

May's reforms must be stopped

From April, non-EU graduates in the UK will have to prove that they're earning £35,000 or more per year in order to stay in the country

By [Ciarán Morrissey](#), Comment Editor (2015/16)

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Image: DFID - UK Department for International Development

From April, non-EU graduates in the UK will have to prove that they're earning £35,000 or more per year in order to stay in the country. The policy is nothing new - it was announced in February 2012, and was one of a raft of pseudo-hardline policies that the government announced to pander to UKIP-Tory swing voters. Yet despite the humiliation of Farage, the collapse of UKIP and the Lib Dems, and Labour's ouroborous-like infighting, the Tories see fit to implement the policy anyway.

So perhaps this isn't a vote-winner, it's a principled effort by a group of ideological conservatives to make the country a better place. If that's the case, then the situation becomes downright frightening.

Despite incessantly banging on about Bulgarians, Romanians (or whatever the EU punchbag du jour is) the aim of this policy is to make it harder for highly educated and highly skilled workers to stay in the country. Perhaps Theresa May genuinely believes the electorate will swallow this. It is difficult to overstate the magnitude of the stupidity here. This is the dishonest rhetoric of a party determined to be seen as tough on freedom of movement.

Why? Firstly, it's a policy only applied to graduates, and so it does nothing to deal with low-or-unskilled immigration, which is both in far greater supply and has far more potential to cause displacement in the economy.

Secondly, it places an extortionate requirement on non-EU nationals to find themselves in very high-paying jobs (and high-paying jobs only) or hop on the plane home.

Thirdly, it will make us insular, isolated, and vindicate our reputation as a bunch of xenophobes. Look around either of York's campuses and you'll find a variety of students from all over the world. Many of them will return to their country of origin after they graduate, but many more will want to stay, to enter into the UK workforce, immigrate here, and become bona fide Brits. It is disgraceful that a Home Secretary desperate to be seen as tough, and to be seen doing something, anything, should deny them this opportunity in order to participate in a political pissing contest.

Not only is this policy beyond incoherent in what it hopes to achieve, it will unfairly privilege those from western, wealthy, white countries (i.e. the EU) over those from the wrong continent, with the wrong skin colour, or from the wrong section of the global economic ladder. Couple it with Prevent (and the inevitable racial profiling this will lead to), and we're heading back to the old internal Tory mantra of 'white face good, black face bad'.

In an increasingly globalised, diverse, multicultural, and connected world, shutting out international graduates from the UK workforce is both socially and economically criminal. It is deeply regressive, unpleasant, and must be challenged.



One comment

theseer

17 Feb '16 at 1:51 pm

Jolly good thing. It'll mean more jobs available for our own intelligent British-born graduates who are still battling to get work in the face of discrimination from hostile snooty employers, who love to downpoint the Brits at any opportunity.

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