

UK Trade & Business Commission: Cultural & Creative Industries Transcript

24 June 2021

Tamara Cincik

... a vast revenue for the UK economy, the latest figures I saw were something around, but I'm sure Deborah will know in more detail, something around 117 billion to the UK economy each year. The fashion industry which I come from generates around 35 billion and employs nearly one million people so it's a large sector and equally music as we know is important not only for the value, for its global presence but also for making us feel better about our lives in such difficult times as we've had during the pandemic. I think a piece of music can transport us in difficult times. So, I'm really pleased to welcome for the session that I'm chairing, Patrick Grant who many of you will know from Sewing Bee on BBC but also is a fantastic designer working not only at the high end but also on a community project. As well as Simon Chambers from Storm Model Management, John Horner from Models1 and Deborah Annetts from ISM. Welcome to all of you. And I'm now going to defer to our witnesses to see if they'd like to add something before we go to our first question.

Deborah Annetts

I'd just like to say thank you for this opportunity. I think we feel amazingly frustrated in the music sector at the moment with the twin threats of both Covid and Brexit and a Government that just doesn't want to engage with us, so I really welcome this opportunity to share my thoughts this morning.

Tamara Cincik

Thank you Deborah. Patrick or Simon or John if you'd like to add something otherwise I'll go to the first question.

Patrick Grant

No, I've nothing to add.

Tamara Cincik

OK thank you Patrick and I haven't heard from the other two, so I'm going to defer to Claire Hanna MP who is going to ask the first question, thank you.

Claire Hanna MP

Thank you very much Chair and thanks to our witnesses for joining us and I think we'd all echo those comments about the value both economically and culturally to the economy, so I

was hoping you could just set the scene in terms of how the trading environment has changed for your sector in this year and I appreciate that in some ways it will be bound up by the impact of Covid, but hopefully you could disaggregate them as best you can. We'll start in the music industry, Deborah if you don't mind opening for us.

Deborah Annetts

Thank you. Looking at music obviously a lot of music is global and that doesn't just mean touring, it also means how copyright works with the sharing of IP in connection with the creation of music. Obviously Covid has had a big impact in relation to the touring for musicians but I think it's fair to say that Brexit is much more serious. Since 2018 we have been trying to engage with the DCMS in relation to what we saw as all the problems coming down the track and they basically split into two different sections. One is all the issues around people and as everybody knows that's because there are now new visa and work permit arrangements in place across the whole of the EU which hopefully we'll go into more detail on, making it very, very difficult for musicians to actually get out of the UK. Secondly we have the issues around goods and by goods I mean things like amplifiers, guitars, violins, violin bows etc, everything that a musician needs in order to be able to play music. Now, we are caught with things like carnets all the regulations around CITES which are managed by DEFRA and the new cabotage rules which are set out in the TCA, so I like to call these the three Cs. They are remarkably complicated, so far we still do not have guidance from the DCMS in relation to portions of them, namely cabotage and carnets so the music sector is really operating in a fog, we don't know what the rules are despite endless conversations with DCMS and I think it's fair to say that they don't know what the rules are and also the Department for Transport don't know what the rules are in relation to cabotage.

So, not only are they trading conditions remarkably complicated and difficult we can't even get useful guidance out of the Government, so we're feeling incredibly frustrated and we have tried repeatedly to get in touch with Lord Frost along with many of our Parliamentary contacts without any success at all, so we feel that we have been left high and dry to battle on with difficulties caused by the TCA.

Claire Hanna MP

Thank you very much Deborah you've painted a very bleak and confusing picture there that even when you're willing and ready to engage that it's difficult to navigate. Simon or John, would you like to give us the perspective in terms of I suppose particularly focusing I would imagine on the movement of people and how it's affected you.

John Horner

Yes, as Deborah has already said or has been said earlier there is confusion because of Covid, but when the veil of Covid lifts which God willing is not going to be too long, we're going to see the harsh reality. Our business currently is running ... about 30% down year on year, I mean the industry, we did a recent audit of our sector and ... it's fair to say that our European business is down even more and the problem there is that if the Covid status is a proxy as it were for Brexit then we're going to see a very substantial decline in our income from Europe. There is complete confusion as Deborah has said, I mean even the countries we're talking to don't actually know the rules, some of the biggest brands in Spain and Sweden and so on don't know what the rules are themselves, so God knows how we're

supposed to know what the rules are. We invested a lot of money last year with a company called Fraganar [ph 0:06:33.9] which is a major European legal firm who specialise in immigration and they gave us guidance for our eight major markets, so Spain, France, Italy and so on. Everyone is different as I'm sure everybody knows and there are 27 different member states as well, every single one is different and it's impossible. We'll go into more detail I'm sure a little later on in terms of some of the real practical difficulties we have, but you know our industry will not be able to survive for too long if we just simply don't get European revenue.

Simon Chambers

The only thing I would add to that is that for the last ten or 15 years Europe has been really a home market for us, it gets treated as a home market so the major fashion brands in Europe, be they Zara or Mango or H&M, they treat the UK as a local supplier and they are likely to put in, to book a model with just a couple of days' notice and say can they fly out tomorrow, shoot the next day, fly home again and they have become a considerable part of our income, as you can see on every High Street they've displaced many older British clients that no longer exist so they've had to become that. And you know they may represent 20-25% of my agency's business on a regular basis and now we cannot by and large get the papers to get them there, that work has gone and the pandemic has only served to highlight what Brexit really means in terms of the inability to travel and work.

Claire Hanna MP

Simon thank you very much, Patrick is there anything you would add, is there a danger of I suppose companies in the European Union [inaudible 0:08:22.2] organising around or without British companies and personnel? [inaudible 0:08:31.3]

Patrick Grant

Sorry, your stream is very broken.

Claire Hanna MP

That's fine, if you don't mind just picking up Patrick and just your perspective on that.

Patrick Grant

OK. What we've seen, and I think this echoes what Simon has just said, prior to Brexit fashion stores in Europe had a choice of buying designer clothes from a huge selection of designers all across Europe and of course the most established designer fashion brands are mostly European, so most of them controlled by three very large groups based in France and Switzerland and there has always been a thriving designer fashion industry in London and we were a part of that. And in exactly the same way as European brands would hire British models, European stores would buy British designer clothes on exactly the same terms and with exactly the same ease as with which they would buy designer clothes from within their own market. So, we used to sell to stores in France and Italy and Spain and Sweden and Denmark and Holland and many other countries and our business has always been up and

down, different collections are liked more or less by different brands, sorry different stores, but on the whole, we always had a certain proportion of our business in Europe.

But of course those European stores have got all of the designer fashion industry of France and Italy and the whole of the rest of Europe to choose from and the trade shows are, the trade shows take place in France and in Italy, that's where all of our selling takes place. And as soon as Brexit was announced we started to see a fall and as soon as it became clear, well as soon as it became totally unclear what sort of relationship the EU would have with the UK in terms of trade, we saw it all disappear. I mean literally all of it disappear. And I mean there will be other brands who have fared better, but my personal experience is all of our European business went away because firstly there was a great uncertainty, we supply ... we take orders for goods that we supply six months in advance and throughout the period of negotiations there was absolutely no certainty whatsoever on the forward looking terms of trade and so essentially to de-risk all of that stores that we used to sell to said well we're just going to buy from somebody else and then we'll kind of wait and see what happens at the end of the day. And at the end of the day we're left with a relationship that is completely arm's length, you know it does not feel at all like it is easy to do business with fashion brands in the UK.

The other, so we've lost business and the other thing that has of course made what business we have less profitable is a lot of the things that we use to make our clothes from, and we make almost all of our clothes in the UK, most of them in our own factory, but we buy materials from Europe, a lot of materials from Europe, we buy zips, we buy fastenings, you know many of these things do not exist in the UK, there are no manufacturers for many of those things in the UK. The UK market would be too small to support anybody who wanted to start one of those manufacturers, so we're now stuck paying ... it takes longer and it costs more to get these things so our profit margins have been affected negatively by these changes.

Claire Hanna MP

Yeah, thank you very much and I know colleagues will pick up on some of those issues, back to you Chair, thank you.

Tamara Cincik

Thank you Claire. Actually I'm asking the next question and I think you've answered that in part Patrick, so we've only got a few minutes but obviously how important before even the Brexit negotiations started was EU activity for your business? You don't have to go into your earnings but you could go into maybe a percentage and then I'll open that up.

Patrick Grant

I mean probably around about 15-20% on average was European and of course, so in terms of earnings but in terms of the goods that we buy again, all of our supply chains were completely integrated with Europe so we bought from Germany and Italy predominantly and goods would move as easily as if they were coming from Manchester or Leeds and now we have cost, you know significant cost rises and delays, so when we are developing collections we rely on pretty much just-in-time deliveries of things like zips and fabrics from across Europe, that no longer happens.

Tamara Cincik

Yeah and I've heard from Jenny Holloway issues around getting [inaudible 0:14:00.8] thread for instance.

Patrick Grant

Yeah, I mean well I mean really, you know there are no thread manufacturers in the UK, I mean there are lots and lots of simple things that we took for granted that we can no longer take for granted, so yeah thread now takes ten days to arrive when it used to take two.

Tamara Cincik

And I think that's an important point Patrick, it's not just what you made from the EU but what you had to buy and because there's a lack of raw materials and production of those parts, I mean we have zips, thread and buttons in pretty much every outfit we're wearing unless it's made out of miracles. Deborah I want to open that out to you for the music industry before I go to John and Simon.

