

Migration Advisory Committee Call for Evidence: EEA-workers in the UK labour market – submission by the Sport and Recreation Alliance

The Sport and Recreation Alliance

The Sport and Recreation Alliance believes that the power of sport and recreation can change lives and bring communities together. Together with our members and in partnership with the wider sector, we make the most of opportunities and tackle the areas that provide a challenge. We do this by providing advice, support and guidance and by being the voice of the sector. Working with government, policy makers and the media, we help grassroots sport and recreation grow and thrive. Having an active nation is important as it delivers huge benefits to society and the millions of participants, volunteers, staff and spectators.

General comments

We welcome the opportunity to input to the Call for Evidence. Before turning to the specific themes and questions raised in the call, we would make the following general points:

- The sport and recreation workforce is large and makes a significant contribution to the UK economy. 1.2m people are employed in sport-related roles (3.6% of total UK employment) and this number has increased by almost 10% since 2012.¹ In total sport contributes £35bn GVA to the UK economy.² The sector is also extremely diverse, encompassing elite/professional sport, grassroots and community sports and outdoor recreation. In addition, the sector supports – either directly or indirectly – employment in a range of other sectors which help to deliver sport including construction, equipment and clothing manufacture, hospitality, safety and security, broadcasting, tourism and creative industries.
- While the available data suggests the aggregate number of EU nationals in the UK sport workforce is relatively small (3.4%), this is likely to mask significant variation across different parts of the sector and does not take account of the strategic importance of different types of roles within the sector which may tend to be filled by EEA workers.³ Further work is necessary

¹ DCMS, *UK Sport Satellite Account 2015*:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/583785/Sport_Satellite_Account_2012_2014_2015.pdf

² *ibid.*

³ DCMS *Economic Sector Estimates 2017*:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/640628/DCMS_Sectors_Economic_Estimates_2017_Employment_and_Trade.pdf Note that the estimate of 3.4% of EU nationals in the

to understand the precise composition of sport-related employment – including the number of nature of EEA workers employed – and the potential impact on the sector of changes to immigration rules post-Brexit.

- The outdoor recreation sector is estimated to support approximately 500,000 jobs across a wide variety of sporting and recreational pursuits and visitor spend on trips to the outdoors totals £17bn.⁴ While the available data is limited, it is reasonable to assume that much of the related employment is seasonal in nature and comprises a substantial number of EEA workers.
- Certain sectors, notably construction, tourism, hospitality and safety and security, are critical suppliers to the sport and recreation sector. For example, major sporting events involve significant catering and hospitality provision and require properly trained staff to provide adequate safety and security for those in attendance. As the MAC evidence shows, these sectors currently rely heavily on EEA workers. Any assessment of the impact of future changes to immigration rules on the sport and recreation sector must therefore take into account its links with other economic sectors which are themselves highly-reliant on EEA workers.
- Post-Brexit, the immigration system must ensure that the sport and recreation sector is able to attract the very best global talent and at the same time support the sector to grow. In some cases, this will mean ensuring the sector to continue to access labour from EEA countries to address particular skills shortages.

More broadly, parts of the sport and recreation sector are significant industries in their own right and face specific challenges relating to the availability of skilled workers. In this context, we would encourage the MAC to engage with sport and recreation bodies to better understand the specific issues faced by different parts of the sector and, in addition to this response, to consider carefully the responses submitted by our individual members.

Rather than address each individual question raised in the Call for Evidence, we have made specific comments where relevant under each key theme below.

EEA Migration Trends

Please provide evidence on the characteristics (e.g. types of jobs migrants perform; skill levels, etc) of EEA migrants in your particular sector/local area/ region. How do these differ from UK workers? And from non-EEA workers?

To what extent are EEA migrants seasonal; part-time; agency-workers; temporary; short-term assignments; intra-company transfers; self-employed? What information do you have on their skill levels? To what extent do these differ from UK workers and non-EEA workers?

