

News story: Restrictions on Croatian workers to expire in June

Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes made the announcement in a Written Ministerial Statement to Parliament.

Legally, the UK could only extend the controls for a final 2 years if there was clear evidence that removing the controls would lead to a serious labour market disturbance. The Government has considered the evidence and with unemployment at near record lows, employment of UK nationals at near record highs and the Eurozone and Croatia forecast to grow strongly over the next 2 years, concluded the economic case for an extension could not be made.

When Croatia joined the EU in 2013, the UK and other member states were able to restrict the access that Croatian citizens had to their labour markets for a maximum of 7 years. The UK is one of a few EU countries (Austria, Slovenia and the Netherlands) which applies such measures. The restrictions have meant that, unless an exemption applied, Croatians needed permission from the Home Office to work in the UK.

Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes said:

This decision has not been taken lightly, but after careful consideration, we have concluded that there is not enough evidence to satisfy the legal requirements to extend the controls for the final 2 year period.

Net migration of EU citizens has fallen in the last year by 75,000 and since joining the EU in 2013 only around a few thousand Croatians have moved to the UK. Estimates suggest there are below 10,000 Croatian in the UK and by comparison, in 2009 at the same point of transitional controls for Romanian and Bulgarian workers there were around 57,000 Romanians and 35,000 Bulgarians living in the UK, according to the Office for National Statistics.

The time-limited restrictions to member states' labour markets were provided for under the Treaty of Accession 2011 between Croatia and the EU and can be applied for five years, plus an additional two years if required to protect the member state's labour market from serious disturbance.

Under the UK's application of the restrictions, Croatian partners and spouses of British nationals or other nationals settled in the UK are exempt, as are Croatian citizens who have worked in the UK for 12 months with the appropriate authorisation.

Further information can be found in the [guidance for Croatian nationals on working in the UK](#).