



A limit on work permits for skilled EU migrants after Brexit

European Union: MW 391

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Summary

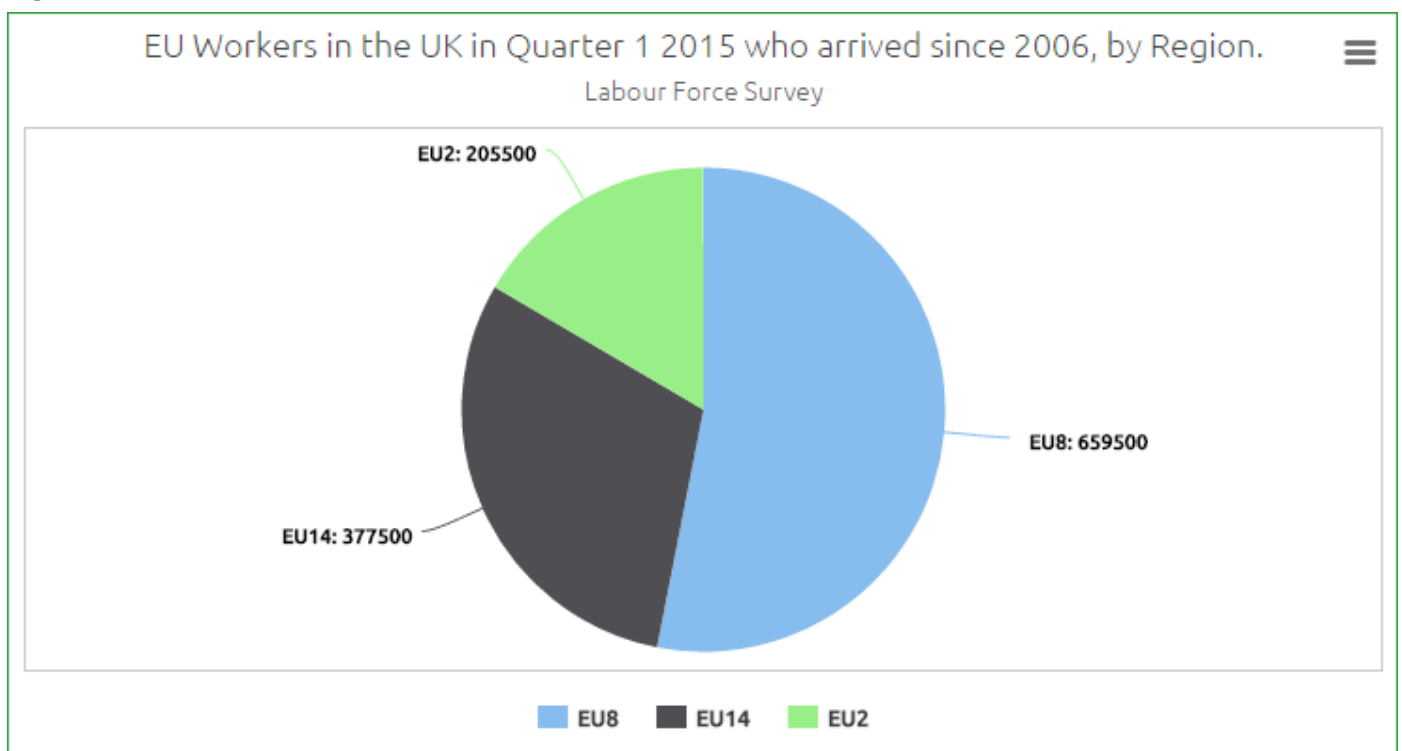
1. An annual limit for highly skilled migration from the EU should be set at a level that allows for the renewal of the current stock, together with some room for expansion. We estimate that the annual limit should be set at 30,000 a year. Eliminating lower-skilled work could reduce net EU migration by around 100,000 a year.

EU Workers in the Labour Market in 2016

2. In Quarter 1 2016 the Labour Force Survey records 1.25 million workers from other EU member states who have arrived in the last ten years (since 2006).

3. Over half are from the EU8, 30% are from the old EU14 and 15% from the new EU2 member states of Romania and Bulgaria. A very small number are from Croatia, Cyprus and Malta.

