

# THE ARTS AFTER BREXIT: THE IMPACT OF THE UK'S DEPARTURE FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION ON ITS CULTURAL RELATIONS WITH EUROPEAN UNION MEMBER STATES

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Polly Dunbar, 'Lady Europa and Children', published in *Drawing Europe Together: Forty-five Illustrators, One Europe* (2018). Reproduced with kind permission from the artist.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UK's departure from the European Union (EU) has had a tremendous emotional impact on the arts and cultural sector and will further affect the funding, mobility, and partnerships which have been so central to the workings of cultural organisations in the UK.

- There will probably be a hiatus of at least two years after the transition period ends in December 2020 because arts and cultural organisations have refrained from planning projects with EU partners as a result of uncertainty regarding future regulations. Administrators estimate that clarity, facility of movement of people and goods (including artefacts and film assets), and funding from the government will be necessary to start European projects again.
- The arts and cultural sector urgently requires clarity regarding the government's migration and customs policy with EU member states so it can plan for the future.
- The sector urges the government to create a fund to replace Creative Europe, since the government has announced that the UK will not seek participation in this fund after 2021.
- British arts organisations will no longer be able to lead on EU-funded projects (and in many cases, will no longer be able to participate) and administrators expect that they will lose the leadership positions they hold in EU schemes.
- The burden of maintaining ties independently of EU frameworks and funding will be greater on mid-sized arts organisations which will probably not have the administrative and staff capacity to adapt to new visa, insurance, customs, and intellectual property regulations defined by each EU member states after 2020.
- Brexit is set to take away EU-funding from the regions that need it most and governance may become more concentrated in cities, not least London.
- Many deplore a reality in which British civil servants will no longer be able to influence key political discussions regarding cultural and digital affairs at EU level.
- The sector broadly expects that the departure of the UK from the EU will undermine many years of work, careful networking, and planning on the part of partners in the EU, the UK, and EU member states.
- The arts and cultural sector must address the overlapping consequences of Brexit and Covid-19 to a greater extent than most sectors.

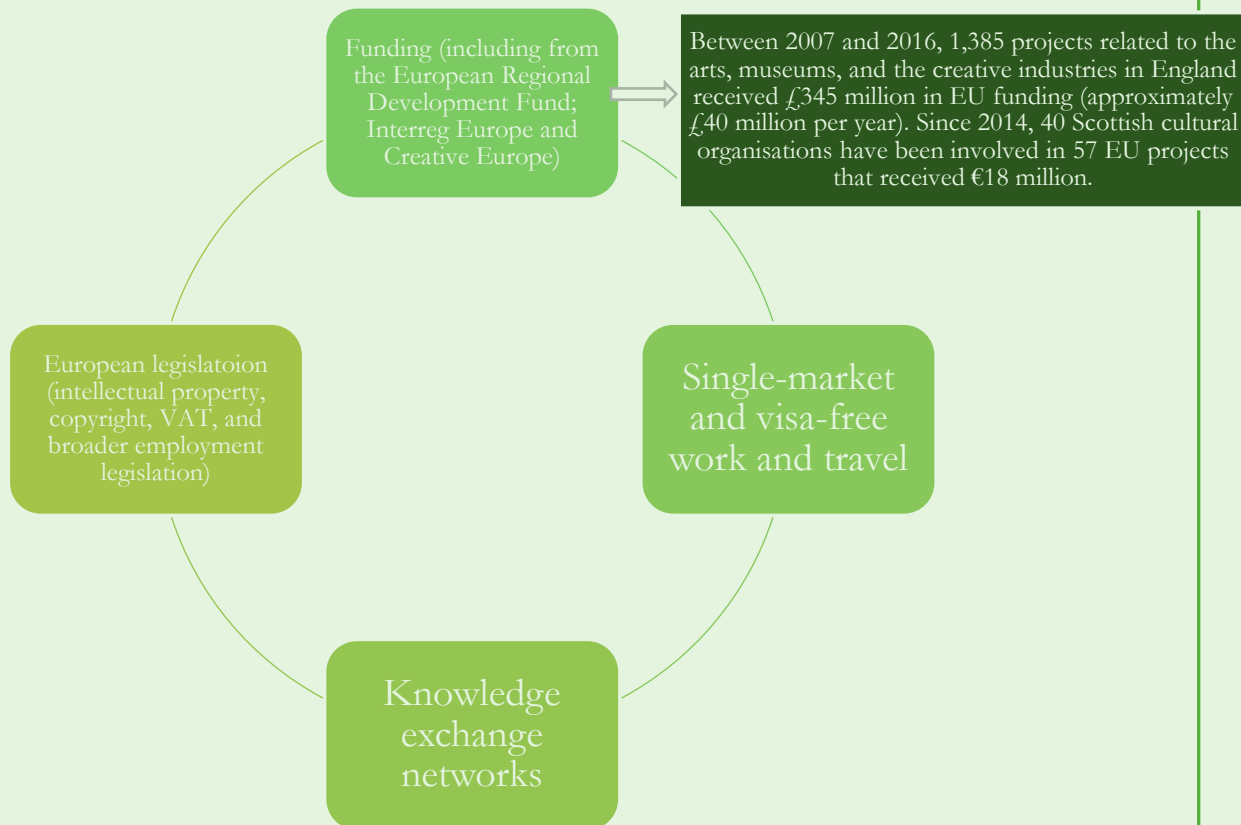
The arts and cultural sector remains willing to create and nurture partnerships with EU member states because such partnerships are crucial for creativity, for testing new ideas, and for engaging with diverse communities.

- Arts practitioners and organisations are looking at alternatives to EU schemes, including transnational networks of cities, engagement with European cultural institutes, and international schemes supported by government agencies and charities.
- However, the future regulations concerning mobility, customs, staff visas, and funding will be major impediments to the willingness of individuals and institutions to maintain partnerships with arts organisations in EU member state.

## INTRODUCTION

The European Union has been a vital organ of solidarity and investment for the cultural system of the UK, as illustrated in the figure below.

### The contribution of the EU to the arts in the UK:



However, the UK's withdrawal from the EU means that the country, and its arts and creative sector, must adapt to a new context. So far, there has been little communication on the part of the British government and the EU regarding the arts and cultural sector after Brexit.<sup>1</sup> So much is uncertain regarding the impact of Brexit on the sector in both the UK and the EU.

