

Immigration and its problems

Bob Hancké of the LSE *ponders the peculiar assumed attractions of the UK labour market to immigrants*

Here's a very thoughtful, interesting [piece on migration in the UK](#), which probably also holds some lessons for other countries. Yet there is something that I don't understand: even this balanced piece states that the UK will become a 'honeypot' once growth is high again (especially when it's lower elsewhere in Europe).

If growth is a lot higher in many of the north-west European economies, as has been the case for a few years, why then does migration not increase there (well, it did last year, when net immigration into Germany reached something like 400,000 — but that's an exceptional year)?

While most immigrants to the UK are working, they do not necessarily earn all that much — and probably not enough to have a nice place to live given current rents? I find it hard to believe that, when given the choice, a Polish or Bulgarian would not prefer, say, Southern Germany over the northern UK (no offence intended, dear Scottish and Yorkshire friends). Wages are higher, rents lower and 'everything' works over there.

Even this intelligent piece, in other words, seems to perpetuate the myth that the UK is a deeply attractive place for immigrants, probably because of its gorgeous weather, modern cities, highly paid jobs, low rents and its superb, inclusive welfare state.

Perhaps I am missing something. But what?

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