Figure 1



Workers by Job Skill Level

4. The current rules require that non-EU nationals wishing to obtain a Tier 2 (General) work permit must have been offered a job at a minimum skill level of National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Level 6 or the job must appear on the government Shortage Occupation List.

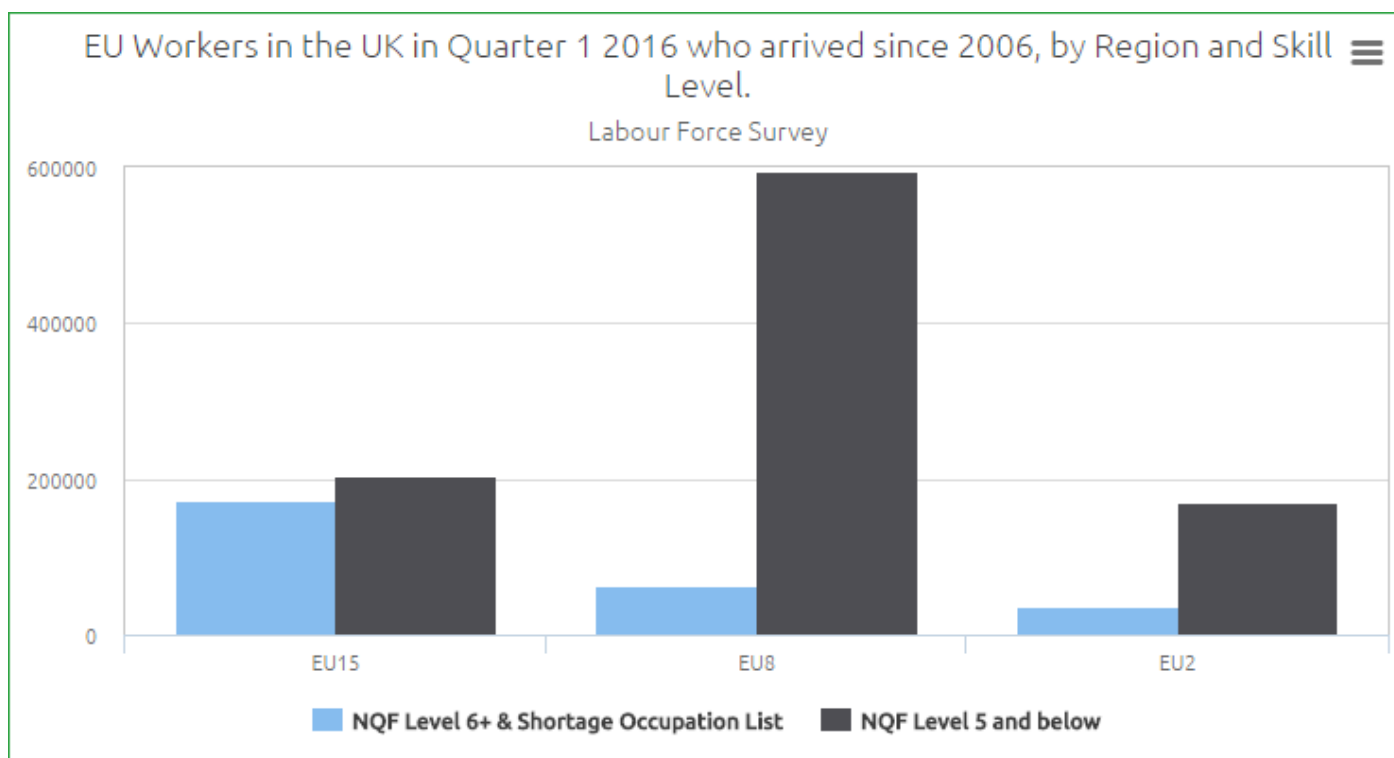
5. Of the 1.25 million EU workers who have arrived since 2006, 22% (273,000 people) are in roles classified by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) as skilled to NQF Level 6 or above or appear on the government Shortage Occupation List. Some 78%, or 972,000, are working in jobs that are classified as NQF Level 5 or below.

6. Thus only 273,000 EU workers who are currently working in the UK and who have arrived in the last ten years would today qualify for a Tier 2 work permit.

7. Workers from the EU14 are most likely to qualify for a work permit, with 46% qualifying. Workers from the EU8 are least likely, at 10%, while just under 20% of workers from Romania and Bulgaria are in work that would qualify, as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: EU Workers in the UK in Quarter 1 2016 who arrived since 2006, by Region and Skill Level.

