



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

RESEARCH

EU citizens living in Wales: community integration, equality of opportunity and equality of outcome (summary)

This research aims to explore the opportunities and outcomes of EU citizens in Wales across different domains and identify areas for improving integration.

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1. Introduction and study aims

The Welsh Government, having recognised the need for ensuring migrant communities in Wales are able to understand their rights and services, commissioned Alma Economics to explore the opportunities and outcomes of EU citizens living in Wales and identify areas for improving integration. This research is part of the EU Citizens Rights (EUCR) project, which aims to encourage EU citizens to remain in Wales, as well as to ensure that EU citizens have access to appropriate advice and that they are protected from exploitation and exclusion.

Due to limited research on the integration of EU citizens in Wales, additional work was essential to understand the inequalities and barriers to integration of EU migrants in the Welsh community.

2. Methodology

The current study uses quantitative analysis of key indicators to evaluate the integration of the EU-27 born population living in Wales, covering four broad

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categories:

- employment
- housing
- health and benefits
- language skills and national identity

The report also includes qualitative research with EU citizens, local governmental officials and organisations providing support and services to EU citizens living in Wales. The qualitative analysis aims to explore the wider integration process, considering areas beyond those analysed in the quantitative section, and to examine the consistency between published data and the lived experiences of a sample of individuals born in EU-27 countries living in Wales.

3. Key findings

Lack of access to information on public services

The research has identified that the most prevalent barrier to equality of opportunity/outcomes for EU citizens living in Wales is a lack of accessible information. Not having appropriate information might prevent EU citizens from successfully integrating (as measured by the Home Office Indicators for Integration), such as being unable to register with a GP or to apply for benefits for which they are eligible. Community leaders in EU communities play an important role in helping people get accurate information and most importantly, integrate.

EU citizens are often over-qualified

EU citizens, especially those from EU-8^[1] and EU-2^[2] countries, are concentrated in jobs for which they are over-qualified. One explanation for this is that employers do not understand qualifications from EU-8 and EU-2 countries, perhaps due to the lack of awareness about qualifications conversion.

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[1] EU-8 countries are those that entered the EU in 2004, including Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia

[2] EU-2 countries include Bulgaria and Romania

Language barriers

Key stakeholders described that many individuals from EU-8 and EU-2 countries are not proficient in speaking English, even after living in Wales for an extended period. This group, who are disproportionately in low-skilled jobs, often do not have time to attend English language courses as they frequently work long hours. An inability to communicate proficiently in English has a number of implications for EU citizens in Wales, including limiting their opportunities in the labour market, their access to healthcare and their understanding of the benefits system.

4. Policy recommendations and conclusions

The research concludes that policy actions should focus on all EU-27 citizens living in Wales. While it is important to provide support to those from all EU-27 nations, there is a heightened need for additional support measures specifically targeting immigrants who have recently arrived, as well as people from EU-8 and EU-2 countries living in Wales.

Help EU citizens who settle in Wales to feel welcome

We recommend the Welsh Government to run a welcome campaign, similar to the 'London is Open' campaign, to send the message that EU citizens are welcome and valued in Wales. We recommend the welcome campaign to aim to target the full spectrum of EU citizens living in Wales, from long term immigrants who have settled in Wales to relatively new arrivals. The campaign could have the additional goal of encouraging positive sentiment among the Welsh population towards EU citizens by outlining their contributions to Wales. Since the campaign objective is to reach people from many demographics, it should

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have a broad approach including billboards, radio/TV messages and social media.

Better access to information

The Welsh Government should consider building an online portal providing i) a brief overview of and ii) links to official websites on all aspects of integration for EU citizens. The portal should be a one-stop shop for information for new arrivals to Wales. The portal could be structured around the Home Office Indicators of Integration, e.g. benefits, healthcare, education, rights and responsibilities. For each area, the portal could include a concise explanation about how each service works in Wales in all EU languages.

Increased support and a more active role for organisations working to improve integration

There are a number of organisations operating in Wales with the aim to support people from the EU settling in Wales, such as Settled and Citizens Advice. To improve their services to support equality of opportunity for EU citizens, the Welsh Government could ensure funding to these organisations is provided on a long-term basis in order to i) support all areas of integration, and ii) train and employ community leaders on a permanent/long-term basis. These leaders should be well-known and trusted by the communities they serve – making them well positioned to offer information and support to encourage inclusion and social cohesion within these communities.

Labour market access

Information should be provided to EU citizens, especially those from EU-8 and EU-2 countries, on how their qualifications can be recognised in Wales (this information should be included on the portal). The Welsh Government could produce resources to help employers become more aware of qualifications from EU countries. These resources could take the form of industry-specific reference documents that explain qualifications from all EU countries to the relevant UK

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equivalents. Additionally, there is a need to provide career advice, including information on qualifications required in the Welsh labour market and occupational training opportunities, targeting individuals from EU-8 and EU-2 countries.

Improving language skills

Given that knowledge of the English language is critical for integration into the community, additional provision of English lessons would be beneficial, especially for individuals born in EU-8 and EU-2 countries. Classes could be delivered either in the community or in the workplace. Since many EU migrants spend a lot of time at work, employers could be given incentives to provide English lessons in the workplace.

5. Contact details

Full Research Report: Alma Economics; 2020. EU citizens living in Wales – Community integration, equality of opportunity and equality of outcome. Cardiff: Welsh Government, GSR report number 77/2020.

Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.

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