

PRESS RELEASE**Migration: Chambers call for restrictions to be lifted**

Commenting on today's European Commission's report on opening the West to Eastern European workers, EUROCHAMBRES calls on Member State governments to lift the restrictions placed on the migration of workers from the new EU members.

Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary General of EUROCHAMBRES, said: *"Free movement of workers within the EU is a key element in promoting flexible labour markets and addressing Europe-wide skills gaps. We hope the restrictions to free movement will be removed: this would not only benefit a vast majority of enterprises and citizens, but also respect the fundamental nature of the European Union."*

Such restrictions were put in place after enlargement amid fears that huge numbers of workers would flock to the West. However, Mr Abruzzini argued: *"Fears of a massive influx of workers from the east have not been proved. In those Member States where no restrictions were originally imposed – namely the UK, Ireland and Sweden – Chambers report that the experience has been positive for business and that these workers have made an important contribution to filling gaps in the labour market."*

Additionally, Commission figures show that flows of workers have been rather limited to date. The Commission report concludes that workers from the EU10 helped to relieve labour market shortages and contributed to better economic performance in Europe. Evidence also suggests that those countries which chose to impose restrictions may also have faced undesirable side-effects, such as higher levels of undeclared work or illegal migration.

Beware brain drain

One important concern however is the potential 'brain-drain' from the east to the west as skilled workers are attracted by higher wages. EUROCHAMBRES calls on the Commission to examine new measures to address this issue to ensure that the competitiveness of the EU10 is not negatively affected by the increased labour mobility.

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