Deborah Annetts

Thank you, well I think everybody knows ever since the Beatles that we have been really focusing on Europe in terms of exports. It's the place where many of our high value and high profile acts go, whether we're looking at opera or organisations that are steeped in pop music, Elton John, etc. But also it's an incredibly important market for emerging artists, it's where people really get to show what they can do and start developing their reputation so that they can actually build a career and then hopefully get access into the US market. You can't get into the US market without really first making it in Europe. In terms of getting into Europe there is not enough work in the UK for musicians. Musicians tend to earn not very much, it's an average of about 20,000 a year, so it's not a well paid career option. Because there isn't enough work our musicians tend to go to the EU and our stats show that about 44% of musicians earn up to half of their income from working in the EU. That was before obviously the TCA and now what we're finding is that musicians are finding it very, very difficult to work in the EU, we also know from all the research that we've been doing that UK musicians who were working in the EU because perhaps they were working for an orchestra or an ensemble have been sacked because they do not hold an EU passport. We are also seeing quite a lot of audition material coming out saying anyone without an EU passport should not apply. So that is incredibly bad news for emerging talent.

Tamara Cincik

We've seen the same scrabble in terms of the fashion industry for trying to get dual passports.

Deborah Annetts

Yeah. So what we are now seeing from our latest batch of research is that lots of UK musicians are relocating so they're leaving the UK and they're going to principally Germany actually because Germany has lots and lots of work for musicians. And from the piece of research that we did in May we found that the additional costs of just trying to put on a tour perhaps with an orchestra or a choir or some kind of ensemble could be something like £15,000. Now if it's going to cost you an additional £15,000 you will not have any profit margin left and what that means is that really high profile ensemble, like say the 16, have simply said we are not going to tour and that's because they cannot make enough money to

cover their basic costs. That then has implications for what happens in the UK because they were reinvesting money that they made on tour in Europe back into places like the Wigmore Hall. So a bit like fashion there are many, many aspects of this, it's not just the money you make in the EU but how you then bring it back into the UK for reinvestment and we heard from the National Theatre that they were no longer going to tour War Horse because it was simply uneconomic to do so. So what we're seeing is that musicians cannot work in the EU for so many different reasons and that is ultimately going to affect the UK economy.

Tamara Cincik

Thank you Deborah, I want to bring in Simon and also while you talk about this I'd like you to just cover what a mother agency does because I think this is important because you make a percentage of the global, and like what Deborah said you have to travel as a successful model in order to break America or other markets where there's wider margins.

Simon Chambers

Yes, that's right Tamara. When I talk about Europe being the home market that enabled us as a UK agency representing UK models to book as if it were local. When it comes to models working and earning in territories further afield, typically Asia or the USA, what happens is that the model will, it's very unusual for a client to book a model to do a one-off shoot there, the costs are prohibitive, there's a lot of effort. So what's much more the case, more standard is that the model will go as it's called in the industry 'on stay' in that particular market. That requires us placing the model with an agency in that market who has those local contacts etc, all models ultimately need to do this because simply put if you want to work for Ralph Lauren you've got to go to New York, Ralph Lauren isn't going to come to London to see you. And you have to at that point, all that business then goes through that agency.

As the mother agency the agency that's invested and built the career of that model, we receive a commission from the agency in New York because they have, we lose an asset from our market, they have an asset that is ready to work and will work from day one coming straight into their market, so they pay a commission for that. But ultimately that's only a small percentage of the revenue that that model is earning and most of that will obviously just go through that American agency, so it's not really business that we can easily get outside Europe, whereas with Europe we did place models in Europe when a model needed to spend a lot of time there but the main clients that we've already referenced, particularly Spain, Sweden and in some other territories in Europe, were very keen just to book straight, London as you know very well known as being a kind of cradle for model development as a great scouting place, we have a disproportionate number of the world's great models and historically always have had and so London is very known for that and the clients have used us and worked with us a lot, but the barriers at the moment to us being able to send models over there to work is proving almost impossible. I mean despite the fact that we have Spanish clients trying, I mean the clients are doing their best ...

Tamara Cincik

The clients are trying.

Simon Chambers

They are trying, but we've had a situation for example where the Spanish Embassy here opened a section saying that models and actors and musicians could get permits through them, they actually did a bit of a short cut and they got another visa which has requirements showing things like three months' worth of bank statements, £750 worth of cash, already confirmed flights, hotels, etc and loads of other paperwork, the process takes probably three weeks, that's far too long for a client, so we had a situation where the client really wanted to book a male model of ours and the model was turned away by the Spanish Embassy here saying that he was a model and wasn't applicable for their own system which on their websites says models are available for.

Tamara Cincik

Thank you Simon, we're running a little bit over so if it's OK before, because we are running over time I just want to ask John quickly in a nutshell because we'll come back to you on the next question, percentage of business that was EU activity and equally EU models that work here pre-Brexit.

John Horner

Pre-Brexit, well roughly speaking 25% of our revenue was European earned, very similar to the music market, they don't earn enough in this country they need to go to Europe models and then they need to go to the States, very similar. But two statistics, one is we estimate that in 2019 which is the last real year in our lives, something like 10,000 model trips were made to Europe, that is at risk and about 8,000 European model trips came to the UK. We're open for business, we let them come, but the Europeans don't want us to go there and like the music industry we are getting clients saying no British models because it's too much hassle, simple as that.

Tamara Cincik

Thank you that's ...

Simon Chambers

And we have to get permits now for the Europeans coming in, so for those 8,000 we now have to process working papers and a lot of us have had to hire a new person simply to do that for that added burden on business.

Tamara Cincik

So it's cost and impact, thank you everyone. I'm now going to hand over to my fellow Commissioner Geoff Mackey for his question.

Geoff Mackey

Thank you very much Chair, good morning. Really interested in what we've set the scene for as regards the size of the industries and the sectors, I'd like to tease out one or two details if I may because one of the issues for some of my sectors is actually people movement and I wonder could we, or could you give us an idea, could you give me an idea how many people are involved in UK/EU cultural activities and the numbers of people involved. John you started to indicate some numbers on that, could you give us an idea please?

John Horner

It depends where you begin. We reckon there are about 10,000 models in the fashion model industry, I mean it's a vast industry in numbers and that of those something like half are British and the rest are either European or from the rest of the world. During fashion week which is obviously very high profile although not a very profitable part of our business, about 7-800 models are made available to fashion week and during fashion week about 40% of those are European, so as I said we are open doors to get the Europeans in and it's relatively straightforward but as Simon points out we have to get visas for them now where we never had to get visas for them before. So it's a big job. It's very hard to put absolute numbers on everything especially in the cultural sector, but we did an audit of our members recently and as I said those numbers are we think pretty realistic. So it's a starter for ten. We're about a £200 million turnover business, it doesn't sound huge but models are at the front end of every single fashion brand, every single hair and make-up brand and so on, so you need your models and our models are not getting the work in Europe that they need to get.

Geoff Mackey

Thanks John, Simon anything to add to that?

Simon Chambers

No, I think that's a very fair summation, I mean obviously we have pinch points such as London Fashion Week where you will have a sudden influx of say 700 models being available for the fashion designers of which half of those are all coming in at one moment from overseas more or less, they all require work permits, you know there's a huge amount of administration now around that because 25-30% of those models were or are from the EU, as John said, previously didn't require anything and now suddenly we've got this sort of mountain of administration.

Geoff Mackey

When we're talking about the areas that you work in, is there any sort of breakdown, I'm talking about numbers again regarding administrative technical performance as regards people, does that exist?

Deborah Annetts

I don't think it does really exist, what we've got is data for the whole of the music industry so the whole of the music industry is worth globally from the UK about 5.8 billion, for the creative industries as Tamara said it's 117 billion which is the same value ... 2.9 billion in terms of export revenue and sustains about 200,000 jobs and those jobs are not just musicians but technical crew, lighting, sound, admin, roadies, etc because musicians tend to travel with a group to support them. And just looking at music tourism that contributed 4.7 billion of spending to the UK economy in 2019, so like fashion there's this flow backwards and forwards across the Channel which is now at risk. And in terms of soft power I think music was one of the reasons why we used to be at the top of the tree and now we have fallen to second or third place. So the value of the creative industries is not just in money but it is also in brand, in profile and soft power and we are losing that.

We did research amongst music businesses, many of whom are small, it's not just the labels out there, it's also small independent music organisations and they were saying that the trade deal, 94% of them said that the trade deal had had a negative or very negative impact on their business. Many of them are now thinking they might as well just close up shop because they cannot see a way forward and only 9% said that Government guidance had been helpful. So it's not just the specifics of the trade deal, it's the fact that the Government just cannot interpret that trade deal for our sector and that I think is an abdication of responsibility that they've entered into a contract without understanding the implications for such a valuable part of the economy and I think that's just absolutely appalling.

Geoff Mackey

That's really, really helpful, thank you very much. If I could just hand back to Tamara, thank you.

Tamara Cincik

Thank you Geoff and I share Deborah's concerns because it's certainly not for a lack of briefings from people like her and I. I'm now going to hand over to Alison Williams for the next question, thank you.

Alison Williams

Hi, morning everyone. I think all of you have touched on the impact of Brexit on the movement of people, so the huge burden of admin and the cost of getting people visas and permits to move around, so I just wanted to drill into that a little bit more. Maybe if we start with Deborah, I think you talked earlier about suddenly £15,000 to put on an event which just makes it unprofitable, could you just talk through what is the process and the cost of trying to get people into Europe now?

Deborah Annetts

Yes, so you have to kind of look at this in different buckets, so the top line bucket if you like is visas. Now not all EU countries are stipulating that they need a visa for cultural activity, but it is very confusing. So that's why we have been calling for a visa waiver agreement which could easily be negotiated between the UK and the EU and we even went out and instructed a QC to draft one, which we then shared with the Government, so they don't even have to do any work, all they have to do is pick up the phone and talk to the appropriate person in the EU and that would get rid of the visa problem for the creative industries.

