

Migration and Brexit

Abstract: This article aims to indicate the role and importance of migration issues in the British social and political discourse in the period before Brexit. The article consists of three main parts. The first part adumbrates basic information about immigration to the UK, the scale and intensity of the phenomenon. It is pointed out here that the United Kingdom is currently ranked among the group of EU countries with the highest influx of foreigners. The second part focuses on the role and importance of immigration in the British social and political discourse. It is noted here that since the turn of the twentieth century the issue of immigration in the UK has gained the status of one of the key social and political issues. At the same time, compared with many other countries, Great Britain is today perceived as a country much more reluctant to immigrants. The third part presents the contribution of immigrants from European Union countries to the social and economic development of Great Britain. It is emphasized here that generally immigration from European Union countries has a positive, though in some areas slight impact on the British economy and the level of social development.

Keywords: Brexit, European migration, immigrants in the UK, EU referendum

Introduction

In the history of European integration one can distinguish both periods of dynamic interaction, resulting in tightened and deepened cooperation between the countries as well as periods of stagnation, slowing

down and delaying the process of the creation of the European unity. In this context, the twenty-first century has brought to the European Union (EU) new and serious challenges. After one of the greatest successes in the history of the integration, namely 2004 successful enlargement of the European Union with 10 new countries, mainly of Central – Eastern Europe (which both in symbolic and practical terms meant overcoming of the established after World War II divisions) there appeared a

series of crises: first, the rejection of *the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe* (2005), followed by the financial crisis in the euro zone (2008) and the migration crisis (2014), caused by the uncontrolled influx of refugees and economic immigrants to Europe. The last shock was caused by the so-called Brexit, which is an unprecedented decision of the British society that opted for leaving the EU by the United Kingdom (UK). This decision was made as a result of the nationwide referendum conducted on 23 June 2016, in which – with a turnout of 72.2% – 51.9% of Britons were in favour of the exit from the European Union. The threads which had appeared in the debate preceding the referendum, raised by both supporters and opponents of staying in the EU, can be reduced to three fundamental issues: sovereignty, economy and im-

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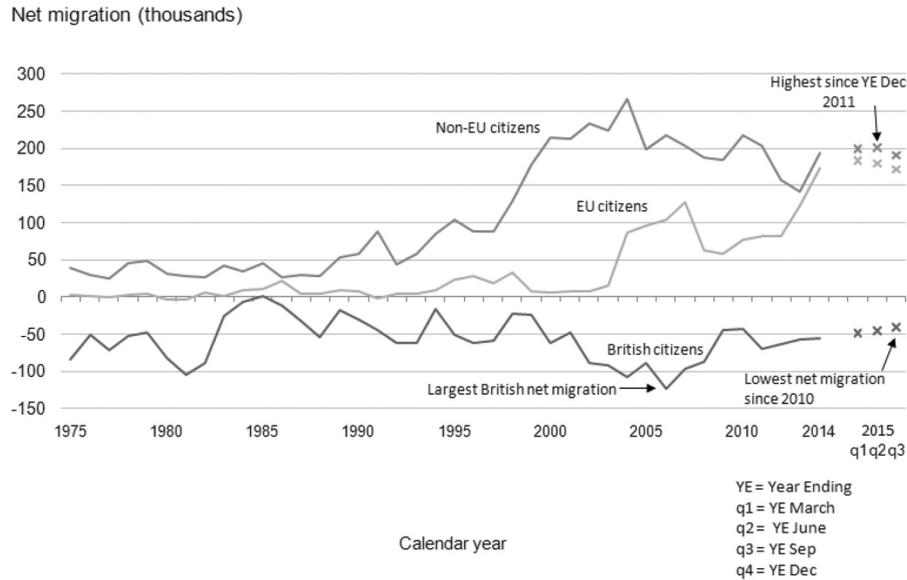
migration. While the first two threads prevailed as early as in the referendum campaign in 1975, when the British decided for the first time whether to stay or leave the European Economic Community (the so-called *United Kingdom European Community Membership Referendum*), the third issue appeared in the British social and political discourse quite recently. Obviously, the political reasons for the decision taken by the British on 23 June 2016 are much more complex, but migration issues – due to their ambiguity and a strong emotional charge – during the referendum debate constituted the main axis around which opponents and supporters of the presence of the UK in the EU focused¹. In this context, Simon Tilford, the deputy director of the British Centre for European Reform research institute even before the referendum had stressed that: “If Britain votes to leave the EU it will be because of hostility to immigration. It will not be because of the threat of eurozone caucusing, the role of national parliaments vis-à-vis the European Parliament, regulatory threats to the City of London or concerns over the competitiveness of the EU economy. Disillusionment with the EU has risen in the UK because membership has become synonymous in many voters’ minds with uncontrolled immigration”². The claim that Brexit will make it possible to seal the borders, limit the influx of new people and better control migratory flows has therefore become a key argument of the supporters of leaving the structures of the EU by the United Kingdom, while their opponents emphasized above all social and economic benefits of immigration. Thereupon – as noted by Sunder Katwala and Will Somerville – the European referendum might be partly seen as a referendum on migration and migration policy³.

This article aims to indicate the role and importance of migration issues in the British social and political discourse in the period before Brexit. It was developed based on the analysis of literature on the subject and source materials, including reports, statements of politicians and press releases.

