

Equality and Human Rights Commission
Policy report

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The UK's new Europeans

Progress and challenges
five years after accession

About this paper

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (the Commission) and the Migration Policy Institute have a shared interest in immigration and the impacts of immigration on society. This paper was prepared for the Commission but represents the views of the authors and not official Commission policy. This is the final of three papers prepared in connection with the major migration summit hosted by the Commission in 2009.

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Executive summary

Executive summary

The recent enlargement of the European Union (EU) has fundamentally changed migration patterns to the UK. Over the past five years, it has brought hundreds of thousands of new EU citizens into the UK's society and labour market. The new migration poses distinctive new challenges for those who work to promote equality in the UK.

An estimated 1.5 million workers have come to the UK from new EU member states since May 2004, and the number of eastern European nationals resident in the UK has increased to about 700,000. Not only have eastern Europeans made up about half of labour immigration in recent years; they also differ substantially from the UK's previous immigrant groups.

The catch-all term 'eastern Europeans' refers to a heterogeneous group of migrants who come to the UK for contrasting motivations and for varying time periods. On average, however, these individuals (and especially Polish people) are young and work for low wages in low-skill jobs, even if they are highly educated (in other words they 'downgrade' and have a lower return on their education achievements than other migrant groups). Unlike other groups they work across the country in diverse and dispersed locations.

EU freedom of movement has given recent migrants substantial flexibility, and this is reflected in their patterns of work and mobility. The new EU citizens' migration strategies have often been distinctively informal. Many rely on recruitment agencies and strong social networks for employment, while often exhibiting 'circular' or 'shuttling' movement to and from the UK. Many come without knowing how long they will stay, while some move between the UK and their home country on a regular basis. A large proportion have found work in unskilled occupations, often in areas that have not typically attracted substantial immigration. The recent migration is still in flux, and we should expect continued change and fluctuation in its nature and volume; not least in response to the economic crisis.

How do the recent migrants fare in the UK?

The story of the new European citizens' economic integration is complex, and we cannot yet establish long-term trends with any certainty. Over the first five years, however, some key trends have emerged. Eastern European workers' employment rates have been very high. Newly arrived immigrant cohorts take about two years to attain unemployment rates as low or lower than the UK-born, and by 2008 the new EU migrants as a group experienced roughly the same unemployment rate as their British counterparts. During the recession, the new Europeans' unemployment rate remained well below that of British-born workers, bucking the usual trend of higher immigrant sensitivity to the business cycle. Eastern European workers have been well received by employers and are widely praised for their strong 'work ethic'.

Despite this positive picture, areas of concern remain. The recent migrants receive low wages and are concentrated in unskilled work, often despite high levels of education. In many cases the new migrants have precarious employment and housing arrangements, are vulnerable to exploitation, or lack support networks and access to information. Finally, and contrary to received wisdom, language barriers appear to be greater than for the UK's other immigrant groups.

The prospects for the new European citizens' upward mobility and for their transition to more highly skilled work are mixed. Those who choose to stay for several years or longer are potentially well-placed to integrate successfully, since they are, on average, highly educated and hence better equipped to learn new skills quickly. But new migrants are also over-represented in jobs with limited career prospects, and rely significantly on social contacts to find work. This may hinder their upward mobility.

The concept of social and economic integration is not clear-cut for short-term migrants, who do not have a long period over which to improve their labour market position. Several policies can help these workers to protect themselves against homelessness, poverty or exploitation, however. These include appropriate enforcement of labour standards, better information and advice in eastern European languages, and access to language training.

How has the recent migration affected local communities and workers?

Despite large and unexpected inflows since 2004, eastern European migrants still make up only a small proportion of the labour force. International experience suggests that labour markets can absorb immigration ‘shocks’ significantly larger than the recent labour movement to the UK. A relatively limited evidence base suggests that eastern European immigration has brought economic benefits, including greater labour market efficiency and potential increases in **average** wages. However, the recent migration may have reduced wages slightly at the bottom end of the labour market, especially for certain groups of vulnerable workers, and there is a risk that it could contribute to a ‘low-skill equilibrium’ in some economically depressed local areas.

The new EU citizens’ overall fiscal impact is probably small but positive. Perhaps more significant is the impact on local areas: local public services have had to adjust to concentrated increases in population and larger numbers of non-English speakers. The growing numbers of children of eastern European immigrants will continue to challenge local schools, although in the long run, analysis of the performance of the children of immigrants indicates that many will be highly successful.

Policies to support equality in the UK

The recent migration adds to the UK’s existing diversity, and over a decade of experience of substantial immigration has helped the public and policymakers to adjust to EU labour mobility. To promote equality, however, policy must focus on helping those who are most vulnerable; and importantly this includes both immigrants and the UK-born. Such policies include measures to encourage upward mobility (such as improved credential recognition and workforce development programmes); a re-examination of language acquisition policies; enforcement efforts to curb the exploitation of a minority of workers; and support for local areas with large immigrant inflows, particularly those unused to migration.

Introduction

Introduction

In 2004, 10 new member states joined the European Union (EU), eight of which were eastern European countries with income levels well below the western European average (often referred to as the A8).¹

In 2007 they were joined by two other countries: Romania and Bulgaria (the A2). EU membership brings rights to freedom of movement between member states² and these accessions led to a wave of immigration that was not only unprecedented, but highly unexpected. About 1.5 million workers from A8 countries have come to the UK since May 2004, and the number of A8 nationals resident in the UK has increased to about 700,000.³

The recent migration⁴ has been highly distinctive. The new European citizens do not face the same barriers to migration as non-EU nationals. Since EU labour mobility makes migration easier for EU citizens, different kinds of individuals have been able to migrate from eastern Europe since accession, paving the way for new patterns of movement including short trips and more low-skilled employment.

This wave of immigration has created new challenges for policymakers concerned with supporting social cohesion and equality. While the overall experience of eastern European immigration has been a positive one, this report identifies a number of current problems and future risks. We discuss three major questions:

- How are the new European citizens faring in the UK? In other words, how successful has their social and economic integration been?
- What are the long-term prospects for eastern European migrants as a group?
- How has the recent migration affected existing communities and labour markets around the UK? Has the recent immigration had a negative impact on existing UK residents?

¹ The A8 countries are: Poland, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia. Cyprus (not northern Cyprus) and Malta also joined at the same time, but are very small countries with higher average incomes.

² Restrictions to new EU citizens' labour market access are allowed during a transitional period following accession. See Box 2: 'Lessons from the past? Previous accessions and their impact.'

³ See footnotes 7 and 8.

⁴ Throughout this paper we use the term 'the recent migration' to refer to post-2004 movement of individuals from both A8 and A2 member states. Unless otherwise specified, the terms 'new EU citizens', 'recent migrants' and 'eastern Europeans' refers to both A8 and A2 collectively.

To answer these questions, we draw on several sources. First, we examine official data sources such as the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS) and other government data that provide a useful, though incomplete, picture of the recent migration. The LFS is a statistical survey of UK households that provides information on individuals in the labour force. While it represents the most detailed source of information on immigrant workers in the UK, it has flaws; in particular, immigrants are under-represented in the survey, which does not sample from non-private communal establishments, such as hostels, where many migrants live. It also excludes those who do not consider the sampled address their primary residence and have lived there for less than six months.⁵ The WRS, on the other hand, is a government programme that requires most new EU member state nationals to register in order to work legally in the UK. Self-employed workers and those who have been working legally for 12 continuous months do not

need to register, and some non-exempt workers fail to register; estimates suggest that approximately one-third of eastern European workers from new member states are not registered with the scheme (Pollard et al., 2008).

Second, we synthesise the growing body of literature that has emerged since 2004, some of which includes important qualitative information to complement the quantitative data.

Of course, gaps inevitably remain. In particular, we know less about the migrants from Romania and Bulgaria than we do about those from the A8 countries. As A2 migrants have come to the UK in small numbers since 2007, the LFS sample sizes have proved insufficient for analysing key variables. A2 migrants also differ from the A8 in two key respects. First, Romanians and Bulgarians face labour market restrictions that strongly limit the work they can perform in the UK, particularly at the low-skilled end of the spectrum.⁶

⁵ For this report, we analysed Labour Force Survey data from 2004 to 2009, made available by the UK Data Archive. Eastern European nationals are identified by country of birth. Unless otherwise specified, our sample comprises all A8-born individuals in the survey when referring to the migrant 'population', and all A8-born labour-force participants when referring to 'workers'. Where multiple quarters of data are analyzed together, we restrict the sample to individuals appearing in the survey for the first time.

⁶ The UK government imposed transitional restrictions on Romanian and Bulgarian nationals' right of access to the labour market, in part due to the unexpectedly large inflows of A8 workers in 2004, when the UK was one of only three countries to allow full labour market access to new EU citizens. A2 migrants can work in the UK if they qualify for work visas through the points-based immigration system: if they are self-employed, if they participate in one of two schemes for less skilled employment in agriculture (the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme, or SAWS) and in food processing (the Sector Based Scheme, or SBS), or if they are a family member of an A2 national with work authorisation (see Migration Advisory Committee, 2008).

Second, migration from Romania and Bulgaria has been primarily directed to Italy and Spain; a trend that seems likely to continue even after labour market restrictions in the UK are lifted (Migration Advisory Committee, 2008).

In other words, not only do we have a shorter experience of A2 migration, there are also fewer individuals on which to base our analysis. As a result, this report considers A8 migration in more detail than A2 migration. However, much of the analysis in this report is relevant to both groups, especially since A2 migration is expected to resemble A8 migration more closely once the 2007 restrictions are lifted, which must happen by 2014 at the latest.