This report investigates and assesses the manifold impacts of the UK leaving the EU on the health, confidence, and sustainability of the UK arts and cultural sector. It gives a provisional assessment of the impact – emotional, creative, and financial – of Brexit and outlines how institutions have reacted to the referendum result and how they have prepared themselves for the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union. It also makes some initial policy solutions which might ameliorate negative impacts of Brexit on the health and vitality of the UK arts and cultural sector.

<sup>1</sup> [Communication on readiness at the end of the transition period between the European Union and the United Kingdom, 2020](#); [The Future Relationship with the EU: The UK's Approach to Negotiations Presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister By Command of Her Majesty, February 2020](#).

The impact of Brexit on the arts and cultural sector and its relations with partners in EU member states needs to be understood in a context in which most of this sector was in favour of remaining in the EU (British Council 2016; Creative Industry Federation 2016; Creative Scotland 2016). However, national agencies and arts and cultural administrators have negotiated the ambition of the sector to maintain close ties with the EU with the referendum vote to leave the EU.

## METHODOLOGY

The research for this report is based on qualitative analysis in the form of nineteen structured interviews and additional consultation conducted between 9 September and 14 October 2020, a literature review and policy analysis. The author and Tom Fleming compiled a list of sample consultees from across the arts and cultural sector of the UK. In addition, the author reached out to European cultural institutions in the UK and local councillors and arts administrators in Remain and Leave areas who shape British policies in the arts and cultural sector at a local, national, or international level. The sample (see the full list of consultees at the end of the report) reflects the variety of arts and cultural institutions in the UK and takes into consideration the geographical, social, and political diversity of British society.

This research deals with the challenges identified by consultees, their perception of the current and future context, and the policies and strategies they had implemented at the time the fieldwork was conducted. The report takes seriously the perceptions and emotions of the leaders and staff of institutions and councils and the broader political culture of these organisations because they are important elements that must be considered to appreciate the policymaking process in the arts and cultural sector regarding the UK's departure from the EU.

## THE EMOTIONAL REACTION TO THE REFERENDUM RESULT

Very few circles in the arts and cultural sector have expressed enthusiasm for Brexit, with the exception of some commercial art galleries that hope to become more competitive outside the EU framework (if the UK government establishes a favourable regulatory environment after December 2020, that is).<sup>2</sup> The political outcome of the referendum felt very personal for many staff in the arts and cultural sector, who reported feeling sad and disappointed following the announcement of the result of the referendum. A large section of those consulted had not anticipated that 52% of voters might choose to leave the European Union and felt that they had failed to engage and listen to people outside their pro-EU circles. Others had noticed an inward-looking shift over the years preceding the referendum and had worked to promote a pro-EU and internationalist agenda, although they largely felt this was not enough. For staff working directly with EU institutions, there was also a feeling that they represented a country that they

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<sup>2</sup> Clare McAndrew, 'Why Brexit Is a Golden Opportunity for the U.K. Art Market' 30 August 2018, <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-brexit-golden-opportunity-uk-art-market>

did not feel aligned with, and furthermore they felt that the referendum was a blow against the work with the EU they had been doing for several years – in fact, for several decades.

Non-UK EU staff who had been residing in the UK for several years and intended to stay in the country were affected the most by the result. They wondered how welcome they actually were in the UK, and what the impact of the referendum would be on their livelihood. One interviewee from an EU member state interpreted the result of the referendum as a point made by the British population that non-British citizens could never truly be part of British society. It is clear that this disappointment and sadness are still very present in 2020, and many in the sector are at pains to reconcile their emotions and politics with the upcoming departure of the UK from the EU.

## THE SECTOR'S IMMEDIATE STRATEGIC RESPONSE TO THE REFERENDUM

Administrators and practitioners in the arts and cultural sector had diverse reactions to the result of the referendum. Most, however, agreed that there had been too little research on and interest in what the departure from the EU actually entailed for the arts.

- Echoing attitudes among the UK population, some began to lobby for a second referendum and refused to believe that the UK would leave the EU (Creative Industries Federation 2019). Several interviewees noted that within their organisations there was a sense that Brexit would never happen, which meant that little planning was done immediately following the referendum. Only since 2019 or 2020 have they started to consider how they might work around the change in legislation after December 2020.
- The political context in Scotland (where there was a strong vote to remain in Europe and where the government is promoting independence) has meant that the prospect of an independent Scotland that might rejoin the EU has prevailed after 2016.
- In England, many advisors working on European bids, such as Geoffrey Brown, Director of Euclid (a leading independent expert on EU funding) were initially hopeful that the UK would seek to remain linked to the EU on the basis of a similar membership status to that of Norway or Iceland. Over the years, however, it became clear that the UK government did not see this as an acceptable way forward.

Some of the institutions surveyed for this research found themselves reflecting on the efficacy of their international and European work: could they have done more, or indeed differently, to prevent the result of the referendum? Some London-based groups also concluded that they had not reached out enough to audiences beyond London (where 59.93% of those who cast their ballot voted to remain in the EU). Staff at the British Council, the UK's cultural relations agency, pondered whether they had done enough to promote international cultural understanding in the UK.

In response to the referendum, the Goethe Institute set out to understand more pro-actively the diversity of experiences within British society and ultimately to better appreciate the



motivations behind the vote to leave the EU. The Institute had always worked throughout the country, especially through its network of schools and partners in the language-department but after 2016 it shifted its focus more decisively beyond London. One of the programs it launched was Arrival City, a worldwide project which, in its UK edition, was curated by the Liverpoolian artist Niloo Sharifi in partnership with FACT Liverpool. In 2018 Arrival City looked at how migration shapes urban spaces and, as explained on Goethe-Institut London's website, '*offers a chance to address and improve upon the toxicity of popular discourse around migration*'.<sup>3</sup> Working beyond London was not without challenges and self-reflexion. As Katrin Sohns, Head of Cultural Programmes at the Goethe-Institut London explains:

this new strategy has required more work on our part to develop fresh connections, to speak with partners and set up cooperation outside London; it also made us aware that for several decades, programmers and curators outside London had been the ones doing the tiring travelling to meet with them. (Katrin Sohns)

One consultee, Joe Mackintosh, who leads the outdoor arts organisation SeaChange Arts, based in Great Yarmouth, suggests that the biggest blow to UK arts' ability to create international partnerships does not originate in the UK's leaving the EU but rather in the 2008 economic crisis. The Budapest Observatory notes that '*on an EU scale, after 2008, culture has been among the losers, in the sense that spending on cultural services has been left behind the average increase rate of total public expenditure*'. Furthermore, in 2017, the UK government spent less on culture than in 2004, and from 2010 the government reduced the budget of local authorities, something which hit Great Yarmouth particularly severely.<sup>4</sup> UK politics in the early 2010s also served to marginalise culture as a valid priority for public funding. Mackintosh remembers that in 2012–13, during the fifth programming for the EU–European Territorial Cooperation (Interreg) Franco-British programme, UK administrators were reluctant to even include the word 'culture' in the call for bids. Budget cuts, combined with a toxic political narrative about public money being wasted on culture (and outdoor art and circuses were particularly vulnerable to such stances), could be deemed more harmful to the sector than Brexit per se.