Immigrants in Great Britain

A significant influx of immigrants to Great Britain is a relatively young phenomenon. Until the 1980s the United Kingdom was an emigration country, which sent migrants in the world, rather than attracted them, and where white population definitely outnumbered others. Only for the last 30 years there has been observed a significant flow of immigration to the UK, where we can distinguish here some stages: first, there was noticed an increase in migration flows of a humanitarian nature (especially between 1998 and 2003), followed by an increased influx of workers and students from outside the European Union (since 2000) and finally, since 2004 the United Kingdom to a greater extent has become the target of labour migration from EU countries, including primarily migration from Poland. As a result, in the UK over the past three decades the proportion of people born abroad has been growing much faster than in most other countries in Europe or North America. In the United Kingdom in the years 1993 – 2014 the population of people born abroad more than doubled – from 3.8 to 8.3 million, which represented 13.1 percent of the total population of the country⁴.

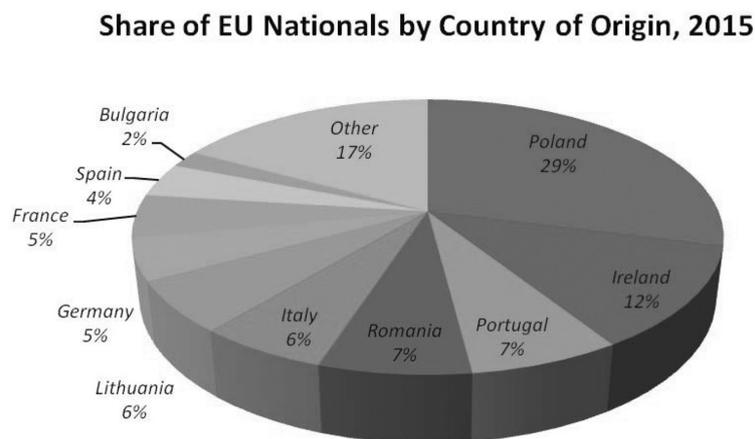
Figure 1. Long-Term International net migration by citizenship (1975–2015).



Source: Office for National Statistics, “Migration Statistics Quarterly Report: February 2016,” 8⁵.

Therefore, the United Kingdom is currently ranked among the group of EU countries with the highest influx of foreigners. In January 2015 in the European Union countries with the highest number of foreigners were Germany (7.5 million), the United Kingdom (5.4 million), Italy (5.0 million) and France (4.4 million). These countries were also at the forefront in terms of the size of the population of residents born abroad, respectively: Germany (10.2 million), the United Kingdom (8.4 million), France (7.9 million), Spain (5.9 million) and Italy (5.8 million)⁶.

Figure 2. EU immigrants by nationality (2015).



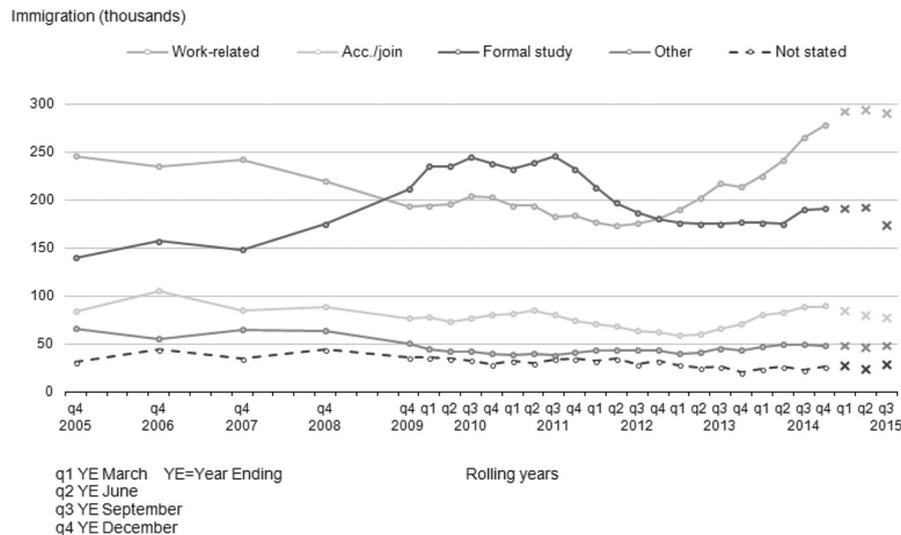
Source: Jonathan Wadsworth, Swati Dhingra, Gianmarco Ottaviano, John Van Reenen, *Brexit and the Impact of Immigration on the UK* (London: Centre for Economic Performance, CEP BREXIT ANALYSIS NO. 5), 3.

In recent years a significant part in the overall increase in the number of immigrants coming to Great Britain was immigration from other European Union countries, which became especially noticeable after 2004 accession of eight countries of Central – Eastern Europe (the so-called A8). This is reflected in the statistics. Between 1995 and 2015 the total number of immigrants from the EU countries increased in the UK from 0.9 million to 3.3 million, which in percentage terms meant an increase from 1.5% to 5.3% of the general population and from 1.8% to 6.3% of the population of working age (i.e. 16-64 years). Since the EU enlargement in 2004 there was observed a significant increase in the influx of foreigners into the United Kingdom, slightly inhibited by the economic crisis which started in 2007. In the last 4 – 5 years, with the progressive economic development, there has been however observed re-intensification of migration flows. In the fiscal year from September 2014 to September 2015 net immigration from EU countries amounted to 172 000, which meant that it clearly approached the level of immigration from countries outside the European Union (191 000) (see Figure 1). So far, these values had varied considerably, i.e. the net immigration from countries outside the EU always had been significantly higher than the level of the net immigration from the member countries of this integration organization. Therefore, at present, immigrants from European Union countries account for approximately 35% of the total population of immigrants living in the United Kingdom, where Poles constitute the biggest national group among the “EU” immigrants (29%)⁷ (see Figure 2).

