

# BREXIT: Shaping the future for EU nationals

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# Prospect is a politically independent trade union representing 141,000 skilled members across all major sectors of the economy

Our membership includes of:

- 50,000 science, technology and engineering (STEM) professionals;
- 42,000 in the broadcasting, entertainment, communications and digital sectors;
- 3,000 in heritage, including archaeologists and specialists in the UK's national museums and galleries.

Many of our members operate in international labour and/or product markets and make a crucial contribution to the success of the organisations they work for and in turn to the UK as a whole.

In October 2017 Prospect responded to a call for evidence from the Government's Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) on the economic and social impact of the UK's exit from the EU and how the UK's immigration system should be aligned with a modern industrial strategy.

## Prospect says...

- The UK's future migration regime must not just be about erecting barriers to free movement but about ensuring continued access to the skills needed for economic success and the public good.
- In sectors like those our members work in, these judgements are most appropriately made by employers through their established HR practices.
- To enable the UK to continue to attract high calibre job seekers migration processes must be as smooth and streamlined as possible.
- We need to actively attract such workers and make it as easy as possible for them and their families to settle in the UK.





**The MAC asked whether the current shortage occupation list should be expanded. We said that, although this approach works satisfactorily in some industries, elsewhere it:**

- Misunderstands the nature of the work undertaken. For example scientific success depends on teams comprising a diversity of roles including technicians, students and support staff who often undertake highly specialised but not highly paid work.
- Wrongly equates academic qualification and skill level. Essential technical and specialist skills developed through experience may not be formally accredited.
- Does not and cannot provide the long-term security that is often desired, for example for people working on major projects with long-time horizons.
  - Has failed to incentivise employers and the wider education system to train up indigenous talent for these roles despite this having been stated as an aim. Many occupations remain on the list year after year whilst others, in niche areas, are unlikely to be included at all.
- Could harm the economy. A 2016 Prospect survey showed that, without the contribution of the EEA workforce, key science projects would be unsupported. The UK's reputation for excellence would lose ground to international competitors.

Other countries with more open migration policies would begin to build capacity in lucrative activities, such as high-end computer graphics for film and TV.

The supply chain for delivering
- Individuals already working in the UK should receive immediate, unconditional and positive confirmation of their right to remain along with family members.
- There must be reciprocal arrangements for UK nationals seeking employment elsewhere in the EEA.



house-building and other infrastructure projects would be held up because planning law requires archaeological investigations to be carried out before development can begin.

- Poses real questions as to whether a shortage list can ever be flexible enough to keep pace with constantly and rapidly evolving technology roles. For example although many EU workers bring high skills to the media and entertainment sector, many others are engaged in lower skilled labour where the labour market is tight and UK workers can't be found to fill the jobs.

The current system is capped at 20,700 entrants per year. Currently fewer than 10,000 visas are awarded annually to non-EEA migrant workers compared with around 150,000 EEA migrants who come to work in the UK. This shows that the current approach to shortage occupations will not be an adequate model for the future.

We understand the consideration is also being given to extending the current Tier 2 salary threshold requirements of a least £30,000 per year for workers from outside the EEA to non-UK EEA nationals. We think that this approach is flawed because:

- It will pose significant challenges for the many thousands of our members who have devoted their careers to the public interest and have been caught by the prolonged period of public sector pay restraint. Due to government policy impeding normal market movement salaries are a poor proxy for value to the UK.

- Official data shows that in some key functions a very large proportion of workers earn less than £30,000 including:
  - 80-89% of lab and pharmaceutical technicians
  - 70-79% of archivists, curators and other culture and media occupations
  - 60-69% of science, engineering and technology associate professionals
  - 40-49% of veterinarians
  - 30-39% of chemical, biological scientists and biochemists, IT professionals and civil engineers.

### **Prospect's own survey of over 650 EU and EEA nationals found that:**

- 22% of workers in STEM earn less than £30,000 per year despite being highly qualified. A further 20% earn between £30,000-£35,000.
- The majority of appointees to post-graduate bands in a major research council earn an average of £24,000.
- There is an endemic problem of low pay in archaeology; where pay typically ranges from £18,000-£27,100. The Chartered Institute of Field Archaeologists reports that it is already very difficult under current Tier 2 arrangements to employ archaeologists from outside the EEA due to salary requirements.
- According to the government's Labour Force Survey there are around 141,000 EU nationals working in UK science and technology and approaching 146,000 in creative industries.

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