IMMIGRATION INTO THE UNITED KINGDOM

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Abstract

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Migration is a process which results in an increase or a decrease of population. When analysing the immigration policy of the United Kingdom, it is important to be aware of two key factors which influenced it: the country's location and its colonial history. As an island, the UK has developed a very strong system of border control while at the same time there is limited control within its borders which can be demonstrated e.g. by the absence of identity cards. The aim of this article is to evaluate immigration into the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland based on available statistical data between 2004 and 2012. The data will be also used for a forecast of development of the numbers of immigrants from different countries and for illustrating possible immigration trends in the future. The article will mainly focus on a question whether in the near future the UK will experience an increase or a decrease in immigration or whether the number of immigrants will stay constant. Convergence analysis will be used to evaluate the data for individual administrative regions at the NUTS II level. The article will also detail numbers of immigrants per 1,000 inhabitants and it will answer a question whether there is convergence or divergence in the number of immigrants among different regions.

Keywords: migration, United Kingdom, statistical methods, forecast, convergence analysis

INTRODUCTION

The United Kingdom is a state in Western Europe. In the past it was the biggest colonial empire in the world but it was not until the 20th century that waves of immigration made it important to research and discuss this topic. The creation of the European Union and the Schengen Area allowed a vast number of people to move freely within its borders. The UK has been an advocate of multiculturalism since the 1960s but at the moment it is questionable whether the number of immigrants will continue to increase or whether the economic crisis and changes in the social security system will cause a decrease in the number of immigrants. Among other currently debated topics are also multiculturalism itself and planned changes in policies concerning ethnic minorities and their integration into the British culture (Held, 2014).

Migration theories started to be developed in more depth in the second half of the 19th century. One of the most influential scholars in the field of history of migration was Ravenstein who formulated the laws of migration. He argued that the biggest number of people moved only within short distances and in stages. If people migrate for a long distance, they usually move into industrial centres. Women tend to migrate for shorter distances while men migrate for longer distances. In the 1920s Thomas developed a concept of disorganisation which states that most migrants lose their primary social ties and they reconstruct or substitute them by new relationships in their new environment. Park details four basic needs of a migrant in the programme of the Chicago School from 1925. They are as follows: a migrant needs a place where they feel safe, they can leave it and they can come back to it, they see it as their home. A migrant needs new stimuli and experiences but also a place where they can rest. A migrant needs respect, status and also a feeling that they belong to a society. Lastly, a migrant needs someone or something to show their affection to, and for the affection to be returned (Uherek, 2005).

Drbohlav and Uherek (2007) define the main types of migration. Migration is caused by ecological, economic, social and political stimuli, and the process can be described as primary, forced, coerced,

voluntary or mass-migration. Primary migration is a result of ecological catastrophes or changes; forced migration is caused by threats of violence; coerced migration means that people are made to migrate against their will; people who migrate voluntarily do so at their own will in order to satisfy their needs; and mass migration can be defined as a process where a large number of people decides to relocate.

There are a lot of different motivations for migration. Among the most important ones are economic reasons which include the ambition to increase the migrant's standard of living or to achieve a level of education which would not be attainable in the country of origin. It can be argued that the majority of migrants are motivated by economic reasons.

Armed conflicts, civil wars, and regimes which do not respect human rights can be classified as political causes of migration. These, however, contribute mainly to an increase in illegal immigration.

The following part of the article will focus on important theories of migration which were developed by prominent scientists who researched the phenomenon, its causes and its laws (Uherek, 2005; Palát, 2012; Palát, 2013):

The theory of push and pull argues that there are forces which push people out of the countries of origin, and on the other hand there are also forces which pull people towards new destinations. Migration only takes place though when these forces reach a certain level of intensity which is depended on external factors as well as individual motivations. Not everyone therefore makes a decision to move. The extent of the migration flow and counter flow is also influenced by conditions in the country of origin and the country of destination.

The neoclassical approach assumes that the distribution of supply and demand of job opportunities in the world is uneven. There are also differences in the wages that employees get for the same type of work because living costs in different countries vary. People therefore decide to migrate in order to maximise their gains.

The theory of dual labour market claims that there are two types of jobs in developed countries. The first type can be described as highly qualified work which is undertaken mainly by citizens of the country. The second type is work which can be dangerous, low paid, strenuous and which does not require a high level of qualification. This is usually undertaken by immigrants because despite the disadvantages, these jobs are attractive for them due to the opportunity to earn much higher wages than when engaging in highly qualified labour in the country of origin.

The human capital model was developed from the neoclassical approach. It agrees that the distribution of supply and demand of labour in the world is uneven but it also adds that migration into a different country can be seen as a major investment for the individual. The model therefore takes into account the dynamics of individual decision-making where everyone evaluates their potential gains and losses based on their individual socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, age, skills, marital status, preferences or expectations. This model therefore explains why certain groups of people or people of certain origins are more likely to participate in migration than others.

