Intra-EU migration: the UK

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The figures

• Currently 2.4 million non-UK EU citizens living in UK
  – Out of total of 63.7 million and 4.1 million non-UK (7.5 million born abroad)

• Currently 1.61 million non-UK EU citizens in employment in UK
  – Out of a total of 30.34 million and 2.77 million non-UK

• But number of non-UK EU citizens has risen
  – 746,000 (1Q 2004) 1,616,000 (1Q 2014)

• Especially from Central and Eastern Europe (A8 and Bulgaria and Romania))
  – A8: 64,000 (1Q 2004) 798,000 (1Q 2014)
  – Bulgaria and Romania: 12,000 (1Q 2004) 122,000 (1Q 2014)
The impact: jobs

- Little indication that migrants push UK citizens out of jobs and cause unemployment
  - Impact primarily in recession
    - “Overall, our assessment is that there is relatively little evidence that migration has caused statistically significant displacement of UK natives from the labour market in periods when the economy has been strong. However, in line with some recent studies, there is evidence for some labour market displacement in recent years when the economy was in recession”.
  - No evidence of impact for migrants from EU
    - “To date there has been little evidence in the literature of a statistically significant impact from EU migration on native employment outcomes, although significant EU migration is still a relatively recent phenomenon and this does not imply that impacts do not occur in some circumstances.”

(Impacts of migration on UK native employment: An analytical review of the evidence: Home Office, Department for Business March 2014)
The impact: pay

• Pay research less clear
  – But impact small
    • “Empirical research on the labour market effects of immigration in the UK suggests that immigration has relatively small effects on average wages but more significant effects along the wage distribution.”
  – Lower paid most affected
    • 1% increase in proportion of migrants in working age population leads to 0.6% decline in ages of lowest paid 5%
      (See Labour market effects of immigration: Migration Observatory Oxford University)
Impression

- "Factor most responsible for current economic fears?"
  - "Immigrants undercutting British workers" – 46%
  - "Ruthless companies exploiting staff" – 42%
  (Guardian/ICM June 2014)

- "Opening British labour market to Poles caused"
  - Increase in unemployment in UK – 60%
  - Increase in social benefits – 60%
  - Fall in wages – 59%
  (Instytut Spraw Publicznych 2010)
The reasons why people blame migrants

• Following 2008 UK experienced longest downturn of modern times from which only recently emerging

• But living standards have still not recovered
  – Since 2008 real wages have fallen by 8% (NIESR May 2014)
  – “Chief worry?” “Wages lagging behind living costs” – 57% (Guardian/ICM June 2014)

• And press provides a scapegoat:
Migrant news

It is not surprising that we are confused about migration issues. There is a daily diet of scare stories. In a 31-day period in 2003, the Daily Express ran 22 front page articles on a supposed threat of a flood of refugees.

The pressure to twist the news led Express NUJ journalists to lodge a formal complaint to the Press Complaints Commission against their own newspaper. Reporters on the Daily Star refused to work on a mock-up front page attacking Muslims.

When challenged about a front page story headed “Swan Bake” about asylum seekers stealing swans, The Sun could offer no real evidence to back up the claims.

The hype reached fever-pitch around 1st January 2014 when regulations for Romanians and Bulgarians changed. Scaremongering turned into farce when very few migrants arrived.

Daily Mail
Flights full,
£3,000 a ticket

MailOnline
The truth
cheap seats available, demand down

EasyJet website, January 2014
The politics: UKIP

26 million people in Europe are looking for work.
And whose jobs are they after?
The politics: not just UKIP

- In elections to European Parliament UKIP came top with 27.5% of the vote & in local elections about 25%
  - Although not in London where only got 16.9% in EP elections in 7% locally
- But mainstream parties also hostile
  - Conservative election aim: “to reduce annual net migration to the tens of thousands” (212,000 in 2013)
  - Conservative party wants to restrict free movement in EU
  - Labour Party: Ed Milliband “Labour got it wrong on immigration … we did allow the entry of Poland into the free movement of labour too quickly” (September 2011)
The unions

• Have continued to support free movement in EU
  – “Don’t blame the minimum-wage worker from Poland for undercutting pay. Blame the greedy, tight-fisted boss who wants to drive down the price of labour” Frances O’Grady TUC General Secretary May 2014

• Have continued to try to recruit migrants as members and activists

• Argue that better protection for all workers is the solution to conditions being undercut

• Campaign against racist groups and for migrant rights
Truth, lies and migrants

a guide to population and migration in the South West

students
moving in
EU migrants
moving out
tourists
emigrating
non EU migrants
Final thoughts

• Has been significant migration from EU into UK
• Impact has been small, although people on the lowest wages have been most affected
• People vastly over-estimate the effects of migration
• They have been suffering – but not because of migrants, although they are a convenient scapegoat
• Mainstream politicians have also responded more to the myths than the reality
• Unions are still opposing view that sees migrants as a threat
Thank you for your attention

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