**The cells that unite us: the story of a fortunate immigrant**

**Dr Gabrijela Kocjan**

Ladies and Gentlemen, members and friends of the British Croatian Society, thank you for coming here tonight instead of staying at the Chelsea Flower show or enjoying the sunset on the Thames. The aim of my talk is to raise awareness of the contribution that EU immigrants present for the UK and the objective is to confirm that immigration benefits not just the migrants themselves but also the host country.

The idea for this talk arose some time last year after a sharp increase in repeated references in the media to migrants from EU/Europe and immigration in general, frequently associated with a negative perception that the immigrants are a drain to the country.

Having lived and worked as a doctor in the UK for the last 35 years, this was the first time that I felt being stripped to a single common denominator: an immigrant. I shall begin with a case study: a specific example of a contribution that a European immigrant, in this case coming from Croatia, can make to the UK, followed by the second part where we shall look at some evidence based data showing the contribution that immigrants from the EU make to this country.

I was born in Slovenia, then part of Yugoslavia. Like many families in those days my parents were of different nationalities, Croatian and Slovenian who met in Belgrade, Serbia, where there were both studying. Therefore the origin of person by nationality never played a part in my upbringing or perception of the world.

Yugoslavia was a communist country presided by Tito which, for all its shortcomings, had a free education and health system.

I was educated at a local, modern, purpose built primary school In Split which had a chemistry lab, art pavilion and other facilities. After we moved to Croatia, it was where I had my first experience of being an alien. It was hard to understand why the children at school were laughing when the teacher introduced me as a pupil from a different country, assuming I could not speak their language. I went to a classical grammar school with a 250 years tradition, learning Latin, Greek, philosophy, sociology and ethics. In parallel, I attended a Music school where I was taught composition, conducting and theory as well as piano.

Subsequently I went to Medical School in Zagreb.

My chosen postgraduate specialist training, lasting 3 years, was in Cytopathology. It was comprehensive and included rotation through many different disciplines.

Cytopathology is a science about changes in cells affected by different diseases. It was George Papanicolaou ( of the PAP test) who first found that precancerous changes can be detected by scraping the cells from the vaginal wall, staining them and looking down the microscope. Normal and abnormal cells differ in several aspects, one of which is that the abnormal cells have much larger nuclei in proportion to the whole cell.

This principle was followed in the sixties by other investigators, principally the European group in Sweden with a Slovenian born Josef Zajicek amongst them. They used a fine needle to collect and analyse cells in the same way as Papanicolaou. The example on the left is of the normal glandular cells which are arranged in an orderly manner and are similar in size to each other. On the right are malignant cells which are much larger and have many irregularities including difference in their sizes.

In the seventies, Croatia had eminent doctors who adopted this new diagnostic method and implemented it in practice. They also established a structured postgraduate training which I took part in. I completed the training, passed the exam and got a permanent job.

However, a Meghan Markle moment came in 1981 when I met Tony. We got married the same year and I moved to the UK.

My friends were convinced he was a prince when they saw the wedding photographs. The backdrop however was St Pancras station and not Windsor Castle.

By coming to the UK, I left behind not only by then a Consultant post in a teaching hospital, my flat and my Renault 4 but also my family and all my friends. Life in the UK was not dissimilar to that in Croatia. Although I could speak English, there were comical situations where instead of saying : ‘I am resting on my laurels’, Iwould say: ‘I am sleeping on my bay leaves’. I did not know how to write a cheque, what the AA or RSPCA were or how to warm up the tinned cottage pie.

After arriving to the UK, In order to be able to work in the same capacity as I did in Zagreb, I had to start from scratch and spend further 5 years converting my qualifications into those valid in the UK. This meant studying for the exams until the age of 35.

I started working almost immediately at what was St Stephen’s Hospital in Fulham Rd. I understood very early on that there was enormous shortage of cytopathologists in the UK at that time and that there was very little or no formal training. For example at the time I arrived to the UK, there were 17 cytopathologists in Zagreb which ha d a population of ½ million and about 7 or 8 in London.

I felt totally at home when I looked first time down the microscope and saw that the British cells were exactly the same as the ones I was used to.

In 1981 there was this new unknown disease affecting young men which we now know as AIDS and which St Stephen’s Hospital was the centre for research and treatment.

At the same time the association of HPV and cervical cancer started to become clearer. The lead time for development of cervical cancer is sufficiently long to allow for the screening to detection of precancerous changes.

At that time St Stephen’s was doing cervical screening for the Women’s National Cervical Cancer Campaign ( WNCCC) which later became the NHS Cervical Screening Programme being set up nationally.

Smoking was still very prevalent in the eighties and examination of lung samples in search for cancer was part of my work.

In 1986, when I was appointed Consultant at the University College Hospital, I was able to use my accumulated knowledge and awareness of the public health issues of the day to a good effect. I established a FNA clinic in 1987 and throughout my career promoted this technique and evaluated its impact on clinical management.

