EEA Migration Trends

Please provide evidence on the characteristics (e.g. types of jobs migrants perform; skill levels, etc) of EEA migrants in your particular sector/local area/region. How do these differ from UK workers? And from non-EEA workers?

EEA migrants account for 14% of our current UK workforce. There is no distinction between EEA migrants and UK employees. We employ EEA workers across all disciplines.

To what extent are EEA migrants seasonal; part-time; agency-workers; temporary; short-term assignments; intra-company transfers; self-employed? What information do you have on their skill levels? To what extent do these differ from UK workers and non-EEA workers?

EEA migrants are hired on the same basis as UK employees, that is to say, on full time permanent basis. This is different to non-EEA migrants who are hired on fixed term contracts in line with the duration of their work authorisation in the UK.
The skill levels of the EEA migrants are the same as our UK employees.

Are there any relevant sources of evidence, beyond the usual range of official statistics, that would allow the MAC to get a more detailed view of the current patterns of EEA migration, especially over the last year?

19% of our new hires in 2017 were EEA Nationals.

Have the patterns of EEA migration changed over time? What evidence do you have showing your employment of EEA migrants since 2000? And after the Brexit referendum? Are these trends different for UK workers and non-EEA workers?

The patterns of EEA migration we can identify are those that co-incide with patterns of economic downturn in certain countries. For example in recent years we have seen a higher rate of employees originating from Greece and Spain.
Since the Brexit vote we have noticed a decrease in applications from the EU in certain offices (those outside London in particular).
Additional trends we can confirm are higher attrition amongst our EEA migrant staff; some of this is attributable to Brexit fears and some of it is attributable to the devaluation of the pound. Fewer people from EEA are applying for roles currently.

Have you conducted any analysis on the future trends of EEA migration, in particular in the absence of immigration controls?

AECOM needs to continue to have access to top talent. We operate in a shortage market so the competition for talent is huge. The talent that doesn’t exist is across the spectrum: quantity surveyors, project managers, civil, structural and mechanical engineers, architects and planners. The talent that comes from the EEA is fantastic and we need diversity to continue to deliver as a business. As a business our success is driven by our ability to be innovative and create solutions for our clients’ problems. Having teams made up of people from different cultural and geographical backgrounds and upbringings leads to diverse thinking which in turn leads to innovation and creativity.
Have you made any assessment of the impact of a possible reduction in the availability of EEA migrants (whether occurring naturally or through policy) as part of your workforce? What impact would a reduction in EEA migration have on your sector/local area/region? How will your business/sector/area/region cope? Would the impacts be different if reductions in migration took place amongst non-EEA migrants? Have you made any contingency plans?

We will struggle if we cannot recruit the same numbers as before. And we are therefore mindful of continuing to invest in our talent pipeline. We are trying to grow our own talent and we have increased our numbers of grads year on year. In FY 17 we hired 380 graduates compared to 330 the previous year.

However our business will cope because we can move work to different locations with relative ease. We already have a model of using our Global Design Centres in India, Poland and elsewhere to work alongside our local teams to deliver projects. We will potentially escalate our efforts to use these teams if our access to certain talent dries up.

Cost of work permits will not deter us from hiring the best talent. Peaks and troughs of workloads cause us a problem. We always run busy therefore a new job always adds extra pressure. We would very much like to see reduced work permit processing times going forward.

Recruitment Practices, Training & Skills

Please provide evidence on the methods of recruitment used to employ EEA migrants. Do these methods differ from those used to employ UK and non-EEA workers? What impact does this have on UK workers? Have these methods changed following the Brexit referendum?

Recruitment methods do not differ. We conduct recruitment roadshows in many European countries as well as within the UK.

Do recruitment practices differ by skill-type and occupation?

We would use milk rounds to recruit grads but would actively target (head-hunt) individuals for senior key positions.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of employing EEA workers? Have these changed following the Brexit referendum result?

The advantages are the same as they are for UK workers. We really just want to hire the best talent and to us if that talent is a UK person that’s great but if the top talent is an EEA migrant then that is also great.

There are no disadvantages to hiring top talent and this has not changed since the referendum.

To what extent has EEA and non-EEA migration affected the skills and training of the UK workers?

The same training is provided to all staff regardless of where they come from.

How involved are universities and training providers in ensuring that the UK workforce has the skills needed to fill key roles/roles in high demand in your sector? Do you have plans to increase this involvement in the future?
We’re doing all we can across the business to make the most of the funds we are required to pay through the Skills Levy Charge. As an overall scheme, the Apprenticeship levy provides a great incentive to the business to train and develop employees from education level 3 (post 16) all the way through the Masters level (level 7).

The main areas of study our employees will access are civil engineering, building services and surveying. At the moment, these are mainly at level 3 (NVQ) and level 6 (degree apprenticeships).

The levy does present some challenges, as with any scheme in its early infancy. Currently, only a (relative) handful of college and university courses have been approved for funding through the levy. The approval process is a long and involved one. The great news is that AECOM has taken a seat at the table (alongside our main competitors) in regards to the input into this work, particularly in the civils area through the membership of the Trailblazer group for this area. We are also in the early stages of the Trailblazer for the Environment standard.

Another substantial challenge the levy presents is that any student on a levy funded course must spend 20% of their time in work undertaking off-the-job training. This level of training input, although very much welcomed by the business as a commitment to the development of AECOM’s employees, does present challenges to the pressure on business utilisation rates.

We have 70 employees either on or about to join levy funded courses at various levels and disciplines, the majority are civil engineers from transportation and QS apprentices. Their level of study ranges from level 3 to 6.

How well aware are you of current UK migration policies for non-EEA migrants? If new immigration policies restrict the numbers of low-skilled migrants who can come to work in the UK, which forms of migration into low-skilled work should be prioritised? For example, the current shortage occupation list applies to high skilled occupations; do you think this should be expanded to cover lower skill levels?

We have an in-house Global Mobility team who are fully up to speed on UK migration policies. Our employees do not fall into the low-skilled category. We would like to see all engineering roles added to the shortage occupation list as it is acknowledge universally the UK has a shortage of engineers across all disciplines.

It will take at least five years minimum for the skills levy to have a positive impact so the shortage occupation list should be expanded immediately for at least five years. We will then have a better pipeline of engineers coming through in the future.