

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 WEDNESDAY 6 SEPTEMBER 2023

A NEW REPORT SETS OUT HOW THE UK CAN ATTRACT MORE INTERNATIONAL TALENT TO KICKSTART ECONOMIC GROWTH

A new report from leading business groups urges the government to rethink migration policy and allow international graduates to access unsponsored right to work in the UK following their graduation, with their time at university counting towards permanent residency.

The report argues that the sponsorship system in the UK disproportionately benefits big firms and disincentivises talented professionals from launching their own businesses in Britain.

The research published by [The Entrepreneurs Network](#), a think tank representing the UK's entrepreneurial community, and [ABE Global](#), a global education non-profit and part of the Institute of Leadership, explored how immigration systems need to change in order to attract and retain high-skilled immigrants that drive economic growth, productivity and innovation – all of which has been underperforming in the UK for years.

The research shows that talent shortages and productivity stagnation require almost all economies to invest in talent, making migration policy increasingly important. The report claims that a competitive and flexible visa system is a must for any country that wants to innovate and grow.

Passport to Progress: A Blueprint for the World's Most Pro-Innovation Visa System, written by Derin Kocer, shows that high-skilled immigrants are more prone to entrepreneurship and make economies more productive and innovative. It calls on politicians to make the case for the positive benefits of high-skilled and high-potential immigration.

Policy Recommendations

The report puts forward a number of policy recommendations, inspired by the best policies from around the world, to attract top international students, high-skilled professionals, STEM researchers, entrepreneurs and unusually talented individuals.

- *Passport to Progress* reveals that Canada has been exceptionally successful in attracting high-achieving international students in the past two decades, accounting for a six-fold increase in numbers. Canada is realising the benefits of positioning international graduates as the future of its workforce. The report argues that any country competing for international graduates needs an unsponsored right to work, with their time at university counting towards permanent residency.
- The UK's High Potential Individual visa, which grants two-year work visas to graduates of top universities, is highlighted as a unique and creative policy example. However, the report argues that what counts as 'top academic institutions' should be expanded to include graduates from institutes such as the Indian Institutes of Technology. It also advocates for granting permanent residency to advanced STEM students on the day of graduation.
- *Passport to Progress* recommends that countries like the UK should establish specialised task forces within the Government to actively recruit entrepreneurs and talented STEM professionals. As a historical example, it references the US's Operation Paperclip which recruited over 1,600 German engineers and scientists after the Second World War, who later led the American space program.

- Ireland’s Critical Skills Employment Permit, which allows Irish firms to bring talent over as long as their workforce is 50 per cent European Economic Area nationals, is held up as a well-designed policy example for attracting high-skilled professionals. In contrast, the sponsorship system in the UK disproportionately benefits big firms and disincentivises talented professionals from launching their own businesses in Britain.
- For attracting entrepreneurs, *Passport to Progress* highlights Israel’s Innovation Labs programmes, which provide migrant entrepreneurs with access to critical technological infrastructure, and New Zealand’s Global Impact Visa, which creates training, investment and networking opportunities for migrant entrepreneurs. The report argues that via similar policy interventions, policymakers in the UK should ease the process of starting and growing businesses.

Lord Bilimoria of Chelsea CBE DL, a life peer in the UK House of Lords and Founder and Chairman of Cobra Beer, who backed the launch of the report, said:

“If our objective is to increase productivity, innovation and economic growth in the UK, immigrants are our natural allies. We should build a more flexible, proactive and competitive immigration system in which international talent is actively provided with the right incentives to come, study and work here. The desire to succeed, the craving to build something new and the entrepreneurial soul are a part and parcel of many immigrants’ personalities. Many of us already know this by heart. We know it from our friends, neighbours, and colleagues.”

Rob May, Chief Executive Officer of ABE Global, said:

“Recently, the central relationship between immigration and innovation has come under attack. **Motivated by desires to limit headline net migration figures, the positive effects of migration have once again become clouded in a hostile narrative that finds its fulfilment in the populist rhetoric that any immigration is antithetical to national progress.** This neglects the historical truth that the flow of ideas, talent and people has been the cornerstone of peace and prosperity. With this report, we hope to unlock a sensible conversation in which the true potential of migration can overcome misplaced concerns.”

Thanks to ABE’s global network, The Entrepreneurs Network’s report will be read by numerous emerging market countries that hope to attract and retain more international talent. The report has an international focus and examines policies from across the world to show the growing global competition for talent.

Passport to Progress will be launched in the House of Lords on 6 September alongside business leaders, entrepreneurs, policymakers and politicians.

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Notes to editor

You can read *Passport to Progress: A Blueprint for the World's Most Pro-innovation Visa System* in full [here](#).

The report's author is available for interview.

About the author

Derin Kocer is a Researcher at The Entrepreneurs Network and an immigrant in the UK. Previously, he worked as a strategic communications and public policy consultant for governments, businesses, NGOs and political leaders.

About The Entrepreneurs Network

[The Entrepreneurs Network](#) is a think tank for Britain's most ambitious entrepreneurs. We bridge the gap between entrepreneurs and policymakers, with the aim of making Britain the best place in the world to start and grow a business. We have a network of over 10,000 entrepreneurs and are the Secretariat of the [All-Party Parliamentary Group for Entrepreneurship](#), which sits across the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The Entrepreneurs Network recently [reported](#) that 39 per cent of the UK's fastest-growing businesses in 2023 had at least one foreign-born co-founder, despite foreign-born residents making up only 14.5 per cent of the population.

About ABE Global

ABE Global is a not-for-profit skills development specialist and awarding organisation providing internationally recognised learning, credentials and quality assurance in the fields of business, entrepreneurship and employability. ABE Global is a subsidiary of the Institute of Leadership.

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