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<sup>3</sup> 'Arrival City, Interview with Niloo Sharifi', July 2018 <https://www.goethe.de/ins/gb/en/kul/mag/21327265.html>

<sup>4</sup> Public Funding of Culture in Europe, 2004-2017, *The Budapest Observatory*, March 2019, <http://www.budobs.org/files/Public%20cultural%20funding%202004-2017.pdf>; Local Government Association, 'Local government funding. Moving the conversation on' [https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/5.40\\_01\\_Finance%20publication\\_WEB\\_0.pdf](https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/5.40_01_Finance%20publication_WEB_0.pdf)



## MAKING SENSE OF BREXIT LOSSES FOR THE ARTS AND CULTURAL SECTOR

As early as July 2016, the sector called for immediate action on the part of the government with respect to the following elements (Creative Industries Federation 2016):

- trade barriers
- intellectual property
- freedom of movement
- funding

In 2016 and still at the time of writing (October 2020), the arts and cultural sector considers that it will probably be significantly impacted by Brexit due to industry-specific features that include:

- the international make-up of the creative and cultural industries' workforce and audiences;
- the arts and cultural sector's need for freedom of movement for people and goods (in the context of touring, exhibitions organisations, festivals, etc.);
- its available sources of funding.

### FUNDING

After 2021, the status of the UK regarding schemes such as Creative Europe, Horizon 2020, and Erasmus+ is unclear.

**Creative Europe.** The UK will no longer be eligible to be the lead on the major EU cultural and creative programme, Creative Europe, which gave grants to UK projects worth an average of €18.4 million between 2014 and 2020 (Creative Europe Desk UK 2018). On 27 February 2020, the UK government announced in its EU negotiation mandate that it will not be seeking to participate in the next Creative Europe programme, which is due to start in January 2021.<sup>5</sup> This caused a backlash in the sector.

The UK Government's decision to exclude Creative Europe from the scope of future relationship negotiations with the EU is incomprehensible. There was no need to take the programme off the table, as it is entirely possible to participate as a non-EU state.<sup>6</sup> (Scottish Culture Secretary Fiona Hyslop)

The Creative Europe Desk UK – Scotland will close in December and staff will return to their organisations (Creative Scotland, British Council) but won't have an official remit to communicate about the programme. The UK team is currently putting together 'third country guidance' (for countries that do not pay into the programme but can still be involved in projects

<sup>5</sup> The UK's Participation in Creative Europe, 2 March 2020. <http://www.creativeeuropeuk.eu/news/update-creative-europe-and-outcome-eu-referendum>

<sup>6</sup> 'Response to decision to end participation in Creative Europe', 28 February 2020, <https://www.gov.scot/news/response-to/>

on the culture side – but not the media side). However, Kate Deans of the Creative Europe Desk UK – Scotland estimates that UK organisations will struggle to act as a third-country applicant if the UK cannot also contribute financially to projects.

**Erasmus +** There are still a great many unanswered questions that concern whether the UK will remain part of the Erasmus scheme, but students and researchers visiting the UK from EU member states will have to comply with the new immigration system. EU students who will arrive in the UK after January 2021 and those who will start their course after 1 August 2021 will all have to face a change in their immigration and fee status (each UK university will set its own fees for EU students, who will no longer be automatically eligible for ‘home fees status’).<sup>7</sup> Bodies such as the British Academy have called for the government to facilitate student and researcher mobility ‘*in view of its important net economic contribution to the UK and its invaluable contribution to the academic, intellectual and cultural vibrancy of UK universities*’.<sup>8</sup> Maddy Probst from Watershed (Bristol) adds that cultural organisations like Watershed that have long-standing partnerships in place with their local universities are likely to be affected negatively by a potential drop in student numbers.

#### MOBILITY OF PEOPLE

The sector is worried that strict visa regulations will limit the circulation of artists from the EU to the extent that the diversity of the cultural offerings in the UK will be damaged. As Emma Escurier from the French Institute in London notes, ‘*We are likely to see fewer artists from EU member states on British stages*’. Arts administrators who have worked in other continents call for the British government to carefully consider the impact the Immigration Bill could have on the presence of EU arts practitioners in the UK. Máté Vincze, who prior to directing the Hungarian Centre London was posted in the US, where the artist visa system is very strict, hopes that the UK does not follow the US model in this respect.

#### EU CITIZENS

Arts institutions are keen to be able to continue employing EU citizens with valuable creative, technical, and language skills. This is particularly important in Scotland, where the government has been very vocal about how migrants are welcome in the context of depopulation.<sup>9</sup> Interviewees noted that their current EU staff have all secured settled or pre-settled status but they are concerned about the potential £30,000 salary threshold for work visa and the administrative burden that new immigration laws will add to arts organisations whose budgets are often already stretched. The situation of interns from the EU, who make up a significant

<sup>7</sup> ‘Studying in the UK: guidance for EU students’, 13 July 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/studying-in-the-uk-guidance-for-eu-students>

<sup>8</sup> ‘A submission from the British Academy to the Migration Advisory Committee inquiry on the economic and social impacts of international students in the UK’. [https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/1858/2018-01-26\\_Migration\\_Advisory\\_Committee\\_submission\\_on\\_the\\_impact\\_of\\_internatio\\_R979CNw.pdf](https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/1858/2018-01-26_Migration_Advisory_Committee_submission_on_the_impact_of_internatio_R979CNw.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> ‘The Contribution of EEA Citizens to Scotland: The Scottish Government’s Response to the Migration Advisory Committee’, November 2017. <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/research-and-analysis/2017/11/contribution-eea-citizens-scotland-scottish-governments-response-migration-advisory-committee/documents/00527186-pdf/00527186-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00527186.pdf>; see also House of Commons, DCMS, ‘The potential impact of Brexit on the creative industries, tourism and the digital single market’ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmcmds/365/365.pdf> pp. 10-15.

portion of staff in arts organisations, is also uncertain. Consultees observed a decrease in the number of applicants from EU countries for some bilingual roles and schemes usually popular with candidates from EU countries. Those consulted for the report are awaiting anxiously news about the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill 2019–21 (currently in the Commons for consideration of amendments made in the House of Lords).