The report is structured as follows. Section Two reviews what we know about the UK's new European citizens, and how these trends are changing. Section Three asks how the new migrants are faring: how well they have integrated socially and economically, and what their prospects are for the future. Section Four examines the impact of EU labour mobility on the UK economy and on local communities. Section Five concludes by highlighting the policy implications from an equality perspective.

What is special about
the recent migration?

What is special about the recent migration?

The new migrants from eastern Europe are different from the UK's other, non-European, immigrant groups: their European Union (EU) citizenship matters. A8 migrants do not need to apply for a visa to work in the UK; they can work in any occupation, and they can travel from their home country relatively cheaply.

This unique situation fundamentally affects the profile of individuals who choose to come to the UK, the work they perform and the length of time they stay.

Examining the numbers

The almost unprecedented scale and speed of eastern European immigration has turned heads. Our estimate is that about 1.5 million A8 workers came to the UK between May 2004 and September 2009.⁷ In 2007, they made up almost half of the UK's labour immigration flow (Somerville and Sumption 2009a, p43). Not all of the new migrants have stayed: the population of A8 migrants in the third quarter of 2009 was approximately

700,000, suggesting that more than half had returned home.⁸ Polish nationals make up roughly two-thirds of A8 immigration.

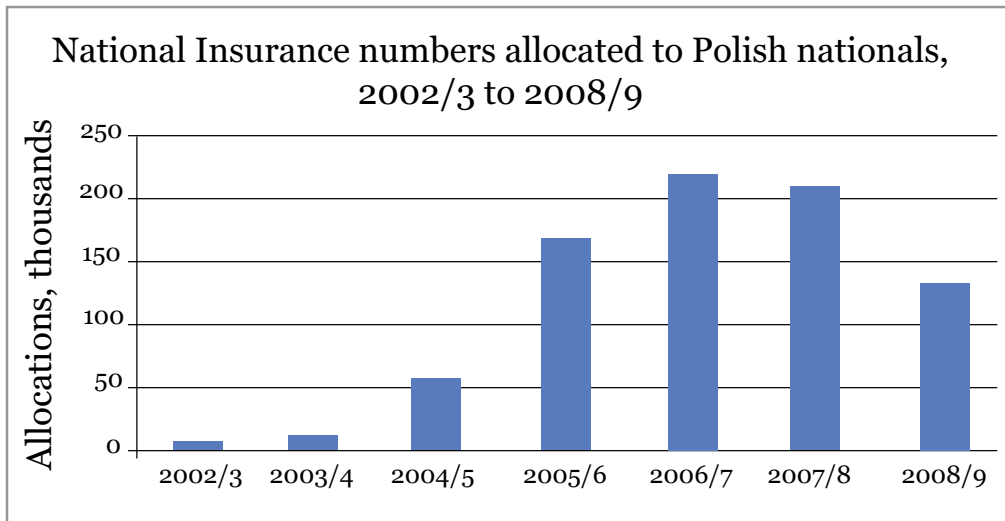
By way of example, Figure 1 (on page 14) shows the number of National Insurance numbers allocated to Polish workers since 2002/3. It provides a useful estimate of the number of Polish people entering the UK labour market.⁹ By 2004/5, Polish nationals were the largest recipients of National Insurance numbers and have remained so ever since, by some distance (see Figure 2 on page 14). The two figures document the extraordinary growth in migration from a single source country.

⁷ This estimate follows the methodology of Pollard et al. (2008): we take the total number of approved WRS applications (1,001,475), and multiply it by 1.49 to account for an estimated 33 per cent of A8 workers who do not register with the scheme.

⁸ Calculations based on the LFS.

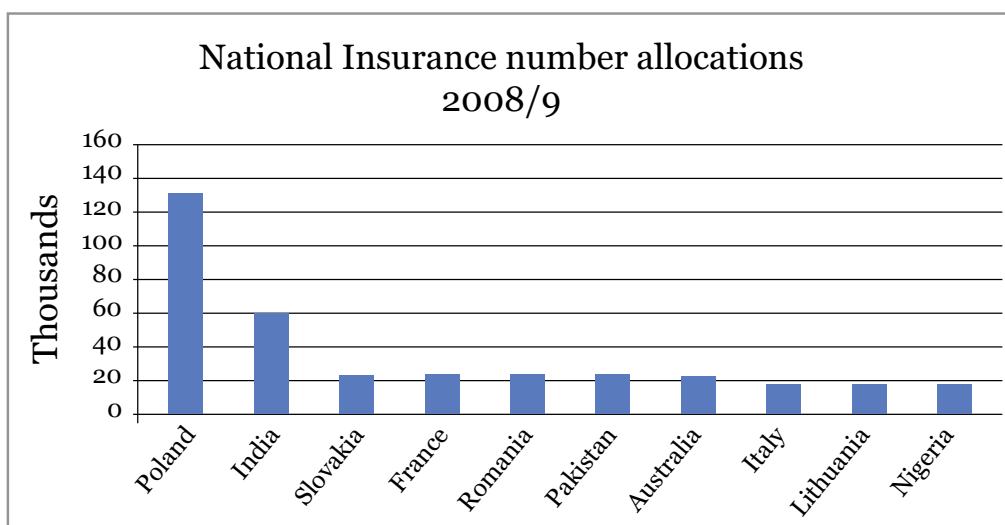
⁹ National Insurance number allocations are not a perfect measure of immigration flows, since they only show entry into legal work. Those who work in the informal economy, and those who do not work, may not have National Insurance numbers.

Figure 1



Source: Department for Work and Pensions (2008, 2009)

Figure 2



Source: Department for Work and Pensions (2008, 2009)

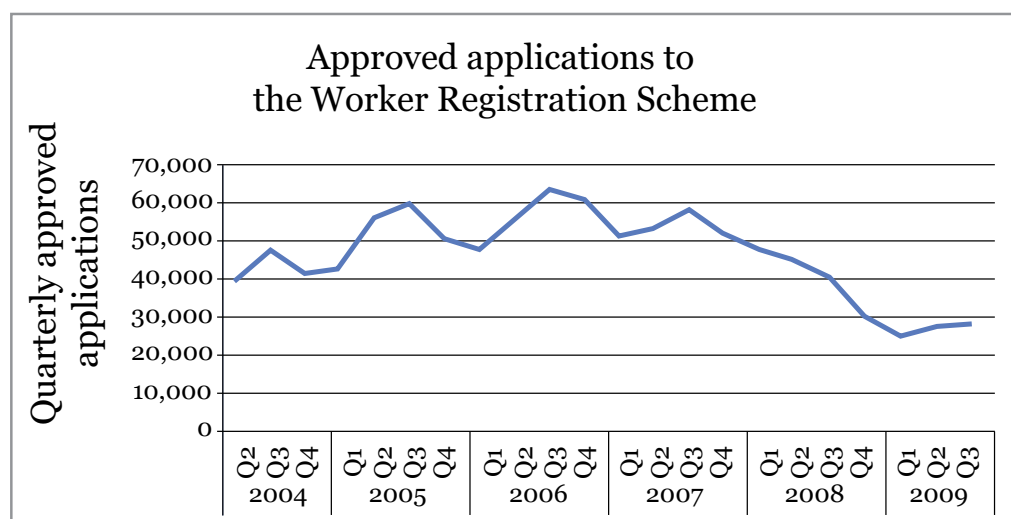
The inflows of A8 workers have fluctuated over the first five years (see Figure 3 on page 15 – the number of initial applications from A8 migrants to the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS) for each quarter between May 2004 and September 2009). Inflows peaked in 2006 at just over 60,000 per quarter, then declined

dramatically. By the first quarter of 2009 inflows had roughly halved year-on-year, to about one-third of the 2006 peak. Similarly, National Insurance number allocations to Polish workers declined substantially in 2008/9 (see Figure 1).

The economic crisis is likely to have played a crucial role in these trends, reducing labour demand in the UK (see Somerville and Sumption, 2009a). Experience to date suggests that migration from eastern Europe is highly cyclical, responding to UK economic conditions.¹⁰ As Figure 3 shows, inflows have also been moderately seasonal, increasing during the summer when labour demand is high in industries such as hospitality and agriculture. It remains to be seen whether this cyclical trend will continue over the course of future economic cycles. If eastern European migration changes are to become more family oriented over time (which we believe to be likely: see Box 1, ‘Changing migration patterns?’), this may reduce its sensitivity to UK labour demand.

Migration from Romania and Bulgaria has been much smaller. There is no significant history of migration from these two countries. The 2001 Census recorded about 5,000 Bulgarians and 8,000 Romanians (Migration Advisory Committee, 2008), compared to about 58,000 Polish people (Sumption, 2009). Even after a rapid increase in numbers to approximately 67,000 in 2008, the A2 still make up only 1 per cent of the UK’s total foreign-born population, compared to 11 per cent for the A8 (Migration Advisory Committee, 2008).

Figure 3



Source: UK Border Agency (2005) and Home Office (2009)

¹⁰ Lower inflows during the current recession are driven primarily by changes in the flow of Polish workers (Home Office, 2009). It is worth noting that the economic crisis did not hit Poland as hard as other Eastern European countries (growth is expected to be positive in 2009), making the Polish labour market relatively more attractive to potential migrants (see Fix et al., 2009).

A different kind of migration

Eastern European migration is not just distinguished by its scale and speed.

It is now well recognised that the new migrants are 'different' in several ways. The recent migrants' characteristics have been reviewed in detail elsewhere (see for example, Blanchflower and Lawton, 2008). Here, we point briefly to some key characteristics, especially insofar as the migrants differ from those of the UK's other immigrant groups. For the most part, we review A8 and A2 migration separately, reflecting the differences in the knowledge base on these two groups, and some differences in their characteristics.

