

EU migrants 'good for UK economy'

By Jack Doyle

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The migrants who came from eastern Europe to live and work in Britain over the past five years have made a positive contribution to the public purse, research reveals.

Poles, Czech and others who moved here after the EU expanded in 2004 have paid far more in taxes than they received in benefits, academics at University College London found. Professor Christian Dustmann said the immigrants made a "substantial net contribution to the UK fiscal system". In 2008-09, arrivals from new EU members the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia paid 37 per cent more in taxes than they took in welfare payments and from public services, he said.

"From the fiscal point of view, this immigration has not been at all a burden on the welfare system. Rather, it has contributed to strengthen the fiscal position," he added.

Prof Dustmann found immigrants were, on average, younger and better educated than the native population, but also prepared to work for much lower wages – on average a third less – and 60 per cent less likely to claim benefits. After a year here, their job prospects improved significantly and their average wages increased, he said.

The study of arrivals between 2004 and 2008 found that about 90 per cent of working-age men and 75 per cent of working-age women had jobs. During the recession, migrant workers may fare better in the employment market than native Britons because of their better skills and qualification, Prof Dustmann concluded.