As regards the spatial distribution of immigrants in Great Britain – as in the case of many other countries – it is uneven. In 2014 more than half of the total population of people born outside the United Kingdom resided in the London region (36.9%) and South East (13.6%). The smallest percentage of such people resided in the regions of Wales (2.3%), North East (1.6%) and Northern Ireland (1.5%). Translated into numbers, it meant that the area of Inner London was inhabited by a population of 1.3 million, and the area of Outer London by nearly 1.7 million people from outside the UK. At the same time ‘Tyne and Wear’ and ‘Rest of the North East’ regions were characterized by the lowest number of such residents. Similarly, taking into account the proportion of the population born outside the UK in relation to the total population of the inhabitants, this percentage was the highest in London (Inner London – 39%, Outer London – 33%) and the lowest in the ‘Rest of North East’. Although the proportion of the population of foreigners in the total population varies considerably depending on the region, in recent years the increase has been noticeable in every part of the country. In the years 1995–2014 the largest percentage increase in the number of foreigners was observed in Tyne and Wear, Rest of Scotland, Merseyside and Northern Ireland (which was attributable to the fact that in 1995 these regions were inhabited by very few people coming from outside the UK)⁸.

Importantly, for many years work and education has been the most common reasons for immigration to the UK (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Long-Term International Migration estimates of immigration to the UK, by main reason for migration (2005–2015).



Source: Office for National Statistics, “Migration Statistics Quarterly Report...”, 13.

Immigration as a Social and Political Issue

In the UK immigration gained the status of the key social and political issue at the turn of the twentieth century, which was connected with the shown above significant increase in the number of people flowing to this country, which was initiated at that time. It was reflected in the intensification of social concerns relating to migration issues. While several years ago anxiety of the public opinion over the topic of immigration remained at a relatively low level (less than 10% of Britons regarded it as an essential issue), in the 21st century the issue was regularly indicated as one of the five biggest challenges faced by Great Britain. In the social perception since the late 1990s concerns about the quality of public services (relating to health care or education) have been gradually losing importance as the main problems of the country, and have been replaced by concerns connected with crime, terrorism and just the immigration⁹. Immigration started to be seen more and more often as a negative phenomenon, and immigrants themselves as the main source of social problems, such as an increase in unemployment, reduction in real wages, extorting social benefits, deterioration of the access to public services or eventually weakening of homogeneity as well as social and cultural cohesion. Consequently, in comparison with many other countries, Great Britain is today perceived as a country much more reluctant to immigrants¹⁰. In 2013, more than 3/4 of Britons were generally in favour of a reduction in the influx of foreigners, while 56% wanted serious limitation in this regard, and a further 21% – slight limitation. Comparative studies conducted in different countries clearly show that concerns about immigration are much more common and intense in the UK than in other countries in Europe or North America. British society is also more prone than other nations to perceive immigration as a problem rather than a chance, and to determine the immigrant population as “too large”¹¹.

The above mentioned British researchers – Sunder Katwala and Will Somerville indicate that three factors played particularly a significant role in shaping the attitude of the British public opinion towards immigration: 1. long-term migration trends, 2. the realignment of British politics and 3. media coverage¹². It should be noted, however, that with respect to the second condition it is difficult to make a clear distinction to what extent the political activities stimulated social attitude, and to what extent they were a response to moods articulated by the public opinion. Certainly, there was strong feedback here. At the same time the authors – on the basis of the analysis of survey data – make a division of British society into three categories:

1. Migration rejectionists – in terms of numbers this group represents approximately 25% of the British population. These people are characterized by very negative and even hostile attitude towards immigration. For example, asked to indicate on a scale from 0 to 10 the extent to which immigration has a positive effect on their country, approximately 1/5 will mark number 0 on the scale. Every fourth representative of this group (25%) without hesitation declares that they would support the policy of forced return of all immigrants to their countries of origin. In sociological terms, this group is dominated by white, older people, mostly male and without a university education.

2. Migration Liberals – this group also includes approximately 25% of Britons, but their attitude towards the influx of foreigners is quite different than in the case of ‘Migration rejectionists’. Those classified in this category are usually younger and better educated; live in urban areas and have many foreigners among friends or relatives. With respect to the above-mentioned scale on positive effects of immigrants they indicate usually 7 or higher. They are satisfied with the current intensity of migration flows and emphasize the immigration policy is paid too much attention to in the public discourse. Approximately 14% of the members of the group would like the migration policy to evolve towards the idea of “a world without borders.”

3. Anxious Middle– this group, which accumulates the largest proportion of Britons, as the name suggests, is situated between the two polarized groups described above. For example, in 2014 61% of Britons agreed with the following statement: “immigration brings both pressures and economic benefits, so we should control it and choose the migration that is in Britain’s best economic interests”, while 24% clearly indicated that the influx of foreigners is bad for the British economy and it should be reduced, and only 7% claimed that it is just the opposite. In contrast to many other areas of public policy, attitudes of the members of “Anxious Middle” towards the phenomenon of immigration cannot be explained by reference to the traditional socio-economic divisions. This group in the context of attitudes towards migration can be best characterized rather as “anxious, conflicted and worried about the impact of migration” than “hostile”. The most important determinant of the attitude to immigration and immigrants are in this group economic issues related to the welfare and public services – hence foreigners who contribute to the economic growth and overall improvement in the functioning of the socio – economic system are positively perceived and accepted; those who do not make such contribution are treated not very friendly¹³.