A8 immigrants are **young** compared to the UK-born population and (to a lesser extent) to other immigrants. In 2008, about 70 per cent of A8 immigrants were between the ages of 18 and 35, compared to about one-third of all immigrants, and less than a quarter of natives.¹¹ By implication, they also have less labour market experience than other UK workers, and many appear to be recent graduates.

The new migrants work in **less skilled occupations** than other immigrant groups: more than half of migrants with jobs worked in unskilled occupations in 2008,¹² compared to 20 per cent of other immigrants and 18 per cent of

natives.¹³ As a result, they receive **lower wages**. Eighty-nine per cent of A8 and A2 workers earned less than £400 per week in 2007, compared to 57 per cent of UK-born workers (Pollard, Latorre and Sriskandarajah, 2008). While the average non-A8 or A2 immigrant worker earns **more** than the UK-born, eastern European migrants over the first years since accession earned an average of 12.5 per cent less (Blanchflower and Lawton, 2008).

This occurs despite relatively **high levels of education**. The recent migrants have higher education levels, on average, than the UK-born: while the median non-immigrant in 2008 left school at age 16, A8 workers had a median school leaving age of 19 years of age.¹⁴ Indeed, when controlling for individual characteristics including education, recent A8 immigrants earn the least of any immigrant group (Clark and Drinkwater, 2008). In other words, many recent immigrants '**downgrade**' their occupational status when they come to the UK, working in jobs that do not reflect their level of qualifications. This common phenomenon among immigrant populations around the world is much more pronounced for the recent migrants than for the UK's other immigrant groups, most of whom work in relatively skilled occupations, as noted above.

¹¹ Authors' calculations from the LFS.

¹² This includes: process, plant and machine operatives; assemblers; construction workers; transport and machine drivers; other labourers; porters; bar and restaurant staff; and cleaners.

¹³ Authors' calculations from the LFS, 2008.

¹⁴ Authors' calculations from the Labour Force Survey, 2008.

As a result, A8 workers have a **lower return on education** than other immigrants: there tends to be less differentiation in wages between those with more education and those with less (Clarke and Drinkwater, 2008). While UK-born workers are thought to earn about 10 per cent more if they complete one additional year of education, recent A8 arrivals gain a tiny 1.1 per cent.¹⁵ Why are eastern Europeans employed below their skill level? This question has not received a definitive answer, although several factors are likely to be at work. These include poor English skills of some migrants preventing them from using their formal qualifications or abilities; employers' difficulty in recognising foreign credentials; discrimination; a reliance on social networks in a situation in which existing eastern European nationals already work disproportionately in low-skilled jobs; and the new migrants' willingness to work in low-skilled jobs, in part because they know that their stay is temporary and sometimes because they hope to upgrade to more skilled work after improving their English skills.

Temporary migration, circular migration (involving several trips, sometimes on a seasonal basis) and **uncertainty** about the duration of stay are important characteristics of the recent migration stream.¹⁶ EU freedom of movement has made it easier to move and circulate between Europe's sending and receiving countries. In many cases, migration requires as little planning as the purchase of a coach ticket. As a result, migrants can come for short periods (data from the WRS consistently points to the fact that large proportions only intend to stay in the UK for a few months), or with undefined plans (migrant surveys have shown that recent A8 migrants are less certain about their future plans than other immigrant groups) (see Green et al., 2007; Blanchflower and Lawton, 2008).

¹⁵ This compares to 4.9 per cent for recent immigrants from Australasia, 2.8 per cent for those from the Americas, and 1.5 per cent for immigrants from Africa. See Clarke and Drinkwater (2008).

¹⁶ Direct comparison of eastern European migrants and other migrant groups is difficult. Estimates using data from the 1990s, before EU enlargement, show that among immigrants who stayed for at least a year in the UK, 40 per cent of men and 55 per cent of women had left five years later (Dustmann and Weiss, 2007). This number would be larger if it included migrants who stayed for less than one year before returning home. A noteworthy example of the latter is the growing number of corporate transferees in computer science and telecommunications, who come to the UK on work permits for relatively short periods (Salt, 2008, p75–76).

Reliable data on return migration from the UK is not available. However, the substantial discrepancy between the size of the net inflows, and the size of the A8 population as measured by the LFS, suggests that large numbers do indeed return home. A 2008 study puts the figure at 50 per cent (Pollard et al., 2008). Our updated calculations, above, suggest that the same figure of roughly 50 per cent still holds as of 2009.

Migration has been not just temporary, but at times **circular**, with migrant workers taking several trips between the UK and their home country. A primary reason for this is to perform seasonal work. Others may choose circular migration to balance work in the UK with family life in their home country. A recent survey of migrant workers in the West Midlands indicates that A8 migrants were more likely than non-EU immigrant groups to have made prior visits to the UK; and that the trend was strongest for workers employed in agriculture and elementary occupations, suggesting that labour demand played an important role (Green et al., 2007).

Given the diversity of migration strategies, it is worth distinguishing between some different 'ideal types' of migrant worker. Eade, Drinkwater and Garapich (2006) identify four categories of Polish worker in London, providing a useful analytical reference point. **Storks** are short-term, seasonal migrants, including students or agricultural workers, who come to the UK for around two to six months at a time, on several occasions, to supplement their incomes at home. **Hamsters** are one-

off, temporary migrants who stay slightly longer to build capital for an investment back home. **Stayers** intend to remain in the UK and have strong ambitions for upward social mobility. Finally, **Searchers** (the largest group in their research) keep their options deliberately open, willing to work in England or Poland depending on the career opportunities they are able to find. In other words, the recent migration is **heterogeneous** in terms of migration strategy and intentions. This matters when we examine policy implications and workers' future prospects in the UK, since generalisations about the new migrants' characteristics may mask the existence of specific vulnerable groups.

Eastern European immigration has shown **distinctive patterns of networks and social interaction**. First, substantial numbers of A8 migrants depend on recruitment agencies to find work: about half of WRS registrants up to 2008 were working for a temporary staffing agency (Blanchflower and Lawton, 2008, p5). Indeed, agencies also play a role in facilitating migration itself, often paying for flights and initial accommodation, then reclaiming costs from migrants' wages. Agencies have played a strong role in shaping the recent migrants' location decisions. In a 2008 poll of Polish workers in rural areas, for example, the most commonly-reported reason for living in a rural area was recruitment by an employment agency (Chappell et al., 2009). For some large food-processing employers, agencies are reported to be the **only** route into employment (Fitzgerald, 2007).

A8 immigrants were substantially more likely to use private employment agencies than other immigrants or UK-born workers, although agencies may be declining slightly in importance, especially for workers who are no longer seeking a first job in the UK. Employed A8 workers recruited in 2005/6 had found their current job through a private agency approximately 26 per cent of the time, compared to 16 per cent for those recruited in 2007/8.¹⁷ Qualitative evidence suggests that agencies are likely to provide a first UK job, while workers rely primarily on social networks for subsequent jobs (Green et al., 2007).¹⁸ This is consistent with a view in the economic literature that agencies can provide immigrants a stepping stone into the labour market (Andersson and Wadensjö, 2004; Marloes et al., 2004). However, the prevalence of agency recruitment also appears to be contributing to employment insecurity among workers who would prefer to have permanent jobs, as we discuss later.

Meanwhile, social networks have become more important, particularly for Polish workers: the largest group among the recent migrants. Employed Polish migrants are about 25 per cent more likely to have obtained their current job through their social network than UK-born workers or other, non-A8 immigrant groups.¹⁹ Polish workers' reliance on social networks increased steadily between 2004 and 2007, but declined slightly in 2008 (Sumption,

2009). As we discuss in more detail later, social networks can help new migrants to settle, but they can also indicate poor integration and a lack of opportunities for labour market advancement outside of ethnic networks.

Typically immigrants cluster in urban areas and major cities. The recent migrants, however, are **more geographically dispersed** than other immigrant groups (although they are still more concentrated in the major urban areas than the UK-born). Thirty-eight per cent of non-A8 immigrants lived in London in 2008, compared to 26 per cent of the A8, and 9 per cent of the UK-born.²⁰ Certain rural areas received concentrated inflows of A8 migrants who subsequently made up a significant proportion of the workforce (Commission for Rural Communities, 2007). This has important implications. First, migration has begun to affect many areas previously unused to (and often unprepared for) new arrivals. Indeed, one could argue that the new immigration poses the greatest challenges not in the labour market where, as we discuss later, new EU workers have been absorbed quite smoothly, but rather in local areas trying to respond to unexpected inflows of new (and often temporary) residents. Second, residence in rural areas affects short-term integration, since it can reduce access to common sources of help and information, which tend to be more concentrated in towns and cities.

¹⁷ Authors' calculations from the LFS.

¹⁸ Evidence from Sweden has also found that agencies provide a stepping stone to non-agency work. See Andersson and Wadensjö, 2004.

¹⁹ Data from the LFS, for jobs obtained in 2007; see Sumption, 2009.

²⁰ Authors' calculations from the LFS, 2008.

Migration from Romania and Bulgaria

Romanian and Bulgarian migrants share several characteristics with their A8 counterparts. They are **predominantly young**: about 60 per cent are between the ages of 18 and 35 (the distribution of ages is not statistically different from that of the A8).²¹ They have **similar education levels** (the median age at which working-age A2 migrants left full-time education was 19 in 2008). And they also have low unemployment rates and high labour force participation (Migration Advisory Committee, 2008).

