Beat: News

Scientists will overwhelm the UK immigration system

Migrating minds

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USPA NEWS - Tens of thousands of EU researchers coming to Britain, who are likely to need some form of visa, would overwhelm the existing system.The numbers underscore the urgent need for reform of the rules governing immigration for researchers “” a topic that a parliamentary group has been investigating since May. Despite recent tweaks to immigration rules in favour of researchers, many scientists see Brexit as an opportunity for further, much-needed reform to the entire system for highly skilled workers.

“Maybe when the dust settles we can get a system that´s better for those coming from all over the world,“ says Richard Catlow, who is foreign secretary at the Royal Society in London. Main and Catlow are two of the many representatives of science organizations and researchers who have submitted evidence to the parliamentary inquiry, set up by the House of Commons´ science and technology committee to address the issue of researcher mobility in the wake of Brexit. The government has pledged to restrict migration from the bloc, but it is yet to publish its long-awaited overall plans for immigration after the departure; senior ministers remain split on whether EU citizens should be given preferential treatment over immigrants from the rest of the world. The committee hopes its recommendations will inspire immigration solutions that would best serve science, says Norman Lamb, the member of parliament leading the inquiry. There are many people who would be alarmed by the idea of fitting EU citizens into the existing system without any adjustment, he says. The UK government is expected to release its immigration plans after the Migration Advisory Committee, an independent body, publishes.

But the government has also made it clear that it wants a special pact on science and innovation with the EU after Brexit, to allow the United Kingdom to access EU research money “” and this could specify special measures for researchers. the decision cannot come soon enough, the science organisations say “Continued uncertainty not only makes it difficult for employers but damages the UK´s international reputation as a welcoming place for researchers and their families,“ says Naomi Weir, deputy director of Case.

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