Especially in the context of the above described characteristics of the “Anxious Middle” group and the determinants of its attitude to the influx of foreigners, it should be noted that in recent years the British socio – political discourse has been dominated by a negative image of immigration, which in turn has influenced the attitude of the majority of the society towards this issue. It can be very well observed in the way how the problems of migration are portrayed

by the British mass media. A study conducted by The Migration Observatory centre (acting at The University of Oxford), whose results were published in 2013, brings interesting conclusions in this respect. The study involved the analysis of the language used by more than 20 major British newspapers in publications on immigration and immigrants. The analysis indicated that in the British press the word “immigrants” was most often linked to words and expressions such as: illegal, million and thousands, terrorist, suspected and sham, jobs and benefits, employment and unemployment, flood, influx and wave, etc.¹⁴

Obviously, along with the growing significance of immigration as a social issue, it also became a theme of greater importance from the political point of view. A gradually advancing process of the so-called politicization of migration was observed¹⁵. What is characteristic is that the introduction of migration issues into the political discourse triggered in the British political system effects similar to those which emerged in other European countries, such as France, Germany, Austria and the Netherlands¹⁶: 1. since the political parties introduced the topic of migration to their election campaigns it has become one of the most important issues raised in the elections, polarizing the public opinion, and thus the whole party and political system, 2. the reference to migration resulted in the movement of the whole British party system to the right, both in terms of the election rhetoric, radicalization of demands and plans for changes in policies on immigration in the direction of more stringent control. By virtue of ideology, it is the easiest for centre-right-wing and right-wing parties to use the migration issues to their political advantage.

In the British party system this phenomenon can be perfectly illustrated by the success of United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). This conservative party, whose main objective was to make the UK leave the European Union, came into existence in 1993 but gained wider publicity only in the late 1990s when in 1999 elections to the European Parliament it won 7% of the votes, which translated into 3 mandates. In the next election to that body in 2004 it increased the number of held mandates to 12. An important event in the history of the party was taking the function of its president by Nigel Farage. In the 2009 European Parliament election UKIP achieved in the UK the second best election result, winning the support of 16.5% of the electorate, which translated into 13 mandates. Five years later, in the next European elections, the party led by Nigel Farage took the first place, gaining 24 mandates (with the support of 27.6% of the voters). The scale of the expansion of the UKIP electorate is well illustrated by the fact that while in the elections to the British Parliament in 2010 the party was given support by 920 thousand people (3% of the voters), in the election of 2015 it gained the support of 3.9 million people (13% of the voters). It is noted in this context that in recent years UKIP has owed its rise in support not so much to anti-EU rhetoric, but to associated with it acute anti-immigrant rhetoric¹⁷, and in the parliamentary election in 2015 it was voting for UKIP that was the biggest determinant of hostility towards immigrants¹⁸.

Initially also the Conservative Party became a beneficiary of the introduction of the migration topic to the British political debate. During the parliamentary election in 2010, in which the Conservatives acted as an opposition force, issues concerning migration were seen as their great advantage. It was easy for David Cameron to criticize the yet ruling Labour Party for allowing a massive influx of immigrants from countries of Central – Eastern Europe, which was a consequence of EU enlargement in 2004. The Labour Party was reproached that, although they had such opportunities, did nothing to restrict access to the British labour market for workers from the new EU countries. At the same time – to meet the expectations of a signifi-

cant part of the potential electorate – Cameron suggested alternative solutions in the field of immigration policy, which were supposed to lead to a significant reduction in the influx of foreigners. During the campaign the leader of the Conservatives promised to reduce the number of immigrants reaching the British Isles from “hundreds” to “tens” thousands per year (it was supposed to be achieved before the end of the term of the new parliament in 2015). These activities contributed to the electoral success of the Conservative Party, which took power forming a government coalition with the Liberal Democratic Party.

The new government of Prime Minister David Cameron formed after the election, trying to live up to the campaign promises, set as one of its priorities to curb the flow of immigrants to the level of less than net 100 thousand per year. Because during the tenure of the previous parliament, in the years 2005 – 2010, the average level of net immigration was at the level of approximately 247 000 people annually, it meant the need to reduce immigration by approximately net 150 000 per year¹⁹. Because Cameron had very little room for manoeuvre as regards the possibility of shaping migration flows between the UK and other countries of the EU (due to the fundamental principle of free movement of people within the EU), his government – striving to achieve the aforementioned goal – introduced a series of modifications concerning the immigration policy with respect to people from outside the European Union, involving mainly the introduction of rules that hindered family reunification and reducing the number of granted visas for students and workers. These actions, however, did not produce significant results. During the first year of the term of the new parliament the intensity of the influx of foreigners increased reaching in June 2011 the level of net 263 000 people. In fact next year the number of net migration dropped significantly, reaching in September 2012 the number of 154 000 (which was the result closest to the assumptions of the government), but ever since only the increase in this area has been recorded. In March of 2015 it turned out that within the preceding 12 months net 336 000 people had flowed to the British Isles. This was not only over three times more than the original assumptions of the government, but also about 89 000 more than the average annual level of net migration during the tenure of the previous parliament (2005-2010)²⁰. This meant a spectacular failure of the “migration management” policy of Cameron’s government.

