



BRIEFING

EU Migrants in other EU Countries: An Analysis of Bilateral Migrant Stocks

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This briefing provides an overview of the numbers of EU migrants in different EU countries. It also analyses data for the “net migrant stock” between different countries, i.e. the number of people from country Y living in country X minus the number of people from country X living in country Y. For instance, it compares the number of Spanish migrants in the UK with the number of UK migrants living in Spain. All data and analysis in this briefing refer to the year 2010.

Key Points

In this briefing, “EU migrants” are defined as people living in an EU country who were born in or are nationals of another EU country. The “net-migration stock” between two EU countries is defined as the number of people from EU country Y living in EU country X minus the number of people from country X living in country Y. A positive net-migrant stock indicates that country X received more migrants from country Y than it sent to country Y. A negative net-migrant stock indicates that country X sent more migrants to country Y than it received from country Y.

EU migrants accounted for 35% of the total migrant stock in the EU countries as a whole in 2010. In some countries EU migrants accounted for over 70% of the total migrant stock: Luxembourg (80.7%), the Czech Republic (80.2%), Slovakia (78.3%) and Ireland (73.2%). This share was 31.7% for the UK.

The EU countries hosting the largest number of EU migrants in 2010 were Germany (3.7 million), Spain (2.5 million), France (2.4 million), the UK (2.2 million) and Italy (1.2 million).

The EU countries with the largest number of people living in other EU countries in 2010 were Romania (2.3 million), Poland (1.9 million), Italy (1.7 million), Germany (1.5 million) and the UK (1.4 million).

The EU countries hosting the largest number of British people in 2010 were: Spain (411,074), Ireland (397,465), France (172,836) and Germany (154,826), while the EU states with the largest numbers of migrants in the UK were: Poland (521,446), Ireland (422,569), Germany (299,753) and France (128,010).

Germany, Spain and France have the largest “positive net migrant stocks” with the rest of the EU (which means they host more intra-EU migrants than they send). Romania, Poland and Portugal have the largest negative net migration stocks with the rest of the EU (which means they send more intra-EU migrants than they host).

The UK has a small net migrant stock with most individual EU countries, with the notable exceptions of Poland (net migrant stock of +518,497 meaning many more Polish people live in the UK, than British people live in Poland) and Spain (net migrant stock of -340,299 meaning many more British people live in Spain, than Spanish people live in the UK).

Understanding the evidence

In UK migration debates, EU migrants are a key group as they enjoy free movement within the European Union; hence, the UK Government cannot limit their immigration under EU law. This briefing reports data on bilateral migrant stocks from within the EU: that is, the number of people from each of the 27 countries which form the EU who are living in another EU country. Third country nationals living in these countries and migrating to other EU countries are excluded. These data capture the stock of migrants in specific countries around 2010, not migration flows (i.e. they do not capture the number of migrants coming or going) in particular years. See the Migration Observatory briefing “Migration Flows of A8 and other EU Migrants to and from the UK” for a discussion of EU migration flows to and from the UK.

International comparisons of migration data are challenging and existing sources provide insightful but imperfect data. A project of the University of Sussex distributed the stock of migrants in the world to source countries. The result was a Bilateral Migration Matrix (Parsons et al. 2007). The authors originally used national censuses, population registers, national statistical bureaus and a number of secondary sources to compile bilateral migrant stocks. It was not possible to identify the source country of all migrants in each country. Therefore, statistical techniques were employed to allocate migrants for whom the source country was not known using estimated propensities to migrate. Finally, the bilateral estimates were scaled up to the United Nations Population Division (UNPD) total migrant stocks for each country for 2000 (see the Migration Observatory briefing “Global International Migrant Stock: The UK in International Comparison” for further discussion of the UNPD data). While the initial matrix was for the year 2000, the estimates were updated to 2010 by the World Bank (see Ratha and Shaw 2007). The discussion regarding the bilateral stock of migrants in each EU country in this briefing relies on these updated estimates. Visit the World Bank excel datasets for the data.