The network theory of migration focuses on behaviour of big migrant groups and their strategies for choosing the country of destination. It assumes that migration into the countries of destination concentrates into particular spaces/regions. Migrants take this information into account, and they are likely to move to destinations where there are already others with similar background and ambitions who can help them settle into the new environment and introduce them to local customs, laws, expectations and also opportunities (Massey *et al.*, 2005).

The new economic theory of migration is connected with economic strategies of families, and it sees migration as a result of economic activity of bigger communities. This theory explains behaviour in countries such as China where decisions about migration are based not only on potential earnings but also on economic situation of the family or loss of labour force in the community. It therefore answers the question as to what migration means not only for the migrants themselves but also their surroundings.

The main premise of the world system theory is that the world economy is truly globalised (Dvořáková, 2011). According to Uherek (2005) the theory develops an argument that there are specific relations between the centre and the peripheries. The centre and the peripheries are connected by centrifugal migration flows from the centre to the peripheries and at the same time by centripetal flows of qualified cheap labour from the peripheries into the centre.

The institutional theory of migration focuses on reactions of state and civic institutions to migration flows because in order to be able to migrate, people need assistance with their move and someone to help them to overcome the barriers. State and civic institutions are therefore key in creating an environment where people can either move freely or where migration is restricted because of the barriers which have been put into place.

The Home Office is the department which controls immigration into the UK as well as being in charge of policies to combat terrorism, crime and drug-trafficking. The current attitude of the Home Office is that migration is an inevitable process in the modern world, and if the process is managed well, migration can bring benefits to the country in the form of economic growth and increased profits and productivity (Home Office, 2014; HM Revenue and Customs, 2012; Migration Policy Institute, 2012).

Asylum seekers were defined as a separate group of immigrants by the Nationality Immigration and

Asylum Act from 2002 which introduced a system of accommodation centres for asylum seekers where their movement can be monitored. Access to social benefits was also restricted. The aim of the Act was to safeguard the borders of the UK and to make the acquisition of the British citizenship feel more meaningful. The Act was followed in 2005 by a five-year strategy for managing migration and asylum called "Controlling our borders: Making migration work for Britain" (Home Office, 2014).

Migration of job seekers into the UK is controlled by the system of work permits. To obtain a work permit, an employer is required to make an application on behalf of the new employee and at the same time provide evidence that the position cannot be filled by a British citizen. There are no quotas for immigration at the moment but the number of granted work permits is depended on employers' willingness to engage with the system of proving that they need a foreign national for the particular job. The UK also issues shortage occupation lists which help the state to manage labour shortages in the market. Work permits for shortage occupations are granted for 5 years but immigrants can apply for permanent residency after having worked in these positions for 4 years.

In 2002 the Home Office introduced a Highly Skilled Migrant Programme which allowed highly qualified migrants to enter the labour market without too many barriers because these people were seen as bringing invaluable benefits to British economy, research and development, and the future growth of the country. The programme is based on a points system and applicants are required to pay a processing fee of £ 150. To be included in the programme an applicant needs to achieve at least 65 points out of 220 possible ones. Points are awarded according to criteria such as level of education, work experience and skills, previous earnings or outstanding personal achievements. In 2003 the points system started to take into account the age of applicants (under or over 28 years of age) and the fact whether spouses or partners of applicants can be classed as qualified or not.

Visa applicants in all categories are required to reach a certain number of points before their visa can be granted. Points are awarded for skills, level of education, financial resources available to the individual, knowledge of the English language which can be proved by a score from an official test, a proof of citizenship or a proof of sponsorship in case of work permits.

There were not many immigrants from Europe in England in the 17th and 18th centuries. In the 19th century the number of immigrants from German territories started to increase, with large communities settling in Manchester and Bradford. Germans constituted the second largest minority after Jews in 1891. German migrants were most commonly employed as waiters, civil servants, businessmen and restaurant owners. In the 1920s there were almost 55,000 Germans living in Great Britain, and this continued until the World War I after which people of German origin found it more difficult to integrate into the society and their number decreased to 20,000 (Beaiwood, 1994).

A shortage of labour at the end of the World War II resulted in the government inviting immigrants to take positions of unqualified labourers in industry. The first two groups to settle in the UK were about 160,000 Polish and Italian immigrants. However, this number was still not sufficient for the needs of the job market so the government started to support migration from India and Pakistan where people found it difficult to enter employment. It is estimated that about 10,700 Indians and Pakistanis lived in the United Kingdom in 1955.

As the number of immigrants increased so did the crime rate, which caused British people to protest against immigration. There were protests in a lot of British towns and cities with the white population requiring restrictions in immigration policies. At first, entry into the UK was only allowed to people with British passports. The Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962 was introduced in order to restrict immigration to the UK from Commonwealth countries. About 1.4 million people of non-white origin lived in the UK in 1970 (Baršová and Barša, 2005).