The second part is work permits and work permits are an absolute nightmare. So on the ISM website you will find pages and pages devoted to visas and work permits and we go through every single country to give people an idea as to the kinds of stuff that they're going to have to do in order to get a work permit. Sometimes it's quite straightforward, sometimes it's very, very difficult. Spain is at the top of the list of difficulty because of the amount of bureaucracy, paperwork, passports, you have to show that you're an upstanding citizen, vast costs of money, it costs about £600 to get all the documentation and it takes a lot of time. I think also the problem with Spain in particular is that the guidance tends to go in a circular fashion and you may well end up with the wrong bit of paperwork after you've spent a vast

amount of money and that's what we've been hearing from musicians who have been trying to work in Spain. It's very, very difficult.

Now we have been saying to the Government for a very long time, you need to put guidance together so that musicians have got an idea as to how to tour. What has actually happened is that DCMS have instructed Deloitte to put together guidance, now Deloitte knows nothing about musicians touring, visas, work permits, nothing. So what we've now ended up with is stuff on the DCMS website which is wrong. So the music sector has been saying to DCMS can you please sort this out and we've even given them the details of experts involving in touring so that they could untangle the mess which is currently on their website. So we do feel that rather than being on our side, Government is actually rowing in a different direction. I mean these are very, very difficult areas in terms of cost, bureaucracy, red tape, mountains and mountains to climb and Government isn't helping us.

Alison Williams

I can hear and understand your frustration and you're offering up all this expertise and drafting legislation and it's still not being used, that's incredibly frustrating. Just a couple more questions on this, so this process and the complexity of getting work permits and visas, does this have to happen every time somebody wants to enter into the EU and is there anything particular about freelancers and how they are impacted?

Deborah Annetts

Well I think it is particularly the case with freelancers that they have fallen totally outside of the TCA provisions, even though we were told repeatedly by Government through 2020 not to worry because they were going to sort the problem out which they absolutely didn't. Being a freelancer means that you absolutely as we've heard previously have to work really flexibly. If you go into Europe one work permit isn't going to cover you in the next country and musicians tend not to just go to one country when they tour, they will do a tour of six or seven countries, they will require different work permits and visas as they tour across the EU. There are also some very complicated rules around length of stay which I won't go into but for an opera tour may well mean that they won't be able to sign on for any significant period of time in order to deliver the opera. So there's all kinds of complications out there, but I think it's the time, cost, red tape which is really proving problematic and we cannot tour from country to country as used to happen.

Alison Williams

Thank you that's a really comprehensive picture. I just wondered Simon, I know you've gone into this a bit as well about the delay to being able to get people into the EU compared to the quick turnaround that you had before, is there anything else you want to add or John from your perspective anything around the visas and the movement of people to add to what Deborah has outlined?

John Horner

I think all the language that Deborah uses is the same language that we've all been using over and over again, we suffer from the same problems exactly and the same frustration.

DCMS might as well not exist and dare I mention 2,500 UEFA people and not a single model allowed into the country and that frankly is the sort of lack of respect that Government is showing to our collective industries, I think it's just abusive, it's disgraceful. And from the day of Brexit we have been lobbying endlessly as far as we can with the same response every single time, there is no reciprocity with Europe for freelancers in terms of freedom of movement, there has been no discussion and the fact that the EU has said that they are prepared to do a deal and that the UK has said they are prepared to do a deal makes the whole thing utterly farcical. Surely if both sides want to do a deal they can do a deal, you know it's a Mexican stand-off, it's absolutely farcical. And our businesses are just, you know, going through the floor, it's appalling.

Alison Williams

And are you finding that it's stopping people from moving or they're having to swallow the impact and do the admin and cover the costs?

John Horner

Yeah exactly that.

Simon Chambers

I would just say by and large a lot of us are trying to do that but we're being thwarted because as has already been said, countries all have different regulations for this, the basic premise though is that everyone who wants to work in a certain country is treated as if they're going to try to become resident there and work on a full-time basis which of course for people in the creative sector is completely wrong, they're going there normally, certainly in the case of models on one-off projects which last only a day or a matter of days and yet the hoops you have to jump through, you know some countries we're finding for example Italy or Sweden whilst models are technically not allowed to work there and need a permit, there is no actual process for what they would get that we could find that Fraganar, the legal company, have come up with. We've had situations where people don't even know, so our lawyers actually gave us an example where they've been trying to get a whole team who were shooting on location in Spain, £3 million budget, and they were getting conflicting information from the Spanish Film Commission and the Spanish Consulate and the Director of the video was told he needed a residence card. The whole thing was a farce and it took them over three months to sort out, luckily it was such a big budget project that they had time to do it, but the cost and the hassle was enormous. Certainly, for somebody going there who was meant to be working there in a couple of days' time, these are insurmountable hurdles, and the business just goes elsewhere, we have lost it at the moment, and the pandemic only serves to highlight the fact, the fact we can't travel is the same as not being allowed in as far as we're concerned.

Alison Williams

Thank you all for your answers, I'll hand back to Chair.

Tamara Cincik

Hi everyone, I just want to flag that we are running a bit over on time, and I know that it's really important that we all have our say, so if we could just make sure that we try to work to time a bit more, but I know how important this moment is and this opportunity for people who haven't felt heard so I do recognise that as well. I'm now going to hand over to Paul Blomfield MP for his question, thank you.

Paul Blomfield MP

Thanks Chair, and I'll be mindful of time. I'm conscious that much of the campaigning and public discourse around the issue of the abolition of freedom of movement has been about quite understandably and rightly about UK performers' access to the European Union, but I wondered if you could reflect on, and perhaps I could start with Deborah, if you could reflect on the difficulties of professionals coming the other way, I remember chairing a meeting of the All-Party Migration Group some years ago about the difficulties and the importance of foreign performers within the UK and now the difficulties they face are clearly going to be extended to European performers. I wonder if you could just reflect on that issue Deborah.

Deborah Annetts

So I'm going to do a bit of a plug for a piece of research which we did about a year ago and it's called 'How Open is the UK for the Music Business' because we were hearing lots of reports of musicians, particularly musicians of colour, being turned back at the border who had got all the necessary documentation. They were often falling into the permitted paid engagement category, so we did a big piece of research looking at what was happening to visa nationals and non-visa nationals trying to come into the UK in order to do a tour. This report showed that the hostile environment which had been coming out of the Home Office had extended to musicians trying to come into this country not to settle but just to do a gig, say at WOMAD, and it was particularly affecting disproportionately people who were not white. We met with the Home Office and asked them why this was going on and I specifically asked them whether there was a risk assessment that they had done in order to demonstrate that people of colour were more likely to abscond. They had not actually done any kind of risk assessment whatsoever, so I think right at the heart of how our immigration/touring policy works there is institutional racism.

Now the structures in relation to the tiers, tier five etc and PPE were put together in 2008 and what our research shows is that something has gone very badly wrong with the operation of the permitted paid engagement and COS under tier five. I'm not going to go into all the details because what I will do is I will email you this report which shows just how badly things are going, but what this does mean is that the regulations in relation to non-visa nationals have been extended to EU nationals and as we have been hearing from fashion, that is now creating mountains of paperwork, everything from visas, work permits, etc. We have been talking to ...

Paul Blomfield MP

Deborah, sorry I'm really conscious of time but could I ask, those who advocated this department from the European Union would probably say well that creates opportunities for talent including black, Asian and minority ethnic talent within the UK to fill those roles, so why is it so important that these barriers, what impact are they having on the industry and sector?

Deborah Annetts

Well I think within the arts collaboration is incredibly important and that doesn't just mean collaboration within your country but outside your country. Music doesn't really recognise boundaries and borders perhaps in the same way that governments do because creativity can come anywhere and something like the WOMAD festival is based around the concept of musicians coming from outside of the UK. If you look at all the festivals, many of the line up will come from outside of the UK and that is what generates excitement within the music industry, it creates new work which then creates even more economic activity. So it's the way the industry works, it's not something that thrives if you don't have collaboration.

Paul Blomfield MP

Thanks very much and do send us the report, that will be really useful. Can I just ask briefly what improvement you think could be made to the visa system?

Deborah Annetts

Well again, we sat down, a whole group of us, 30 of us, sat down with the Home Office about two years ago and said let us work with you to try and sort the mess out so that we've got a proper touring system post-Brexit so that EU nationals didn't get caught up with the bureaucracy that we've already got in place. That has not happened and I think it's a deep, deep shame because this is an opportunity to actually make our touring mechanisms so much better and that would actually help the UK economy.

Paul Blomfield MP

OK many thanks. I mean it would be useful perhaps if you could kind of share any of the proposals you discussed with the Home Office at that stage.

Deborah Annetts

Yeah.

Paul Blomfield MP

Conscious of time but could I just ask Simon and John, is there anything kind of different in your sector from the points that Deborah has shared?

John Horner

No, I mean we worked with the Home Office, again it took about four years to get something done to try and make improvements to the tier five visa system, wherein a model has supposedly got to have all the jobs that she might or might not be doing lined up and committed for the length of time that that model is going to be in the UK market. Well the point is that a model comes to the UK to get a job, she has to be checked to see if her size is right, etc, etc, etc and if the model doesn't get a job within two weeks the model has to leave the country and it starts all over again. So it's not just one visa, it can end up being multiple visas, so they introduced a system called 'Stop the Clock' which allows you to let the model leave and then come back in again, but again it's tons of administration, it's just loads and loads of administration.

Paul Blomfield MP

Thanks very much. I wonder Patrick, what's the impact in your sector?

Patrick Grant

The biggest impact at the moment seems to be that for a very long time our industry has relied on skilled sewing machinists from Europe, not only to produce the samples that we make each season, so the collections that we put together from which we sell our products, but also the production of the volume of clothing that we then sell. So if you look at the make-up of a typical clothing factory in the UK they would probably be more than half staffed by European nationals previously, so predominantly people from Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Lithuania where there has been a thriving garment manufacturing industry over the last 25-30 years. The UK garment industry went into very significant decline in the late 80s and early 90s and over the last 30-odd years the Eastern European industry has grown very significantly, now that industry is declining as work is moving to cheaper places and for a long time the businesses in the UK that had seen their business decline quite rapidly and so were quite strapped for cash, didn't have the money to train their own and there was a freely available staff of extremely skilled and very hard-working sewing machinists. Technical sewing machinists operating all the various different bits of technical sewing equipment that we use. And as of today there is an enormous shortage of those people. Now in the long run it is our hope that we would train our own, but training new staff takes about two years and costs about 40,000 per new employee, as businesses in an already cash strapped environment we are really, really struggling and I had a conversation the other day with a very large manufacture partner John Lewis Group who are makers of curtains and blinds, they can't find people.