Source: Labour Force Survey



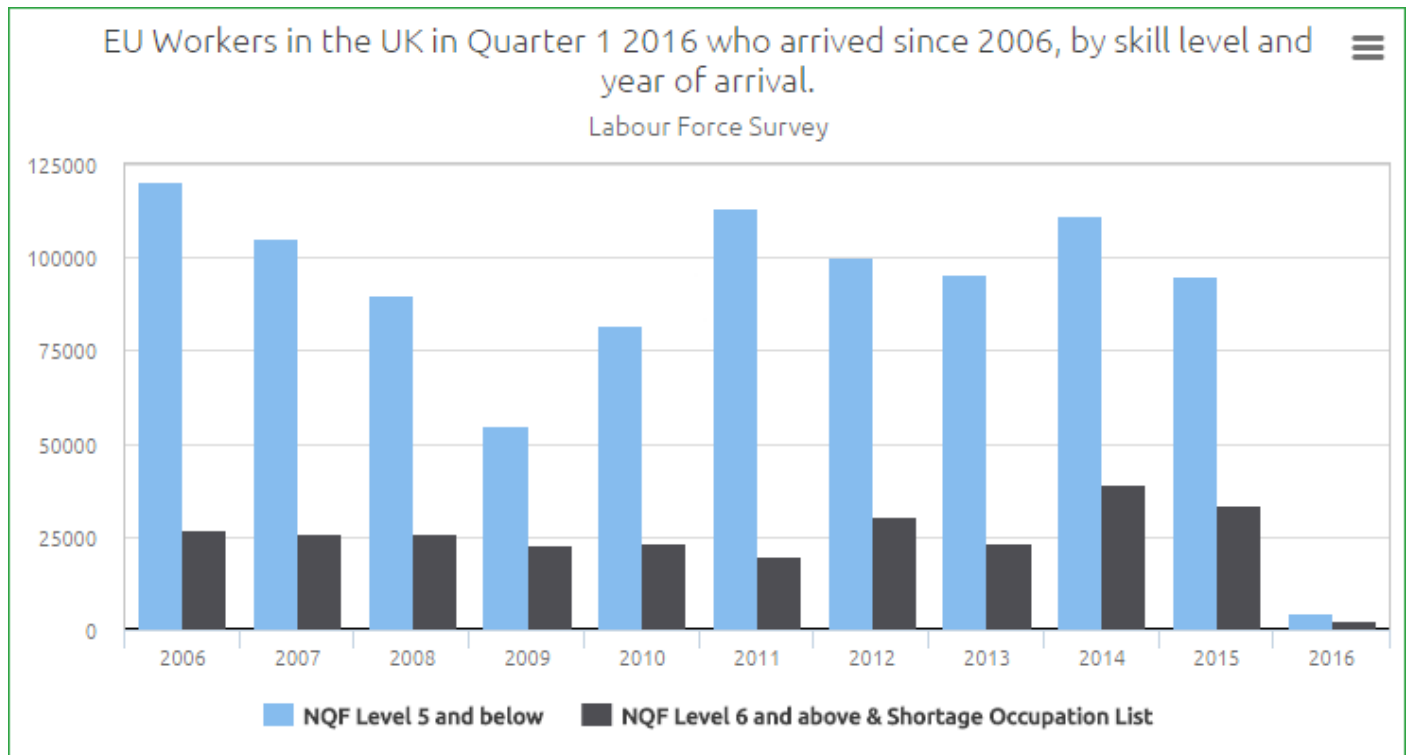
8. We do not know how many of these skilled workers arrived to work in a job skilled to Level 6 and how many started off in lower skilled jobs and worked their way up to this level. However, previous Migration Watch UK analysis conducted in 2014 showed that, regardless of year of arrival, a majority of EU migrants were in low skilled work, suggesting that low skilled work is not generally a 'stepping stone' into highly skilled roles.¹

¹ For more, see here: <http://www.migrationwatchuk.org/briefing-paper/371>

Average Arrivals

9. The bar chart in Figure 3 below shows all EU workers in the UK in Quarter 1 2015 by occupational skill level and year of arrival.