One crucial distinction, however, is that A2 migrants work in **more skilled occupations** than the A8. Like non-A8 immigrants and UK-born workers, the majority of A2 workers perform jobs in the top two (of four) occupational skill groups (Migration Advisory Committee, 2008, **This is most likely a function of the labour market restrictions that A2 migrants face**). Since they cannot work freely in all sectors, but are limited primarily to highly skilled occupations and self-employment (lower-skilled work is permitted but limited through the Sectors Based Scheme and Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme quotas), it is not surprising that their occupational distribution differs from that of A8 migrants. However, labour market restrictions must be lifted by 2014, and at this point the population of new A2 migrants may well come to resemble the A8 more (Migration Advisory Committee, 2008).

²¹ Authors' calculations from the LFS, 2008.

Box 1: Changing migration patterns?

The recent migration is not a 'fixed quantity'. Eastern European migration to the UK is unlikely to have reached equilibrium in just five years. Indeed, we should expect it to change or fluctuate. Two major factors in particular will drive changes: the economy and the development of a stable migration chain.

New types of migrant

Migration streams develop over time, as a result of a complex range of factors including economic conditions, institutional relationships between countries, social networks and labour market intermediaries. Social networks shape new inflows, as settled migrants are able to help new workers to migrate and to find work or housing.

As a result, the characteristics of new migrants from a given source country are likely to change over time (Massey et al., 1994; Carrington et al., 1996), as networks grow and make migration more attractive to new groups, such as female migrants with families.

In fact, the character of A8 migration already appears to be changing, albeit not dramatically. One study finds that Polish workers had become 'less prepared to do unskilled work at the national minimum wage' a few years after accession, and that more recent arrivals were less well qualified with lower levels of English proficiency, leading some employment agencies to 'switch to workers from countries other than Poland' (Blanchflower and Lawton, 2008).

Second, migration stays may be becoming longer, according to tentative evidence. Polish government data on short-term migration suggests that while 63 per cent of all short-term migrants from Poland to receiving countries worldwide stayed abroad for less than 12 months, this per centage had declined to 54 per cent by the second quarter of 2007 (Kaczmarczyk and Okolski, 2008). Meanwhile, family-related migration is becoming common. The proportion of WRS registrants arriving with dependant children increased from 4 per cent in 2004 to 15 per cent in the first quarter of 2009, suggesting more permanent flows. (Note that some of the increased proportion of family migration might be a temporary effect if the economic crisis has disproportionately reduced migration among single workers who come for more purely economic reasons.)

Box 1 continued

Future flows and the economy

Future flows from eastern Europe are highly uncertain. First, the very substantial inflows in the two years following the 2004 accession are likely to have been boosted by pent-up demand for work or experiences in western Europe, suggesting that long-run flows will settle at lower levels.

Meanwhile, the economic crisis has generated additional uncertainties. Economic conditions in both the receiving and sending countries affect migration flows. While the current economic crisis and lower labour demand in the UK has reduced migration from eastern Europe, events in the eastern European sending countries could ultimately boost migration if they hinder economic development there in the medium term. Ahearne et al. (2009) suggest that Bulgaria, Romania, the Baltic States and Hungary may send more migrants abroad for this reason in coming years.

In the mid to long term, UK employers' demand for workers at the low end of the skills spectrum is expected to rise over the coming decade, especially in industries such as personal services (UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2008; Somerville and Sumption, 2009a). This implies that UK employers will continue to look to migrant workers from eastern Europe to fill less skilled jobs. The Government's current position is that only intra-EU migration (and not migration from third countries) will be sufficient to meet additional demand in low-skilled employment until further notice. However, it has reserved the option of introducing less skilled migrants from outside the EU (into the third tier of the points-based system), should this prove necessary. For example, if the inflows of eastern European workers who are willing to work in positions at the bottom of the UK labour market declines to a level that is considered too low. This, in turn, is likely to depend substantially on economic development and wage growth in the new eastern European member states which will make low-skilled UK jobs relatively less attractive. The primary unknown is how long this economic development will take.

Equality implications: how are eastern European migrants faring?

Equality implications: how are eastern European migrants faring?

The new migration is highly distinctive: more dispersed, more educated for the level of work the migrants perform, more informal and probably more temporary. Each of these characteristics affects the new European Union (EU) citizens' prospects in the UK.

We argue in this section that while the new migrants are popular with employers and have been quite successful at obtaining work, it is less clear whether meaningful social and economic integration has been within their reach. The majority fare well, but their employment and housing circumstances can be precarious, their future prospects somewhat uncertain, and a small minority remains vulnerable to substantial short-term risks.

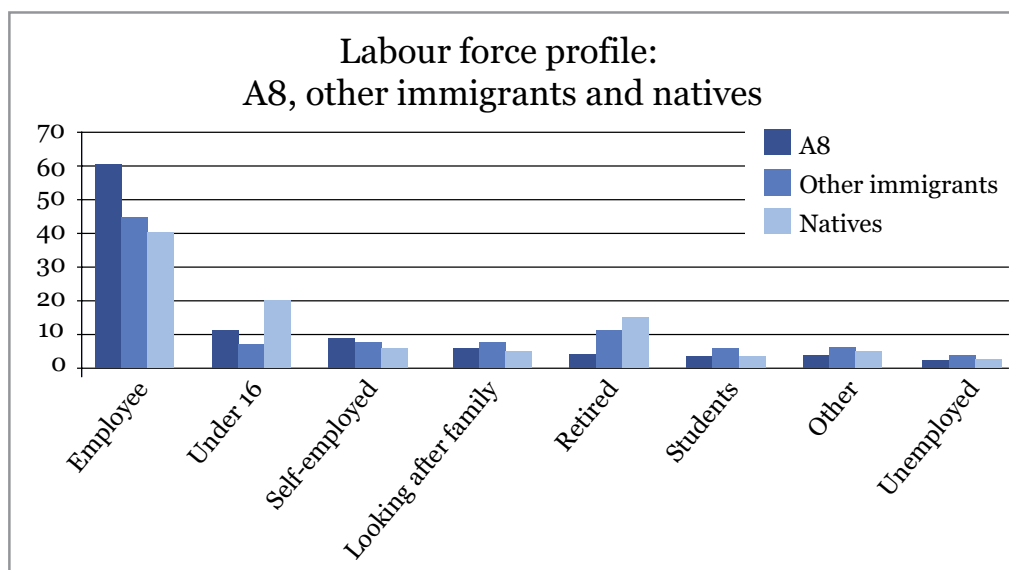
The evidence presented in this section refers exclusively to A8 migrants. This is because of the close relationship between the new EU citizens' prospects and their migration status (including full labour market access). However, much of the analysis will apply to Bulgarian and Romanian migrants, especially once their labour market restrictions are lifted.

Economic integration

The recent migrants tend to be highly popular with employers. Immigration studies have found again and again that employers value A8 workers for their excellent 'work ethic' (Matthews and Ruhs, 2007; Dench et al., 2006; Anderson et al., 2006, Green et al., 2007).

Perhaps this is not surprising: the new migrants have been willing to work in isolated rural locations, work long or irregular hours, and flock to the country during times of high labour demand. They are also overeducated for the jobs they perform – a distinct advantage in industries such as hospitality, which involve contact with customers.

As a result, the recent migrants have been quite successful in accessing employment. Their participation in the labour force remains well above average: 95 per cent for men and 80 per cent for women (Dustmann et al., 2009). As a recent and strongly labour-motivated migrant group, they comprise fewer inactive individuals (old and young) and represent a much greater proportion of employed workers than the UK-born population. Indeed, the A8's employment rates are above those of almost all other significant immigrant groups, with the exception of those from South Africa, Australia and New Zealand (Office for National Statistics, 2009).

Figure 4

Source: Labour Force Survey, 2008

The unemployment picture is also positive. During the first five years since EU enlargement, the A8 population as a whole has achieved relatively low unemployment rates. In 2005, the unemployment rate for A8 immigrants who had arrived in 2004 or later was approximately 7.6 per cent – substantially higher than the rate of 4.5 per cent for UK-born workers.²² By 2008, however, the unemployment rate for the post-enlargement A8 population had declined to approximately 4.2 per cent, compared to 5.6 per cent for the UK-born (the difference is not statistically significant). This is largely because in the first five years, A8 workers' unemployment rates declined substantially, the longer their stay in the UK. Figure 5 shows the average unemployment rate over the 2005–2008 period for A8 and other

immigrants, conditional on the number of years they have been present in the UK.

For each yearly cohort, unemployment rates have been high (sometimes over 15 per cent) in the first year of living in the UK. Unemployment subsequently declines, **reaching a rate at or below that of UK-born workers after two years.**²³ The trend suggests successful integration over time, although the selective return migration of individuals unable to find work is also likely to play a role. By comparison, other immigrant groups have higher initial unemployment. Their unemployment also declines over time but remains significantly above overall UK unemployment of just over 5 per cent during the same period (2004–2008).²⁴

²² The difference is statistically significant at the 5 per cent level. Authors' calculations from the LFS, 2005.

²³ LFS, 2004–2008. The same trend is found for each cohort, by year of entry, from 2004 to 2007 (we do not report the data here due to sample size limitations).