#### MOVEMENT OF GOODS

The referendum result and its impact present practical challenges for the arts and cultural sector around the question of VAT and customs regimes for exports and imports, especially if there is a no-deal Brexit. The UK will lose the right to the free movement of goods originating in EU member states. Economists have traced a positive correlation between openness and growth (Born, Müller, Schularick & Sedláček 2019) and the cultural sector accounted for 2% of all UK jobs in 2017. In 2016, the value of exports of goods associated with the cultural sector was £10.5 billion (3.4% of all of the UK's goods exports). In 2018, creative, cultural, and digital industries, as well as gambling, sports, and telecoms (which all fell under the scope of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport [DCMS]), exported £28 billion to the European Union as a whole, which represented 44.7% of all services exported by these sectors.<sup>10</sup> But if the UK falls into the 'third country' category after 2020, UK organisations wishing to move goods in EU countries will have to obtain the necessary licences and comply with the regulations of each EU member state. This will not only prove administratively burdensome and costly for organisations but will also be a hinderance to British exports.

#### PARTNERSHIP

After June 2016, many arts organisations in the UK chose to focus on intensifying their existing relations with their European partners because of a strong collective belief in the importance of maintaining a dynamic dialogue with their EU counterparts for the health of UK arts and cultural sector. Ian Thomas (Head of Evidence, Arts at the British Council) suggests that as an organisation, the British Council has had a little more focus on Europe in the last couple of years than it has had during the preceding decade. It has intensified its work with the EU Commission on questions such as heritage and sustainable development and has become more vocal than it had traditionally been on EU-related issues.

Similarly, arts organisations based in EU member states also want to maintain ties with their UK partners. Geoffrey Brown remarks that UK arts organisations have always been very valued partners in EU schemes. Only a few interviewees noted that EU partners have reassessed their collaboration with a UK organisation. The Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust has lost an Estonian partner, with which it had organised student and lecturer exchanges since 2013. It was chiefly the uncertainty relating to the Brexit deal which deterred this Estonian organisation from engaging further with the Trust.

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<sup>10</sup> DCMS Sectors Economic Estimates 2016: Trade, 6 August 2018 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dcms-sectors-economic-estimates-2016-trade> ; DCMS Sectors Economic Estimates 2018: Trade in Services <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dcms-sectors-economic-estimates-2018-trade-in-services>

## ALTERNATIVE GOVERNANCE

Being part of EU schemes also meant that organisations outside London were able to cooperate with link-minded groups and gain an international profile through a transnational and non-London-centric system, something which many of the interviewees value. They fear that if a new UK agency oversees cultural partnerships with the EU, all discussions will have to go through London. They are also concerned that funding allocation might be less fair than for the EU, with some schemes such as the European Regional Development Fund being based on socio-economic criteria.

The UK will no longer be able to influence policy-making in the EU. Clive Gillman, Director of Creative Industries at Creative Scotland, is particularly concerned that the UK will not be able to contribute to talks on the EU's strategy for the digital single market and will probably be excluded from it. He believes that a digital single market is, undeniably, a positive development in an area that is increasingly dominated by the US.

## CASE STUDY: SITE GALLERY, SHEFFIELD



1 SITE Gallery, Sheffield

Site Gallery in Sheffield specialises in new media, moving image, and performance. It provides a space and a platform for emerging artists in Sheffield, the UK, and internationally. Its seven staff have huge international ambition, and before the referendum they had worked intensely across the world – in Europe and with the USA and Korea. Site runs a residency programme for local artists, who get the opportunity to travel throughout the scheme to make international connections; and Europe offers ideal destinations for doing that, in part because

of cost-effective and relatively environmentally friendly travel.

Sharna Jackson, the Artistic Director of the gallery, is passionate about Europe and is convinced that partnerships with galleries in the EU can benefit from the quality of the arts and cultural sector in the UK. In 2020 Jackson moved to the Netherlands from where she feels that she will be able to maintain relationships with partners in the EU. She has recently started collaborating with Kulturforum, a complex that includes an auditorium, a library, a music school, and a gallery that are spread across Witten, a city in the German Ruhr valley. Site and Kulturforum share a common interest in understanding what place-making is and what genuine participation looks like for the arts. In addition, Sheffield and the Ruhr have had long-standing relations that have built on their history as two industrial areas which have been facing similar questions: what do the arts mean in industrial regions? Is there a resistance to arts among the local population and if so, how do we address this? Site is planning to apply for EU funding through a partnership with the Kulturforum as the main bidder: this will allow the gallery to circumvent the uncertainty concerning the ineligibility of UK organisations to apply for many EU schemes after Brexit.



## CASE STUDY: HOME, MANCHESTER



2 HOME, Manchester

The multiple art form venue HOME is located in Manchester, a city that voted to remain in the EU and which has benefited from EU funding for its cultural sector. For example, between 2007 and 2013, the National Football Museum, which has 750,000 visitors each year, received £3.8 million from the EU; and the People's History Museum

partly financed its recent redevelopment with a £12.5 million grant from the European Regional Development Fund.

