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Economic Migration within the EU

Introduction

1 The recent dispute at the Lindsey Oil Refinery has drawn attention to the migration of workers within the European Union.

2 Economic migrants from the EU are not likely to become a long term immigration problem as their numbers are expected to come into balance in a few years time but this note provides the most recent numbers available.

3 The government say that the number of "posted" British workers in the EU is three times the number of EU workers posted to Britain. However, if all workers are considered, it turns out that the number of EU workers in Britain is three or four times the number of British people employed elsewhere in the EU.

EU workers in the UK

4 International migration statistics are based on a small sample and do not give an accurate picture of the number of EU citizens working in Britain. Such workers do not require a work permit as citizens of the EU are free to travel and work within its borders. However, when the UK Labour market was opened to the eight new East European members of the EU (the A8 countries) in May 2004, a Workers Registration Scheme was established. Nearly one million people from these countries have registered to work in Britain but the register does not record their departures.

5 The Labour force survey is the best available source. For the fourth quarter of 2008 this shows a UK born workforce of 25,582,000. The number of workers born in the A 8 countries was 482,000; this represents a fall of about 6% on the previous quarter but is very similar to the level of Q 4 2007 so there is, as yet, no clear sign of a significant return home by East European workers. The number of workers born in the EU 14 countries was 690,000; thus the total born in the other European Union countries was 1,172,000. The same survey gave the total number of non UK born as 3,819,000. Thus 70% of foreign born workers come from outside the EU [1].

6. Measured by nationality the results are different because some 1.5 million migrant workers have acquired British nationality. A8 nationals are 469,000 while EU 14 nationals come to 548,000 giving a total of EU nationals of 1,017,000.

British workers in the EU

7 The number of UK Nationals working in other EU countries is approximately 286,000. The main

destinations are Germany 65,000, Ireland 52,000, Spain 42,000, France 36,000, Netherlands 28,000 (**Annex A**).

8 The number of EU workers in Britain is thus three or four times the number of British workers in the EU, depending on whether you take the EU born or those who are still EU nationals. Reasons for this imbalance may include limited language skills among British workers, relatively low unemployment rates in Britain in recent years and the fact that wages here are generally higher than in most EU countries.

1 February, 2009

NOTES

1 ONS Migrant Worker Table 2. All aged 16 plus by country of origin. Not seasonally adjusted.

Annex A

UK Nationals working abroad in September 2008

Austria	2,600
Belgium	10,600
Cyprus	5,900
Czech Republic	1,300
Denmark	8,300
Estonia	300
Finland	1,500
France	36,100
Germany	65,300
Greece	2,700
Hungary	800
Ireland	52,000
Italy	11,100
Luxemburg	2,500
Malta	800
Netherlands	28,200
Poland	2,100
Portugal	4,500
Spain	41,800
Sweden	9,200
TOTAL	287,600

Footnotes:

1 Source Euro Stat 2008 Q3

2 Some, mainly small, countries which have not reported are not included: Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.

3 The figure for Ireland comes from the Central Statistics office, Ireland: estimated number of persons aged 15 years and over classified by nationality and economic status, June-August, 2007 and 2008.

4 All numbers are rounded to the nearest 100.