This situation was favourable for the United Kingdom Independence Party that tried to build its political capital through criticism of the government policy and postulates of “real” reduction of immigration. Both UKIP and the conservatives fighting for as best as possible position in the political system, tried to win as much of the electorate from the “Anxious Middle” group as possible. The failures of the ruling party with regard to the issues of migration were accompanied by the growing support for Nigel Farage’s party. After the success of UKIP in the local elections in May 2013, in which the party won the support of 23% of voters, the government decided to introduce *Immigration Act 2014*, whose provisions were supposed to create in the UK “hostile environment” for illegal immigrants (among others, limiting their access to certain services, such as the possibility of obtaining a driving license, opening a bank account or renting a flat). This action, however, did not affect the progressive decline in trust of the British society in the government as an institution able to effectively manage migration. It also did not stop the outflow of the electorate and the rise of UKIP’s significance on the British political scene.

Paradoxically, in the parliamentary election of 2015 the issues relating to immigration were pushed into the background. It resulted from the strategies adopted by the major parties. The Conservatives focused on the promotion of issues which they saw as their strengths, and in which they could boast about successes (immigration – as described above – was not one of them). The Labourites, on the other hand, based their campaign on issues related to the labour

market (fight against exploitation and the observance of the principles of social justice), devoting less attention to matters of cultural identity or the size of migration flows. Leaders of the Conservative Party, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats at the same time realized that references to the problem of migration in the course of the campaign can only enlarge the electorate of UKIP. In the election campaign – in fact as the only one – it was this party that referred to the issue of migration as often as it was possible.

Unexpectedly, the Conservative Party was able to not only win the election, but also to receive the majority of votes, which ensured them a possibility to govern on their own. It was attributable primarily to two factors: the image of Cameron as the best candidate for the prime minister (47% of responses among the Conservative voters), and the economic programme (27% of responses among the Conservative voters)²¹. The Conservative Party succeeded even though they lost to UKIP, as it is estimated, approximately 1.5 million voters. And although during the campaign the Conservatives avoided the subject of migration, after the election Cameron quickly returned to continue his policy of “tough control” in the field of immigration. First, as early as in September 2015 the Cabinet announced a new act *Immigration Bill 2016* which – referring to the act of 2014 – aimed at illegal immigrants. Secondly, Cameron decided to live up to the promise given yet in 2013, which said that if the Conservatives gained a majority in the parliamentary election in 2015, their government would lead up to a referendum on the further presence of the United Kingdom in the European Union, where such a referendum would be preceded by negotiations between London and Brussels on the renegotiation of the terms of membership, including those associated with the freedom of movement of people. Cameron was keenly aware that in the debate on Brexit the problem of migratory flows between the UK and the EU would be one of the key issues.

Therefore, in the negotiations which took place at the European Council summit held in Brussels in February 2016 the British Prime Minister, in addition to demands relating to: the guarantee of protection of sovereignty (provisions ensuring that the UK would not be a part of the “ever closer Union”), greater power of national parliaments (allowing them to form coalitions in order to block a particular EU law), retaining the right to own currency and the implementation of mechanisms protecting the British financial services sector, successfully sought also for a change in regulations concerning: social benefits for children of immigrants working in the UK but living in the countries of origin of their parents (so far the benefit had been paid in the same amount as the one paid for children living in the UK – the new rules allowed for the recalculation of the benefit to the amount reflecting the cost of living in the country of residence of the child), the payment of social benefits for migrant workers (Great Britain gained the possibility of limitation of the payment of benefits for working people – with regard to tax allowances – during the first four years of their work in the country) and certain restrictions in the free movement of people (the Member States received additional rights that restricted the free movement of people on the basis of security threats and on the basis of greater possibility to prevent fictitious mixed marriages)²². With regard to the issue of migration, Cameron in talks with EU leaders limited himself to the issue of social benefits for immigrants, because from the very beginning it was known that the leaders would not agree to any renegotiation of the fundamental in the EU perspective, principle of free movement of people. At the same time the matter of access of immigrants to public services and social benefits became in Great Britain an important political issue and in the social perception – in spite of the reality – was regarded as a serious burden for the budget²³. As demonstrated by the re-

sults of the referendum the guarantee package negotiated by Cameron in February 2016 did not satisfy, however, the majority of voters.

The Contribution of Immigrants from EU Countries in the Socio-economic Development of Great Britain

As noted by Gregor Irwin, the author of the report *BREXIT: the impact on the UK and the EU*, immigration is a fraught political issue because the costs and benefits of this phenomenon are distributed unevenly, and its public perception is often detached from reality²⁴. In British society – as indeed in many other societies – the topic of the impact of migrants on socio – economic development is affected by many circulating simplifications, stereotypes and common opinions, which often are not confirmed by the application of scientific knowledge. Not infrequently this distorted image of reality is amplified by statements and actions of politicians. It was the case of David Cameron, who before the February negotiations mentioned above claimed that nearly 40% of migrants who lately arrived in the UK from the European Economic Area are supported by the British system of social benefits. These pronouncements were quickly criticized by UK Statistic Authority that admonished the government not to disseminate analyses based on a questionable methodology. According to 2015 statistical estimates persons without British citizenship were more than two times less likely to receive social benefits for people of working age than the British themselves (6% and 14%, respectively), and among foreigners claiming benefits in 2015 only 1/3 were citizens of the EU²⁵.