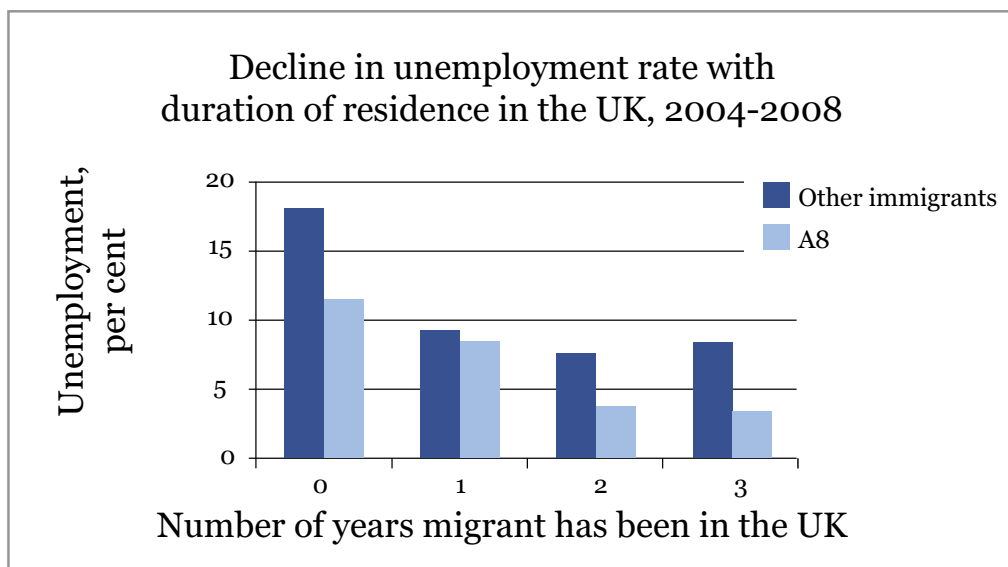
²⁴ All unemployment rates are non-seasonally adjusted.

In the 2008–2009 economic crisis, A8 workers' unemployment rates remained low, in contrast to rising unemployment among British-born workers and other immigrant groups. By the third quarter of 2009, British-born unemployment had risen to 7.8 per cent, while A8 workers' unemployment rate fluctuated around 5 per cent, and the unemployment rate for workers from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh rose to approximately 12 per cent. This lower vulnerability to the recession is likely to stem, in part, from the fact that the flows of migrants to and from eastern Europe (particularly Poland) appear to have responded strongly to economic circumstances.

The data on wages tell a more nuanced story. Recent A8 migrants have typically earned between 60 and 70 per cent of natives' median wage in the same year.²⁵

By comparison, recent Pakistani immigrants had similar relative wages during the 2005–2008 period. Other recent immigrants earned about the same as natives, and other immigrants from outside of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development earned about 80 per cent of natives' median wage.²⁶ Note that about two-fifths of non-EU immigrants enter the UK on work visas, many of which require a job offer in a skilled occupation (Somerville and Sumption, 2009a). This partly explains the non-EU immigrants' higher wages – they are more limited to highly skilled work.

Figure 5



Source: Labour Force Survey, 2008

²⁵ LFS, 2005–2008.

²⁶ LFS, 2008. Recent immigrants refers to those arriving in 2004 or later.

Tentative evidence (limited only by small sample sizes in the Labour Force Survey) suggests that A8 migrants have experienced relatively rapid wage growth during their first years in the UK. On average, their wages have grown by an average of 5 per cent per year, compared with 1 per cent for natives (Dustmann et al., 2009).²⁷ They also appear to have moved into more highly skilled occupations, although the data on this is insufficient to draw strong conclusions as to how robust this trend will remain in the future.²⁸

Short-term vulnerabilities: precarious circumstances?

Low-wage, temporary employment

Low wages reduce the economic buffer that workers can rely on to weather periods of unemployment or unexpected expenses. Recent migrants have low wages and are also strongly represented in high-turnover industries such as hospitality and agriculture. Many work for temporary employment agencies on a series of short-term contracts. While short job tenure is

not necessarily a problem – indeed, it is an important avenue for upward mobility for some workers (Andersson, Holzer and Lane, 2005) – involuntary job changes put workers in a precarious position. In many cases, temporary agency workers may prefer to have permanent contracts to gain some of the benefits and stability associated with long-term employment, but may find it difficult to access permanent employment in industries dominated by agency recruitment.

Housing

Housing arrangements can also be precarious. Many recent migrants live in overcrowded temporary accommodation, at high rents, or in poor conditions (Audit Commission, 2007). Substantial numbers live in employer-provided housing (especially in sectors such as agriculture where local housing is insufficient to meet peak seasonal demand). This magnifies the risks associated with unstable employment, since workers who lose their jobs also lose their housing.

²⁷ Some of this higher growth is likely attributable to A8 workers' age: younger workers experience higher average wage growth.

²⁸ According to the LFS, in the post-accession period almost 70 per cent of A8 immigrants interviewed during their first (calendar) year in the UK worked in unskilled occupations, compared to just over 50 per cent for those resident for three to four years. Note however that this may simply indicate that less-successful immigrants are more likely to return (pushing up the average of the remaining workers by default) and not that individuals are progressing from less skilled to more skilled jobs. The trend also relies heavily on the stronger performance of the 2004 and 2005 cohorts (future cohorts may be different) and sample sizes are small.

Indeed, homeless agencies have noted an increase in rough sleeping among eastern European nationals (Homeless Link, 2008). In addition, migrants are not eligible for certain benefits, increasing the risk to which they expose themselves. In particular, since many are not eligible for housing benefit, they can be refused entry from homeless shelters that rely on public funds (Audit Commission, 2007). By consequence, a distinctive type of homelessness has arisen among A8 migrants. While UK-born homeless individuals experience high rates of mental health and substance abuse problems, it has been suggested that much of A8 homelessness could be easily rectified through better access to information and employment (McNaughton, 2008).

Support networks

Social networks can help to provide information and reduce migrant workers' isolation. A wealth of information services and websites has developed to reduce the information deficit facing many of the recent migrants.

However, some migrants may lack such support networks. For example, migrants recruited directly from their home country by employers or agencies and placed in rural areas may find themselves isolated from sources of assistance, with little knowledge of local labour markets, public services or other amenities. Language barriers exacerbate these problems, preventing migrants from accessing information or standing up for their rights.

In addition, economies of scale mean that some information or services are most readily available to Polish speakers: the majority group. Many of the support organisations that have emerged since 2004 are aimed specifically at Polish people, while workers from smaller sending countries appear to have many fewer options for seeking assistance and information (Stenning et al., 2006).

Exploitation (or 'flexibility'?)

Certain migrant workers' precarious circumstances, potentially combined with language barriers and a lack of knowledge about working practices in the UK, make them vulnerable to exploitation.

Exploitation cannot be quantified with any accuracy, since many incidents go unreported. Trade unions have documented and highlighted numerous incidents of exploitation. Academic evidence, typically qualitative, has also increasingly pointed to the numerous incidents affecting eastern European workers. Research points to cases of failure to pay wages, failure to pay the minimum wage, disproportionate wage deductions for housing that is provided with the job, and dangerous or unhealthy working conditions (Anderson et al., 2006; Audit Commission, 2007; Crowley, 2008; Somerville, 2007).

Many of these instances of exploitation are clearly outside of the law and migrant workers can, in theory, report employers to public authorities. In practice, however, migrants are reluctant to report exploitation to the authorities, concerned that they will lose their job if they complain. As an alternative to relying on complaints, the Gangmasters Licensing Authority offers a more proactive model of public enforcement but is limited to the 'food' industry (agriculture, horticulture, food processing and shellfish gathering industries).

Exploitation is thought to be concentrated in certain industries. These include not only factory work such as food processing, but also domestic work where workers are 'dependent on the good nature of their employers' (Currie, 2007). In addition, the current recession may well have increased the prevalence of exploitation, since employers find it more necessary to cut costs and workers are more desperate to keep their jobs.

More 'benign' forms of exploitation also pose a risk. A8 migrants are widely praised for their superior 'work ethic' and 'flexibility', as we have described. They are willing and able to perform certain jobs that UK-born workers are thought to shun. But does 'flexible' sometimes mean 'compliant' or 'easily exploited'? For the same reasons that eastern Europeans tend to be willing to accept low wages, they are also more likely to accept working conditions (such as antisocial hours or unpleasant work) that employers cannot impose on UK-born workers: they are young, do not see their current

occupational status as permanent (Eade et al., 2006), are receiving wages well above their home-country average, and have non-wage reasons to remain in the UK (such as learning English).

One study, for example, shows how strong migrant networks combine with a willingness to tolerate irregular hours and poor conditions to create a flexible labour force for low-skilled jobs. The study cites a chain-restaurant employer:

'You'll tend to get a situation where there's six or seven Poles living in the same house. Five of them work for me and, if one's feeling ill, they don't even bother phoning in sick. So I'll be saying "I thought such and such was working", and they'll say "they're not feeling well, so I'm doing their shift". And, so they really keep it covered.'

Matthews and Ruhs, 2007

Of course, the vast majority of workers benefit from living and working in the UK; otherwise they would not have come in such large numbers. However, there is a risk that a constantly self-replacing stream of A8 workers could fall into the role of a semi-exploited (if often compliant) 'underclass', with limited long-term prospects for social mobility and integration.

We turn to this issue next.

Long-term prospects for upward mobility and integration

Currently A8 workers are heavily over-represented in low-wage work, often despite high levels of education, as we described earlier. Will this remain the case over the long run? How successfully can the A8 integrate economically, accessing better job opportunities? To answer this question, it is useful to distinguish between short-term and long-term immigrants: those on the one hand who come for short periods (either seasonally or on a one-off basis), and those who will eventually stay for several years or even for ever. Of course, no sharp line divides the two groups, and many migrants who at first put themselves in the first category end up in the second, or vice versa.

