



Cabinet Office

Public Correspondence

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Our reference:
TO2021/12460

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24 June 2021

Dear Tim Brennan,

UK Touring Professionals and Artists

1. Thank you for your letter of 26 May regarding UK touring professionals and artists. This government recognises the importance of the UK's creative and cultural industries, not only to the economy and international reputation of the United Kingdom, but also to the wellbeing and enrichment of its people. We are grateful for the work the Carry on Touring Campaign has done in bringing together interested parties from across the cultural and creative sectors in the UK and EU to discuss this important issue.
2. The British people voted to take back control of our borders and end free movement with the EU in the 2016 referendum. That was a key part of the manifesto on which the Government won the 2019 election, and is accordingly reflected in the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement. It was inevitable, therefore, that there would be changes in the arrangements under which UK creative workers could operate in the EU after the transition period.
3. While negotiations with the EU could never have replicated in full the mobility arrangements that existed during our membership of the EU, the proposals we tabled would have addressed many of the challenges that performers and artists currently face. We are disappointed that the EU did not agree to them, despite the mutual benefits to the creative industries on both sides. Our recent deal with the EFTA countries (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein), which has secured permit free touring in those territories, was based on the same UK offer that the EU turned down. This shows our proposals to the EU were workable, and our door remains open should the EU be willing to revisit those proposals.
4. Now that the negotiations have concluded and the Trade and Cooperation Agreement has been ratified, our focus is on helping the creative industries adjust to our new relationship with the EU. As part of this, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport led Working Group - involving sector representative bodies and a range of government departments - has been a vital forum to discuss these issues. The Working Group has sought to provide clarity regarding the practical steps that need to be taken by touring professionals when touring the EU. We have published sector-specific "landing pages" on gov.uk to help professionals navigate the guidance available online, as well as general business traveller guides for EU Member States.

We are also exploring other ways in which these sectors can be supported to work and tour in the EU with confidence, including looking carefully at proposals for a new Export Office that could provide further practical help.

5. Regrettably, we do not believe the proposal for a bespoke visa waiver for the creative industries is viable. During negotiations on the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, the Commission proposed an EU-wide visa waiver agreement alongside a binding non-discrimination clause covering all current and future Member States. A permanent, legally binding commitment not to impose visit visas (including for paid engagements) would have been inconsistent with the government's manifesto commitment to take back control of our borders. We do enable visa-free visits from EU citizens, but we wish to retain control of how we apply the policy. No major G7 economy has agreed to lock in their visa systems with the EU.
6. Whilst the EU has competence under its common commercial policy to agree with its trading partners arrangements facilitating trade in services and investment by allowing temporary entry and stay to natural persons for business purposes, it cannot agree measures affecting natural persons seeking access to the employment market of Member States. Accordingly, the EU's existing visa-waiver deals with other third countries only include non-binding commitments regarding paid activities. Indeed, according to the Commission's own materials, a number of Member States require visit visas for, to take one example, Columbian nationals undertaking paid activity in the EU, despite the EU-Colombia visa-waiver agreement.
7. We are, however, engaging with Member States directly on the visas and work permits that some in the creative industries will now face. We have already spoken to every Member State about the importance of touring, and through these discussions established that at least 17 out of 27 Member States, including France and Germany, allow some visa and permit free touring. DCMS ministers have raised touring with their counterparts in a number of Member States. We are also now working closely with individual Member States to encourage them to adopt a more flexible approach, in line with the UK's own rules which allow creative professionals to tour easily here.
8. It is in everyone's interests to support touring - British creatives want to tour in the EU, and venues and audiences in the EU want to host them. I am grateful for the contributions you and many other creative and cultural stakeholders have made to these discussions to date, and would welcome your continued support in encouraging EU Member States to match the generous arrangements we provide for incoming creative professionals ourselves. By continuing to work with urgency across government, in collaboration with the music and wider creative industries, and directly with Member States, we can help touring in Europe resume as soon as it is safe to do so.
9. I hope you find this response helpful and thank you once again, for contacting the Cabinet Office.

Yours sincerely,

Ollie

Correspondence Officer

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