Figure 3: EU Workers in the UK in Quarter 1 2016 who arrived since 2006, by skill level and year of arrival. Source: Labour Force Survey



10. **EU Arrivals who are now in jobs that would qualify for a Tier 2 visa have averaged 25,000 per year since 2006.** 16,000 are from the EU 15, 6,000 from the EU 8 and 3,500 from the EU 2 (See Table 1 of Annex A).

11. As noted in paragraph 8, some will have made progression during their time in the UK. The Labour Force Survey cannot provide concrete evidence of the number of workers who have made progression so, as an approximation, we have assumed that all of those currently working in a highly skilled role or in a job on the Shortage Occupation List entered the country to work at that level. This ensures that we are not underestimating the historical demand of employers for highly-skilled EU workers.

A Limit on Skilled Workers from the EU

12. We propose that, in order to avoid hindrance to British industry, an annual limit should be set at a level that allows for the inflow of highly skilled EU migrants to continue at present levels, together with some room for expansion. We recommend, therefore, that the annual limit should be set at 30,000 a year. This is based on the 25,000 average arrivals per year who are now in highly skilled work (see paragraph 10 above) plus 5,000 additional permits to allow for expansion.

Impact on Net Migration

13. Previous analysis by Migration Watch UK² has shown that restricting low skilled migration to the UK could reduce net migration from the EU by around 100,000 a year.

21st September 2016

2 Migration Watch UK, 'UK immigration policy outside the EU', January 2016, URL: <http://www.migrationwatchuk.org/briefing-paper/371>

Annex A

Table 1-5. Workers in the UK in Quarter 1 2016 who arrived in the last ten years by year of arrival and 4 digit SOC code (aggregated into those SOC codes that are NQF Level 6 or above or are on the Government Shortage Occupation List and those SOC Codes at NQF Level 5 and below). Table 1 is all those born in the EU and Table 2-5 is a breakdown by EU region.

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------|
| ALL | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
| NQF Level 6 and above & SOL | 26886 | 25813 | 25830 | 22921 | 23287 | 19846 | 30400 | 23459 | 39096 | 33343 | 2551 |
| NQF Level 5 and below | 120255 | 105200 | 89693 | 54734 | 81834 | 113134 | 100327 | 95524 | 111378 | 95109 | 4559 |
| ALL TOTAL | 147141 | 131013 | 115523 | 77655 | 105121 | 132980 | 130727 | 118983 | 150474 | 128452 | 7110 |
| EU14 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
| NQF Level 6 and above & SOL | 10635 | 11344 | 10598 | 17661 | 16155 | 12563 | 20805 | 19067 | 27143 | 24849 | 2551 |
| NQF Level 5 and below | 14480 | 14684 | 10436 | 7191 | 10134 | 26222 | 22919 | 23749 | 42255 | 29553 | 2486 |
| EU14 TOTAL | 25115 | 26028 | 21034 | 24852 | 26289 | 38785 | 43724 | 42816 | 69398 | 54402 | 5037 |
| EU8 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
| NQF Level 6 and above & SOL | 14105 | 13248 | 11236 | 1317 | 3033 | 4316 | 6109 | 2406 | 3653 | 4078 | 0 |
| NQF Level 5 and below | 103600 | 77148 | 61758 | 35700 | 57107 | 67379 | 66830 | 55244 | 35482 | 34665 | 1133 |
| EU8 TOTAL | 117705 | 90396 | 72994 | 37017 | 60140 | 71695 | 72939 | 57650 | 39135 | 38743 | 1133 |
| EU2 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
| NQF Level 6 and above & SOL | 2146 | 1221 | 3996 | 3943 | 4099 | 2967 | 3486 | 1986 | 8300 | 4416 | 0 |
| NQF Level 5 and below | 2175 | 13368 | 17499 | 11843 | 13774 | 19533 | 10578 | 15085 | 33641 | 30891 | 940 |
| EU2 TOTAL | 4321 | 14589 | 21495 | 15786 | 17873 | 22500 | 14064 | 17071 | 41941 | 35307 | 940 |
| Cyprus, Malta & Croatia | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
| NQF Level 6 and above & SOL | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| NQF Level 5 and below | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 819 | 0 | 0 | 1446 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Cyprus, Malta & Croatia Total | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 819 | 0 | 0 | 1446 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Note that data for Cyprus, Malta and Croatia are too small to report due to reliability issues resulting from sampling.