Short-term migrants

The classic model of immigrant integration suggests that immigrants experience downward social mobility at the point of migration (working in lower-skilled jobs than they would at home) but that their wages increase faster than those of the UK-born, allowing them to catch up with time. In practice, however, some groups experience this upward mobility relative to the UK-born, while other groups do not (see Papademetriou et al., 2009b). Nonetheless, the time an immigrant has spent in the host country is widely considered to be a highly important driver of successful integration.

But for the substantial population of recent EU migrants who stay for only short periods, integration over time is less relevant: migration stays are too short to allow for substantial upward mobility, especially if migrants work in only one or two jobs before returning home. Even if many of the new EU citizens eventually stay for longer than intended, the return **intention** alone may reduce the likelihood of upward mobility: migrants who consider themselves temporary are thought to invest less in their own labour market advancement (be it through formal education or informal networking and information-gathering), especially when they will not benefit from the investment in their country of origin (see Dustmann, 1993). Temporary migrants are also more likely to retain their home-country earning power as a reference point, and hence may be willing to accept lower wages and poorer conditions.

In other words, temporary migrants may have greater barriers to integration. But policy can aim to improve their welfare in the short term by giving them the tools to defend themselves from homelessness, poverty and exploitation. For example, appropriate enforcement of labour standards (that does not rely solely on employee complaints), better provision of information and advice in multiple languages, and access to language training to acquire at least a basic knowledge of English, could all improve their circumstances.

Longer-term settlers

Longer-term migrants have greater opportunities for upward mobility. For eastern European migrants, occupational status will be crucial to labour market advancement: they will need access to progressively more skilled jobs if they are to begin to see a return on their high levels of education. They will need effective systems for recognising both academic and vocational credentials. And since language proficiency is often essential to practicing more skilled work, many will need access to language tuition (whether publicly or privately provided) focused towards their employment requirements.

Given what we currently know, how good are the prospects for the longer-term eastern European migrants? We argue that while high education levels make many of them well-placed to integrate successfully, they may experience barriers to highly skilled work, in part because of their reliance on social networks to find work.

On the one hand, the recent migrants have high levels of education. As a group, they have not seen high returns on education during the first few years, as we described earlier. Several explanations are possible: insufficient language skills, a lack of social contacts or knowledge about entry routes into certain kinds of work, and the fact that education received in the country of origin may be either less relevant to employers or more difficult for them to understand.

Previous education, however – even if it is not currently valued in the labour market – helps individuals to gain host-country human capital that is valued. In their studies of migrations from Latin America to the US, Duleep and Regets (1994, 2002) argue that ‘source-country human capital is more valuable in learning than in earning’, so that immigrants with undervalued human capital should experience faster wage growth than those with immediately transferrable skills. If this is true, we should expect that many of the recent EU migrants will, over time, acquire the language and other skills necessary to qualify for highly skilled work.

On the other hand, immigrants who qualify for skilled occupations might still face barriers to upward mobility if they do not have sufficient information or social contacts. The recent migrants have relied more strongly on social networks to find work than any other significant immigrant group, as we described earlier.

Networks are a useful means of finding work, especially for newly arrived immigrants, but they can also encourage social stratification in the long term (Montgomery 1991; Topa 2001). This is because information about jobs typically comes from individuals who are already employed in a certain field. If workers rely on one another to get jobs, they are limited to the range of opportunities that their friends and relatives can provide.²⁹ And if these friends and relatives work in low-skilled occupations or live in areas where

²⁹ According to one study, living in ethnic enclaves can improve an individual’s employment prospects if the enclave is a high-income one, but might reduce earnings if it is populated by low-income co-ethnics (Edin et al., 2003).

average incomes are low, even qualified individuals can fail to access skilled work. Since the recent migrants are highly concentrated in unskilled occupations, their reliance on social networks, if it continues, could mean that some are 'locked in' to low-productivity, low-wage jobs (see Sumption, 2009).

Language proficiency

Language skills matter greatly for both long-term and short-term immigrants. They are crucial to upward mobility and advancement into highly skilled work. They also enable workers in less skilled jobs to avoid exploitation and to access the information they need to protect their own welfare. Little useful data exists on the new EU migrants' language levels. In 2006, the LFS included some limited questions on language, however, and the results suggest that recent eastern European migrants have lower English proficiency than other immigrant groups (many of whom come from English-speaking countries). Approximately 80 per cent of working-age eastern European migrants arriving in 2004 or later reported speaking a language other than English at home, compared to about two-fifths of other immigrants and just under half of other immigrants who arrived in 2004 or later (and hence provide a better comparison with the recently arrived eastern Europeans).

Among those who spoke another language at home, about a quarter of working-age eastern Europeans reported language difficulties in finding or keeping a job, compared to about 6 per cent of other immigrants and 8 per cent of other immigrants who arrived in 2004 or later.³⁰ Migrants have also experienced difficulties accessing language tuition, or committing to available classes because of long or irregular working hours (Spencer et al., 2007; Commission for Rural Communities, 2007). The high employee turnover in many of the jobs that the recent migrants perform reduces employers' incentives to invest in language tuition at work. However, employer-based language tuition, whether it is funded by employers or migrants themselves, may be the most effective way to provide access to language classes for the recent migrants (Roberts, 2005). Many work irregular hours in isolated locations and cannot access classes in universities or town centres, and work-focused language tuition is most likely to improve labour market prospects. Any policy framework to improve the prospects of the new EU citizens in the UK must carefully examine the availability of language teaching for different migrant groups, and the most effective means of provision.

³⁰ Authors' calculations from the LFS, Q3 2006.

Integration

How well have the new EU migrants integrated socially? Integration is not a neatly defined concept. While closely linked to the kinds of economic integration we have described so far (including labour market participation and prospects for upward mobility), the term also encompasses social inclusion, active citizenship, civic renewal and community cohesion. In practice, integration can include everything from setting down roots in a local community, building contacts with UK-born workers, learning English, and gaining mutual understanding with local residents. Without a firm purchase on the definition, we set out only some basic observations.

At first sight, eastern Europeans do not face the same barriers to integration as other migrant groups. They have benefited from strong educational institutions in their home countries, have employment rights almost equal to British citizens, and are not visible minorities. The widespread perception (especially among employers) that the recent migrants have a strong work ethic has also boosted their standing. Ethnic stereotypes about eastern Europeans tend to be ‘disarmingly positive’; they are ‘keen, young, white people taking whatever work is on offer and going to church every Sunday’ (Kohn, 2007).³¹

On the other hand, language barriers and high concentrations of fellow nationals at work may reduce eastern European workers’ opportunities for integration. Qualitative studies on eastern Europeans’ experiences in the UK shortly after accession suggested that in many cases, integration was incomplete. For example, a qualitative study for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation conducted shortly after the 2004 accession found that the ‘vast majority’ of eastern European interviewees spent most of their time with other migrants; after two years in the country, a quarter still spent no time with British people.³² This picture does not necessarily continue to represent the recent migrants’ situation today, however, and the evidence base on social integration is quite thin, making it difficult to draw firm conclusions.

In the longer term, the new EU citizens’ high labour force participation bodes well for integration, while other factors we have described (such as low wages and the potential for limited upward mobility for certain groups) present challenges. In particular, the large number of temporary migrants and the prevalence of short stays may make social integration difficult. Of course, the risks that we have described (including worklessness, isolation, lack of language ability and vulnerability to exploitation) all reduce the ease of integration.

³¹ This positive reception may have been dented by the recession, however: an FT/Harris poll taken in February and March 2009 found that over half of UK respondents opposed ‘citizens of other EU countries getting a job’ in their country (Eaglesham, 2009).

³² The study interviewed individuals from A8 countries who had been present in the UK since 2003.

The children of A8 immigrants: prospects for the future

To support equality in the long term, policymakers must consider not just the new migrants and their communities, but also the children in immigrant families.³³

While we do not have good data on the nationality of children in the UK, birth statistics show that the number of children born to foreign mothers from another EU country has increased substantially since 2001, with steeper increases from about 2004 (see Figure 6). By contrast, a much slower increase in the number of births to Indian mothers occurred over the same period. This is highly consistent with the assumption that the recent migrants account for much of the increase in the number of EU births.

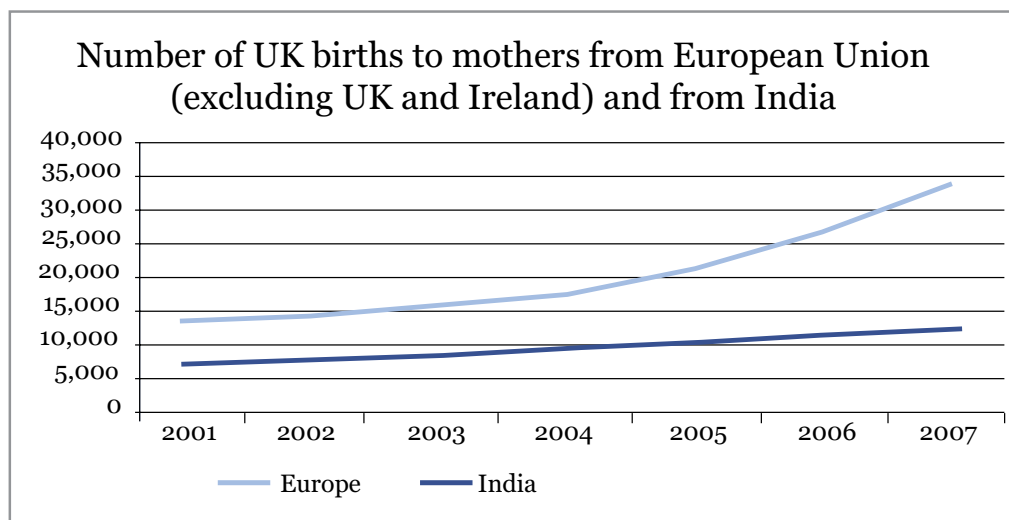
As a result, we may see a substantial change in the composition of young, second-generation immigrants over the coming decade. At the same time, growing proportions of Worker Registration Scheme (WRS) registrants are bringing dependant children with them. This trend is already evident in schools

around the UK: provisional data from the Schools Census shows that 4.4 per cent of pupils whose first language was reported to be other than English spoke Polish, Lithuanian, Slovak or Czech³⁴, and anecdotal reports point to much larger concentrations in specific local areas.³⁵ How will these children fare as they move through education and into the labour market? Experience from many developed, immigrant-receiving countries suggests that the success of immigrant children depends to a large extent on their parents' background. In general, children whose parents came from wealthier source countries tend to fare better. In practice this often means that white children from immigrant families tend to face fewer barriers to educational and labour market success than visible minorities. The reasons for this are complex, but certainly discrimination is likely to play at least some role (for more analysis on the children of immigrants in the UK, see Papademetriou et al., 2009b). This suggests that integration may be relatively smooth for the children of eastern European immigrants. On the other hand, the less positive experience of some other white European groups (such as the Portuguese) serves as a reminder that some acute needs may be hidden.