In 1972 about 80,000 people of Asian-African origin were expelled from Uganda and as they were British passport holders, they decided to settle in the UK. In the 1980s strict border controls were introduced in the UK while at the same time there were a lot of political statements about protection of human and minority rights. Work permits became more difficult to obtain as industrial output decreased and the demand for qualified labour increased. At that time, Australians, New Zealanders, South Africans and Americans constituted the biggest groups of immigrants (Beaiwood, 1994).

The development of the European Economic Community, increased integration, and later the establishment of the European Union, encouraged immigration within Europe, especially into Western European states which were economically more stable and offered better living conditions for migrants. Immigration is also closely connected with the enlargement of the Union as this process usually causes changes in immigration and asylum policies and increased movement of people and goods within the EU. The Polish were among the most frequent migrants, and a big number of them immigrated into the UK during the period of economic crisis in Poland.

In 2004 ten new states, mainly from Eastern Europe, joined the Union and the number of migrants started to grow. In 2004 the influx of immigrants was estimated to be 273,000; in 2006 it was nearly half a million. The main sources of migrants were Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Lithuanian and Latvia. Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007 but their access to job markets in other countries was more restricted. During the end

of 20th and the beginning of 21st century the number of illegal immigrants, mainly from Africa and Asia, increased significantly. The main motivation for illegal immigration seems to be the hope for better living standards (Fiala and Pitrová, 2009).

Last but not least, the British public will vote in the general election on 7 May 2015, and immigration and its control (mainly when it comes to illegal immigrants and immigrants from Eastern Europe) is among the most discussed topics by all the major political parties in the country.

The levels of immigration can be also influenced by a number of other factors the analysis of which would lead to this article exceeding its word limit. The forecasts and prognoses in the article are therefore based on economic theories of migration only.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

At first the concept of convergence was only used in connection with economic growth (GDP and its development) but since the 1980s and 1990s, measuring convergence has become common practice in other fields as well. Convergence is a process when two values move towards the same level over time i.e. the difference between them is becoming less pronounced (Žďárek, 2006). In contrast to convergence, divergence is a process when two values/objects become more and more dissimilar. Objects can, however, show individual attributes which are then described as disparities. Disparities can have both positive and negative influences (Minařík, Dufek and Sojková, 2009).

A demographic projection can be defined as a sum of calculations which estimates the future development of a population. Projections serve as models which show how a population will develop over time according to certain predicted levels of birth rate, death rate and migration. Projections which try to provide as reliable estimates of future demographic developments as possible are called population prognoses (Klufová and Poláková, 2010).

The data for this article was obtained from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) which in regular intervals publishes estimates of the number of inhabitants in the UK, the number of immigrants in different parts of the UK and nationalities of these minorities. This data is available for the period between 2004 and 2012 and the first part of 2013; the article will, however, focus only on data where full years are available i.e. until the end of 2012. The ONS provides data about the United Kingdom as a whole and also about NUTS III regions. Data for NUTS II regions is not available and it has thus been calculated based on information about NUTS III regions. Numbers of immigrants in thousands were also converted to numbers of immigrants per thousand inhabitants during the period between 2004 and 2012. Origins of individual minorities are only given in the context of the UK as a whole

because this data is not available for individual NUTS regions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Until 1982 the number of emigrants exceeded the number of immigrants as a lot of British people moved abroad after the World War II. In the 1960s and the 1970s migrant workers who came to the UK to supply labour for textile factories were the biggest group of immigrants. At that time the number of immigrants was approximately 200,000 a year while the number of emigrants reached nearly 300,000, which equals 133% of the former number. As the economic situation in the UK improved in the 1990s, its inhabitants stopped emigrating in such numbers. Since 1994 the number of immigrants has been gradually rising. A significant increase in immigration was witnessed at the turn of the century, and especially in 2004 after the EU's enlargement towards the East (EUROSTAT, 2014). At that time about 500,000 immigrants came to Britain every year. The most common origins of the immigrants were Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Irish, German, Polish and other European nationalities. In the last ten years, the number of people of Irish origin has decreased significantly as the British job market stopped being attractive for Irish people who therefore decided to emigrate back to Ireland or they moved to Australia, the USA, Canada or other countries. There has been a large increase in the number of Polish immigrants, especially between 2004 and 2009 which was caused by the poor economic situation in Poland and also by the opening of the job markets after the EU enlargement. Since 2009 this trend has slowed down due to the British pound decreasing in value and the economic situation in Poland improving. Nevertheless, the Polish still constitute the second biggest group of immigrants in the United Kingdom (UK National Statistics, 2013).

At present, the number of immigrants is higher than the number of emigrants. The number of migrants as a whole reached its peak between 2008 and 2010. This was caused by globalisation and the decision of some British people to study and work abroad in order to gain valuable experience. At the same time, the UK became an attractive country for people from abroad as a good place to work or study. The financial crisis contributed to the decrease of migration. As unemployment rose, there were some protests against immigration while at the same time British people started to save more and became more cautious which decreased emigration mainly to the USA, Canada and Australia.

