

From: Rt. Hon. David Blunkett MP
To: Sir Andrew Dilnot
Cc: Yvette Cooper MP, David Hanson MP
Date: 11/04/2014
Subject: ONS revision of statistics in relation to inward migration

Dear Andrew,

ONS revision of statistics in relation to inward migration

I was astonished yesterday to pick up a report of what purported to be the ONS revision of statistics relating to inward migration from Eastern Europe (from 2001 onwards) which related primarily to 2004-2011.

There were a number of issues here in terms of the methodology, used but I'd be grateful for your comments in relation to the following matters.

I've corresponded with you before about the sensitivity of those dealing with 'pure statistics' failing to understand not only the political nuances but actually the practical and 'real world' issues that affect these matters.

I'd be grateful if you could therefore explore and get back to me on:

1. Do these statistics take into account the fact that 40% of those adjudged to be 'new' migrants from May 2004 were already in the country? This is a factual matter, not one of surmise. It's based on the work done immediately after 2004 in relation to those who presented themselves (and therefore had legitimate status) and where they were before May 2004!
2. If, as alleged, migrants from Eastern Europe came in to airports outside London and Manchester, can it be presumed that their supposed arrival was determined by the nature of the flights that came in from particular airports, the assessment of how many on such flights were intending to stay in the country (as opposed to visiting relatives or holidaying in Britain) and therefore a benchmark of the number who might actually be counted? Obviously given that these flights were not 'monitored' there has to be a statistical methodology to reach any conclusion at all (because there are no hard statistical facts)
3. Is this a question of net migration or gross? As we know that 40% of those who were 'registered' and therefore counted as new migrants were already in the country, were any of the people who the ONS believe to be 'new' actually returning from visits to home?

These are very serious issues. They get to the heart of believable, professionally robust and therefore credible evidence!

I'd be happy to meet you or those who produced this 'report' to be able to explore these issues further.

Having lived through it, having knowing the difficulties and the complexities backwards, I'd love to be able to debate with the statisticians what on earth they think they're playing at!

Very best wishes,

David Blunkett