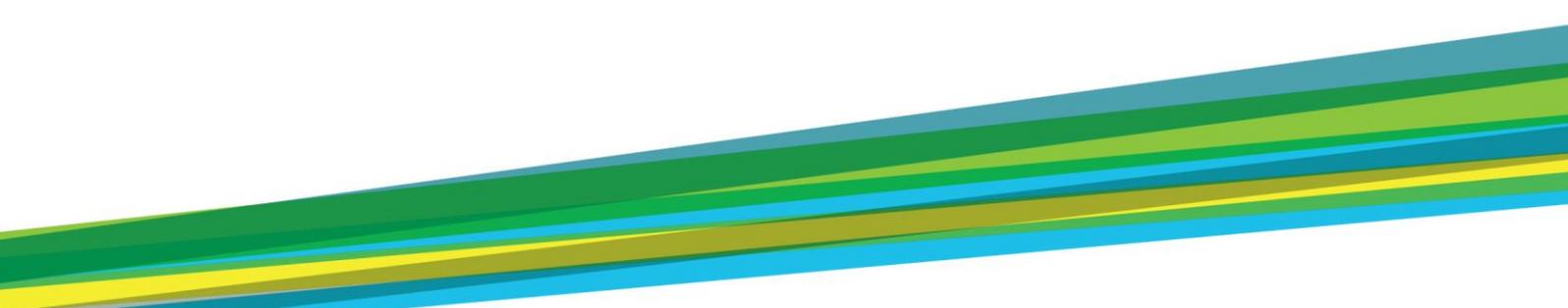
Are there any relevant sources of evidence, beyond the usual range of official statistics, that would allow the MAC to get a more detailed view of the current patterns of EEA migration, especially over the last year?

Have the patterns of EEA migration changed over time? What evidence do you have showing your employment of EEA migrants since 2000? And after the Brexit referendum? Are these trends different for UK workers and non-EEA workers?

Have you conducted any analysis on the future trends of EEA migration, in particular in the absence of immigration controls?

sport workforce is likely to be an underestimate given the narrow definition of 'sport' used in the sector estimates compared to the Sport Satellite Account.

⁴ Sport and Recreation Alliance, *Reconomics Plus*: <https://www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/pages/reconomics-plus>



Have you made any assessment of the impact of a possible reduction in the availability of EEA migrants (whether occurring naturally or through policy) as part of your workforce? What impact would a reduction in EEA migration have on your sector/local area/region? How will your business/sector/area/region cope? Would the impacts be different if reductions in migration took place amongst non-EEA migrants? Have you made any contingency plans?

Outside of perhaps professional sport, the available data for the sport and recreation sector is not of sufficient granularity to identify detailed characteristics or trends on EEA and non-EEA workers. Nonetheless, we do know that:

- Professional and elite sport in the UK is reliant on highly-skilled migrants from EEA countries. The major domestic sports – including but not limited to football, rugby, cricket, horseracing and tennis – through their associated clubs and competitions employ a large number of athletes and coaches from EEA countries. While in aggregate the numbers may be relatively small compared to other sectors, these employees tend to be very highly-skilled and the domestic supply of similar talent is extremely limited. Without access to EEA (and indeed non-EEA) labour, these sports, clubs and competitions would struggle to sustain the same level of investment and growth.
- There are many EEA workers involved in the delivery of sport at grassroots level, either as employees or as self-employed persons (for example as a coach), all of whom play an essential role in ensuring that people have access to high quality sport and recreation opportunities. The sector is investing for the future to develop the domestic workforce but this will inevitably take time to bear fruit and in the meantime the sector will need to be able to recruit talent from EEA countries.
- Some parts of the sports sector have skills shortages in specific, key roles where access to EEA labour is vital. Very often these roles be in occupations below NFQ6 (highly-skilled) yet which nonetheless require a high degree of training. As an example, horseracing is currently experiencing a shortage of qualified racing grooms which are critical to ensuring thoroughbred horses are properly trained and cared for. In such cases it is imperative that access to EEA workers is maintained in order to address short-term shortages.
- A number of major sports hold competitions and fixtures throughout the year which involve short-term transfers or assignments for athletes, coaches and other staff. Again, in the case of horseracing, there are very regular transfers between the UK and Ireland for fixtures while in other sports, there may be a seasonal element where athletes compete in competitions held during the summer months for example.
- Aside from being a large employer in its own right, the outdoor recreation sector is closely integrated with other economic sectors that are themselves heavily reliant on EEA migrant workers, notably tourism and hospitality, and where work is more likely to be seasonal in nature. There is also a clear geographic aspect in that the outdoor recreation economy tends to be highly concentrated in particular locations or regions e.g. around national parks and popular rural and coastal locations. Some of these regions may face particular challenges with respect to the availability of domestic workers, particularly in the peak seasons. It is therefore vital that any assessment of the impact of future restrictions on EEA workers takes into account the consequences for related sectors such as outdoor recreation.