The highest number of British inhabitants as well as immigrants is concentrated in the South East, in London, and in the North West where there are important metropolitan areas, international airports and well-known universities. London and its surroundings has the biggest number of immigrants, while the smallest number of immigrants can be

Administrative region	
C1	Tees Valley and Durham
C2	Northumberland and Tyne and Wear
D1	Cumbria
D6	Cheshire
D3	Greater Manchester
D4	Lancashire
D7	Merseyside
E1	East Riding and North Lincolnshire
E2	North Yorkshire
E3	South Yorkshire
E4	West Yorkshire
F1	Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire
F2	Leicestershire, Rutland and Northamptonshire
F3	Lincolnshire
G1	Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire
G2	Shropshire and Staffordshire
G3	West Midlands
H1	East Anglia
H2	Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire
H3	Essex
I1	Inner London
I2	Outer London
J1	Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, and Oxfordshire
J2	Surrey, East and West Sussex
J3	Hampshire and the Isle of Wight
J4	Kent
K1	Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Bristol/Bath area
K2	Dorset and Somerset
K3	Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly
K4	Devon
L1	West Wales and The Valleys
L2	East Wales
M2	Eastern Scotland
M3	South Western Scotland
M5	North Eastern Scotland
M6	Highlands and Islands
N0	Northern Ireland

1: *Administrative regions of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland at the NUTS II level*
Source: The map was produced by the authors based on data from the Office of National Statistics

found in the North East. The population density in the North East is lower in general though, with only about 2.5 million British people living here (Gordon, Scanlon and Travers, 2009).

Agricultural land covers big parts of Scotland and Northern Ireland. The population density is lower and the climate is worse, and most people are therefore locals as immigrants usually do not see these areas as attractive destinations. On the whole the number of immigrants from developing countries and from countries which have recently joined the EU is increasing.

The biggest groups of immigrants originate from Africa (Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Somalia), tropical areas such as Jamaica, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Malaysia, and from Eastern and North Eastern Europe. The United Kingdom is

divided into 37 statistical units according to NUTS II (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics). The division into NUTS region is typical for EU member states to allow for analysis of economic indicators, distribution of resources from structural funds, evaluation of regional policies and collection of statistical information.

The smallest increase in the number of immigrants between 2004 and 2012 was recorded in the regions of Cumbria, Cheshire, Tees Valley and Durham, and Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. There are no important cities or travel junctions here, and these regions are also relatively far away from important centres of services and industry where the biggest number of people work. At the same time, some of these regions border with metropolitan districts which attract large groups of immigrants

from all over the world. Greater Manchester, South Yorkshire, the West Midlands and Outer London experienced the highest increase in numbers of immigrants due to their accessibility, especially by low-cost airlines, and a big number of opportunities for unqualified labour in agriculture, industry and services.

Greater Manchester with the city of Manchester represent a centre of continuously developing industry, trade and higher education. The region attracts a lot of immigrants as it offers a big number of jobs as well as good opportunities for education. Sheffield in South Yorkshire together with Wolverhampton, the Black Country and Solihull form the second biggest conurbation in the United Kingdom. The West Midlands is an easily accessible region in the heart of England with the city of Birmingham which is also one of the favourite destinations for immigrants. The region is known for its agriculture, and a lot of immigrants, mainly from Eastern Europe, work at farms here.

The suburban ring of boroughs around the centre of the capital is called Outer London. High density of immigrants living in this area can be explained by the fact that living costs are lower here combined with an easy access to the City. Immigrants of different origins also concentrate in different parts of London.

Looking at the values of the coefficient of determination and the direction of the line of regression, it is evident that there is a strong divergence in the number of immigrants per 1,000 inhabitants in the individual NUTS II regions in the United Kingdom. The value of the coefficient of determination is higher than 90%. It is therefore possible to argue that this trend is significant and that individual regions diverge in time when it comes to the number of immigrants settling there.

Strong divergence between regions is influenced by NUTS II regions I1 and I2, Inner and Outer London. Values of the coefficient of growth in these two areas were not immediately obvious when compared to other regions but logarithms of the initial and final state were significantly higher and differed from other regions as did the logarithm of average growth. This was caused by the fact that London represents an important centre which offers a lot of job opportunities for both unqualified and qualified immigrants. In addition, a lot of people study here or attend different vocational courses. Last but not least, London is much more populated than other cities in the UK. It is therefore possible to argue than Inner and Outer London can be classed as disparities.

Most London boroughs have a similar coefficient of growth; the exceptions being Havering, Bexley and Bromley which are quiet locations with a small number of immigrants where there are no industrial localities and where parks cover relatively large areas. This type of land use cannot be found in such an extent in other parts of London.