It is difficult to clearly and accurately assess the impact of immigration on the socio – economic development of Great Britain. The results of the latest research and macroeconomic analysis, however, suggest that generally immigration from European Union countries has a positive, though in some areas a slight impact on the British economy. John Springford notes in this context even that “Britain’s EU immigrant are a boon, not a burden.” In general, they are younger and more eager to work in comparison with the British, and besides pay to the budget more in taxes, than take advantage of it using public services. In comparison with the native population, they are also much less likely to use social benefits. At the same time the author points out that due to demographic changes (namely aging of the population) in the future, Great Britain will need to increase rather than limit the influx of immigrants²⁶.

Table 1. Employment, unemployment, students and economic inactivity by immigrant status (working age population) 2015.

	UK-born	EU immigrants	A8	All immigrants
<i>% of whom:</i>				
Employed	72.5%	78.2%	81.9%	69.9%
Unemployed	3.3%	3.2%	2.65%	4.2%
Student	7.7%	7.1%	5.1%	7.6%
Inactive	16.5%	11.6%	10.5%	18.3%

Source: Jonathan Wadsworth, Swati Dhingra, Gianmarco Ottaviano, John Van Reenen, *Brexit and the Impact...*, 5.

Immigrants from European Union countries as a rule tend to be better educated than the British. Almost two times more of them have some form of higher education (43% compared with 23% of people born in the UK), and only 15% of them finished their education at age of 16 (in the UK up to 44% of young people finish education at this stage). EU immigrants are not only better educated, but also more prone to be economically active, thus much more rarely claim the unemployment benefit or remain economically inactive. This applies particularly to migrants from the A8 countries – in this group as many as 82% of people work²⁷ (see Table 1).

In this context, among a significant part of the British society it is believed that immigrants, especially those from Central – Eastern Europe, “steal” work of the native population and cause decrease in wages offered in the economy. Most of studies conducted in recent years in the UK indicate, however, that the influx of foreigners has very little effect on employment of the local population and the amount of their wages, which applies both to immigration from the countries of Western Europe as well as A8 (see Table 2). In the latter case, while immigration from A8 does not seem to contribute to the reduction of salaries of the British, the immigration from the countries of Western Europe is likely to slightly increase Britons’ productivity and therefore wages²⁸. OECD research, on the other hand, indicates that in the UK „immigration has been a key factor behind the strong labour market. Out of around 2.5 million jobs that were added to the UK in 2005-15, 2.2 million were supplied by immigrants, with nearly 60% originating from the EU [...]. Immigrants have contributed on average 0.7 percentage points to GDP per year since 2005, accounting for roughly half of GDP growth, with a slightly higher contribution of immigrants from the EU than non-EU countries”²⁹.

Scientific analyses show also that immigrants from European Union countries do not have negative effects on the state of Britain’s public finances and the quality of the country’s public services. OECD points out 3 fundamental factors which largely determine whether immigrants are net contributors or net beneficiaries. These are:

1. the age of immigrants – young immigrants of working age are likely to be net contributors (until they are between 40 and 45 years of age);
2. their employment rate – if the immigrant employment rate is higher than the native population’s, then they are less likely to receive welfare benefits – and if immigrants have come to work, rather than to be reunited with their families, they are more likely to be net contributors;
3. their skill level – if immigrants are highly skilled, they are more likely to be employed, pay more in taxes, and receive fewer benefits³⁰.

This is confirmed in the case of Great Britain. A study conducted by Christian Dustmann and Tommaso Frattini for the years 1995 – 2011 shows that immigrants from countries of the European Economic Area had a positive impact on public finances: they contributed more to the British budget in taxes than took from it in the form of social benefits. Dustmann and Frattini notice at the same time: “Notable is the strong positive contribution made by immigrants from countries that joined the EU in 2004”³¹, which are countries of A8.

Tabele 2. Impact of A8 immigrants on Britains' employment and average wages, and on the UK wage distribution.

Study	Employment/wages	Estimated impact
Portes and French (2005)	Employment	A one percentage point increase in A8 worker registrations in local authorities is associated with a 0.09 per cent increase in native unemployment in that area
Gilpin et al (2006)	Employment	Not statistically significant
Lemos and Portes (2008)	Employment	Not statistically significant
Lemos (2010)	Employment	Not statistically significant
Migration Advisory Committee (2012)	Employment	Not statistically significant
Lemos and Portes (2008)	Average wages	Not statistically significant
Lemos (2010)	Average wages	A one percentage point increase in the A8 migrant-working age population ratio is associated with an increase in natives' average wage of approximately 3.4 per cent
Lemos and Portes (2008)	Wage distribution	Not statistically significant
Lemos (2010)	Wage distribution	An increase of one percentage point in the A8 migrant-working age population ratio is associated with a 3.9 per cent increase in the wages of workers in the 60th percentile of the distribution

Source: John Springford, *Is immigration a reason...*, 4.

At the same time, the British government, arguing the need to renegotiate the terms of the access of immigrants from the EU to social benefits in the UK, pointed to the need to combat in this way the so-called benefit tourism. In reality, studies show that such tourism, if it exists at all, has a very limited range.

Besides, other studies show that in the UK the influx of immigrants:

- did not cause a particular burden to the health care system (statistically immigrants do not use medical services more often than the British³²; they do not affect significantly medical services waiting time³³);
- did not adversely affect the quality of education³⁴;
- did not contribute to a significant increase in crime (the influx of immigrants from the A8 countries did not translate into an increase in crime at all)³⁵.