We saw about 20% of our staff leave and go back to Europe and we have not been able to fill those vacancies. Now, rather ironically there are lots of opportunities right now created by the fact that getting goods made in Europe and bringing them into the UK is an incredible hassle, so UK-based fashion businesses are trying to make more in the UK but there is not, in fact there is less capacity now than there was pre-Brexit.

Paul Blomfield MP

OK thanks very much Patrick, I mean that's a useful addition to the range of skills shortages that we've become aware of.

Patrick Grant

Well again most sewing machinists earn about £15,000 sort of starting salary which is obviously well below the £25,000 skilled employee level, because they are incredibly skilled, it's just that our sector traditionally has been the lowest paid of all the industrial sectors, that is something historical.

Paul Blomfield MP

Many thanks, I'd better hand back to Tamara now.

Tamara Cincik

Thank you Paul, I appreciate all of your insights. I'm now going to hand over to Andrew, I hope I've got your surname right, Ballheimer.

Andrew Ballheimer

Thanks fine, thank you. Good morning everybody. So looking ahead and sort of aspirations hopefully, you know obviously the Government ...

Patrick Grant

... sold all across Europe, we've sold into Africa, we've sold into North America and we've sold extensively across Asia. There are no countries with which we previously didn't do business that I can see us having any greater opportunity to do business as a result of any changes that have come about. You know we are also suffering because the image of Britain as a culturally exciting and culturally liberal place has been tarnished by things like the hostile environment that we have heard, you know we are seen now as a less cool country than we were before because you know, because there are undercurrents of racism and other things that tarnish the reputation of our creative industry, so we are just seen as less cool than we used to be. And that's a pretty significant difficulty. Also, and it's been mentioned in music, I mean if I look at the people who have won the biggest prize in British fashion over the last decade, I just made a quick note, one is German, one is Croatian, one is Belgian, one is Greek. My head designer was Finnish, you know we thrived as an industry because the best talent from all over Europe came here for an education and stayed and brought their creative flair to our industry and that is now starting to drop off. Partly for reasons of perception but also for reasons of actual physical difficulty in achieving it.

Andrew Ballheimer

Thank you. In the music industry, Deborah.

Deborah Annetts

Well I would like to echo everything that Patrick has said, we are now way less cool than we used to be. But I think in addition to that we've also got things going on within education policy which are really troubling, so for some time now we've had something called the EBAC and Progress 8 [ph 0:50:08.6] which are mechanisms for judging schools which have led to arts subjects disappearing from the timetable in our secondary schools. So the talent pipeline is disappearing from maintained schools coming out at the other end. We've also seen additional charges being placed on higher education courses within the arts, so actually the message from Government is we do not value the arts and we see that in all kinds of different spheres.

Music is global, there are no other markets to go into that we're not already in. I think my concern around the trade deals is that the Government is incredibly keen to do as many trade deals as possible without necessarily understanding the implications and we are seeing I think big concerns within music around copyright. Copyright lies at the heart of the exploitation of music and we are desperately concerned that some of the trade deals which the Government are contemplating could lead to undermining the copyright regime in this country which will mean that we will be able to generate less GDP than we have done previously. So I think there is a real risk that actually new trade deals could undermine the value of the music industry around copyright.

Andrew Ballheimer

So it's a perfect storm isn't it. In the modelling space John, perhaps on behalf of the two of you. I think you're on mute still John.

John Horner

If I look at my company alone which is Models1 and we are one of the four majors in the UK, we get about 20-25,000 online applications from around the world of youngsters who want to be models, 25,000 people. We are increasingly unable to even think about bringing them in because the cost implications are considerable because once they're here they have to work every two weeks which I've already explained. Has Brexit done anything to help us? No, nothing whatever, I think Simon may or may not agree but I'm 100% certain from my perspective, it's done nothing whatever, it's just added red tape which was not there before.

Simon Chambers

I agree.

Andrew Ballheimer

I think he's agreeing. I'm conscious of time, so thank you very much all.

Tamara Cincik

Thank you Andrew, I'm now going to hand over to Peter Norris and I'm just asking that all questions are succinct because we are running over but I know how powerful this is for everyone, so thank you.

Peter Norris

Good morning everyone and I think this can be succinct because in a way the question seems a bit redundant given all we've heard and at the risk of raising our witnesses' blood pressure further, I'd just like to ask for some comment on how possible it has been to make effective representations to the Government's negotiating teams about what needs to be taken into account as we frame the new world after Brexit. Deborah, perhaps I could start with you.

Deborah Annetts

Yeah well I'm going to take that in two parts. Firstly, I think with the actual negotiation of the trade deal, I was part of the Department for International Trade cohort of so-called experts for the cultural industries and we repeatedly raised concerns all the way through 2019-20 in relation to mobility and I don't think those concerns were listened to or acted upon. I think since the TCA as you've heard my sector, fashion, etc, everybody in the cultural industries have tried to work with the Government to try and get to a better situation and we simply meet a brick wall.

Peter Norris

Is the brick wall a refusal to engage or is it engagement without any discernible result?

Deborah Annetts

When Boris Johnson said to the Liaison Committee “don’t worry we’re working flat out on that” I immediately contacted the Lead Civil Servant at DCMS and said well presumably that means we can work on the visa waiver agreement and the bilateral agreements with all the key EU states and he said no, no, no Deborah, we’re just going to have conversations with the EU states to see if we understand their guidance. So we’re hearing on thing from the Prime Minister but the actual reality on the ground from DCMS and the other various Government departments is they really can’t help because the mess lies with the Cabinet Office and Lord Frost.

Peter Norris

Thank you Deborah, perhaps we’ll just take one more comment on this. John, would you like to add anything?

John Horner

Yeah, we’ve been working with Creative Industries Federation with the British Fashion Council, we work very closely with, we’re part of, we’re a member of the touring group that works theoretically with DCMS, it’s a muddle and as far as I’m concerned we’re just pushing against, not a brick wall because it’s not that they don’t want to help, I don’t think they know how to and at a conference recently the DCMS was described as sort of the bottom of the pile when it comes to Cabinet. I don’t get the impression they have any influence whatever. And that for us is the biggest problem, we’re not talking with people who have any influence. So we’re not being heard.

Peter Norris

And do you think is there any prospect of what’s been called the Cultural Export Council coming into existence?

Deborah Annetts

I don’t think it will actually help and I also think that it was kind of a displacement activity by DCMS to show that they were doing something rather than sort out the real problems like the visa waiver agreement and the bilateral agreements, carnet, CITES, cabotage, etc. Much easier just to set up an export office to say oh well you’ve done something, but it’s absolutely not going to sort the problems.

Peter Norris

No, I agree 100% they want to be seen to be doing things and they're doing all the wrong things which have no influence whatever on our business.

Thank you very much, Tamara I'll hand back to you.

Tamara Cincik

Thank you Peter, and our last question is from Shearer West, I'm aware of time, I think we are going to be running a couple of minutes over. Over to you Shearer.

Shearer West

Don't worry, I think a lot of what I would ask has already been answered. Really it's one line from each of you on the one thing that would make a big difference to you and I think I've heard the visa waiver point already, so can I go to Simon?

Simon Chambers

Sorry, hello, can you hear me?

Shearer West

Yes.

Simon Chambers

Sorry, could you repeat the question, sorry Shearer.

Shearer West

It's really just a question about the one thing that you think would make a difference and as I said we'd heard the visa waiver push being an important one.

Simon Chambers

Yeah, I just feel that people working in the creative industries who go to add value whether people coming into the UK or UK creatives working in the EU, their services need to be looked at not as part of an immigration work visa process but they need to be understood as they're going there to do a really creative job, they're not displacing the local labour market and they're coming back to wherever they started. So it's got to be free movement ... the problem is the rules imply employment meaning permanency in residence and it's just completely inappropriate, both sides.

Shearer West

Thank you, Patrick.

Patrick Grant

I mean from my point of view it's ... the ideal situation is that we have something that looks and feels like the Customs Union with free movement of goods backwards and forwards and free movements of skilled professionals backwards and forwards.

Shearer West

Thank you, Deborah.

Deborah Annetts

I would love to be able to indulge that but I don't think the Government would do that because they're so committed to their red lines around immigration. So, I would say definitely visa waiver agreement, bilateral agreements for the key EU states on work permits, starting with Spain. And I would ask that the Government sorts out the guidance on their websites for carnets, CITES and cabotage and that is within the UK Government's control.

Shearer West

Thank you, that's very succinct and clear. John.

John Horner

Find us somebody in Government who will listen and understand and who has the ability to make an effect, we are not being listened to and that's just ridiculous. We are too important as a collective industry to be ignored and I don't think anybody sitting round here would say that we're being listened to or understood, it's a massive frustration and it's really going to damage our industry.

Shearer West

Thank you everyone, and I will hand back to the Chair.

Tamara Cincik

Thank you Shearer and I just want to add that there are some issues which Deborah and actually Patrick have pertained to and all of our evidence givers that are in the UK Government's gift, adding garment workers to the shortage occupation list until we have the two levels in craft and design rolled out would help Patrick grow business for the UK economy and that is nothing to do with having to deal with the EU and I absolutely endorse what he said on the skill of those workers that it is not necessarily always recognised and should be.