³³ 'Children in immigrant families' refers to both the first generation (those born abroad who come to the UK with their parents) and the second generation (those born in the UK to immigrant parents).

³⁴ This is likely to be an underestimate, since many children whose first language is other than English are either not recorded, or the language is not specified. Other A8 languages are not specifically presented in the School Census data because the samples are too small.

³⁵ See, for example, Casciani (2006).

Figure 6

Source: Office for National Statistics birth statistics

However, specific challenges remain for the new EU migrants. The recent migration poses a specific challenge for educators because of its temporary nature, which makes children's residence and hence schooling unstable. In particular, if circular migration establishes itself as a long-term trend, we could see a new generation of children who have spent significant periods in the UK but whose schooling has been interrupted on numerous occasions. Interrupted schooling or childcare during early years reduces a child's opportunities to acquire full language fluency if they are learning English as a second language

(Crul, 2007). In addition, teachers may not have good information about a child's educational history or may be unable to provide him or her continuity of teaching.

Finally, workers who migrate temporarily are thought to invest less in their children's human capital, since they do not expect them to remain in the host country where they would require a host-country education (Dustmann, 2007). If the temporary immigrants later become more permanent, this could hold back their children's opportunities.

Equality implications: the impact of A8 migration

Equality implications: the impact of A8 migration

The unexpected scale of A8 migration prompted questions – among policymakers and the public – about its economic and social impacts. The current economic downturn and environment of rising unemployment has intensified existing concerns about any negative impacts on UK-born workers. In this section we examine the ways in which A8 migration has affected both the economy and local communities.

Of course, European Union (EU) labour mobility is just one part of the economic integration between members of the EU. For this reason, it does not make sense to examine the ‘costs and benefits’ of the recent migration as if it were a discrete policy choice. That said, we can usefully analyse the recent migration to suggest how to manage the adjustment process more smoothly, maximise the benefits and reduce the negative impacts of immigration.

The labour market impact of the recent migration

The impact of immigration on host countries’ labour markets has received substantial academic attention. Public opinion tends to support the view that immigrants take natives’ jobs and reduce their wages, yet a large body of research suggests that this is not the case, as we have recently outlined in previous work produced for the Equality and Human Rights Commission (see Somerville and Sumption, 2009b).

There is no strong reason to expect a significant negative impact on wages or employment in response to the recent immigrant influx. Indeed, much larger ‘immigration shocks’ around the world have been absorbed by receiving-country labour markets with relative ease. For example, the Mariel Boatlift in 1980 brought 125,000 immigrants from Cuba to a single US city (Miami) over a period of only a few months. It increased the labour force by 7 per cent and boosted the supply of less-skilled workers significantly more. Still, according to David Card (1990), the influx had virtually no effect on wages for those less-skilled workers who already were in the labour force. Another paper finds that even when a sudden influx of Russian Jews boosted Israel’s population by 7.6 per cent in 1990 and 1991, during one of the single largest immigration waves the world has seen, there was little evidence of downward pressure on Israeli wages (Gandal, Hanson and Slaughter, 2004). Recent migration from the new EU member states has boosted the labour force by significantly less in comparison.

In 2008, the recent European migrants made up less than 1.5 per cent of the working-age population after five years of migration.

Similarly, studies that have examined more gradual, steady inflows of immigration to a host country (often over several decades) have tended to find that the impact of immigration on natives' wages or employment rates are small (see Somerville and Sumption, 2009b for a review). However, certain groups may lose out, such as workers in manual occupations who do not have the skills to move into more 'communication-intensive' jobs for which immigrants compete less effectively, previous immigrants who may have poor language skills and compete for similar kinds of jobs as new immigrants, and individuals with marginal labour force attachment, such as single mothers and teenagers. These effects are neglected in most studies, because there is insufficient data to differentiate these groups characterised by a lower level of 'employability' (the two UK studies cited certainly suffer from this drawback). Nonetheless, the contribution of immigration alone is still thought to be small. Even taking into account these potentially unmeasured effects, ultimately **other factors remain much more important in determining the economic welfare of these low-wage groups** (Somerville and Sumption, 2009b).

In the end, economies are highly dynamic and can absorb large numbers of new workers without reducing average wages. Generally, the labour market is able to expand to accommodate influxes of migration. There is no a priori reason to believe that it would respond any differently to A8 migration. Two recent studies examine the specific impact of the recent migration, and find that it has not had any effect on the unemployment of natives (Gilpin et al., 2006) or even on those of sub-groups of UK-born workers, such as women, the low-skilled, and the young (Lemos and Portes, 2008). Indeed, Dustmann, Frattini and Preston (2008) argue that immigration in recent years has a **positive** impact on average wages across the labour market, which might be the product of occupational downgrading, particularly among recent immigrants. If immigrants are paid less than the value of what they produce, which is a strong possibility in the case of the A8 (who, as discussed earlier, tend to be over-qualified for their jobs), a 'surplus' is generated, which accrues to UK-born workers and employers. Even so, the recent migration also intensifies the risk that certain immigrant-receiving areas will develop a 'low-skill equilibrium': a situation in which the local labour force has low skill levels, and so local employers (or employers considering locating in the region) only create low-productivity jobs. The result is a 'vicious circle,' in which employers fail to invest in increasing the skills in their workforce, and individuals have little incentive to invest in their own human capital (Stenning et al., 2006, p66; Pindus et al., 2007).

According to research from the UK, Germany and the US, firms in areas that receive more low-skilled immigrants do not reduce wages in response, but simply employ more low-skilled labour. In practice, this means that they may fail to adopt labour-saving technology that would have led to productivity gains and fewer low-skilled jobs.³⁶ While A8 migration may create a benefit to UK-born workers employed in industries that are made more viable because of immigration, it also runs the risk of perpetuating the existence of substantial numbers of temporary jobs with unsociable hours that are increasingly only attractive to migrant workers (see, for example, Scott, 2008).

This underscores the importance of policies to develop career opportunities for low-skilled workers across the labour force. These workers feel most threatened by migration, in part because other factors (such as trade or technical change) already make their economic circumstances precarious (Somerville and Sumption, 2009b).

The fiscal impact of EU labour mobility

The impact of immigration on public finances also receives substantial attention. How has the recent migration affected public revenues and spending? Do the recent immigrants pay more in taxes than they receive in benefits and public services? Contrary to early fears about ‘welfare tourism’, the recent migration has been strongly labour-motivated, and welfare reciprocity has been low.³⁷ That said, it is remarkably difficult to determine immigrants’ overall fiscal impact. Tax payments and cash benefits (such as tax credits, unemployment or housing benefit) can be estimated. But the implied costs of public services such as health care and education (where service providers typically do not keep data on the origin of their clients) cannot be determined with anything approaching accuracy.

In addition, not all immigrant groups have the same fiscal impact. One analysis, for example, suggests that immigrants from non-English speaking countries are about 5 per cent less likely than the UK-born to use disability or unemployment benefits, once we control for factors that typically affect reliance on welfare, such as age, marital status and education. On the other

³⁶ See Lewis (2003), Quispe-Agnoli and Zavodny (2002) and Dustmann and Glitz (2008).

³⁷ It is difficult to know the extent to which restricted benefit eligibility has affected this trend, or whether welfare reciprocity would be higher if more of the recent migrants were eligible for benefits. What can be said, however, is that the large numbers who migrated despite the welfare restrictions demonstrate the strong pull of work and life in the UK, regardless of the availability of welfare benefits.

hand, immigrants from English-speaking countries (the vast majority from Ireland) used welfare significantly more than the UK-born (Barrett and McCarthy, 2008). Even abstracting from these problems and taking immigrants as a whole, researchers dispute the real impact.³⁸ The most thorough assessment of the fiscal impact of A8 migrants in particular, estimates that the recent migrants receive significantly less in welfare benefits and public services than the UK-born, but contribute to tax revenues at about the same rate as their UK counterparts (Dustmann et al., 2009). A8 immigrants who had been in the UK for at least a year (and hence are more likely – although not certain – to be eligible for most benefits)³⁹ were found to be 60 per cent less likely than the UK-born to receive benefits or tax credits and 58 per cent less likely to live in social housing. Meanwhile, high labour force participation meant that the A8 contributed to tax revenues in proportion to their representation in the population, despite lower wages than the UK-born. In addition, if A8 workers experience high wage growth in the future their tax payments will rise, further boosting their fiscal contribution (Dustmann et al., 2009).