The figures presented in this briefing provide rough approximations rather than precise statistics of bilateral migrant stocks between EU countries. There is an element of uncertainty related to all estimates. Because of data limitations, the definition of “migrant” in this briefing is based on a mix of data about “foreign-born” people and “foreign nationals”. Also, as mentioned above, originally it was not possible to identify the source country of all migrants in the dataset. See the Evidence gaps and limitations section at the end of this briefing for further discussion of the limitations of these data.

EU migrants accounted for 35% of the total migrant stock in the EU countries as a whole in 2010. In some countries EU migrants accounted for over 70% of the total migrant stock. This share was 31.7% for the UK.

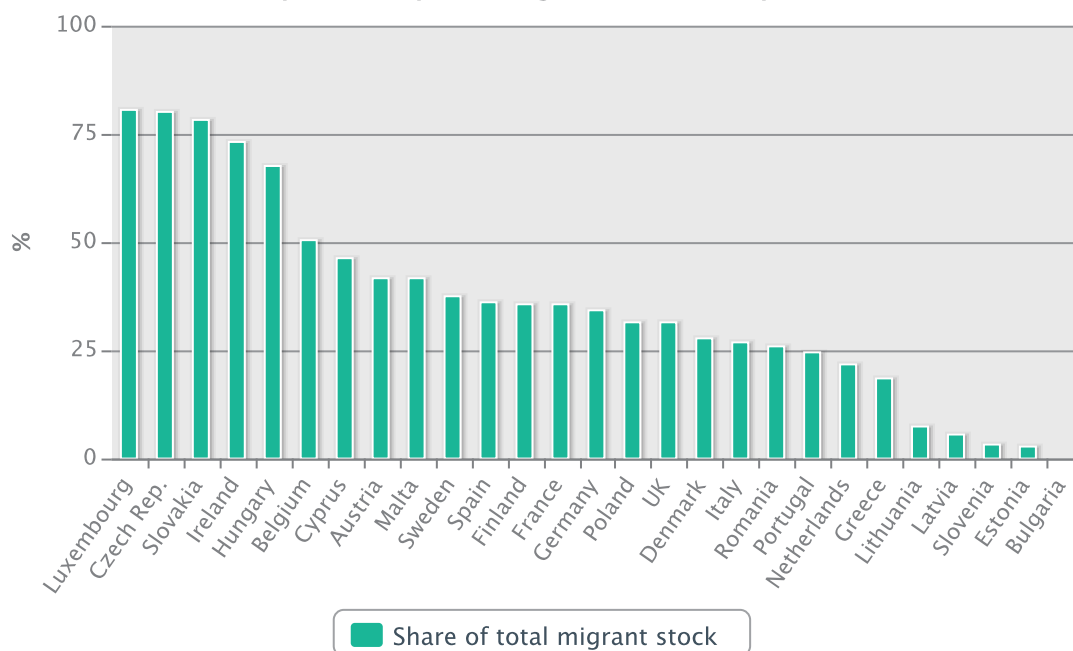
EU migrants accounted for 35% of the total migrant stock in the EU countries as a whole in 2010. However, as shown in Figure 1, there is considerable variation in this share across EU countries. In some countries EU migrants accounted for over 70% of the total migrant stock: Luxembourg (80.7%), the Czech Republic (80.2%), Slovakia (78.3%) and Ireland (73.2%).

In the UK, the share of EU migrants in the total stock of migrants was 31.7% in 2010. This puts the UK below the EU average and in the 16th place out of the 27 EU countries.