Based on the information described in the article so far, it is evident that the highest number of immigrants is concentrated in London which has just under 330 immigrants per 1,000 inhabitants. The West Midlands is another important destination for immigrants after London. Municipalities near London are also popular places for immigrants to settle in; especially the area north of London which has approximately 100–150 immigrants per 1,000 inhabitants. On the other hand, the lowest density of immigrants can be found in areas with no important centres of agriculture, industry or services. In these regions, there are about 30–50 immigrants per 1,000 inhabitants. The most popular destinations for immigrants in London are Harrow,
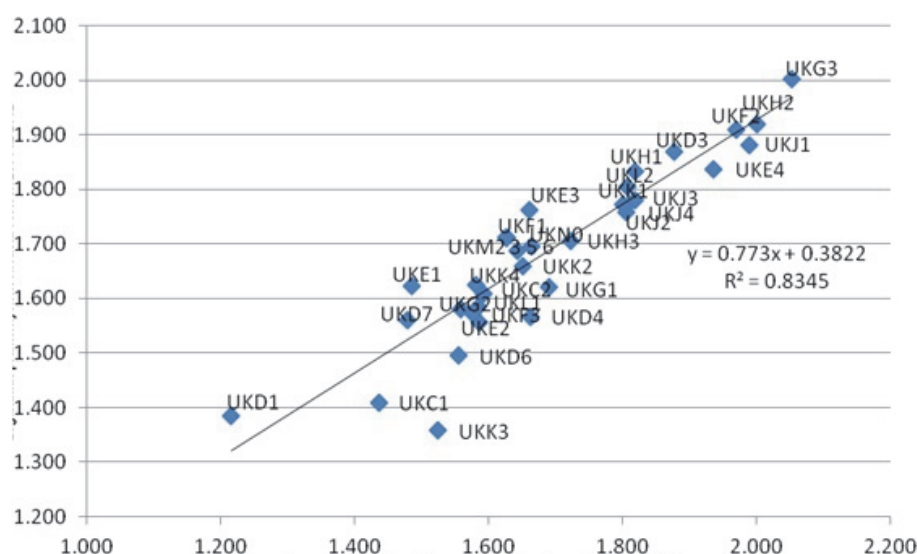
2: β-*convergence of the number of immigrants per 1,000 inhabitants in the United Kingdom between 2004 and 2012*
Source: Own calculations based on the data for individual regions
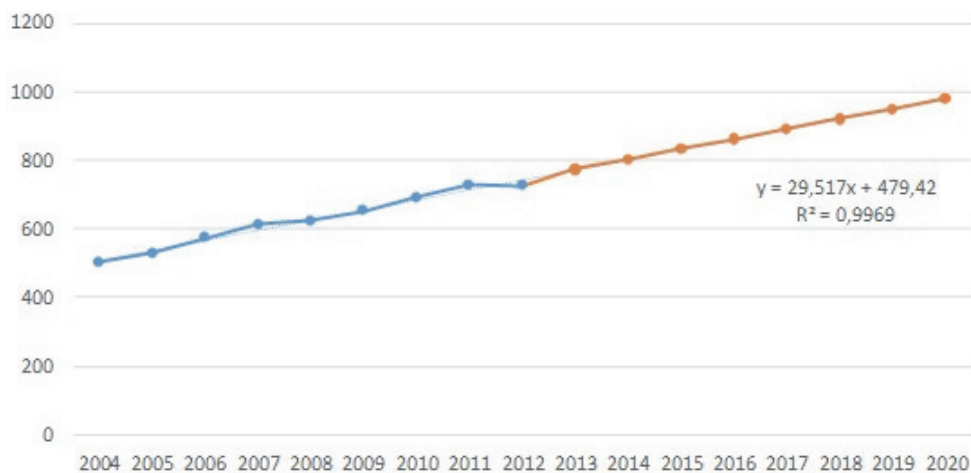
3: *Forecast of the development of the number of Indians in the UK until 2020, linear trend*
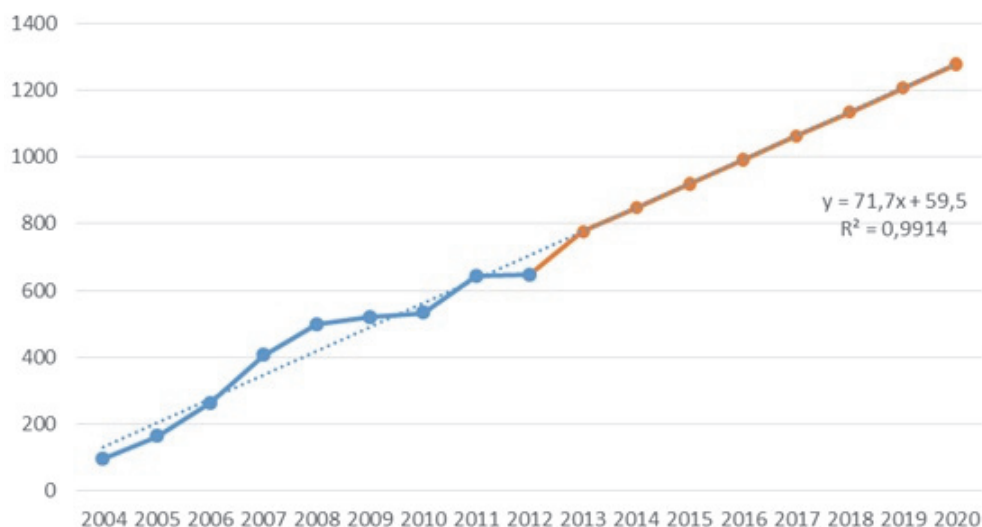Source: UK National Statistics; forecast developed by the authors

