Introduction

Federation of Scottish Theatre (FST) is the membership and development body for the professional performing arts in Scotland. In partnership with the Scottish Contemporary Art Network (SCAN) we have commissioned research which has confirmed anecdotal reports of widespread concern about Brexit within Scotland’s creative communities. It provides us with evidence of the scale of the potential impacts on individuals, sole traders, other businesses and art organisations.

The survey gathered 341 responses from workers across Scottish arts in less than two weeks. 93 of those respondents work in theatre, dance and other performing arts. The headline figure is that a quarter of all respondents, regardless of nationality, are considering or planning to leave Scotland post-Brexit. The figure rises to 57% among EU nationals. Half of those working in the arts are also employed in other sectors, and so the potential impact of these decisions goes far beyond arts and culture.

The survey was carried out by Edinburgh-based Ruthless Research to feed into the Scottish Parliament’s Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee’s ongoing monitoring and scrutiny of the Article 50 withdrawal negotiations and their implications for Scotland.

The full research report is attached to the evidence submitted by SCAN.

Below we have presented some key information relevant to the performing arts in Scotland, taken from the research report and from discussions with FST members.

The impact the Article 50 negotiations on the contemporary visual arts sector to date

54% of those working in theatre, dance and other performing arts reported that Brexit has had a negative impact on their work already. 2% reported a positive impact, with a quarter reporting no impact and one in five respondents being unsure at this stage.

Respondents reported the following impacts:

‘I am unable to commit to long-term projects as I am living in uncertainty of whether I will be able to stay in Scotland, legally or financially’

‘[F]unding opportunities are already reducing’

‘Training programmes and corporations have frozen their spending while they await the impact of Brexit.’

‘We took part in an international performance showcase during the Edinburgh Festival. In previous years, promoters from EU countries attend to scout performers to perform in Europe. There were no EU promoters this year, just promoters from outside the EU.’
'I did have a grant/award for a residency last year (from an arts charity) and the funds did not go as far as they would have done in the past because of the drop in the value of the pound.'

'Already observing decline in work offer from collaborators in EU countries.'

The sector’s anxieties about future impact are clear in their comments:

'Within my work and the sector I believe there's a risk of isolation, many connections and partnerships will become too difficult and expensive to uphold and this could lead to a closed micro sector lacking external stimulation and contribution.'

'If I go freelance again, a lot of my work came from Berlin - I'll be much less attractive if I have little freedom of movement.'

**The preparations being made by our members for the range of scenarios which may result from the Article 50 negotiations?**

Our members currently spend more time in the EU and beyond than other parts of the arts sector. This is a vital element of the sector’s work, accounting for 17% of income of those who responded to the survey. It’s also the case that respondents from the performing arts are more likely than the total arts respondents to work beyond the EU. According to the research we commissioned, 15% of income from those of our sector compared to 11% overall comes from work beyond the EU. For some FST members, the direct impact may be relatively limited because they don’t currently work within the EU. However there is concern that a general fall in the standard of living, and the weak pound, may make overall economic conditions even more difficult than they already are.

The survey and our engagement with FST members, indicates that lack of certainty is inhibiting planning. The general sense is of frustration with the lack of information, as in this quotation from the research:

'..cannot plan to cover events beyond March 2019 with certainty

...cannot plan to attend or speak at conferences beyond March 2019.

...lack of travel opportunities being presented.

...unclear how equipment or electronics can be transported.

...shall be outwith EU copyright and IP laws, what is happening?’

**To what extent, the guidance issued by the European Commission and UK Government has been helpful in helping you to prepare for the UK's withdrawal from the EU?**

The survey did not specifically ask about guidance from the European Commission and UK Government. However as indicated above we know that FST members are concerned about the lack of clear, straightforward and practical advice on how they will be able to run their businesses and make their living after Brexit.

We welcome the recent Scottish Government announcement on the EU Citizens’ Rights Project and would suggest that there is a need for a similar approach for creative and cultural
practitioners. This needs to take into account the wide range of activities and business types in our industry, including the many freelance and microbusinesses who are internationally active. The Creative Industries Advisory Group may have a role to play in bringing together the relevant government bodies to coordinate advice.

**The further support or guidance that should be provided to enable the individuals, businesses and organisations in Scotland’s arts and creative industries to prepare for the UK’s withdrawal from the EU?**

The most common response to this question from the performing arts was simply ‘information’. Specific asks included:

- practical support on understanding where visas will now be required, and accessing those visas;
- practical support on how to bring EU artists and shows to Scotland;
- access to legal advice about the implications of legal change, particularly around copyright and intellectual property
- creation of networks to share new practice
- creation/support of networks to continue to engage with EU partners and to learn about engagement in other markets.

One in five of those who responded highlighted the issue of funding, both in terms of access to EU funds and the potential increased costs of travel within the EU in terms of visas and health insurance. Some respondents indicate that currently some or all of their funding comes from EU sources, and so information on how and under what terms they will be able to access EU funding in future, or what other funding may be available and how to access it, is urgently required. Respondents also mentioned the potential need for careers advice and guidance, as well as business support to help them deal with the withdrawal of a key funding source.

Particular issues were raised for performers and other workers with disabilities and health conditions in relation to the potential end of health insurance rights within the EU, with one respondent saying:

‘Brexit will make the lives of artists with disabilities and chronic illness more challenging without the safety net of EU wide emergency healthcare coverage. It may be that artists with disabilities or chronic illness will not even seek out opportunities to work in EU member states because of the lack of healthcare safety net.’