



Sarah Crane, COMPAS Visual Arts Competition 2015

Potential implications of admission criteria for EU nationals coming to the UK

In the debate over the UK's membership of the European Union (EU), the question of how EU exit could affect migration levels has been a major point of contention. However, it is not possible to know how exactly a vote to leave the EU would affect migration to the UK, both because forecasting migration under any policy regime is difficult, and because the policies that would follow a vote to leave the EU are not known in advance.

EU exit could mean tighter controls on the migration of EU nationals, but free movement could also remain largely unaffected if the UK were to follow a model such as that of Norway, which is not a member of the EU but has access to the EU

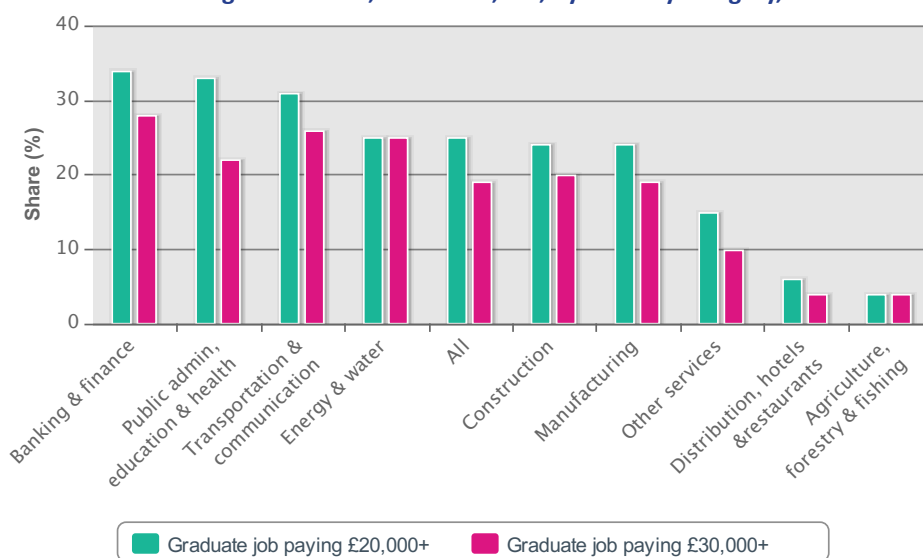
single market as part of the European Economic Area (EEA). If the UK did introduce admission requirements for EU nationals after leaving the EU, however, the requirements for work visas would be particularly significant since a majority of EU nationals coming to the UK report doing so for work.

There is no reason to assume that any admission requirements imposed on EU citizens after a vote to leave the EU would be the same as the ones that currently apply to non-EU nationals. These policies were designed to regulate non-EU migration in a very different environment, in which EU nationals did not face restrictions on migration for work. Nonetheless, even if we do not know

exactly which criteria would be in place if the UK imposed admission requirements on EU citizens, it is reasonable to assume that the skill level of the job would continue to be an important part of any selection scheme in the future. As a result, it is possible to draw broad conclusions about the industries, occupations and regions in which the implications of introducing admission requirements would be more significant.

The UK's current labour immigration policies for non-EU nationals place a strong emphasis on the skill level of the job when determining their eligibility for an employer to sponsor them to come to the UK for work. With

Figure 1 – Share (%) of employees working in graduate level occupations and earning at least £20,000 or £30,000, by industry category, 2015



Notes: based on analysis of the LFS 2015: Q1-Q4. Includes both full-time and part-time employees. Graduate-level jobs are defined using the 4-digit Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) from the government's Codes of Practice for Tier 2 visas.



narrow exceptions for occupations deemed to face a shortage of workers, Tier 2 visas are currently available to workers in graduate-level jobs that pay at least £20,800. In 2015, most employee jobs in the UK labour market did not meet the criteria for skilled work visas. Specifically, about 25% of all employees in the UK labour market were in graduate jobs paying at least £20,000 per year- a threshold which is close to the current Tier 2 work visa requirements.

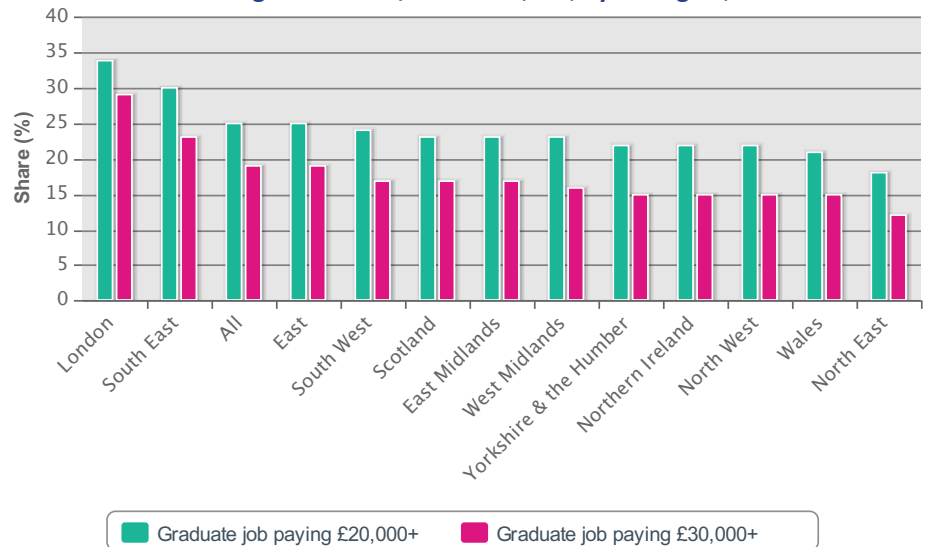
Examining differences between industries and UK regions:

- Skill-based selection criteria would affect employers' ability to sponsor EU workers in some industries much more than others. The "agriculture, forestry and fishing" industry category and the "distribution, hotels and restaurants" sector had the lowest shares of employees in graduate jobs paying at least £20,000 in 2015 (4% and 6%, respectively), while the shares were highest in "public administration, education and health" (33%) and "banking and finance" (34%) industry categories.
- Some of the occupations and industries in which employers have relied most on workers from EU countries in recent years are those in which the smallest shares of jobs are currently eligible for work visas. Most notably, the distribution, hotels and restaurants industry category is the largest employer of EU born workers, but only 6% of all employees in this sector were in graduate jobs paying at least £20,000 in 2015.

- The implications of skill-based selection for UK regions would also vary. Employee jobs in London and the South East are most likely to be graduate occupations paying at least £20,000, while Wales and the North East regions had lower shares of these jobs.

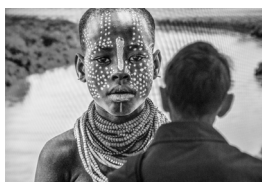
Despite uncertainty about future immigration policies, it is clear that there are scenarios in which admission requirements for EU nationals would represent a substantial departure from the status quo. It is also clear that in any selection system based on earnings and proposed occupation, there would be large differences in the implications for different industries, occupations and, to a lesser extent, regions.

Figure 2 – Share (%) of employees working in graduate level occupations and earning at least £20,000 or £30,000, by UK region, 2015



Notes: based on analysis of the LFS 2015: Q1-Q4. Includes both full-time and part-time employees.

About the speakers: Madeleine Sumption is Director and Carlos Vargas-Silva is a Senior Researcher at the Migration Observatory



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