Recruitment practices, training and skills

Please provide evidence on the methods of recruitment used to employ EEA migrants. Do these methods differ from those used to employ UK and non-EEA workers? What impact does this have on UK workers? Have these methods changed following the Brexit referendum?

Do recruitment practices differ by skill-type and occupation?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of employing EEA workers? Have these changed following the Brexit referendum result?

To what extent has EEA and non-EEA migration affected the skills and training of the UK workers?

How involved are universities and training providers in ensuring that the UK workforce has the skills needed to fill key roles/roles in high demand in your sector? Do you have plans to increase this involvement in the future?

How well aware are you of current UK migration policies for non-EEA migrants? If new immigration policies restrict the numbers of low-skilled migrants who can come to work in the UK, which forms of migration into low-skilled work should be prioritised? For example, the current shortage occupation list applies to high skilled occupations; do you think this should be expanded to cover lower skill levels?

Overall, the sport and recreation sector has benefitted from skilled EEA and non-EEA migrants in terms of helping to raise standards and share best practice. Likewise, many sports have benefitted from being able to attract the very best talent from across the globe which has in turn helped to drive interest (both domestically and internationally) and sustain growth.

If new immigration policies are to be framed so as to restrict the number of migrants in future, we would encourage government to engage early with the sector to identify the specific needs of each sport. Governing bodies are likely to be best placed to determine the appropriate balance between continued access to the best overseas talent and need to develop domestic talent. As already noted, some sports already have skills shortages in specific areas and these may be best addressed through changes to the shortage occupation list. Similarly, there may be scope to extend or adapt the existing governing body endorsement system for work permits once the UK has left the EU.

Economic, social and fiscal impacts

What are the economic, social and fiscal costs and benefits of EEA migration to the UK economy? What are the impacts of EEA migrants on the labour market, prices, public services, net fiscal impacts (e.g. taxes paid by migrants; benefits they receive), productivity, investment, innovation and general competitiveness of UK industry?

Do these differ from the impact of non-EEA migrants?

Do these impacts differ at national, regional or local level?

Do these impacts vary by sector and occupation?

Do these impacts vary by skill level (high-skilled, medium-skilled, and low-skilled workers)?

As already highlighted, the sport and recreation sector is a large employer and makes a significant positive contribution to the UK economy. Much of this positive contribution is a result of EEA migration which has provided a supply of skilled workers and which, in turn, has supported the sector continued growth. Access to EEA workers is particularly beneficial where there are shortages in skilled domestic labour and where there is a particular regional and/or seasonal aspect to the work e.g. outdoor recreation and related industries. As noted above, while the sport and recreation sector is committed to

investing in the long-term development of the domestic workforce, there will likely remain skills shortages in key areas and/or at certain times of the year for the foreseeable future.

In this context, it is vitally important to ensure that policies designed to restrict immigration do not place constraints on the sector's ability to sustain itself and to grow. Fundamentally, the sector must retain the flexibility to attract the best overseas talent where necessary whilst continuing to investing in domestic skills.

**Sport and Recreation Alliance
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