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## **Inquiry Session: The role of arts and creative industries in maintaining relationships between the UK and Europe**

**6 February, 09.30-12.30, IPU Room, Houses of Parliament**

### **Attendees:**

John Baron MP, Chair, British Council APPG  
Paul Farrelly MP, Member, DCMS Committee  
Baroness Bonham-Carter, Liberal Democrat DCMS Spokesperson  
Baroness Hooper, Deputy Speaker, House of Lords  
Alex Pleasants, Office of Ed Vaizey MP  
Alison Woods, Executive Director, No Fit State  
Annie Lyford, Head of Communications and Marketing, Creative Industries Federation  
Antonia Byatt, Director, English PEN  
Caroline Meaby, Director Arts Network, British Council  
Cathy Graham, Director Music, British Council  
Clymene Christoforou, Director, D6 Culture  
David McConnell, Creative Industries Development Officer, Arts Council Northern Ireland  
Frances Corner, Head, London College of Fashion  
Giulia Ascoli, Senior Communications Manager, Sadler's Wells  
Harriet Finney, Director of External Affairs, BFI  
Joan Parr, Director of Arts & Engagement, Creative Scotland  
Joanna Burke, Deputy Regional Director, EU Region, British Council  
Judith Knight, Director, Arts Admin  
Marshall Marcus, CEO, EU Youth Orchestra  
Melike Berker, Policy and Parliamentary Officer, British Council  
Nadja Race, Director of International Engagement, British Museum  
Ruth Cayford, Creative Industries and Culture Manager, Cardiff City Council  
Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive, Belfast City Council  
Tao Chang, Research Grants Manager, V&A Museum  
Thomas Brayford, Office of Paul Farrelly MP  
Trevor McFarlane, Head of Office, European Parliament, Office of Julie Ward MEP  
Vanessa Reed, Chief Executive, PRS Music

### **Main Points:**

- The UK is at the heart of collaborative work in the arts and creative industries and this shouldn't be lost.
- International festivals are important, and the UK should continue to host these (i.e. Edinburgh Festival)
- It is important to continue multilateral cultural diplomacy, working with devolved governments and European governments and partners



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- Skills based immigration systems should take into account niche skills and the salary laws need to consider artists and organisations' needs. Immigration shouldn't be measured geographically and barriers need to be lowered, not heightened.
- Mobility is key for artists to prosper internationally
- The UK is good at community-based peace building work, and diversity and inclusion work – we are leaders in good practice
- Young people are articulate and forward-thinking, and they should be engaged with, in the negotiations moving forward
- We share ideas across Europe through various mechanisms that enable organisations to network and collaborate – arm's length bodies work effectively and should be capitalised on more.
- The shared history that the UK has with the rest of Europe should and will not vanish post-Brexit

## Discussion:

John Baron MP, Chair to the British Council APPG made opening remarks. He welcomed the group and thanked them for attending. It was important to have representatives from the arts and creative industries sector around the table from across the UK. As the first in a series of roundtables, the Chair encouraged guests to submit written evidence by emailing the APPG secretariat ([melike.berker@britishcouncil.org](mailto:melike.berker@britishcouncil.org)). The European cultural sector is a dynamic trigger of economic activities and job creation throughout the EU territory. There are around 6.3 million people in the UK working in the cultural sector. The sector is growing at an average annual rate of 1.3 per cent. The chair recognises the importance of the sector's work in the UK and Europe and in building trust between nations.

Cathy Graham, Director Music and Joanna Burke, Deputy Regional Director, EU from the British Council then provided context to the inquiry from a British Council perspective. The British Council works across the globe building trust and sharing friendly knowledge and understanding. It marries up sectors across the UK and overseas and consults with the wider sector through forums such as the Cultural Diplomacy Group and the Arts Advisory Group. As well as this it runs the Creative Europe Desk UK along with BFI and other partners. In the context of cultural relations, they harness the power of the arts through 5 pillars:

- Arts for social change
- Sharing arts work with the world
- Capacity building
- Fostering collaboration and networks
- Policy and research

Recent engagement was also mentioned including a UK roadshow engaging with the sector on Brexit-related matters, a conference in Brussels at Bozar and regular ad-hoc interaction with the sector.



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The British Council's presence in the EU territory is still apparent and it aims to strengthen relationships with countries, organisations and Governments across the region. It facilitates relationships and fosters positive collaboration.

In her opening remarks Cathy quoted a delegate from “Moving Beyond Brexit: Uniting the Cultural and Creative Sectors”:

*‘The UK is essential. This [Brexit] is a chance too and it forces us to rethink the models. It’s not just the economic argument. The EU was a cultural project to secure peace in Europe. This needs reaffirming. It’s not just about making deals.’*

## **Why are Arts and Creative Industries important for UK relations with Europe?**

The UK is a chosen partner for collaborative projects across Europe. It is a partner on 42% of collaborative Creative Europe projects. The UK is considered one of the most prominent leaders of collaborative work generally across the region.

It was noted that some organisations have strong links with academic institutions across Europe and collaborative work has been undertaken to develop creative solutions around sustainability and technology. Culture and education are devolved throughout the UK and there is a lot of work being done to ensure that creative work is being prioritised across Europe by all UK governments.

Festivals such as the Edinburgh Festival are extremely important in bringing together creative minds from across Europe and the world – these mechanisms are integral to the continuation of the sector’s growth.

Grassroots community based activity builds bridges in communities, for example in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Throughout the conflict in Northern Ireland, culture was the constant communication tool. The work that Arts Council does with Culture Ireland also shows that culture works across borders no matter what.

Young people within the sector are articulate and ahead of the game.