Figure 1

Share of total migrant stock represented by EU migrants 2010

Chart provided by www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk



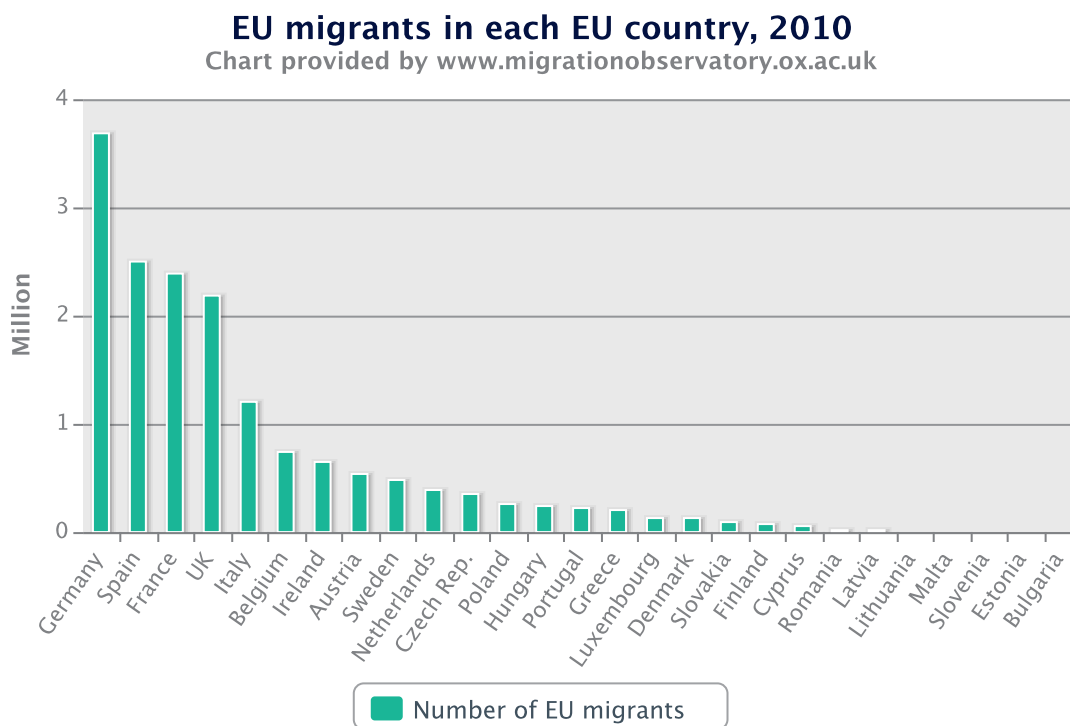
Source: World Bank Bilateral Migration Matrix

The EU countries hosting the largest number of EU migrants in 2010 were Germany, Spain, France, the UK and Italy. The EU countries with the largest number of people in other EU countries were Romania, Poland, Italy, Germany and the UK.

The average number of EU migrants living in EU countries in 2010 was about 622,000 per country. This number masks important differences across EU countries. Figure 2 presents the stock of EU migrants in each EU country. Some countries host over 2 million EU migrants, such as Germany (3.7 million), Spain (2.5 million), France (2.4 million) and the UK (2.2 million). Meanwhile, some countries such as Malta, Slovenia, Estonia and Bulgaria host fewer than 10,000 EU migrants. It is important to remember that these are absolute numbers of migrants that do not tell us about the shares of migrants in the population.

The largest groups of EU migrants in the UK in 2010 were those from Poland (521,446), Ireland (422,569), Germany (299,753) and France (128,010). In total there were about 2.2 million EU migrants living in the UK in 2010.

Figure 2



Source is World Bank. Values for some countries are too small to show in the figure.

