

The Telegraph

385,000 Romanians and Bulgarians will come to Britain, report warns

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At least 385,000 Romanians and Bulgarians will come to Britain after restrictions are lifted on January 1 a think tank has warned.

The report by the Democracy Institute, a think tank, warns that the British Government is to blame for the “mess” of migration describing the flood of new arrivals as a “self-inflicted economic migrant own goal.”

Under “transitional” rules introduced when Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007, migrants from these two countries can only work in the UK in seasonal jobs such as fruit picking, or if they are self-employed.

These restrictions end on January 1, 2014, and all Romanians and Bulgarians will then have the same rights to work in the UK as British citizens.

The model predicts that over the next five years from January 1 at least 385,000 migrants will move from Bulgaria and Romania – more than the population of Coventry.

Of the estimated 77,000 migrants arriving each year the majority – 44,000 – will be from Bulgaria, the poorest country in the EU. 33,000 will arrive each year from Romania the Democracy Institute estimates.

The British government has refused to estimate the number of likely new arrivals next year, saying it is impossible to give credible forecasts.

The think-tank’s estimate for migration are significantly higher than those made by other independent observers. Migration Watch, a UK group opposing uncontrolled immigration, has put the figure at around 50,000.

The Romanian and Bulgarian governments have suggested that the numbers will be even lower, without giving formal estimates.

Politicians in those countries have argued that their countrymen are more likely to seek work in southern European countries like Spain and Italy than to travel to the UK.

The report warns that Britain will be opening its borders to a “not insignificant, uneducated, unskilled group” planning to “avail themselves of the smorgasbord of government-provided benefits.”

Last week the Prime Minister announced plans for new curbs on the entitlement of EU migrants to claim benefits in Britain. He called for a review of EU freedom of movement laws, in an attempt to put an end to “vast migrations” from poorer European countries to the West.

However the report warns that Britain’s high minimum wage will also act as a “perverse” lure would be migrants deciding which country they will settle. The minimum wage in Bulgaria is 73p an hour and in Romania workers receive 79p – in Britain the minimum wage will rise to £6.31 for over 21’s after this year.

Authorities including the European Commission have argued that the arrival of migrant workers in countries like Britain can have economic benefits, increasing tax revenues and filling skills gaps.

The issue of migration is “seemingly insurmountable” for the Prime Minister, the report warns, arguing that the “UK’s over-generosity towards its own citizens” through benefits means it is now legally obliged to pay them out to EU migrants.

The lifting of transitional controls will also leave Bulgaria and Romania full of “zombie towns” after all of their young “flee their homelands” and move to Britain and other European countries looking for work, it says.

The Democracy Institute is a think-tank with offices in Washington DC and London. It describes itself as “politically independent”. It is run by Patrick Basham, who – like several of its associates, is affiliated to the Cato Institute, another US think tank that espouses free market values and the need to cut the size of government.

David Cameron is currently facing a rebellion from inside the government over the lifting of controls.

This weekend a minister publicly backed a campaign by more than 50 Tory rebels who want Mr Cameron to pass a new law restricting the rights of Romanians and Bulgarians to travel to the UK for work.

Kris Hopkins, the housing and local government minister, defended Conservative backbenchers who are calling for the current border controls on migrants from the two countries to be extended when they lapse in January.

He warned that a failure to address public fears over immigration with “robust” action would drive voters into the arms of far-Right parties and extremists.

Mr Hopkins's intervention came as it emerged that a number of other members of the Government have been warned by Tory whips not to back the rebel amendment to the Immigration Bill, which would ban Romanian and Bulgarian migrants until 2019.