



CaSE Briefing on Proposed Cap on Non-EU Economic Migrants 23rd September 2010

The Government wants to limit net migration, currently 160,000, to “tens of thousands” through, in part, a cap on the number of non-EU economic migrants entering the UK. **A ‘migrant cap’ could have devastating consequences for UK universities and industries, which may in turn hinder or stall the economic recovery.**

Financial entrepreneurs, investors, and elite sportspeople are to be excluded from the cap. Skilled scientists and engineers are intellectual investors and entrepreneurs – creatively investing their knowledge and skills. They have a vital role to play in the economy and in solving some of the UK’s most urgent challenges, from security to energy demands. Other countries, including the US and EU nations, already offer special entry routes to researchers.

We urge the government to exclude qualified and competent scientists and engineers from the cap or to create a separate category to welcome them to work in the UK and support our future growth and wellbeing.

- Industry invests **£16bn in research and development** (R&D) in the UK. A key factor for where to site R&D infrastructure is access to skilled workers, including being able to employ global talent. A 2008 CBI survey found that larger UK firms look abroad to fill their vacancies in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.
- **Migrants bring many benefits.** Some research skills are so highly specialised that they can only be found by recruiting from overseas. Migrants also bring access to and knowledge of different environments and export markets, essential to our economic growth at this time - and China, India and the US provide the highest number of academic immigrants to the UK.
- Universities depend on international recruitment to employ the best researchers and lecturers. In 2007/08, **10.5% of all academic staff were non-EU nationals**: 12% in the biological sciences, 11% in the physical sciences and 10% in engineering (HESA).
- If international researchers have difficulty coming to the UK to work or for short visits, then it will be hard for UK-based researchers to work overseas and to build up the relationships underlying many important international collaborations. From 2002-07, nearly **40% of the UK’s scientific output involved such international collaborations.**
- Due to financial pressures on UK universities the **£5bn income received from international activities**, including over £1.5bn in fees, is increasingly important. In 2008/09, **97,000 non-EU students took science and related subjects.** A factor attracting them to the UK is the opportunity to stay on and work after graduating. Restricting this may reduce the numbers of students and the benefits that the UK can gain from their skills in the workforce.
- In 2008, 66,000 non-EU migrants entered the UK for work-related reasons, while 74,000 left, so there is already an outflow in this group.¹ Furthermore, there has already been a decline in migration of skilled and highly skilled workers. 6,685 Tier 1 highly skilled workers visas were issued in the first quarter of 2010, down 44% (or 5,179) compared to the equivalent visas and period in 2009. The number of Tier 2 Skilled Workers visas issued was 16,915, in the first quarter of 2010, up 6% (or 995) from the equivalent visas and period in 2009.² **A migrant cap could turn an outflow of talent from the UK into a “brain drain”.**

Contact: Imran Khan, CaSE Director, imran@sciencecampaign.org.uk, 07967 831 333

¹ *Hansard*, HC Deb, 28 June 2010, c450W

² Migration Statistics 2008, Annual Report, Office of National Statistics