I want to say thank you to all of our evidence givers, to Deborah Annetts, to Simon Chambers, to Patrick Grant and to John Horner for making the time in all of your busy schedules and to all of our questioners from the Commission and I'm now going to hand over to Dame Rosemary Squire who will be chairing the second part of the session. Thank you very much.

Dame Rosemary Squire

Thank you so much Tamara and thank you for a fascinating session, it was really, really interesting. And I think the next hour, and we're just a couple of minutes late, so well done for clawing back the time. The next session, the next hour is going to be focusing on the live theatre and touring sectors which in common I have to say with fashion and music, I think our industry absolutely feels there's been a failure to recognise the value of these cultural industries, huge growth areas, huge employers and we've now got a double-whammy facing particularly the live sector of Covid and Brexit hitting us which is creating a multitude of barriers for our performers, for our work, not just the famous stars but all of the big names of the future too.

So for the second session we have four fantastic expert witnesses and I would love, I think they're all with us now. I would love if each of them could perhaps just take a minute or so to introduce themselves to all of us and starting with Kash, Kash Bennett.

Kash Bennett

Good morning everybody, it's lovely to be here. I am Kash Bennett, I work for the National Theatre, sorry I look like I'm in the witness protection programme. I am responsible for delivering all the National Theatre's work outside of the National Theatre, so that's West End, international touring, Broadway and UK touring, so obviously that has had a European focus.

Dame Rosemary Squire

Thank you Kash. Julian, Julian Bird.

Julian Bird

Good morning, I'm Julian Bird, the Chief Executive of the Society of London Theatre and UK Theatre, the two main membership organisations that represent everything to do with theatre and performing arts, so opera, dance and everything else.

Dame Rosemary Squire

Thank Julian, and then Paule, I can see Paule there.

Paule Constable

Good morning everybody, my name is Paule Constable, I'm a lighting designer, I work across theatre, opera, dance and musical theatre internationally. Thank you, good to be here.

Dame Rosemary Squire

Thanks and last but not least, Craig Stanley from Marshall Arts, thank you for joining us Craig.

Craig Stanley

I'm here as an agent and promoter of music shows, my company works in all the EU27 states, I'm also here as Chair of the Touring Group on behalf of LIVE, which is the Live Music Industry Venues and Entertainment. We represent around about 200,000 workers, 3,000+ businesses, promoters, agents, and other trade associations an industry that depending how you calculate it is somewhere north of 4-5 billion a year.

Dame Rosemary Squire

Thanks Craig, so in fact I'm going to ask the first question which maybe Craig you can pick up on, because just perhaps you could throw a bit more light on just how important foreign earnings are in the sector and we'll come to others in the theatre sector and maybe just a bit more information between how it's split with overseas activities of the companies or visitors coming in from other countries.

Craig Stanley

Well music is obviously universal, our closest and most important international market is Europe, it seems strange the Government want to drive us to go and do business in Korea, which is a fantastic place to go, but why go 4-5,000 miles when we can go 22 miles across the short straits. Economically it's about the future as much as about consolidating what we already have. Artists have to travel internationally to develop, you know they've already been name-checked once, it is part of our cultural history that the Beatles went to Hamburg to become a band and that is as true today as it is then, or was then. For our service sector around about 80-85% of international tours that go around Europe originate in the UK, that's not just UK-based artists or UK resident artists but international artists principally from America, when they come here they choose England and UK as a hub to actually gain all their equipment, all their staff and to actually undertake rehearsals here. The danger is that some of the big lighting companies and video companies are already beginning to move or make plans to move their equipment to Europe and we as an industry think there will be quite a rapid drift to Europe for the origination of those tours, with a consequent loss of jobs in this country.

Dame Rosemary Squire

Thank you. Julian, do you have any breakdown of earnings across the theatre industry for overseas, for other countries, for Europe?

Julian Bird

Let me just give you a flavour of the kind of international scene if you like for theatre, so of course we have UK businesses which are very, very much present and working extensively across the globe and the first point I'd just make is the Government sort of talk about well our sector should get out and work more than in the EU, well I would say in the professional theatre world we are working literally across the globe, both in terms of actually owning infrastructure, owning theatres abroad but also touring productions globally and crucially and a very, very important part of the theatre world is the licensing of intellectual property, the licensing of shows, the licensing of ideas but things that have originated here in the UK.

International tourism incoming makes up about 20-30% of the London audience, the West End audience, something we're obviously very concerned about at the moment post-pandemic, but also concerned about particularly from an EU perspective obviously going forward as well. I mean we're doing a little bit of quantification at the moment globally but broadly it's worth just knowing from a pure commercial perspective and this is where commercial versus cultural and soft power all comes into a conversation, but without doubt in terms of pure pounds or dollars the US is the most important single country in terms of professional theatre and trade. And that's historic, it's partly because of English language, Canada and Australia would flow behind that. And of course the EU incredibly important but perhaps behind some of those other countries in pure economic terms, but not in terms of soft power and in terms of skills sharing.

It's worth just talking just very briefly something like Phantom of the Opera, a property that originates here where all the money flows back to the UK has grossed north of \$6 billion across the world now, more than any single movie has ever made, so when a property, when a piece of intellectual property goes well in the theatre world the trade flows back to the UK are very, very substantial over a very, very long period, over many, many decades. But the point I'd make is you know theatre is already working literally globally and I think sometimes at the moment the Government talk about well we all need to get out and not just talk about the EU, we need to start working elsewhere I would start by saying we already are very, very much.

Dame Rosemary Squire

Thank you, Kash, is there anything you'd like to add from a National Theatre perspective about foreign earnings and their importance?

Kash Bennett

Yeah, well at the time of our last annual report 65% of the National Theatre audience were outside of London and well over a million people saw NT shows internationally. So that's obviously in terms of soft power and cultural exchange that's huge. Those tours as Julian rightly said were global but European dates made up a portion of that touring and there cannot be, it's very difficult to not tour everywhere. Once you take one piece of the touring away or make it more difficult it's much harder to put together consolidated touring weeks for the UK and the rest of the internationals. So, our tour of Curious Incident which was seen by three quarters of a million people globally played dates in Europe and Australia and China and the UK.

Dame Rosemary Squire

Thank you, and Paule, last but absolutely not least from an individual artist's point of view and a freelance point of view how important are foreign earnings for you and for your peers?

Paule Constable

For myself personally because I work a huge amount in opera and obviously in the UK we only have five major opera companies, in Germany alone there are 200. I would say 70-80% of my opera work, often in a year 100% of my opera work is outside of the UK and I would

say the majority of that is within the European Union. So it's a huge loss and I think it's really worth saying that it would have been a loss to me at the early stages of my career as well as the current moment. It's also worth noting that opera is essentially a European form, so while it has spread elsewhere and of course in America it is huge, but it is a European conversation that the sense of collaboration we've talked through through the previous session, that exchange of ideas is one that we've generated within Europe, so it's been going on for hundreds of years and we need to keep our part of that conversation happening.

I think it's also quite interesting Julian mentioning the US, I work in the US a lot but one of the things that I have to do every time I work in the United States is I have to prove that I'm an artist of international reputation, that's OK for me because I've spent the last 20-30 years working and developing that reputation within Europe, if you are a younger artist I don't know how you can prove that anymore and therefore that market is potentially not open to you anymore, but yes, it's a huge issue for the freelance sector, thank you. You're on mute Rosemary.

Dame Rosemary Squire

Sorry about that. I'm going to hand over now, thank you Paule, for the next question to Layla, Layla Moran.

Layla Moran MP

Thank you, Rosemary, thank you Chair and thank you everybody. And I come to this being the proud MP of an area Oxford that has a vibrant theatre and music scene and if we can't get it here then we jump on a train to London and we go there and it's a huge part I think of why people live here and love living here and certainly Covid I think has masked a lot of the issues that you guys are raising and it would be really helpful to understand given the challenges that we're exploring in this session around particularly sort of international touring and issues with visas and all the rest of it, how are we going to see it here in Oxford, what is going to be the blow-back for us here who want to see these performances, are we going to have fewer performances, is it that the talent is just not going to come, we're not going to have the range of performers coming to the country, what can we expect? And I think everyone will have interesting things to say, perhaps I could start with Kash?

Kash Bennett

Thank you, yeah it's back to what I was just saying previously really, I think the knock-on for Oxford will be the way the finance for touring is structured, a lot of international touring is done on guarantees and that can shore up a tour, if you're going to do a tour for a year knowing that you've got six months of it out of the UK with guaranteed income is going to help you when you are touring in the UK, so it may well be that we see fewer UK touring companies and shows touring the UK. Thank you.

Layla Moran MP

Thank you, Julian.

Julian Bird

Just to echo what Kash said, I think it's about the inter-relatedness point and the point I'd make is you know yes it will lead to less performances and crucially less opportunities, I mean I think one of the issues with this all the time is when we talk about skillsets and people within our industry we're of course talking over a longer period of time, we have real issues at the moment post-pandemic, we know that very skilled people have left our industry. You're absolutely correct I think, the pandemic has masked what we would have seen as an immediate impact of Brexit, had we been in normal working operation I literally don't know how the sector would have coped on the 1st of January, we would have had people in every country in the EU trying to prepare to go, trying to cross borders, I mean it would have been complete chaos, I mean it would have been unworkable. We didn't have that because of the pandemic and we're only now starting to really see the implications of some of that, but it's going to take time. But I think you know in your question the long-term impact on skills and opportunities is immense, so we may not see that for five or ten years, but I think it's really important.

Layla Moran MP

[Inaudible 1:14:07.7] you're referring to there, so the people trying to break into the industry, their first chances, that kind of thing.