Local and non-economic impacts

At the local level, however, there is more variation. Some local authorities have reported difficulties responding to unexpected or concentrated increases in the immigrant population, especially since the population estimates that determine funding are not frequently updated (Robinson, 2007). By way of example, policing services in some areas now experience greater contact with non-English speakers, and some schools have needed to increase their capacity to teach children with English as a second language (Audit Commission 2007).

In many ways, some of the most keenly felt impacts of A8 migration have been social and cultural, rather than economic. As we have discussed, A8 migrants have integrated successfully into the UK labour market, albeit primarily into low-wage jobs. However, some tensions have arisen in local communities. For example, overcrowded housing or in some cases rough sleeping may impact negatively on local neighbourhoods.

³⁸ See Gott and Johnson, 2002; Coleman and Rowthorn, 2004 and Sriskandarajah et al., 2005.

³⁹ A8 workers become eligible for benefits after 12 months of continuous employment; therefore, some workers who have been in the UK for a year or more, but have not been employed continuously, will not be eligible.

Misunderstandings about ‘laws, regulations and community expectations’ (Audit Commission, 2007), such as how to use rubbish collection services or where parking is prohibited, have also caused tensions, though such issues can be mitigated by distilling and reinforcing information to new migrant groups.

A substantial literature on local authorities’ good practice now exists: local areas experiencing new or unexpected inflows do not have to reinvent the wheel (see Audit Commission, 2007; Communities and Local Government, 2009; Stenning et al., 2006). Local authorities have responded to the new migration by exploring various strategies. For example, some have increased their information-gathering activities, by obtaining information from police agencies that are often aware of

emergent problems before public officials. Some have increased coordination between agencies (new EU citizens often have specific needs, especially since many are not eligible for the same benefits as native workers or longer-term immigrants). Others have made a greater effort to share the costs of translation and interpretation between agencies and local areas and to coordinate the dissemination of information. Perhaps not surprisingly, areas with past experience of migration are thought to have been better able to respond to the new A8 inflows, developing policies to meet these new migrants’ needs (Audit Commission, 2007). The developing national agenda on immigrant integration (for example, the Communities and Local Government’s Migration Impacts Fund)⁴⁰ is also increasingly dedicated to promoting promising local practices.

⁴⁰ The Migration Impacts Fund was announced at the Equality and Human Rights Commission–Migration Policy Institute migration summit in March 2009.

Box 2: Lessons from the past? Previous accessions and their impact

2004 and 2007 were not the first, nor the last, EU enlargements. Croatia is expected to join in 2010, and several states remain in the EU's waiting room. Turkey (a country that falls in the last of these categories) is particularly important. With a population of over 75 million⁴¹ and with average wage rates that are lower than any of the recent accession states (Von Weizsacker, 2008), it is only natural to question whether a Europe with Turkey could sustain the migration that could follow enlargement. What then are the lessons from past accessions, including the most recent ones described in this report, and how may they be applied to the questions that future accession projects pose?

Mobility in previous enlargements

Europe's internal market provides four freedoms: free movement of goods, persons, services and capital. The free movement of workers, set out in Article 39 of the EC Treaty, entitles nationals of one member state to look for and take up employment in another member state.

It also grants them the right to resettle with their families in their respective countries of migration. Needless to say, the right to migrate within the EU is at the core of the European project.

These freedoms, however, come with limitations. Accession agreements allow existing member states to impose transitional restrictions on freedom of movement for up to seven years. This occurred in four of the six accession treaties. In fact, there were no transitional measures only for the first enlargement involving the UK, Ireland and Denmark; or for the fourth enlargement involving Austria, Finland and Sweden (which already had free movement for their nationals under the terms of the European Economic Area Agreement). Even where transitional arrangements have not accompanied enlargement projects, there has been disquiet over possible immigration impacts, for example Dutch anxiety that the UK's Commonwealth citizens would move to the Netherlands after 1973.

When Greece joined the EU in 1981 the first transitional rules to protect labour markets were introduced after pressure from Germany and France. There was little evidence of any negative labour market impact.

⁴¹ 2009 estimate from CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu.html#People> [Accessed 7 August 2009]

Box 2 continued

According to one study, the accession of Greece had not resulted in any ‘clear, common or consistent relationship between changing patterns of population and labour stocks, or immigration’ (Migration Research Unit, 2000). The impact of Spain and Portugal’s 1985 accession was also deemed to be ‘negligible’, even after the end of the transitional period (Dustmann et al., 2003). Indeed, return migration of Spanish and Portuguese nationals from other EU countries after 1985 may explain why the European Council of Ministers felt able to shorten the transitional period by 12 months, ending it in 1991. In short, no mass migration followed previous EU accessions.

Why was the 2004 accession different?

The Accession Treaties with the A8 and A2, with transitional restrictions on labour mobility, were thus based on past practice. One difference was that the seven-year transitional period was broken down into three phases: the so-called ‘two plus three plus two’ rule. This allowed countries to opt in to free movement procedures immediately or after two, five or seven years. A ‘standstill’ clause prevented countries from reducing labour market access after opening up.

This more sophisticated transitional structure, therefore, allowed countries to open their labour market doors at different speeds. Since the UK was one of only three countries to provide full labour market access in 2004, this almost certainly displaced A8 flows to the UK and may have done so for the long-term, as initial flows have led to established networks that continue to attract new immigrants. The lessons learned from the British case could affect how member states approach the question of migration in future enlargement projects. More specifically, it may persuade policymakers to coordinate more closely before choosing how and when to open the borders of their respective countries.

2004 was also an anomaly in that there were relatively few migrants from the new EU member states at the moment of accession. By contrast, earlier EU entrants had been able to develop considerable migrant populations in other EU countries prior to their own accessions. One study suggests that because migration from eastern Europe had been frustrated under communism, a ‘pent-up’ demand to migrate abroad resulted in the huge migration response to the opening of borders. This may explain why the migration response during the recent enlargements was so much larger than in previous ones, which also involved countries with considerable wage differentials (Ahearne et al., 2009).

Conclusions and primary
policy questions

Conclusions and primary policy questions

Five years after the first eastern European accessions, forecasting migration from within the EU remains difficult.

During the coming years, migration patterns are likely to change and fluctuate. Different kinds of workers may migrate, and the balance among sending countries may shift. Changing economic conditions throughout Europe will shape these dynamics. In the mid to long term (and certainly after the current recession), demand for labour in the low-skilled jobs that the recent migrants have filled in large numbers is expected to remain strong. On the other hand, sustained economic development and wage growth in the new member states could ultimately reduce the 'push' of east–west migration within Europe, but it is difficult to know how quickly such growth could occur. Indeed, the current recession may have slowed the medium-term prospects for rapid economic development in the new member states.

In the meantime, it is likely that many of the UK's new European citizens will continue to find low-wage work in industries such as hospitality or food processing, while some will move into more skilled work. One of the key policy questions today is how easy this transition to more highly skilled work will be. In other words, how easily will eastern

European workers gain sufficient language ability, work experience, recognition for their foreign credentials or additional UK qualifications? Will the new migrants be able to build up the social contacts and local labour market knowledge that will help them to negotiate the market for more skilled employment? At the same time, how successfully will local areas continue to adjust to new migration to ensure equality of opportunity for both migrants and existing UK residents?

Promoting equality in the context of eastern European migration requires a strong focus on helping vulnerable workers (both immigrant and UK-born). From the overview we have provided in this report, five primary policy messages emerge:

- Widespread temporary migration necessitates policies that do not rely on a migrant's length of residence for their effectiveness. Such policies include rapid and effective credential recognition, the enforcement of labour standards and minimum wages, and the provision of information to help immigrant workers who lack UK labour market experience to know and understand their rights.

- A closer look at the availability of language tuition may be warranted: how it is provided and which groups can access it. Policies to encourage employers to provide such programs may make the most sense for the recent migrants. In addition, greater policy and programme evaluation would help to ascertain what works and what doesn't to increase participation in language-learning, as well as its effectiveness.
- Occupational downgrading is a natural phenomenon arising from the migration process, and it is not feasible to eliminate it entirely. However, policies can encourage upward mobility into jobs where the recent migrants can be most productive. These include the improvement of credential recognition policies, and more 'hands-on' efforts such as internship programmes and government cooperation with professional associations or certificate-awarding bodies.
- Efforts to prevent social stratification among both UK-born and immigrant workers in low-skilled jobs could include policies to encourage the employer provision of training and the creation of 'job ladders' that enable workers to gain upward mobility. Such programmes would also be useful in attempts to tackle the risk of 'low-skill equilibria' in areas that rely heavily on low-skilled jobs.
- Local areas that receive large inflows of new migrants – particularly areas unused to migration – could receive greater support in the form of flexible funding and technical assistance. Needs will vary by area, but greater resources might be dedicated to hiring dual-language teaching assistants or outreach to encourage more efficient use of public services. The new Migration Impacts Fund, announced at the Equality and Human Rights Commission–Migration Policy Institute migration summit in March 2009, can make some contribution to these programmes.

The recent migration has been a positive experience. Eastern European workers have been relatively well received by the public and by employers (although attitudes to both EU and non-EU migration have hardened to some extent during recent economic turmoil). It is clear that policymakers need to make sure that they do not become complacent about the benefits of EU migration. Instead, they must work to ensure that EU labour mobility remains compatible with equality of opportunity in the UK, for current migrants and for their children.

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