Because it is a charity, HOME cannot be party political, but it can campaign on topics which are in the institution's interest. During and after the referendum campaign, HOME's trustees judged that the interest of the charity was best served if the UK continued to be a member of the EU. HOME therefore campaigned to remain in the EU in 2016 and afterwards called for a deal that had the most favourable terms possible for the arts. Its programme reflects these views and HOME has hosted a discussion on Brexit and the future of British animation, the National Theatre's *My Country* (2017), which is based on testimonies collected in the days following the referendum results, and a play titled *Out of Order*, which was co-produced by the German Künstlerhaus Mousonturm (2019). The local news website Northern Quota viewed this latter performance as an attempt to discuss Brexit through silent scenes with six clowns on the stage at a time when *'words are no longer a useful ally to express how we feel about the current impasse. Or maybe, just maybe, the rest of the world thinks we're a bunch of clowns.'*<sup>11</sup>

## CASE STUDY: BRITISH CINEMA



3- Watershed Exterior - Photo by Farrows Creative

The British film industry has been alerting the government and the public to the harmful impact of the UK's departure from the EU since the start of the referendum campaign. According to the EU network Europa Cinemas, a harsh Brexit deal could mean that admissions to cinemas in the EU to see UK-made films and to cinemas in the UK to see European films fall by six million admissions in one year (Europa Cinemas 2019).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> 'Political chaos we find ourselves in is Out of Order as this stage show comically proves', 13 November 2019, <https://thenorthernquota.org/entertainment/political-chaos-we-find-ourselves-out-order-stage-show-comically-proves>

<sup>12</sup> Geoffrey Macnab, 'Hard Brexit could see six million cinema admissions fall', 20 May 2019 <https://www.screendaily.com/news/hard-brexit-could-see-six-million-cinema-admissions-fall/5139668.article>

It is now looking increasingly unlikely that the UK will remain involved in Creative Europe sub-programme MEDIA. UK cinemas likewise are unlikely to be able to remain part of Europa Cinemas as it currently stands in the framework of the MEDIA sub-programme. This network incentivises film exhibitors to show non-national European films by offering (modest yet significant) retrospective financial support to cinemas that dedicate a significant percentage of their screenings to non-national European films and develop initiatives aimed at young audiences. This arrangement also benefits British productions shown in cinemas across EU member states. Many British filmmakers from Ken Loach to Andrea Arnold have benefited from the various MEDIA incentives that are in place for sales agents, distributors and festivals. All are all encouraged to buy, distribute, and programme films made by directors from EU countries.

Like many administrators in EU cultural networks, General Director of Europa Cinemas Claude-Éric Poiroux was astonished by the result of the referendum and expressed concerns about its potential impact on the European film sector. In 2019, British films accounted for 17.3% of European admissions amongst the network and there are currently 29 network member cinemas in 19 cities across the UK (Europas Cinema 2019). Poiroux also stated that UK exhibitors have been a source of inspiration for the network; they are among the most ‘innovative’ and resourceful when it comes to marketing and new initiatives.<sup>13</sup> All Europa Cinemas can do now is to examine how it might maintain meaningful links with UK cinemas as it does with other parts of the world and explore proposals that would limit the damage of a hard Brexit on the circulation of British films within the EU. According to Maddy Probst from Watershed (also Vice-President of Europa Cinemas), the implications for independent film distribution and exhibition are a real concern. Relatively small yet significant amounts of money come from the MEDIA sub-programme to support the UK cinema eco-system; and this framework is reciprocated in other European countries. Without it, there are potential knock-on effect for diversity in UK film culture and smaller operators. For example, without incentives in place, UK distributors and cinemas might no longer be in a position take a risk on smaller European films in a British market that is already dominated by US and British studio productions. While cinemas like Watershed will certainly continue to support a diverse range of films, they may find it increasingly difficult to access these films if they are not in distribution. Above all, Watershed is concerned about losing access to a network of film exhibition practitioners that has been a constant source of inspiration, a platform for British practitioners and a springboard for pan-European collaborations. The one silver lining for UK cinemas could be that an alternative programme of support could extend to other underrepresented cinema, such as films made in Africa, Asia and Latin America and engage with a more global definition of cultural diversity.

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<sup>13</sup> Geoffrey Macnab, ‘In Brexit’s wake, UK industry wonders what’s next’, 24 February 2020  
<https://www.screendaily.com/features/in-brexit-wake-uk-industry-wonders-whats-next/5147494.article>

## CULTURAL RELATIONS WITH EU MEMBER STATES IN LEAVE AREAS

The arts and cultural sector is facing unique challenges in areas where over 65% of the vote was in favour of leaving the EU. In these regions, artists and art managers are, just like in many other places throughout the country, deeply attached to the European Union as an intellectual and creative space. They have had to negotiate a sense of fracturing from a local population that overwhelmingly voted to leave the EU. In addition, many felt particularly sad to think that the communities with which they were working and that so profoundly benefited from EU schemes (too often without being aware of the EU's contribution) would suffer because of the UK's departure from the EU.

The three areas surveyed for this case study, Stoke-on-Trent, Great Yarmouth, and Middlesbrough, have affluent neighbourhoods as well as large pockets that suffer from severe poverty and high unemployment rates. All fall into the bottom 33% of arts engagement and have been part of Arts Council England's Creative People and Places, which aims to boost cultural projects in areas with low arts engagement (suspended because of the Covid-19 pandemic).<sup>14</sup>

In cultural organisations and councils in these areas, there was a lot of discussion about how or whether to address Brexit in cultural strategies and programmes. Abi Brown, the Conservative leader of Stoke-on-Trent City Council, recalls that there was an agreement that the council would not comment on its stance over Brexit. Instead, she worked to delineate a cultural strategy that addressed and corrected narratives that many locals felt were being churned out from London around the time of the referendum and the subsequent parliamentary by-election which said that the city was inward-looking and in industrial decline.<sup>15</sup> In Brown's view (whose personal support for remaining in the EU was made public after the referendum), her predecessors as city leaders and politicians of all persuasions had failed to communicate enough about how the EU had benefited Stoke-on-Trent, but there was no point in going back and revisiting the democratic vote.

Like in Stoke-on-Trent, Great Yarmouth council and Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA) have, where possible, avoided any reference to Brexit because it is too politically loaded within the community; and cultural organisations must tread carefully with their stakeholders and funders. Elinor Morgan, Head of Programme at MIMA, explains that since 2016 her institution has acted more proactively as a space for conversation by organising community meals and workshops. There has been a willingness to encourage people who would not normally visit a museum and would not normally have met and spoken to each other to go to events at MIMA (or those organised outside the museum as parts of residents' events). Joe Mackintosh from SeaChange Arts in Great Yarmouth has opted to use satire and comedy to address politics in the charity's programming.

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<sup>14</sup> Figures from the Active Lives Survey, 2015-2017, <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/creative-people-and-places/creative-people-and-places-2020-24#section-1>

<sup>15</sup> 'Making The Creative City, A cultural strategy for Stoke-on-Trent 2018-2028'.