Julian Bird

Yes I mean exactly and as Paule said, you know in lots of our sector there's an inter-relationship between working and how one gets experience, both actually EU nationals coming to the UK and getting experience here but people from here having experience by being able to work in the EU and that inter-relationship has gone, obviously or is going to be very, very difficult. And the sheer number of opportunities now to take a tour, to be part of a tour, whether you're a creative or on stage is reduced for a significant period of time. I mean you've heard others talk around, you know we may have a two or three year gap now before any meaningful activity can really get underway, particularly on cross-border touring and you know that coupled with the pandemic impact, you could be talking around four or five years where there is just a lack of any opportunity for people in the sector. And that will have a very long-term effect.

Layla Moran MP

Thank you. Paule.

Paule Constable

Thank you, echoing everything that both Julian and Kash have said, I mean one of the people giving evidence to me recently was talking about the fact that she felt she had to make the choice about whether she was British or a musician, because at the moment she didn't feel able to be both and I think that really sums up how many of us feel. I think you know just a really small example, co-productions, so if you think about somewhere like the Royal Opera House and Peter Grimes that's been recently happening in Madrid that was a co-production between the Royal Opera House and Madrid, productions like that you can't mount major

international productions without international partners and the number of houses that we can share making that work with now is way, way less. We have been really, I think the word that many, many managers are using is marginalised, we're not anyone's first choice anymore because of the complexities around employing us. So you'll be losing shows at the Royal Opera House, you'll be losing freelancers from the top of the industry to the bottom because also there's not the work in the UK to sustain the industry, we are genuinely an international industry.

Layla Moran MP

And just to follow up on that, so before and just to understand how the picture has changed, in terms of those co-productions and the way that you would work, was it primarily you know with European countries that that was with or is it just that that's just so much easier that's how it ended up. I mean the Government would say well why don't you just do it with America, why don't you just do it somewhere else, can you explain to me why?

Paule Constable

I could give you several examples of that. Most of the time within opera you'll have five or six co-producing partners if you're looking at a major production and one or two of them may be in the US. There's one opera company in Australia and generally the costs of importing work globally are quite prohibitive to them, so being a sort of co-producer at the front of something is very difficult for them. So, we do, you know the relationships are wide and international already, so you're just taking a huge sort of sector of that market away overnight.

Layla Moran MP

I see, so it's not like you can increase that, that was happening anyway you're just basically removing a bit of the pie and there's nothing more, OK.

Paule Constable

Absolutely.

Layla Moran MP

Thank you, and Craig from your perspective.

Craig Stanley

If I heard you correctly I believe your question was about inbound, so for pop music, rock shows the reality is that the UK has one of the most liberal procedures to enter, there is additional paperwork there's no doubt about it but it's very straightforward. The temporary worker tier five card system, the permitted paid engagement or indeed the permit free festival. Now the Home Office started a process two years ago that Deborah referred to earlier to attempt to streamline the process, so it could be made better, it could be made

more streamlined, the permit free festivals could be extended, in actual fact there might possibly be only two categories rather than three as the principle means for short term workers to come in. But that isn't going to be a real handicap for a lot of artists coming into the UK because we actually welcome artists, that's our experience. What's more of an issue is to do with cabotage that overseas trucks, if they're bringing equipment will also be subjected to cabotage in this country unless the DFT offers up a reverse easement and actually allows those trucks to come in which is in the grant of Shapps at the DFT, that would be hard for them to tour around the UK using EU trucks.

And then the last thing that I don't think has been mentioned yet is the 90/180 day rule and I think an awful lot particularly of skilled technicians are going to have a lot of trouble because they will very quickly use up their days going outbound and then coming in they're limited by the number of days that each of those three mechanisms I described will limit their stays in this country because quite often you can prep a show and then tour it and you can quite easily then exceed some of the allowances, the number of days. But apart from that in rock and roll it's not ideal but it is a system that works.

Layla Moran MP

And so, what, you know is the knock-on effect of those difficulties that you just outlined, is it that we'll have fewer gigs, we'll have fewer people, we'll be just lower down on the list of places to go because it's just too difficult or are we just not going to really see much of a difference at all?

Craig Stanley

Individual gigs I don't think you'll see so much difference because the reality is that the British music fans tend to actually watch English language artists, so in actual fact the number of contemporary musicians that come over and perform isn't that great. What is more problematic is in festivals and particularly more arts, I'm thinking Edinburgh Festival and so on which has a very large music component and many other festivals have international appeal, they may have more paperwork, more bureaucracy to get through but in actual fact the actual process if you are a UK sponsor for certificate and for sponsorship for other tier five it's actually a very straightforward process.

Layla Moran MP

Thank you, back to you Chair.

Dame Rosemary Squire

Thank you very much. So for the next question could I hand over to Hilary Benn, is Hilary with us? There he is, thank you.

Hilary Benn MP

I am Rosemary, thank you very much indeed. Kash, can I ask you just to explain to us briefly what are the steps that you would now have to go through when planning a tour to any parts of the EU?

Kash Bennett

Thank you. I think a lot of it was you know Deborah spoke brilliantly about this earlier, the idea is around visas and work permits, they're not the same thing, you need one for some countries, two for other countries and it's enormously complex and time consuming and expensive and at the moment quite confusing to work out what you need for which countries and if we are planning, as we hope to do, a very large scale tour in 2024 that's a tour that has 60 people on the road and would hope to do 40 weeks of touring across Europe. Now getting 60 people into an Embassy to get visas put in their passports, at different timescales, some places we know there's a three month lead time, some places don't need anything, you know it's vastly complicated and expensive and is something we do when we're going to Australia or we're going to the US, we apply for visas for everybody, but you need one visa for the US, you don't then need a separate work permit for every state you enter.

Hilary Benn MP

So, it will make touring clearly in the future in the EU very complex and difficult and expensive and is that going to mean that some things that you have toured very successfully in the past, and you've referred to a couple of those shows at the National Theatre already, wouldn't happen in the future?

Kash Bennett

They wouldn't necessarily happen in the same way, certainly, I think. We may look at the margins are quite tight on quite a lot of those shows and it may be that we can't tour in France, we can go and do four weeks sit down in Paris maybe but you know the longer you are in a country the more chance you stand of needing to fly other people out and you know our colleagues from the fashion industry spoke about the difficulties of getting people into Europe quickly. These are all problems. So yes, I would hate to say at this point we will never tour those big shows in Europe because we want to find solutions, we are a creative industry and that's what we do. However, at the moment I can't see what those solutions would be.

Hilary Benn MP

Right, now we've touched on cabotage during the course of the questions today and as I understand it it means that there is a limit for a truck coming out from the UK to the number of stops it can make in the EU. Now presumably in the kind of shows that you're talking about you load all of the sets and equipment and stuff in the lorry and it tours around Europe unloading for every show, loading up again and off you go. How do you manage that with the cabotage rules that you now have to apply?

Kash Bennett

Well I think simply from our point of view what will happen is we'll have to use European hauliers, we'll use a UK haulier to our first venue in Europe and at the point we load out, you've got it absolutely right, then it will be a European haulier that we use for the rest of the touring. At the moment we can't see another way round that. Now some UK hauliers,

apparently 85% of specialist theatrical hauliers are in the UK, they are planning to open offices in Europe

Hilary Benn MP

Right, got you. OK, that is really helpful, thank you. Craig can I put the same question to you, now for the big acts, the big artists presumably they have people they can call upon to help try and deal with all of these bureaucratic problems, paperwork and permits and so on, is that the case first of all and secondly for emerging artists who don't, what do you think is going to be the impact of trying to make a tour in Europe work?

Craig Stanley

I'm not quite so down as some of my fellow panellists are. Our research shows that about 17, 18 out of the EU27 it is a straightforward, I can get on with my crew and go to France and have permit-free for 90 days what's called a short-term entry to go and work. I can do the same in Germany, you know, in Poland it is limited to 30 days but again it is permit-free. In Hungary there is no permit required, so there's actually 17, perhaps even more, perhaps heading toward 20 out of the 27 that for our industry where we are short-stay, well we are often only there for two or three days and, or sometimes a week, you know it's actually straightforward on the work permit issue. Those countries that have been identified, Spain, Croatia, Bulgaria, possibly Italy, they haven't come off the fence on their websites yet from the Government of what they really want and a few other countries are actually we've sort of put onto an amber list. But they will be, you know to actually secure those entry for the people, what's far, far more existential threat is that no trucks means no tours. 85% of the concert fleet that brings the specialist hauliers that bring trucks round Europe originate out of the UK, there's not enough resource or spare capacity in Europe to take up the slack in the short-term. Now obviously European hauliers are actually looking at it as a growth potential. Now there will be at the moment under the current rules we would actually do exactly as the National Theatre was suggesting would be move stuff over, actually for us we use artics on the bigger tours, the equipment stays in the truck, in the trailer and then the unit, the tractor unit at the front is then changed.

Now, we're working with the DFT and others to see if there is actually three solutions, first one is we're calling actually for a cultural exemption and that could be based on what is already in existence for the car delivery industry where you can actually get car transporters are allowed to do more than three stops at certain times of the year because it would be unfeasible to actually deliver cars to all the local car dealerships. So there is a precedent for it and so in first position we're saying there needs to be a cultural exemption, I put that to Lord Frost when I met with him, fortunately I work with Sir Elton John and David Furnish and we met with Lord Frost and I was rather saddened at his rejection of that ask. He said that they were ...

Hilary Benn MP

And did he explain why he was rejecting it, Craig?

Craig Stanley

No, he would not be drawn on it.

Hilary Benn MP

He would not be drawn, OK. Very briefly because I'm running out of my time, sorry.

Craig Stanley

Yeah, but it's really important because in our industry we will not be able to tour, as we come out of Covid tours will not happen, I cannot be as blunt as that, because if it's strictly enforced our trucks will be pulled over and shows will be missed. There is no greyness whatsoever about it.

Hilary Benn MP

Right, well that is a pretty grim prospect. Craig, thank you very much indeed. Back to you Chair.

Dame Rosemary Squire

Thank you very much. I think we're actually Philippa is going to be asking the next question which we're going to move onto question 12, does that work for you Philippa? Thank you.

