

AS BRITAIN OPENS BORDERS TO

Anti-foreigner spin is vile and without merit

COMMENT

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TODAY, restrictions on the movement of people from Bulgaria and Romania are being lifted so they can relocate to any EU country they like.

We should be mindful, of course, that moving across countries isn't easy, especially when there are language difficulties, and it is younger people who are most likely to move.

For the past seven years, it has been legal for folks from these countries to work in the UK, and already 100,000 have come. So it is likely that many who wanted to come here to work have already done so. And there are lots of more prosperous places they can now go to other than the UK, so it is unlikely the floodgates will open.

UKIP and the Tories have both disgracefully been trying to scare people that millions are going to come from these two countries in search of benefits. This, of course, is fanciful nonsense.

In 2011, the borders were opened to folks from eight other former Soviet-bloc countries, including Poland and Hungary, and the Government has produced no credible evidence that significant numbers from these countries came to the UK to claim benefits.

We have new evidence from a Europe-wide survey taken between May and June 2013 that a third of Brits, but only a fifth of Bulgarians and Romanians, would like to move to another EU country.

People from Bulgaria and Romania were much more likely to say they would move for a higher salary and hardly any said they would move to get benefits. None of the evidence points to a flood of either benefits or job seekers. More vile spin. The Coalition has to blame someone for its failures. Foreigners are an easy scapegoat.

We want to get real jobs and pay tax in the UK



FRESH START
Gheorghe wants a job before leaving

EXCLUSIVE FROM ALUN PALMER IN ROMANIA



AS the security guard chased his loaded car, Gheorghe Stoica knew realised his dream of a new life in Britain was now a nightmare.

The Romanian builder paid an agency £200 for what he believed to be legal work in the UK.

Instead, when he arrived, his passport and the little money he had were taken by people traffickers and he was forced to drive a team of Roma shoplifters around North London.

Hitting Sainsbury's, Marks & Spencer and Currys, the gang stole all day long as gang-masters literally drove them to crime.

After three days, Gheorghe begged the Romanian embassy in London for a new passport and money so he could return home.

Now, three years later, former heroin addict Gheorghe, 28, who has hepatitis C, wants to return to the UK. And he is not alone.

Within minutes of arriving at the Rahova slum on the outskirts of Bucharest, we are swamped by Roma desperate to flee grinding poverty where the minimum wage is 88p an hour - £145 a month.

Dozens scribble their names and numbers into my notebook

in the hope that British employers will contact them. None asks about benefits or free housing.

Gheorghe plans to return to Britain in the New Year with his three-year-old son Gabriel and partner Roxanu Munteanu.

He says: "I had a horrible time in England when I was there. But I thought I had a legitimate job.

"Instead I was driving thieves around London. I could not do it. They tried to force me to but I said no. I did not want to be their slave, to be arrested.

"I want a legal job, to pay tax. I

need to be legitimate as I need regular hospital treatment."

Gheorghe now plans to borrow £200 from his parents to give him a fresh start in Britain. But he wants a job before he travels.

The Roma have become the most persecuted race in Europe, vilified across Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary. In Slovakia

there have been calls for a wall to be built around a Romaghetto

and in Bucharest, life is little better.

Yet many in Rahova say Britain is not the favourite destination

POVERTY
Roma living in Rahova slum

DESPAIR
Mother and son begging

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