Partly as a response to Brexit, arts administrators in Great Yarmouth and Middlesbrough have emphasised the contribution of migrants to local life through events that stress the long history of migration in these localities. In Great Yarmouth, the cultural lead at the council, Julia Devonshire, and Joe Mackintosh of SeaChange Arts have programmed events about the 10,000 Portuguese people who live in the town.<sup>16</sup> Insisting on Yarmouth's history of migration as directly connected to the town being a port encourages thinking not only about the economic contribution of migrants but also about their cultural influence. They also strive to include these communities as central participants in arts events. Similarly, at MIMA, Morgan has built upon the history of industry, ecology, and migration, which are fruitful themes for provoking discussion about contemporary politics, she believes.

EU funding has proved very important for building the reputation of organisations in these areas, where councils have traditionally engaged little with the arts. MIMA was created in part thanks to EU funding and until 2020, Stoke-on-Trent was part of the Council of Europe's European Route of Ceramics network.<sup>17</sup> Joe Mackintosh is clear that without the significant levels of EU funding he has received over the years, he would not have been able to attract investment from Great Yarmouth Borough Council and Arts Council England, which enabled the establishment of SeaChange Arts as the only dedicated national organisation for outdoor arts and circus. The Interreg funding that SeaChange Arts received in 2008 was important for funding its activities and allowed Mackintosh to gain expertise, guidance, and mentoring from French partners.

## COVID-19

Arts practitioners have had to put a lot of time and energy into dealing with the situation created by the pandemic and have needed to respond quickly to a unique context. This has caused a significant strain on them, particularly in relation to preparing institutions to reopen. Most have had to postpone exhibitions and events as well as address new requirements on the part of funding bodies. The cultural sector's ability to plan for the long term has certainly been weakened and many institutions are facing staff redundancies and permanent closures. Some arts practitioners and administrators feel that the focus of the government in terms of providing guidelines and support has shifted to Covid-19 because the pandemic requires an immediate response whereas Brexit, and the uncertainty of the negotiations, feels less urgent. In a way, the Covid-19 pandemic has played the role of a smokescreen that conceals urgent and crucial Brexit-related discussions.

## EUROPEAN CULTURAL INSTITUTES IN THE UK

European cultural institutes have a different understanding of their roles within the UK–EU relationship, which often echoes their own home nation's relations to the EU. The Goethe-

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<sup>16</sup> One such project is 'Migration, Heritage And Belonging' run Sarah Lowndes at the Time And Tide Museum, <https://yarmouthmuseums.wordpress.com/2020/04/14/migration-heritage-and-belonging-project-2/>

<sup>17</sup> European Route of Ceramics, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/the-european-route-of-ceramics>

Institut London is determined to act as an intermediary between British arts and the EU. It sees itself as a bridge and wants to allow the UK to contribute to discussions about the EU. It also welcomes partnerships with UK arts organisations, all the more as, like all European cultural institutes based in the UK, it will continue to be able to apply for EU funding thanks to its anchoring in a EU member state. The institute's ambition to act as a go-between will be supported because it took the presidency of EUNIC London (European Union National Institutes for Culture) in 2020 (until 2021) at the same time as Germany has taken the Presidency of the Council of the European Union (July to 31 December 2020). This timely political support will allow the Goethe-Institut London to organise a higher than average number of European cultural events in the UK.

While the Goethe-Institut London sees itself as a German-speaking *and* European institution, its French, Spanish, Hungarian, and Danish counterparts have been more careful about how they have promoted their European components since 2016. An institution such as the French Institute has certainly continued to schedule European productions, but these are marketed as international rather than European. Likewise, Ignacio Peyró, Director of the Cervantes Institute, considers that his organisation does not form a bridge with the EU but is a conduit to further partnership with Spain and, more largely, Spanish-speaking countries.

Administrators of Danish, Hungarian, and Spanish cultural institutes in the UK are confident that the setbacks regarding visas and freedom of movement will be positively resolved by the UK government and the EU. The long history of the relations between Spain, Denmark or Hungary with the UK means that they believe Brexit won't hinder the work they have been doing for several years and indeed decades in some cases:

Brexit will make very little difference to Hungarian–British cultural relations given that Hungary joined the EU relatively recently and that Anglo-Hungarian relations have flourished outside the EU framework since the creation of the Hungarian Republic in 1918. (Máté Vincze, Hungarian Cultural Centre London)

## THE IMAGE OF THE UK ABROAD

The UK is renowned worldwide for its international cultural scene, which contributes to strengthening its soft power. This, and the status of English as an international language, has led many young people to study in the UK, and many (budding) artists to train and settle there. However, recent surveys suggest that the UK's reputation in the world is declining slightly. Data from G20 countries gathered by the British Council shows that although international interest in the UK's arts and culture went up between 2015 and 2018, there was a worrying fall in the percentage of individuals in G20 countries who visited arts institutions between 2016 and 2018 (20% versus 18%) and an even steeper fall for people who intended to visit them in future (31% versus 37%). While the latest G20 survey points to a drop in the UK's international reputation, the Soft Power 30 index, which offers a global ranking of soft power, suggests that the UK's soft power remained high and stable in 2016 and 2017 but went down from first to

second position between 2018 and 2019. Whether or not this drop will transform into a trend is something that UK experts are looking into with concern.<sup>18</sup>

Arts practitioners feel that prolonged and still inconclusive EU-UK negotiations and, lately, the UK government's breach of the Agreement on the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union are damaging the reputation of the UK.

Getting the right Brexit deal with the EU is important, especially to how young Europeans view the UK in the short to medium term, but it is how the UK conducts itself after 29 March 2019, both at home and on the international stage, that will determine global attitudes to the UK in the years ahead. (Alistair MacDonald for the British Council, 2018)<sup>19</sup>

However, some interviewees were quick to highlight that this damage is not irremediable: a change in the attitude of the government (or indeed a change of government) would improve the situation. A minority considers that the reputation of the UK in the field of arts and culture is well established abroad and that even if Brexit negatively impacts this image in the future, this has not yet occurred. Darren Barker, project director of the Great Yarmouth Conservation Trust has no doubt that the UK will continue to be a world leader in the heritage sector.