Brent, Westminster and Kingston upon Thames. Brent is the most multicultural part of London with the biggest number of people of Indian origin living there. A very high proportion of people settled in Harrow and Brent can be described as belonging to the middle class. Westminster, despite the fact that it is the centre of London with luxurious shops and very expensive houses, is also known for a high proportion of working class people living here. The situation in Kingston upon Thames is similar to Westminster. The smallest number of immigrants can be found in the suburban areas in the East such as Bromley, Bexley and Havering with their quieter style of living, higher rents and fewer job opportunities.

While in 2004 about 0.5 million of immigrants from India lived in the UK, their population in 2010 was nearly 700,000, and in 2012 nearly 750,000. Indians form the biggest group of immigrants in the

United Kingdom and they also submit the highest number of applications for the British citizenship and work permits. According to the forecast the number of Indians in the UK will continue to grow, and it could reach 1 million in 2020. This will, however, depend on the economic situation of the country and also on the system of granting work permits to migrants. An increase in the number of immigrants can also be influenced by an economic crisis, strength of the British pound and social policies.

Fig. 4 shows a forecast of the development of the number of Polish people in the United Kingdom until 2020. The Polish minority increased significantly after the EU enlargement in 2004 with the opening of the British job market to Polish immigrants who decided to leave Poland due to the very difficult economic situation in the country. In 2004 around 100,000 Polish people lived in the UK.
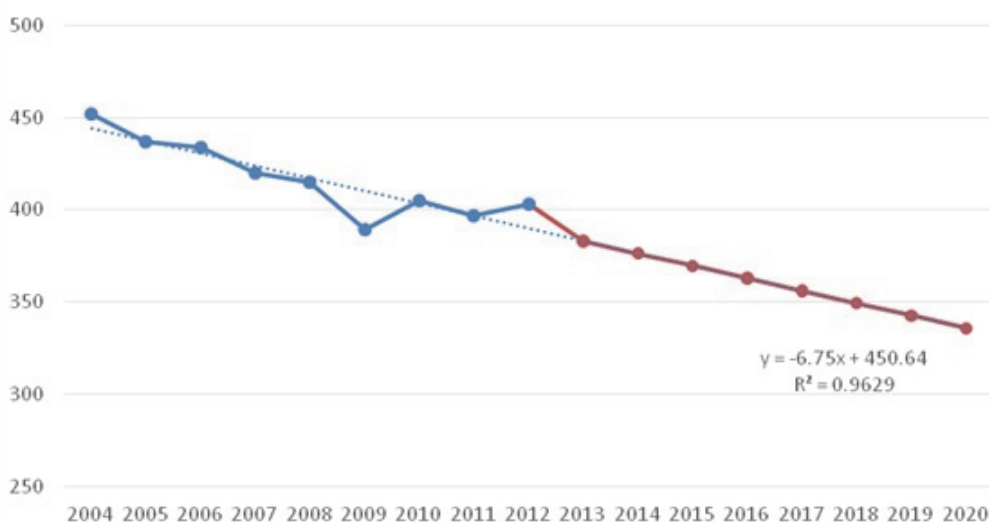

4: *Forecast of the development of the number of people of Polish origin in the UK until 2020, linear trend*
Source: UK National Statistics; forecast developed by the authors
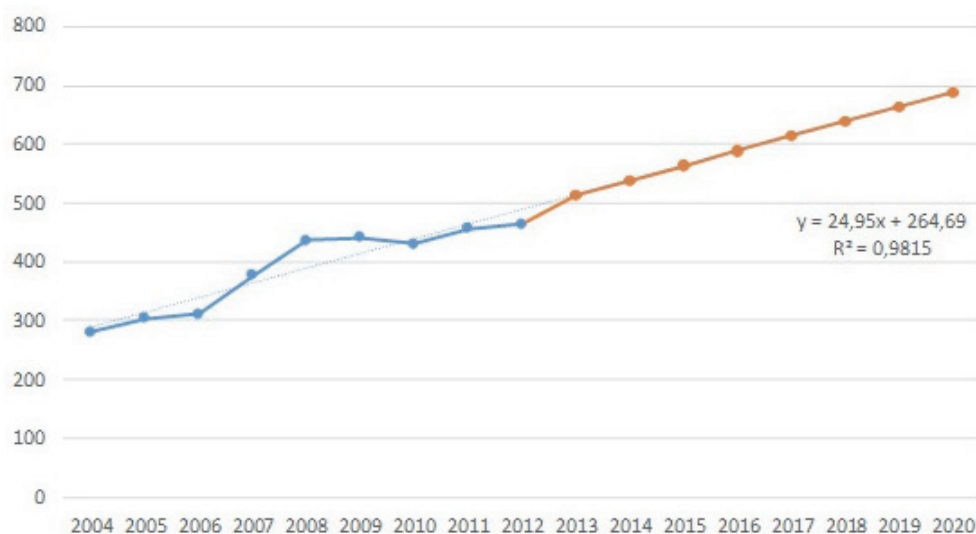
5: *Forecast of the development of the number of Pakistanis in the UK until 2020, linear trend*
Source: UK National Statistics; forecast developed by the authors

