

Migration changes will boost communities, finds research

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This month's lifting of EU restrictions on migration will benefit both Britain's Roma and local employers, though it is unlikely to attract any significant number of new migrants, according to new research.

Professor Yaron Matras from The University of Manchester says the new regime will allow school graduates to integrate more fully into the workforce, and remove barriers to social integration.

Young Roma often possess language skills, he adds, that are badly needed in the service sector.

His comments undermine claims by MigrationWatch UK that 50,000 people a year will come to the UK from Romania and Bulgaria, the two states which joined the EU in 2007.

Restrictions on workers from both countries on their right to work across the EU over the last seven years were lifted on New Year's Day.

Professor Matras coordinates 'MigRom', a four-year research project launched in 2013 studying why Roma visit western Europe, attitudes toward them, and their social inclusion patterns.

Last month, Prime Minister David Cameron threatened to veto new EU members unless sweeping curbs were introduced on freedom of movement in Europe.

Professor Matras said: "Our research shows that those who are motivated to leave and seek new opportunities for themselves and their children, have already arrived and settled here.

"The new rules are unlikely to attract new people except those who have special skills that UK employers are unable to find in Britain and who are thus in a position to fill existing gaps in the labour market.

"Having lived in several countries before coming to Britain, Roma migrants often speak Spanish and French and sometimes German, in addition to Romanian and their native Romani.

"UK employers, who have so far not been allowed to hire Romanian nationals, will now be able to benefit from those skills."

He added: "David Cameron's attempt to clamp down on migrants' rights to benefits is uninformed and misplaced.

"The Roma from Romania who have been here since 2007 are self-employed and rarely rely on work benefits.

"Their children show high school attendance rates, and encouraging progression rates to high school qualifications."

Provided by University of Manchester

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