I was one of the authors of the British Society for Clinical Cytology Code of practice for FNA

As Editor of Cytopathology, I established European Discussion Forum where wider professional issues where discussed such as

The nomenclature of thyroid FNA

The role of cytopathology in breast cancer diagnosis

When Cancer networks were introduced to the NHS in 2008, I tried to define the role of cytopathology in the management of HN cancer and the impact of one stop clinics.

By using cytopathology in the detection of Breast Cancer, I was one of the pioneers of the so called One Stop Breast Clinic where patient comes, is examined, has an X ray and FNA and is given the result the same day.

When the service was being threatened by cuts, I published the paper in the BMJ: ‘Is £35.00 too high a price for the peace of mind.’

Consequently, I passed my enthusiasm and experience to numerous young doctors teaching them not only how to recognize cells but also how to manage patients more efficiently. I wrote textbooks and professional guidelines.

* In summary of this Case Study: An immigrant who worked 35 years in the NHS and has contributed to the development and promotion of a niche discipline which benefited from the education and training I received in Croatia
* The impact that I was able to make in my discipline has probably been greater than it might have been should I have stayed in Croatia by reason, amongst other, of the greater exposure that British academics have worldwide

This is my story which could be true for many other persons in this room who are immigrants from Croatia and are contributing to the life in the UK. This brings us to a wider issue on **how does Immigration from EU benefit the UK economy ?**

In 2017, Total net migration to the UK was 230,000 of which

173,000 net migration from outside the EU and 107,000 net migration of EU citizens.

**Reasons given for immigration slide**

**EU citizens living in the UK slide**

**Restrictions on Croatian workers will be lifted at the end of June**

* When Croatia joined the EU in 2013, the UK and other member states were able to restrict the access that Croatian citizens had to their labour markets for a maximum of 7 years.
* Since joining the EU in 2013 only around a few thousand Croats have moved to the UK
* Estimates suggest there are below 10,000 Croats in the UK

**Let us take a look at some evidence based facts about the EU immigration starting with a seminal paper published in 2014 by the researchers from UCL**

**Fiscal contribution of EEA immigrants**

EEA immigrants have made a positive fiscal contribution, even during periods when the UK was running budget deficits.

This positive contribution is particularly noticeable for more recent immigrants that arrived since 2000 in particular from EEA countries**.**

**Comparison between EEA and non EEA contribution**

* EEA migrants have made a positive contribution and non-EEA migrants have made a negative contribution.
* Non EEA negative contribution was nearly thirty times greater than the EEA positive contribution
* The overall fiscal cost during the period resulting from immigration to the UK was over £115bn.

**Lower reliance on benefits**

Many of those opposed to immigration believe migrants enter the UK solely to make use of its benefits system. However, immigrants arriving in the UK after 2000 were 43% less likely than UK-born workers to receive state benefits and were 7% less likely to live in social housing.

Impact on local employment

Home Office report by Devlin and Bolt found little evidence in the literature of a statistically significant impact from EU migration on native employment outcomes …

**Education**

European immigrants are on average better educated than natives. According to findings published in The Economic Journal last year, European immigrants who arrived since 2000 are more likely to have a university degree than natives. In 2011, 25% of immigrants from A10 countries and 65% of those from EU-15 countries had a university degree while in comparison just 24% of natives were the same.

Over the period 1995-2011 immigrants who lived in the UK endowed the UK labour market with human capital which would have cost about 49bn if it were produced through UK education system and contributed about £82 bn to fixed or pure public goods.

**NHS House of Commons publication** on NHS staff from overseas shows that 10% of doctors are from overseas and 62,000 NHS staff in England are EU nationals - 5.6% of all staff.

**Economic impact of Migration** (Osiri Ndukwe dec 2016)

**Labour markets**:

* Migrants
  + **fill important niches** both in fast growing and declining sectors of the economy
  + young migrants are **better educated** than those nearing retirement
  + contribute significantly **to labour market flexibility**

**Economic growth**

* Migration boosts the working age population
* Migrants arrive with skills and contribute to human capital development of freceiving countries
* Migrants also contribute to technological progress

**The public purse**

* Migrants contribute more in taxes and social contributions than they receive in benefits
* Labour migrants have the most positive impact on the public purse
* Employment is the single biggest determinant of migrants’ net fiscal contribution

**Summary**

**EU immigration to the UK**

**Take home points**

* **Cost:**

**Positive net fiscal contribution of recent migrants,** contributed £20bn since 2000

* **Profile of migrants**:

The average **age of migrants half that of the British labour force**

* **Education:**

European migrants **better educated than the UK-born** labour force

* **Work**:

European migrants come to Britain to work, employment rate 70-81%

* **Local employment**

No statistical evidence that they take away local employment

* **Benefits**:

43% less likely to get state benefits or tax credits

7% less likely to live in social housing

**CONCLUSION:**

Contrary to the view often maintained in the public debate.

EU immigration has **not been a drain on Britain’s finances** but has actually made a substantial fiscal contribution with **immigrants contributing more** to the tax and welfare systems **than taking out**.

Consequently, UK can expect to benefit from opening its doors to Croatian students and workers