6: *Forecast of the development of the number of Irish people in the UK until 2020, linear trend*
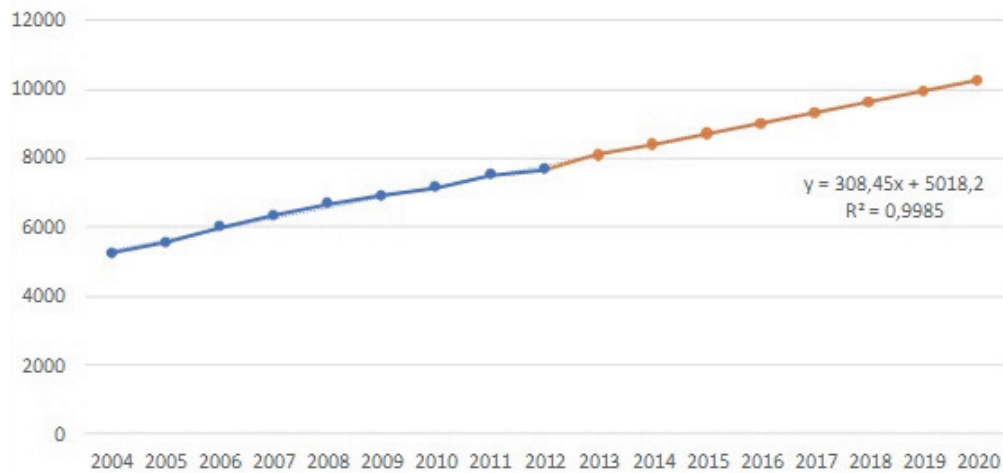Source: UK National Statistics; forecast developed by the authors

The number increased to over 500,000 in 2010, and over 646,000 in 2012. According to the forecast, the number of people of Polish origin in the UK will continue to grow until 2020 by which time it may reach 1,278 million. If the estimate is right, the Poles will become the biggest group of immigrants in the UK by 2020, displacing the Indian minority from the first place which they have held for a long time.

According to the forecast, the number of immigrants from Pakistan will continue to grow, and if a linear trend is used, their population in the United Kingdom will reach 689,000 by 2020. Pakistani people are the third largest group of immigrants in the UK. Their number has been growing since 2004 but the speed of the increase has slowed down recently. Similarly to immigrants from India, Pakistani people are very interested in

job opportunities and they apply for work permits. Their future stay in the United Kingdom therefore depends on the economic situation and levels of employment.

The Irish formed the biggest group of immigrants in 2004 but their number has decreased significantly since then as they started to return to Ireland or emigrate elsewhere. According to the forecast which uses a linear trend as its base, the number of Irish people will continue to decrease to fewer than 340,000 in 2020.

Fig. 7 shows the estimated development of the number of all immigrants in the United Kingdom calculated by extrapolation of time series for the following 6 years. The data about the number of immigrants was obtained from the Office of National Statistics. Based on the coefficient of correlation,

7: *Forecast of the development of the number of immigrants in the UK until 2020, linear trend*
Source: UK National Statistics; forecast developed by the authors
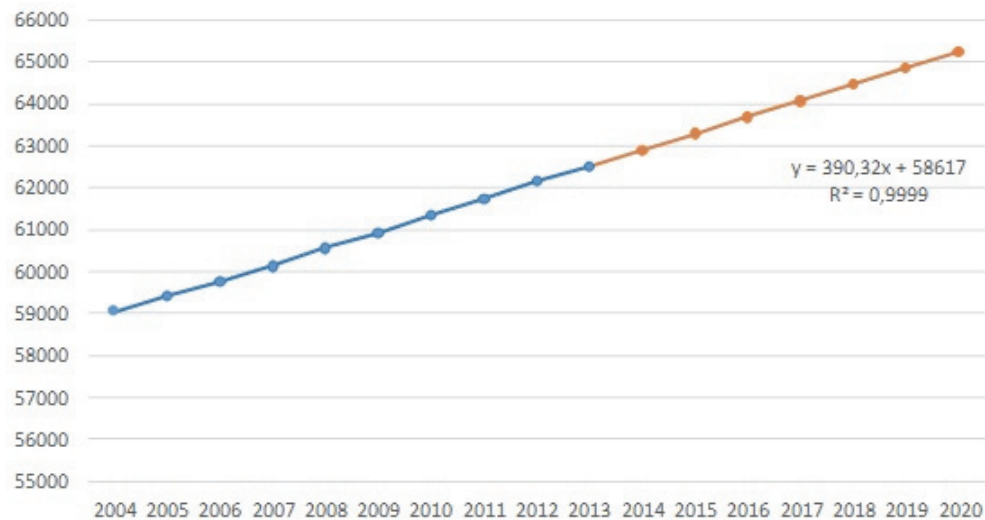
8: *Forecast of the development of the number of inhabitants in the UK until 2020, linear trend*
Source: UK National Statistics; forecast developed by the authors