In fact, the only sphere where the influx of immigrants led visibly to negative consequences is housing. Here actually the growth in the number of foreigners led to the increase in the prices of real estate³⁶.

In this situation it is worth asking a question *why immigration from EU countries, in particular from the countries of A8, had (and has) in the UK such a pejorative public perception and what consequences for the British economy may bring the curb of the flow of immigrants?*

Although the conditioning of the negative image of immigrants is much more complex, answering the first question, it is difficult not to agree with mentioned in the introduction Simon Tilford, who emphasizes that the immigrant population has become for the British society and

part of the political elite a kind of “scapegoat” that can be blamed for any failure. Tilford notices in this aspect: „attitudes to immigration are being fanned by the failure of successive governments to tackle the country’s real problems: housing, the poor educational performance of the white working class and the financing of public services. Immigrants, in turn, have become an easy scapegoat for politicians of nearly all persuasions. It is easier to blame them than address the chronic policy failures driving the rise in anti-immigrant sentiment”. And a bit further, with regard to the referendum debate on Brexit, he notes: „By talking about immigration as a problem and treating the need to reduce it as axiomatic, politicians have legitimised xenophobia. The reason anti-immigrant sentiment is focused on EU migration as opposed to immigration from outside the EU is simple: complaining about Polish immigration is not seen as racist in the way complaining about black or Asian immigration is”³⁷.

Simultaneously, the postulated limitation of the influx of foreigners may bring some negative consequences for the British economy. One of the econometric forecasts indicates, for example, that if half of the immigrants from EU countries residing in the UK returned to their countries of origin, in the long term the Britons could expect a lower per capita income of between 2 and 5%³⁸ (see Tabele 3).

The outflow of foreigners can be particularly onerous for certain sectors of the economy, where there is overrepresentation of European immigrants, such as manufacturing, construction or service industry³⁹.

Table 3. Changes in the UK’s income per capita through limiting the free movement of people, static + dynamic effects, long term.

Reduction of immigrants from the EU by:	10%	33%	50%
Lower limit (b=0.100)	-0.5%	-1.7%	-2.7%
Upper limit (b=0.226)	-1.1%	-3.9%	-6.2%

Source: Rahel Aichele, Gabriel Felbermayr, *Costs and benefits of a United Kingdom exit from the European Union* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, Center for International Economics 2015), 53.

Conclusion

The subject of migration was one of the three most important topics brought up in the course of the referendum debate on the future of the UK in the European Union. It was attributable primarily to two considerations. First, in recent years, migration issues have gained in the UK the status of one of the most important social and political problems polarizing the public opinion and strongly affecting the realm of politics. Secondly, this subject due to the EU principle of free movement of people was directly associated with the issue of the United Kingdom’s membership in the European Union. It is therefore difficult not to agree with Will Somerville, who even before the referendum, noted that: “While migration is not the sole issue driving those seeking a future apart from the European Union, it is among the key considerations that led to the referendum’s call, and has been one of the recurring topics of tension with Brussels”⁴⁰. This is because for many Britons membership in the EU was associated primarily with the influx of immigrants and the lack of control over their own borders. At the same time in the social perception – in spite of the facts – dominated the image of immigration as a phenomenon contributing to deepening of social problems, such as an increase in unemploy-

ment, extorting social benefits or rise in the level of crime, etc. A large part of the British political elite rather than counteract and neutralize these negative stereotypes on immigration from EU countries (especially from the group of A8 countries), by reference to facts and promotion of fair image of immigration (that is showing also the benefits stemming from the phenomenon in question) chose the strategy of building political capital through a largely declarative, but responding to social expectations, policy of “control” and “restriction” of the influx of foreigners. In this way a significant part of the British society, positioned in the so-called “anxious middle” group, that based their attitude to immigrants on the contribution to the socio – economic development of Great Britain was rather negatively biased against the phenomenon of immigration and the immigrants themselves. This negative political discourse was largely conditioned by political rivalry between the United Kingdom Independence Party and conservatives and divisions within the Conservative Party itself. In this context Cameron decided to introduce a postulate of the referendum into a political manifesto of his party, fearing the outflow of the electorate to UKIP. In addition – as noted by Michal P. Garapich – the force of the impact of the migration issue in discussions about the referendum stemmed from the fact that migration combines many basic issues which accumulate around the relationships of Great Britain with the European Union – economy, labour market, sovereignty and identity. Migration is understood here multi-dimensionally – as an economic, cultural and demographic issue, but also associated with a sense of security. Therefore, for the flank of Eurosceptics the exit from the EU meant not only regaining control over migration flows, but also economic recovery, greater independence and a sense of stability⁴¹. It is difficult today to unambiguously predicate what consequences in the long term Brexit will bring for the further development of the phenomenon of the influx of immigrants to the British Isles and for the functioning of immigrant communities there. Much this regard will depend on the arrangement of future relations between the European Union and Great Britain, and therefore, whether Brexit will be conducted in a “soft” or “hard” form.

Notes

¹ Michal P. Garapich, *Brexit – fakty, mity, liczby. Możliwe konsekwencje wystąpienia Wielkiej Brytanii z Unii Europejskiej. Analiza głównych osi debat publicznych* (Warszawa: Instytut Spraw Publicznych, 2016), 12.

² Simon Tilford, “Britain, immigration and Brexit”, *Cer Bulletin* 105 (December 2015/January 2016): 1 (accessed 08.10.2016) // https://www.cer.org.uk/sites/default/files/bulletin_105_st_article1.pdf.