## CITIES AND INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS

Regardless of the result of the UK government's political negotiations with EU partners, in UK cities that voted by a majority to remain in the European Union, there is a strong desire to continue collaborating with EU partners through groups such as Eurocities. This city-to-city network of 190 cities in 39 countries criss-crosses Europe from the UK to Turkey via Switzerland, Luxembourg, and Georgia. Each city pays an annual subscription fee fixed at €16,300 (except cities from Central and Eastern Europe, for which the fee is €4,390). At the time of writing [October 2020], only Nottingham has notified Eurocities that it will be leaving the network due to budgetary issues. Coventry joined after the referendum and other UK cities are reinforcing their cooperation with Eurocities as they see it as their tool for keeping alive their relationship with cities in the EU. This is notably the case for Birmingham and Glasgow, as both have applied for a seat on Eurocities' executive board in November 2020. Julie Hervé, who is a senior policy advisor at Eurocities, notes that the membership of British cities is crucial to this network:

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<sup>18</sup> 'From the outside in: G20 perceptions of the UK & Brexit', 2017, [https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/from\\_the\\_outside\\_in.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/from_the_outside_in.pdf) Results of the Soft Power 30 are available here: <https://softpower30.com/>

<sup>19</sup> Alistair McDonald, 'Powers of attraction: Young people's views on the soft power of the G20 group of nations', British Council, 2018 [https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/j136\\_thought\\_leadership\\_g20\\_perceptions\\_196x284mm\\_final\\_web\\_v3.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/j136_thought_leadership_g20_perceptions_196x284mm_final_web_v3.pdf)

Not only are they often very dynamic contributors but they also are significant in influencing the development of the cultural sector in Europe. Eurocities is keen for them to be able to share good practice with other members of the network. Glasgow has for example championed diversity and inclusion, two themes where British cities are often ahead of their European counterparts. (Julie Hervé, Eurocities)

British cities have also been actively engaged in bilateral cooperation through the signing of memoranda of understanding that strengthen inter-city links and are supported by ministries or agencies in charge of culture. In 2019, Manchester signed such a memorandum with the Danish cities of Aarhus and Aalborg with the aim of improving future cultural collaboration (with a focus on arts and health, young people, and urban development and design).<sup>20</sup>

## AFTER BREXIT

The arts and cultural sector is resilient and people in the arts want to work with other people from within Britain and across borders but it is going to be so much more difficult to initiate and maintain these partnerships. There will be a great deal more paperwork, including visas, and increased costs, such as insurance. (Geoffrey Brown, Euclid)

Why would an arts organisation team up with us when we are unlikely to be eligible for EU funding and there is equally exciting arts being created within the EU? (An interviewee who wishes to remain anonymous)

There is no doubt that UK-based organisations and their EU partners are keen to continue working together after the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020. At the level of individuals, a great deal of energy is being put into keeping UK–EU artistic and creative collaboration going. As Sharna Jackson of Site Gallery notes, she has been ‘*on a one-woman mission to keep the appetite for Britain and British arts alive in EU member states!*’

However, without favourable customs, migration, and funding policies, international collaboration will be more challenging and more expensive. Medium-sized UK organisations that want to have European partnerships but have less capacity and are not as well funded as well-established national organisations will be hit the hardest because they have traditionally been the target of schemes like Creative Europe. Undeniably, any UK-based arts organisation, regardless of its size, will suffer from a lack of European cooperation and new visa, customs, and migration rules.

**Strategies that some organisations have already put in place to maintain partnerships in EU countries are indeed proving more burdensome and costly. They include:**

- **opening sister companies abroad.** This is a solution pursued by Darren Barker at the Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust in order for the Trust to continue operating in Bulgaria.

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<sup>20</sup> Manchester agrees cultural links with Danish cities, 6 March 2019, <https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/news/article/8128/manchester-agrees-cultural-links-with-danish-cities>

- **initiating new partnerships.** European cultural institutes in the UK and one-on-one collaborative schemes for artists or organisations will likely be fruitful avenues.
- **cooperation at the municipal level.** After 2020, mayors and city administrators who wish to distinguish their policies from those of the government will have a more important role to play in promoting British intercultural relations with EU member states.
- **bilateral government schemes.** In the arts and cultural sector, these have developed relatively independently from EU schemes and will probably continue to flourish. We are likely to see more schemes such as the British Council's current bilateral strategy UK–Italy Season running in the autumn of 2020 and the Fluxus Art Projects with France (managed in partnership with the Institut Français and the French Ministry of Culture).<sup>21</sup>

**The strategies of Arts Council England and the British Council insist that the UK is a global country.** They stress international connectedness without necessarily distinguishing between EU and non-EU countries. Many civil servants and arts administrators believe that it does not matter whether these connections take place in the EU or elsewhere: what is important for arts practitioners is the artistic development and creativity that arise from them.

**But there are challenges to a non-EU global Britain.** Considering partners beyond the EU is exciting but comes with significant issues.

International projects beyond the EU require much longer lead time and larger scale budgets which small and medium-sized institutions might not be able to sustain. Elinor Morgan (MIMA)

Interviewees also feel that the international schemes run by government agencies will be unlikely to prioritise Europe. Some consultees have expressed doubt about what bodies such as Arts Council England and the British Council will be able to do in terms of keeping the UK arts and cultural sector working in EU members states, mostly because they fear that the government will not want to be seen spending money (through these bodies) on promoting links with the EU. This is not the perspective of Ian Thomas, who suggests that the British Council will try its best to provide market insight and intelligence to UK-based organisations and help them approach and collaborate with EU partners.

Very few consultees consider that the end of the Brexit transition period will bring benefits to UK arts. In Stoke-on-Trent, Abi Brown, who has led large-scale cultural projects in the city (including securing a slot for the city on the national tour of the 'Weeping Window' exhibition of poppies from the Tower of London, half of which were made in Stoke-on-Trent), suggests that some arts organisations will need to diversify their funding streams and speak more clearly to criteria outlined by Arts Council England and private sponsors: *'It will force cultural groups to sharpen up what they are selling because the quality is really good but the benefit for the*

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<sup>21</sup> 'European art and the UK', British Council, 2018, [https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/bc\\_artsstrategy\\_europe\\_digital\\_v2\\_1.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/bc_artsstrategy_europe_digital_v2_1.pdf)

*funder is not as clear as what it might have been. Whereas now, they will be more focused on what the value is for the funder.'*

## 'THE GAP STARTS NOW'

**About half of the witnesses consulted for this report believe that the UK's departure from the EU will bring about a hiatus of at least a couple of years for the arts and cultural sector.** Dave Moutrey, Director and Chief Executive at HOME and Director of Culture for Manchester City Council, notes that the way the government has been handling negotiations has not been conducive to effective business planning. To mitigate the uncertainty resulting from UK–EU discussions, the board of HOME decided to hold off from launching any big projects between September 2019 and the summer of 2021. MIMA have taken the same decision. This will also allow the institutions to work with the actual situation, whenever it becomes clear, rather than making predictions that could turn out to be very costly. Watershed in Bristol have stopped actively looking for new EU projects until there is more clarity but are still open to participating in EU funded programmes (they are already involved in projects as the Creative workforce for the future funded by West of England Combined Authority and the European Social Fund).

