

## MIGRATION PATHWAYS

# Sectors Based Scheme

### Overview

The Sectors Based Scheme was introduced in 2003 to help address shortages in the hospitality (hotel and catering) and food-processing (fish, meat, and mushroom) sectors. Although the scheme was open to people from all countries, most applicants came from Eastern Europe and Asia. The scheme was terminated in 2013.

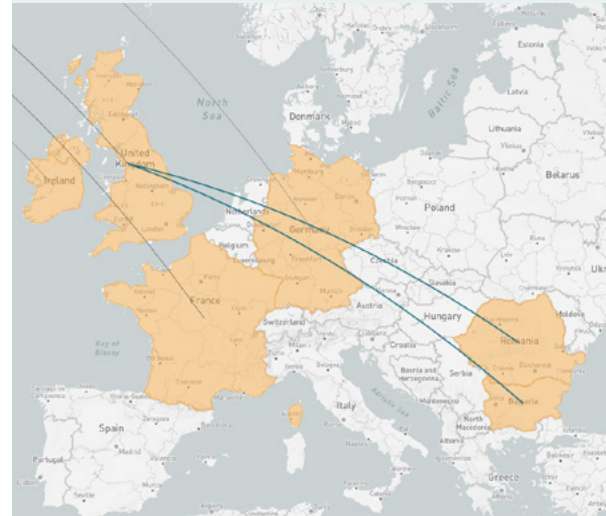
### Why was it started?

The United Kingdom's hospitality and food-processing sectors suffer from significant shortages of workers. The Sectors Based Scheme was developed to help employers fill vacancies with qualified workers from countries outside the European Union (EU).

### How does it work?

Initially, the scheme provided 20,000 visas (10,000 to each sector), which were open to people from selected non-EU countries. Countries in Eastern Europe included Belarus, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, the Slovak Republic, and Ukraine. Countries in Asia included Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

Employers sourced workers and then applied to the UK Border Agency for visas and work permits on their behalf. Workers were required to be between 18 and 30 and engaged full-time within a specific set of occupations. After a year, they could be granted permission to remain, thereby transitioning into a more permanent immigration status.



Country of Destination  
**UNITED KINGDOM**

Country of Origin  
**PREDOMINANTLY EASTERN  
EUROPE AND ASIA**

Skill  
**HOSPITALITY AND FOOD  
PROCESSING**  

Skill Level  
**LOW**

Timeline  
**2003–13**

Beneficiaries  
**3,500 A YEAR**

*Countries all around the world utilize migration pathways to train and bring over workers with needed skills. The CGD Migration Pathways database documents these pathways to promote innovation in this space. To explore the database, visit [GSP.cgdev.org](https://GSP.cgdev.org).*

Over time, the number of visas was reduced. In 2005, hospitality was removed from the scheme. By 2007, only people from Bulgaria and Romania could apply, and the number of visas was reduced to 3,500. These changes were made to reflect declining private sector use of the scheme.

### What impact has it had?

The number of firms and applicants using the scheme dropped steadily beginning in 2007, after which quotas were rarely met. The lack of takers may have reflected the facts that (1) the application process was cumbersome; (2) by providing a pathway to permanent residence, the scheme reduced the need for temporary workers; and/or (3) employers were able to freely source workers from the European Union. The government therefore determined that closing the scheme in 2013 would not have a severe impact on employers.

Recruitment within these sectors remains a challenge. Following Brexit, some industry groups asked that hospitality and food-processing jobs be added to the shortage occupation list, enabling employers to more easily hire migrants within these sectors.

### Further readings

López Sala, A. M., Y. Molinero Gerbeau, M. Jolivet-Guetta, T. Eremenko, C. Beauchemin, S. Samuk, and E. Consterdine. 2016. “Seasonal immigrant workers and programs in UK, France, Spain and Italy.” Temper Working Paper, Proyecto Temper. [www.temperprogram.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Working-Paper-1-DF2.pdf](http://www.temperprogram.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Working-Paper-1-DF2.pdf)

Migration Advisory Committee. 2013. *Migrant seasonal workers: The impact on the horticulture and food processing sectors of closing the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme and the Sectors Based Scheme*. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/257242/migrant-seasonal-workers.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/257242/migrant-seasonal-workers.pdf)



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