Philippa Whitford MP

Yes, that's great, thank you Chair. One little thing supplementary to Hilary's discussion, Kash you talked about your tour in 2024, you had planned 40 weeks but obviously that's way beyond the 90 days so will you actually have the additional costs of switching out staff and performers or will you actually, will all tours in the future be limited by 90 days?

Kash Bennett

Well I really hope not, I mean you're absolutely right it is the biggest problem at the moment, you know 20 weeks of that could well be in the Netherlands and you're right we've used the 90 days, but we have previously or I have in the past, brought US citizens and Australians into Europe for that kind of length of tour and it's just a really boring procedure of work permits and visas. So I would hope that we wouldn't have to swap people out, if we do that would really be absolutely cost prohibitive. So hopefully we will be able to find a way, but unlike Craig we are a long-term thing, the 90 days is a problem for us yes.

Philippa Whitford MP

My main question is really looking at to what extent simpler activities like exchanges and EU funding which are obviously often so central to younger performers, or you know younger developers, writers, choreographers, how much is that going to be a problem, particularly around funding or the exchange. I mean obviously we've seen within education the Erasmus system be abandoned slightly inexplicably, so what about cultural exchanges? I'll just start with you Kash and I'll go through everybody else.

Kash Bennett

It's not my area of expertise I'm afraid so I would defer to Julian.

Philippa Whitford MP

So, the National Theatre isn't involved in any kind of exchange work or using EU cultural funds?

Kash Bennett

Not cultural funds at the moment no, and again we are a year and a half behind in our programming, there were some international projects planned but they are currently due to Covid just been shelved for the moment.

Philippa Whitford MP

OK if I can go to you next Craig then, whether cultural exchanges are affected particularly around festivals and things, here in Scotland things like Celtic Connections etc are very big culturally where I am in the west of Scotland, will these be affected?

Craig Stanley

I believe they will be. As I say I come from the commercial sector of rock and roll touring, we don't tend to rely on that. The development of new artists and new festivals it may be affected and I'm sure cultural exchange of specialist musical performances will undoubtedly be impacted, yes.

Philippa Whitford MP

OK thanks, and Paule.

Paule Constable

Thank you, I think you only need to look at what's happening within music education at the moment. I mean talking to the Royal Academy they were saying that every single one of their graduates and MA students were looking to try and study outside of the UK because they couldn't see a future in the UK. So I think in terms of cultural exchange we're incredibly vulnerable with the young. I think also when you talk about simple mechanisms there's one that we're very, very, we're world famous for our opera singers jumping in and out of, at short notice, 24-hour, sometimes 12 hours' notice, it's the way we train our singers that they are able to do that and also many of our great singers have developed their reputations by doing that at the last minute. That's simply not possible anymore. So that's completely shut down that.

And I just slightly want to just, from what Craig was saying earlier, I think it's important to know that within the longer term issues of opera, dance and theatre, the movement of people is an enormous problem, so I don't want that to hide underneath the rock and roll shorter faster. And also the number of EU companies who are now advertising for EU passport holders only and that's within classical music, within theatre, within theme parks, on cruise ships, all over the place. So the red tape is enough that they are not going to be looking at any UK passport holders in a huge number of jobs in the cultural industries.

Philippa Whitford MP

Yeah, I mean obviously you know the change just for young people no matter what sector in losing the right to just work anywhere in 31 countries is a loss to our young people, but as

you say people within Europe kind of going, we've got 31 countries let's not bother with the UK, it's just too much hassle. And Julian, to you.

Julian Bird

Just two points I think, so one on your question about funding, you're absolutely right, you know cultural organisations don't have access now obviously to the EU cultural funds. What the UK Government is standing behind is you know they say that that money used to be distributed through what was called EU structural funds, including on culture, and that will now be distributed through what's called the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the issue is of course there are no details yet on that fund, what it's going to cover, DCMS, Oliver Dowden just last week, the Secretary of State, you know said that that, he hopes that that will mean distribution through to the theatre and cultural sector, but of course we have no information on that, so once again we have a gap there and particularly for companies that were working in Europe and they have no idea whether that will help within the future or not.

The second point I'd just like to reiterate what Paule was just saying, you know we are already seeing calls for people to work on shows, we are seeing this, it's not our sector but you're seeing this in film and television as well, where people are insisting that people applying for roles have an EU passport. So you know we're already seeing the activeness of why we've all talked about why that's essential, but obviously we're talking about UK workers being shut out now of jobs for a period of time until some of these issues are resolved.

Philippa Whitford MP

I mean I think in any industry where the workforce is incredibly competitive you don't need to add very much red tape for companies that may live on the edge of profit margin to go it's just not worth it, so you know like Paule was talking about getting into the US, if you are of international renown, but you know how do you get to that point if you can't build up your career.

Julian Bird

And I think the other point I'd make, we're talking a lot, or we've talked quite a lot about the commercial scene, but you know for the smaller what I'd call subsidised supported companies, their margins are tiny, so the additional bureaucracy, the additional cost is at the moment, and the uncertainty as we said around funding, is just making their ... they can't plan, they can't think about anything like that. And you know it is, we must remember the small and medium size end that perhaps the impact is going to be the most immediate.

Philippa Whitford MP

I mean obviously one of the concerns here in Scotland traditional music is very central to our culture and entertainment but with the shared prosperity fund control all moving to Westminster and cutting out the Scottish Parliament and cutting out the Welsh Parliament, how much will these traditional sectors be seen as important by someone sitting in Whitehall. I mean that's a real, it's a concern about everything but it applies within this, so you know that loss of if you like devolution around culture which is quite important across the UK. OK thank you very much, back to you Chair.

Dame Rosemary Squire

Thank you Philippa, and just picking up from all the evidence that the witnesses are giving, the overriding feeling is that UK artists, especially emerging ones, are really being marginalised and I think that's a very major problem and barrier for developing careers. I'm handing over now to Andrew to ask his question, Andrew Ballheimer.

Andrew Ballheimer

Thank you very much and thank you to each of the witnesses as well. I mean picking up on the dire theme, as we look ahead I'd be interested in hearing the kind of agreements that would be helpful for us to enter into with other countries as a way of supporting the industry. I'll start with Julian please.

Julian Bird

Well I think, you know Craig is absolutely right and Kash has mentioned it as well. There is a root of bilateral agreements with individual member states and the EU and that will help with a proportion, a large portion of what we're talking about. I think as Kash has talked about though, you know when you're coming onto broader theatre touring over multiple weeks, it does actually need the cross border issue resolved and it's the cross border issue within Europe, but also adding in other territories, so we've talked about China, we've talked about South Korea and America. You know the global tours have to be able to operate, including in and amongst the EU states. So while the bilateral approach of course we'd welcome, we're all engaged in and it's very important, the bigger structural issues around cross border touring also need to be a key part of the Government's approach and our fear at the moment is they're reverting to just talking about well let's make bilateral arrangements with each EU member state. That will take us so far but it isn't actually the solution we need.

Andrew Ballheimer

OK. Kash.

Kash Bennett

Yeah, Julian is absolutely right. I think we are as I have mentioned, you know we are touring absolutely globally, we already are doing Australia and South East Asia as part of our touring and I think Deborah mentioned earlier as well, there's a worry that as trade deals get pushed through with other parts of the world that something might get lost in the detail and we might end up worse off in some countries, we do trade relatively frictionlessly with a lot of those places outside Europe and the last thing we want to do is create any further problems there as well. But I completely agree with Julian, it's about cross border for us. So, the visa waiver may be really useful, but it's the bigger issue.

Andrew Ballheimer

Thank you. Paule.

Paule Constable

It's not really an answer to the question but there's one really small thing that a lot of individual artists would like to request that it's much easier to get a second passport as a cultural worker because we're all finding, we all have to give up our passports all the time at the moment and we can't move quickly enough. So can I just put a small plea in for that please?

Andrew Ballheimer

OK, understood. And Craig. Finally.

Craig Stanley

I think the most pressing thing would be for Lord Frost to agree that these matters are actually included in the Partnership Council agenda, we were fortunate in their first meeting it was added under any other business, it was remarked, we were calling on him to actually include it actually as part of the main agenda in all further meetings with Europe, as they look to refine the TCA. The second thing is that to get a commitment from Government that they are actually entering into bilateral discussions in a meaningful way for them to be open and to actually share with us what those discussions are, I've been at meetings where Caroline Dinenage, the Minister for Digital and Culture says they are actively doing them and I asked her can you tell me who you have met, they declined to do so. And I feel that it's very important because we as an industry across all of our cultural expressions can actually put pressure on our partners within each territory for the other side, because to have any negotiation both sides have to come to the table, we can put pressure on if we know who they are approaching to make sure that the Spanish come to the table, or the Croatians come to the table.

The third thing is that the Government really has to actually tighten up their guidance, they say they are doing it, it's just flim-flam, to use the Prime Minister's favourite word. They actually need to actually put down true guidance, not just signposting to other nation's websites which are often out of date anyway. And the far last thing is that we've called on them to actually put a transitional support package, so while they're actually getting long-term solutions sorted out and we acknowledge that international diplomacy does take time, we're realists, but in the short-term, and actually in the medium term sadly they need to put a transitional support package which is a balanced mixture of financial support, especially to help young and emerging and self-employed people, both artists and technicians to help companies actually navigate this new relationship with Europe and to provide the support that we're actually looking at our Government to provide. Because they created this mess and they need to sort it out.

Andrew Ballheimer

How much are you looking for in terms of the fourth item because I think you know all the other ideas are very easy, you know and sort of mutually beneficial as well but the fourth one I'm sure the Treasury are going to be pushing back on hard, so you know how much are you looking for?