a linear trend was selected as the most suitable for the given data (R^2 = 0.9985). As illustrated by Fig. 7, the number of immigrants in the United Kingdom will continue to grow and it may reach 10 million in 2020, which will constitute one sixth of the whole population. It is possible to estimate that if the economic and security situation in the UK stays stable, the growth in the number of immigrants may be maintained after 2020.

The population of the United Kingdom will continue to grow, and it could reach more than 65 million in 2020. Immigration will contribute significantly to this trend as it grows faster than the natural population increase. If this trend continues into the future after 2020, it is possible to argue that the United Kingdom may become the most populous country of the European Union in the long term.

The concept of safe immigration advocates the need to increase awareness among people of immigration as a global trend which will be a driving force of modern societies in the future while at the same time it will be important for societies to maintain their languages and customs for future generations and integrate immigrants.

CONCLUSION

The number of immigrants in the United Kingdom has been increasing since 2004. The countries which are the main sources of migrants such as India, Pakistan or Poland are still experiencing growth of their populations. The number of immigrants from Africa is also growing, mainly from countries such as Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Somalia. The UK is also an attractive country for migrants from the Caribbean, especially for people from Jamaica. Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Malaysia are also among countries from which people emigrate to the United Kingdom. On the other hand, immigration from Ireland is decreasing and so is the number of Irish people living in the UK.

It may be argued that the number of immigrants will continue to increase in the future if the economy stays stable with low inflation and unemployment. It is also possible to predict that the number of immigrants of Romanian and Bulgarian origin may increase in the future. Every enlargement of the European Union is likely to cause a new wave of immigration within its borders. However, states of the European Union are not the only destinations for migrants, and there are other countries and regions which may become attractive for immigrants if their economies are viewed as being stable and growing. Norway and Iceland can be among these new destinations. Migration for better employment opportunities is influenced by economic situation, and it can therefore change significantly in the next few years.

Convergence analysis based on the data between 2004 and 2012 shows a significant divergence between different NUTS II regions of the UK. It is usually possible to predict that less-populated regions will form exceptions; however, significant divergence over 90% proves that there are very important differences between regions in the development of the number of immigrants in the United Kingdom. There is also divergence in the number of immigrants per 1,000 inhabitants. The convergence analysis indicates that the following regions can be classed as disparities: London, and also to a certain extent the West Midlands, Cumbria, Tees Valley and Durham, and Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

According to the forecast of future trends in immigration, the number of immigrants will continue to increase until 2020 when the total number of immigrants can reach one sixth of the total population of the UK. The country will also remain a popular destination for immigrants from all over the world if its economic, political and security situation stays stable.

It is possible to argue that there may be an increase in the number of immigrants entering the UK from Africa and Latin America, and there may be a higher number of illegal immigrants from these regions. On the other hand, immigration from the countries which joined the European Union in 2004 may decrease while there may be another wave of immigration from states which will join the Union in the future.

Convergence analysis illustrates a trend in the development of individual administrative regions in the United Kingdom. It is possible to argue that the trend became more significant in the period between 2004 and 2012. If we estimate the highest possible divergence into the future, it may be argued that some administrative regions will become very important centres for immigration. This is caused by the fact that immigrants concentrate into areas where people of the same origin already live. They often assume that it will be easier to enter the country and start their life in a place where they can live with members of their extended family or at least with people of the same origin. It is important to be aware of these trends in those particular regions and to try and integrate immigrants into the British society.

Based on the estimates of the developments in the numbers of inhabitants and immigrants, the United Kingdom may become the biggest country in Europe in the next ten years. The population growth is caused by the growing birth rate among the British population but also by an increasing number of immigrants whose birth rate is high. Family support by the state will also play an important role.

The United Kingdom will stay a major destination for immigrants unless the government implements restrictions on immigration policy or there is a significant security threat or economic instability. It is, however, not expected that the increase in the number of immigrants will be as high as when the job market opened to ten new EU member states in 2004. The increasing number of immigrants together with a growing British population should not pose a problem though.

It is important to highlight the fact that individual regions of the United Kingdom diverge in time which can cause problems for immigrants as well as British citizens. This process could lead to emergence of separate cultures in different localities, and these cultures can then start to request special rights, recognition or even independence. It is therefore important to educate both British citizens and immigrants themselves about the topic.

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