³ Sunder Katwala, Will Somerville, *Engaging the Anxious Middle on Immigration Reform: Evidence from the UK Debate* (Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2016), 2.

⁴ *Ibidem*, 8.

⁵ accessed 09.10.2016) // <http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/migrationstatisticsquarterlyreport/february2016>.

⁶ Oliver Hawkins, *Migration Statistics* (London: House of Commons Library, Briefing Paper Number SN06077, 2016), 20-21.

⁷ Jonathan Wadsworth, Swati Dhingra, Gianmarco Ottaviano, John Van Reenen, *Brexit and the Impact...*, 2-3.

⁸ Cinzia Rienzo, Carlos Vargas-Silva, *Migrants in the UK: An Overview* (Oxford: The Migration Observatory, 2016), 3-5.

⁹ Ben Page, *British Attitudes to Immigration in the 21st Century* (Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2009), 1.

¹⁰ Sunder Katwala, Will Somerville, *Engaging the Anxious Middle...*, 1.

¹¹ See. Scott Blinder, *UK Public Opinion toward Immigration: Overall Attitudes and Level of Concern* (Oxford: The Migration Observatory, 2016), 4-7.

¹² Sunder Katwala, Will Somerville, *Engaging the Anxious Middle...*, 8.

¹³ *Ibidem*, 5-6.

¹⁴ See. Allen William, Scott Blinder, *Migration in the News: Portrayals of Immigrants, Migrants, Asylum Seekers and Refugees in National British Newspapers, 2010 to 2012* (Oxford: University of Oxford, Migration Observatory report, 2013).

¹⁵ Magdalena Lesińska indicates that the notion of politicization “ is understood as the process in which a given social phenomenon gains a status of a political issue, so it becomes the object of not only regulations of the state, but also the object of a broad debate in the political and public sphere [Magdalena Lesińska, *Migracje we współczesnej analizie politologicznej – niewykorzystany potencjał* (Warsaw: Centre for Migration Research, CMR Working Papers 47/105, 2011), 16].

¹⁶ Magdalena Lesińska, *Migracje we współczesnej analizie...*, 17.

¹⁷ Sunder Katwala, Steve Ballinger, *The politics of immigration. The surprising lessons of the 2015 General Election and what they mean for new party leaders*, British Future (London: British Future, 2015), 5.; Sunder Katwala, Will Somerville, *Engaging the Anxious Middle...*, 9.

¹⁸ Sunder Katwala, Will Somerville, *Engaging the Anxious Middle...*, 9.

¹⁹ Oliver Hawkins, *Migration Statistics...*, 9.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, 10.

²¹ Sunder Katwala, Steve Ballinger, *The politics of immigration...*, 9.

²² Michal P. Garapich, *Brexit – fakty, mity, liczby...*, 7 – 8.

²³ *Ibidem*, 13.

²⁴ Gregor Irwin, *BREXIT: the impact on the UK and the EU* (London: Global Counsel, 2015), 18.

²⁵ Michal P. Garapich, *Brexit – fakty, mity, liczby...*, 13.

²⁶ John Springford, *Is immigration a reason for Britain to leave the EU?* (London: Centre for European Reform, 2013), 1.

²⁷ Jonathan Wadsworth, Swati Dhingra, Gianmarco Ottaviano, John Van Reenen, *Brexit and the Impact...*, 4.

²⁸ John Springford, *Is immigration a reason...*, 5.

²⁹ Rafal Kierzenkowski, Nigel Pain, Elena Rusticelli, Sanne Zwart, *The economic consequences of Brexit: a taxing decision* (Paris: OECD ECONOMIC POLICY PAPER, No. 16, 2016), 26.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, 6.

³¹ Christian Dustmann, Tommaso Frattini, “The fiscal effects of immigration to the UK”, *The Economic Journal* 124/580 (2014): 593.

³² See: Jonathan Wadsworth, *Musn't Grumble. Immigration, Health and Health Service Use in the UK and Germany* (Bonn: NORFACE MIGRATION, 2012), 28.

³³ Osea Giuntella, Catia Nicodemo, Carlos Vargas Silva, *The Effects of Immigration on NHS Waiting Times* (Oxford: University of Oxford, BSG Working Paper Series, 2015).

³⁴ Charlotte Geay, Sandra McNally, Shqiponja Telhaj, *Non-Native Speakers in the Classroom: What are the Effects on Pupil Performance?* (London: Centre for the Economics of Education, London School of Economics, 2012).

³⁵ Brian Bell, Stephen Machin, Francesco Fasani, *Crime and Immigration: Evidence from Large Immigrant Waves* (London: Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics and Political Science, CEP Discussion Paper No 984, 2010).

³⁶ Jonathan Wadsworth, Swati Dhingra, Gianmarco Ottaviano, John Van Reenen, *Brexit and the Impact...*, 14.

³⁷ Simon Tilford, “Britain, immigration and Brexit...,” 2.

³⁸ Rahel Aichele, Gabriel Felbermayr, *Costs and benefits...*, 7.

³⁹ See. *Commentary. Project unclear: Uncertainty, Brexit and migration* (Oxford: The Migration Observatory, 2016), 3-5.

⁴⁰ Will Somerville, “Brexit: The Role of Migration in the Upcoming EU Referendum,” (accessed:18.10.2016) // <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/brexit-role-migration-upcoming-eu-referendum>.

⁴¹ Michal P. Garapich, *Brexit – fakty, mity, liczby...*, 13.

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