Sharing ideas across borders through literature is powerful when creating and developing new thought. In a lot of sectors, English language travels a lot further due to its ability to connect with the USA and countries across the world.

Film and screen lead on diversity and inclusion and this is something that the UK is at the forefront of. Each country has a film institute so this is an example of existing networks that will need to be used in future.



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Europe has a lot of shared history and this is celebrated through museum work across the region. A lot of work is often on loan throughout Europe and travels to the major national museums and galleries.

Arms-length bodies are important in sharing knowledge and increasing relationships.

## **What does the sector see as the risks and gaps after Brexit?**

The group felt that these concerns are already beginning to show, before the UK officially leaves the EU.

The UK arts sector is stretched financially and therefore the issue is bigger than the continuation of individual programmes like Creative Europe- it includes touring across the world, administrative costs and access to mechanisms and networks. A lot of smaller organisations can't do their job properly without the support of networks and mechanisms brought about through programmes like Creative Europe.

It was noted that following Brexit, immigration laws will hinder mobility, for example increasing the amount of administration needed to process visas has an impact; organisations of all sizes do not have the capacity or time for this. The immigration question means that students from Europe who really want to come to the UK might be less inclined to. The UK offers some of the most prestigious art and design courses and should be proud and making the most of them.

Students who visit and gain experience in other countries are more in demand by employers, so the risk of little or no Erasmus+ funding, for example, could be damaging to the employability of talented artists.

Erasmus+ is highly beneficial for sending students to Europe and academic institutions such as the London College of Fashion receive many European students too. It was also highlighted that Arts organisations bring in their own income - they don't rely only on external funding.

Income from the EU can be monetised, but the UK gains so much more in the way of networks and mechanisms for creativity, which may be lost post-Brexit. It was pointed out that underwriting funds won't help, because those leading on programmes collaboratively with Europe will lose their status – therefore, staying a part of Creative Europe is a must. The European Parliament is proposing increasing the spending on the EU's Creative Europe programme from 1.45 billion euros to 2.8 billion euros in the next 7-year period 2021-27, sending a clear message that the EU is prioritising the growth of arts and culture. The EU has put culture at the heart of its international diplomacy strategy and the UK should be doing the same. Arms-length organisations have a role to play in this. With the possibility of a no-deal Brexit it is important to continue engaging with European parliaments across the region through culture.



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If the UK left Creative Europe it would no longer have the stature and reputation in European networks and mechanisms. This loss isn't just to the bilateral relationships, it is to the multilateral relationships across the region. There is also a risk that the UK is excluded from work travelling into and out of Europe. Europe is a key destination for touring of art and performances - leaving the EU will reduce a lot of the accessibility the UK currently has to markets which could in turn affect the springboard that Europe provides for artists working internationally.

There is an intrinsic link between freedom of movement, the skills shortage and the growth of the sector. Both permanent and freelance employees are going to be at risk post-Brexit. Freedom of movement is required for artists wanting an international career. It was mentioned that agents from further afield in countries like China and Korea only hire musicians if they have toured around Europe. Europe is seen as a launch pad for global success. Artists often establish themselves as European because this provides them with the flexibility of being able to travel which in turn enables them to broaden their skills.

Another cause for concern is the European Capitals of Culture Programme: Belfast applied so that they could put culture at the heart of their city strategy, but now they can't take part – even though Istanbul was chosen as Capital of Culture in 2010, both Bergen and Reykjavík were chosen in 2000, and Stavanger in 2008. The reputational aspect should not be downplayed; the UK is being deselected for things because of Brexit already.

In terms of tourism, institutions like the British Museum employ around 15% of their staff from Europe. This is important for guests, as it increases the languages spoken and portrays an open and inclusive image to the rest of the world.

It was noted that there is a plan from Government to introduce an immigration system based on skills that are fair which no longer discriminates against the rest of the world outside the EU – all nationalities want to live and work in the UK. This is a cause of concern for the arts sector, given that a lot of skills in this sector are extremely niche and often not recognised in the wider framework. It was also noted that skills and salaries within the sector don't always marry up; it is impossible for small arts organisations to meet the high salary criteria of skills-based visa systems. It also hurts young people from outside the UK and Ireland who don't have the experience to meet the £30,000 salary threshold.

In addition, this is impacting on the perceptions of the UK. The UK is losing post-graduates because they are often unable to remain in the UK long enough to put their education into practice – gaining valuable work experience, which benefits their skills development, and the UK by retaining skilful graduates. This also causes an administrative burden on arts organisations to meet visa requirements.

The group expressed a desire that rather than building more barriers, we want barriers to be lowered so that all international artists are treated fairly, from across the world- not just Europe. The idea is that there shouldn't be geographical biased, but a system based on merit and skills.



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It was noted that the House of Lords are dealing with the Trade Withdrawal Bill at the moment, and creative industries should be considered a part of this. This is an example of other departments in Government being integral to the securing of a better future for creative industries. It was noted however, that it would be hard to incorporate culture into trade fully, but the cooperative accord could be used as a good example of how policy building feeds into such an issue.

City strategies are important and can ensure that cross-sector organisations support each other. International hubs are important. Areas like the Olympic Park in London are good examples of best practice during the transition period because they represent cultural generation and are areas where various cultural organisations exist together.

The Soft Power Strategy was discussed, and guests asked how far the Government are using it in the run up to Brexit. It was noted that this should sit alongside the Spending Review in order to ensure that soft power efforts in education and culture were taken into account moving forward.

Two key points were raised around health insurance, and bilateral recognition of awards and qualifications continuing post-Brexit. These are integral to the mobility of artists and the multilateral relations.