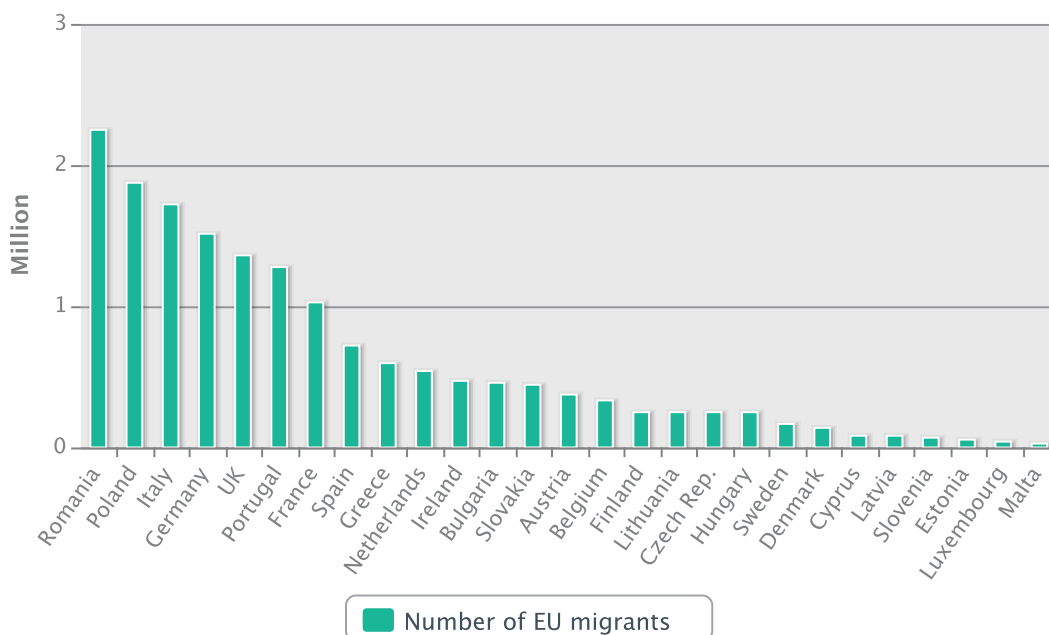
Note: The estimates for Romania, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Slovenia, Estonia and Bulgaria are all smaller than 35,000.

As shown in Figure 3, the EU countries with the largest number of people living in other EU countries in 2010 were Romania (2.3 million), Poland (1.9 million), Italy (1.7 million), Germany (1.5 million) and the UK (1.4 million). This means that, of all EU countries, the UK hosts the 4th largest number of EU migrants, and has sent the 5th largest number of people to other EU countries.

Figure 3

EU countries ranked by people living in other EU countries

Chart provided by www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk



Source: World Bank. Includes EU countries ranked by people living in other EU countries as a whole.

The largest populations of British people living in other EU countries in 2010 were in Spain (with 411,074 British migrants), Ireland (397,465), France (172,836) and Germany (154,826).

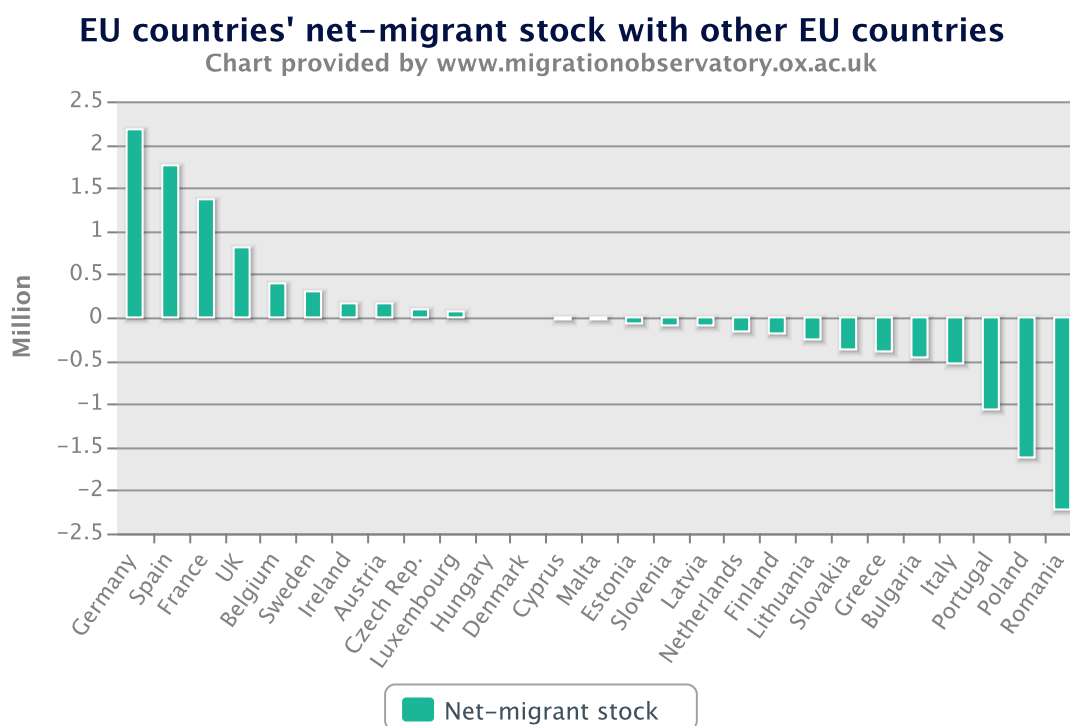
Germany, Spain and France have the largest positive net migrant stocks with the rest of the EU. Romania, Poland and Portugal have the largest negative net migration stocks with the rest of the EU.