Gunnar Papendick Larsen (Danish–UK Association) thinks that Brexit and its consequences will just be 'a bump in the road': *'you have the world here and there are so few places in the world which are as diverse as Britain and I think people will still find ways to come here and the UK will continue partnerships with EU member states'*. Experts such as Geoffrey Brown are also optimistic but insist that administrators, civil servants, and the government will have to work hard to overcome significant challenges to ensure that the Brexit-induced hiatus that will strike the sector does not last for many years:

Once we emerge from Covid and once the new British regulations are clear regarding the EU then the cultural sector will start planning. Hopefully new networks and strategies for moving forward will emerge and, maybe by the middle of 2021, things will start to become clearer. (Geoffrey Brown, Euclid)

For Kate Deans, there is no clear end in sight for this hiatus:

The gap starts now: we don't have any replacement for the cooperation projects. The gap starts now because people aren't fully able to say to their partners in EU member states that they can contribute to the next EU-funded project. (Kate Deans, Creative Europe Desk UK – Scotland)



## EMERGENT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

**The UK arts and cultural sector continues to call for clarity on Brexit and demands that any deal agreed with the EU takes into consideration the sector-specific needs regarding funding and movement of goods, services, and people.**

- **Consultees want clarity urgently.** For example, will the UK remain part of the Erasmus scheme? Will the UK government provide an alternative fund to Creative Europe?
- **A favourable visa regime** is needed for artists and creatives so that UK citizens can work in the EU and EU artists can be invited to the UK without difficulty. In addition, a new, specific visa for EU citizens who graduate from UK universities and intend to start creative and cultural businesses is needed so that they can stay and develop their businesses in the UK. Many university and arts administrators estimate that if graduates don't feel this is an option, they might not want to study at all in British higher education institutions.
- **Clarity regarding the movement of artefacts is needed.**
- **A reciprocal framework.** The sector is painfully aware that it will be impossible to replicate the complex, mutual system of Creative Europe but urges the government to think about how to best continue supporting cultural diversity within a reciprocal framework. The UK will be in need of a network that will send a clear message that it is open for international cultural business.
- **Arts administrators are calling for an increase in government funding for cultural organisations so that they can collaborate with European partners** because it will cost more to undertake partnerships with European counterparts. There is also a need for more travel and networking bursaries so that UK practitioners can continue having a presence and platform at key festivals, conferences, and other sector development programmes.

Certainty is needed now as a matter of urgency to enable effective and successful planning in 2021 and beyond.

## CONCLUSION

The UK arts and cultural sector is European in its disposition and outlook. It is working tirelessly to sustain existing partnerships with EU member states, but it is very pessimistic about the economic, regulatory, and structural impact of Brexit on arts organisations and communities.

Studies on the impact of Brexit have highlighted that industries that will be hit the hardest by the UK's departure from the EU (as these export high shares of output to the EU) are clothing



and textiles, transport equipment, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, and lastly finance.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, and as mentioned above (see section ‘movement of goods’), the areas covered by the DCMS export 44.7% of all services to EU member states and will likewise need time to adapt to post-Brexit regulations (which may, in all likelihood, cause them damage). Moreover, arts and culture have been one of the hardest hit sectors by Covid-19, as they rely on in-person services.<sup>23</sup> While some studies have found little overlap between sectors hit by Covid-19 and those affected by Brexit, the arts and cultural sector is in a particularly precarious position. As such, it must address the double consequences of Brexit and Covid-19 to a greater extent than most sectors.

Undeniably, there is a range of opportunities that arts organisations in the UK won’t be able to access after January 2021 and it is still unclear how trade and movement of goods and people in the cultural sector will operate. The sector is worried that the immigration policy will lead to skills gaps and that the UK will lose its status of excellence in the arts.

However, the pro-EU stance of the sector and the willingness of individuals and indeed government agencies to uphold cultural diversity means that the sector is working around the negotiation uncertainty to encourage partnerships in EU member states, many of which are keen to maintain links with the UK. Despite the negative posturing of the UK government, there remains an enormous amount of goodwill across Europe for the arts and creativity of the UK.

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<sup>22</sup> Peter Levell and Agnes Norris Keiller, ‘The exposure of different workers to potential trade barriers between the UK and the EU’ available <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/13463>; Dhingra, S., Ottaviano, G., Sampson, T., & Reenen, J. Van, ‘The impact of Brexit on Foreign Investment in the UK,’ *CEP Brexit Paper*, 2016, 1–12.

<sup>23</sup> de Lyon J. and Dhingra, S., Covid-19 and Brexit: Real-time updates on business performance in the United Kingdom, *Centre for Economic Performance, COVID-19 analysis*, July 2020.

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Cllr Abi Brown, Leader, Stoke-on-Trent City Council;

Geoffrey Brown, Director of Euclid;

Stacy Cosham, Project manager at Great Yarmouth Council;

Kate Deans, Culture officer at Creative Europe Desk UK – Scotland’;

Julia Devonshire, Cultural lead at Great Yarmouth Council;

Nicolas Edmery, Market Analysis & Statistics, Project Coordinator UK & Ireland at Europa Cinemas;

Emma Escurier, Arts and education officer of the Institut Français du Royaume Uni;

Clive Gillman, Director of Creative Industries for Creative Scotland;

Julie Hervé, Senior policy advisor at eurocities;

Sharna Jackson, Artistic director of the Site Gallery Sheffield;

Joe Mackintosh, Chief executive of SeaChange Arts in Great Yarmouth;

Marta Marcuzzi, Membership Coordinator & Executive Assistant, Eurocities;

Elinor Morgan, Head of Programme at Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA)

Dave Moutrey, Director & Chief Executive at HOME and Director of Culture for Manchester City Council;

Gunnar Papendick Larsen, Managing director of the Danish-UK Association;

Maddy Probst, Maddy Probst, [Managing] Producer at Watershed & Film Hub South West and Vice-President of Europa Cinemas;

Ian Thomas, Head of Evidence, Arts at the British Council;

Katrin Sohns, Head of the Northwestern Europe Culture Department at the Goethe-Institut London;

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