Craig Stanley

Well the trouble is I only come from the music industry, even with music it's such a broad church that there are so many different and disparate interests across all four home nations. I think to actually put a number on it across all of cultural expression I think is actually extremely difficult for us to put forward, what I think the Government needs to do is to say this is the type of package we could do, which could range from tax breaks for example as opposed to actually hard cash into people's pockets. Whether it's distributed through organisations such as the Arts Council England, that is up to the Government to decide how they wish to distribute it. They keep going back to the Cultural Recovery Fund, my fear/anxiety is that the few hundred millions that they still have left will now start to be pushed across to actually make us go away complaining about Brexit. It was there to do with Covid and I get this horrible suspicion that it's beginning to morph over and they will be throwing us crumbs when we actually need active and positive engagement.

Andrew Ballheimer

Thank you very much, thank you all. Chair.

Dame Rosemary Squire

Thank you very much Andrew, and now turning to Roger, Roger Gale who is going to ask the next question which are in two parts I think Roger.

Roger Gale MP

They are, thank you very much indeed but in fact most of the ground has been covered, I've been working in the related businesses for over 50 years, I think I'm one of only two members of Parliament who still have a current British Actors Equity Card and I've also been involved in touring bands. And it does seem to me that the big problem, and I'll raise this mainly with Craig, is the issue of cabotage and replacement of people on tour and the need for a visa waiver and that seems to go right across the board, right through all the evidence that we had from the music industry and the modelling industry in the first half and now from you. And I just wonder whether you get any sense at all that these issues are being addressed by Frost or Johnson or anybody else.

Craig Stanley

On the cabotage issue I mean I do have to give praise where it's due, the officials at the DFT have absolutely actively engaged and they actually have been the most open of all the people in Government I've dealt with. Sadly, they don't actually have the ... the capacity to actually bring about change, they can support us, they can talk with their colleagues in Europe at DG Move and others but it actually needs the Minister, the Secretary of State to get involved and it has been deafening his absence. Many of the solutions being put forward are actually in his gift and we believe, and it is our understanding, and we have been briefed by the DFT, it could be done, that it could be entered into instruments, statutory instruments could be introduced in September and actually be active by October if the reverse easement, which is where UK trucks go and register themselves as EU trucks, I can't believe the Government is advising us to take successful businesses in the UK and relocate them within

one of the EU27, but that is what they are suggesting. And then those freshly minted Irish or Dutch or French trucks will then be allowed to come and ply their trade back in the UK, even though they've got a French number plate. If that is in his power to do, and he could make that commitment today and enter into Parliament at the next session after the summer recess.

Roger Gale MP

You're saying that we could do this unilaterally, that it doesn't have to be an agreement with ...

Craig Stanley

Correct. Because what it is is voluntarily successful British companies will actually give up their registration of their British trucks and go and relocate, at large expense, to go and actually open up depots in Europe and re-register their trucks under European rules and have European registration numbers. They could then come back and ply here.

Now I understand there's complexity and there could be abuse that others would then try and come back in, but we believe that it could be very specifically and tightly worded the actual legality of it that they're involved in cultural activity for specific set times with an obligation to return at the end of each tour.

Roger Gale MP

That's very helpful. Kash, looking at the people bit of this as opposed to the cabotage, my impression is that dance companies for example the state dance companies from all over the world, tour globally, the Mongolian State Dance Company, you've got Cirque du Soleil, all these outfits travel worldwide, is it your impression that Europe is being bloody-minded and that actually it's being made more difficult for us than it is for any of the other non-European nationalities that are touring very widely already and have done for a long time?

Kash Bennett

No it isn't, I think there are lots of extra issues that we have touring, interesting as you might think cabotage is not our biggest issue, our biggest issue is 40 consecutive weeks of touring in Europe for example which dance companies do not do, they work very much like Craig's industry, they come in and they do three nights in France and they do two nights in you know Denmark, they do not want to do 40 weeks of consolidated touring and that's our bigger issue, you know they often are also very heavily state funded those companies which we are not, you know we're talking about the commercial producers touring within Europe, so I'm not sure that it is Europe being bloody-minded at all, it's just going from country to country for us for consecutive weeks is going to be extremely problematic.

Roger Gale MP

Sorry, I don't understand why should that be more difficult?

Kash Bennett

Because a) we've got the 90 day thing, we can't be in Europe for more than 90 days at the moment, so if you want to do 20 weeks in the Netherlands and then ten weeks in Germany and then four in Italy, four in France and two in Spain. That's complicated so we can't, you know we can't do that. And we will also have to make applications for whatever work

permits and visas, which is when you've got a company of 60 people on the road a very complicated process, especially if they're not all with the tour all the time.

Roger Gale MP

So, is the answer to that a visa waiver?

Kash Bennett

Visa waiver would be a start, yes.

Roger Gale MP

OK. Paule, do you have any thoughts to add to that?

Paule Constable

Apologies, I'm on a strange computer. Yes, I mean I think it's interesting one of the complexities about theatre and opera and dance is we work in countries for longer and I think that it's worth talking, you know often an opera singer might be going to say, I was talking to Andrew Staples recently, he's been performing in Madrid for three months, so that's including a rehearsal process, then performances while he's in Madrid, then he's been offered a job singing Idomeneo in Rome, he actually hasn't got enough days left in his 180 to accept the second job. I mean that's three months of work just gone for him. So, it's just understanding that the issues for people are very different depending upon which form we're talking about, and therefore there's no one size fits all. And for example the visa waiver is just a start, it's a baby step, but it is a start that would be very helpful. It doesn't alter the work permit issue obviously.

Roger Gale MP

Julian.

Julian Bird

I'm not sure I've got a huge amount to add, I mean I would just say you know the complications for individuals are immense, you know we've even had producers talk to us about if they start to contemplate touring can they insist that their casts don't also go on holiday in Europe so they don't use up part of their 90 days. I mean we're into that level of detail and that level of control over individuals and clearly long-term that, as Paule and Kash are giving examples, that isn't really workable.

Roger Gale MP

That's horrific.

Julian Bird

But that's the reality, you know. Should we have to tell people that in their spare time we don't want them spending time in Europe so they don't use up their days' allocations, that's the reality.

Roger Gale MP

Who is your point of contact and how much contact are you actually having with Government at any level?

Julian Bird

Well there are, I'm sure others have covered this briefly, I mean DCMS have set up a touring group which Craig and Deborah and I are all on. There's a lot of talk I would suggest and not a huge amount of activity at the moment, I mean there is this new portal of information about touring which I think is helpful at the smaller end, so for small companies and individuals who don't have access to the resources that maybe the big organisations do. I think Deborah mentioned this, I mean some time ago the Government had set up some expert trade advisory groups across different sectors, I think there were 11 of these, and if I just go beyond Europe you know I think we all feel that the Government didn't listen closely enough to our industries when they were agreeing the trade agreement with Europe, our huge fear is that the same might happen again elsewhere around the world as trade deals are concluded, and so you know I would really urge that the Government go back to talking about how they can engage with the industry on international trade going forward, so that we try and avoid these issues particularly with the big commercial territories like America and places like that.

I would say, Craig has said, you know there is engagement but it isn't at a high enough level, we still have a fear that at the very senior level this issue isn't being taken seriously enough.

Roger Gale MP

OK, I'm going to leave it there and let the chair ask if anybody else wants to say anything that we've missed, thank you very much indeed.

Dame Rosemary Squire

Thank you, Roger, yes picking up from Roger are there any final points for our witnesses we haven't covered or that we would like to add? We've got a couple of minutes left if anybody has got anything to ask.

Hilary Benn MP

Can I ask a question Rosemary? I mean we've touched on this in some of the answers. Do you think, all of you with your experience of talking to DCMS or any other civil servants or Ministers, do you think that they get what the problem is, do they understand what you have so clearly explained to us in your really important evidence this morning?

Julian Bird

I'll answer that quickly, yes I do believe they do understand, I mean I think the DCMS Ministers absolutely understand this, I think they are powerless to do anything about it and that's one of the issues and you know Lord Frost, Craig, many people have had time with him and his advisors and explained this, so I think the understanding is there, whether there ... how far there is a willingness to try and get this resolved I don't know and as Craig said there is a mechanism by which the agreement can be reopened and thought about on both sides and we all have large European networks, ours is called PEARLE, the Performing Arts League of Europe and we're working with them and with all our counterparts across the EU member states to put pressure from the EU side because they're seeing it as well. So it does need everybody to come to the table.

The one point I would also just make, cultural export office was mentioned earlier and I agreed with Deborah, you know this may be a side-line but for the long-term this could be really important. You know as we went into this across Government there was very little understanding about our sector and very little understanding about our sector's work overseas, we had largely just got on with it with very little Government involvement, and if a cultural export office can do one thing it would ensure that across Government there was a level of expertise at official level around the activities of our broad sector and I think that would be useful.

Hilary Benn MP

Thank you, is that a view that is shared that DCMS gets it but is powerless to do anything about it because it runs up against well, I suppose ... the ideology of what Brexit means, despite the consequences it's going to have for one of our great British success stories, all of you.

Craig Stanley

I believe this is an accurate reflection, I think the DCMS Select Committee when Caroline Dinenage was in front of them I believe they described DCMS as being impotent and that the Home Office is caught up on their ideology. And that other departments were just inept. They know the problems, what I'm not 100% certain is that they don't recognise that we as an industry, as a cultural creative industry, we are about problem solving, we recognise there's a new relationship with Europe, we want to make it work and we are here to actually really work with them. They're not stupid, they do understand it but it's political that they don't, they aren't actually getting their sleeves rolled up and actually getting some of this sort of jaw-jaw actually moves to meaningful engagement.

Hilary Benn MP

OK thanks very much, thank you Rosemary.

Dame Rosemary Squire

Thank you, well I think we're exactly on time, finished at 12 noon. If there aren't any other questions I would just like to thank all of the expert witnesses, it's been a fantastically interesting session for me and I'm a professional in the industry, but it's been fantastic and

on behalf of the Commissioners thank you so much and look forward to seeing you all before long. Two weeks I think, thank you.