Figure 4 shows the net stock of EU migrants across the EU in 2010. The EU-country level net stock is defined as the difference between the number of EU migrants living in a country and the number of people from that country who are currently living in other EU countries (as a whole).

The value for Germany, the leading country in terms of positive net stock, is 2.2 million. This means that there are over 2 million more EU migrants in Germany, than there are Germans living in other EU countries.

Following Germany the countries with the largest positive net migrant stocks with the EU are Spain (1.8 million), France (1.4 million) and the UK (834,000). On the other side of the spectrum, Romania (-2.2 million), Poland (-1.6 million) and Portugal (-1 million) have the largest negative net migration stocks in the EU (i.e. many more people from these countries live in other EU countries, compared to the number of EU migrants that these countries host).

Figure 4

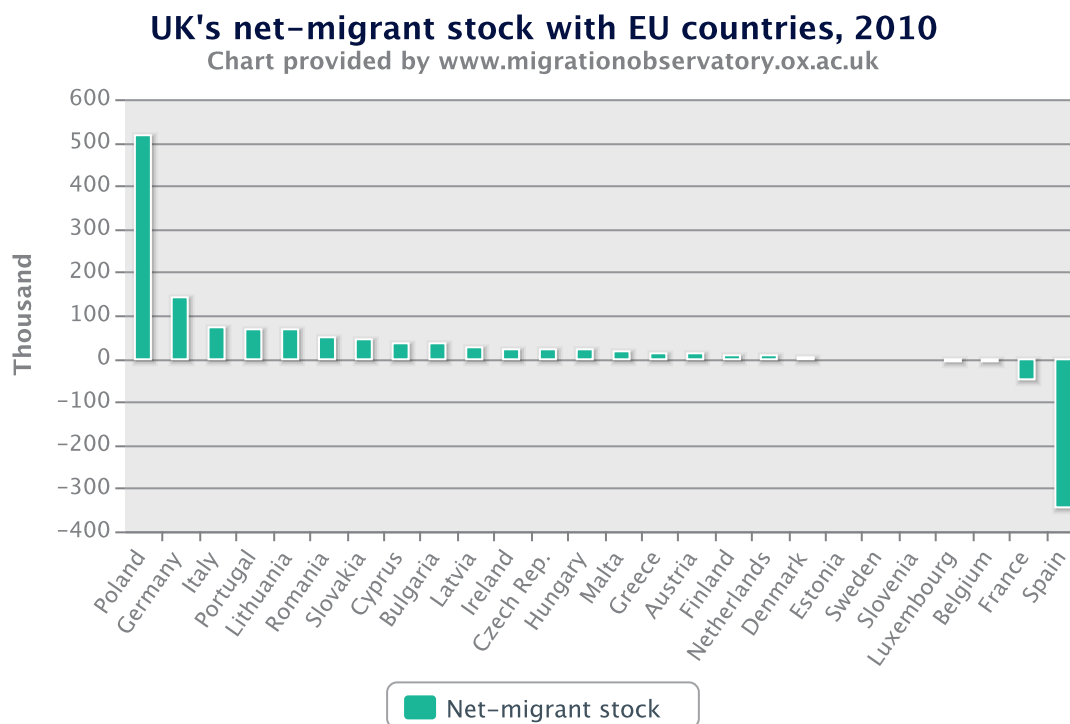


Source is World Bank, 2010. Values for some countries are too small to be visible in the figure.

Note: The estimated net stock value is +2,688 migrants for Hungary and +670 migrants for Denmark.

It is also possible to estimate country-specific net migrant stocks (the net-migration stock between two countries). The UK has a small net migrant stock with most EU countries, with the notable exceptions of Poland and Spain (see Figure 5). The UK-Poland net migration stock is +518,497. This indicates that about half a million more Polish people live in the UK, compared to British people living in Poland. The UK-Spain net migration is -340,299. This suggests that many more British people live in Spain, compared with Spanish people living in the UK.

Figure 5



Source: World Bank, 2010. Values for some countries are too small to be visible in the figure.

Note: The net stock estimates for countries such as Sweden, Slovenia, Luxembourg and Belgium are too small to be visible in Figure 5. These values range from Sweden = 2,193 migrants to Belgium = -2,651 migrants.

Evidence gaps and limitations

Data from the bilateral migration matrix used in this briefing have several limitations and in some cases it was necessary to make strong assumptions. One of these assumptions entails combining information on foreign-nationals with that of foreign-born individuals in some countries to come up with a total estimate of the migrant stock. Moreover, the creators of the database had no bilateral migration data for several countries and had to use several estimation methodologies to “distribute” those migrants across countries. However, this problem relates mainly to developing countries and it is unlikely to affect most EU estimates. Finally, the meaning of migrant stocks for countries which were part of the same state (i.e. the Soviet Union) at some point but are now separate states is not clear as many of these “migrants” were technically born in the same state. This problem could be especially important for some of the countries which have joined the EU during the last decade. See Parsons et al. (2007), Ratha and Shaw (2007), Ozden et al. (2011) for further discussion of the limitations of these data. While recognizing these limitations, this dataset remains the most useful and most widely used in international comparisons of bilateral migrant stocks.

References

- Ozden, C., C.R. Parsons, M. Schiff, and T.L. Walmsley. "Where on Earth is Everybody? The Evolution of Global Bilateral Migration 1960–2000." World Bank Policy Research Working Paper, World Bank, Washington DC, 2011.
- Parsons, C.R., R. Skeldon, T.L. Walmsley, and L.A. Winters. "Quantifying International Migration: a Database of Bilateral Migrant Stocks." World Bank Policy Research Working Paper, World Bank, Washington DC, 2007.
- Ratha, D. and W. Shaw. "South–South Migration and Remittances." World Bank Working Paper, World Bank, Washington DC, 2007

Related Material

- Migration Observatory briefing: Migration Flows of A8 and other EU Migrants to and from the UK
- Migration Observatory briefing: Global International Migrant Stock: The UK in International Comparison
- World Bank: Bilateral Migration and Remittances 2010 Excel datasets

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The Migration Observatory

Based at the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) at the University of Oxford, the Migration Observatory provides independent, authoritative, evidence-based analysis of data on migration and migrants in the UK, to inform media, public and policy debates, and to generate high quality research on international migration and public policy issues. The Observatory's analysis involves experts from a wide range of disciplines and departments at the University of Oxford.



COMPAS

The Migration Observatory is based at the ESRC Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) at the University of Oxford. The mission of COMPAS is to conduct high quality research in order to develop theory and knowledge, inform policy-making and public debate, and engage users of research within the field of migration.

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