

**MU position on Brexit**

The British Musicians’ Union (BMU) has taken several important steps to bring to the attention of the UK Government and the public the impact of Brexit for its members and the wider performing community.

Our main areas of concern are:

* Touring visa for musicians/the end of freedom of movement.
* Copyright protection
* Safeguarding cultural exchange
* Funding streams that may end
* Worker’s rights
* 2nd Referendum

On each of these issues the BMU has set out its position and reasoning behind it.

1. Touring visa for musicians

* Most professional musicians and performers rely on touring and travelling as part of their career. Many of the MU’s 30,000 members work in Europe either on a freelance basis with orchestras, touring as an individual or group, or working for theatre producers or fulltime to orchestras on touring productions.[[1]](#endnote-1)
* Performers often work in multiple member states on gigs and tours that can be anything from a one-night engagement to a four week or longer more extensive tour.
* Often these performances are booked at short notice. The current ability to travel to Europe without any hindrance allows for performers to earn a living from such engagements.
* To introduce work permissions and/or visas for British performers touring and working in Europe could be extremely detrimental.
* The MU is campaigning for reciprocal free movement for musicians and performers across the EU’s 27-member states.
* We seek an exemption from visas , carnets and work permit rules, or a visa that covers performers to work across the EU for a defined period.

2. Copyright protection

* The majority of copyright law that protects performers rights is enshrined in European law, some of which derives from EU directives.
* Despite assurances from the UK Government that there will be no reduction in copyright protections post-Brexit, there are, as yet no guarantees.[[2]](#endnote-2)
* We have lobbied to get an assurance from Government that the EU Copyright directive will be transposed into UK law.

3. Safeguarding cultural exchange

* The UK is currently open to EU performers to work in the UK , enhance the cultural vista of the UK population and strengthen ties between countries.
* Current freedom of movement policies allow for this. To remove this freedom would harm the cultural landscape of not only the UK but of the European member states also.
* Showcasing across Europe at the internationally acclaimed festivals such as Jazzahead, The Reeperbahn festival, Womex, Womad and the many independent festivals and showcase events that take place across Europe every year would suffer.
* To impose work permits, carnets and visas will be yet another barrier to cultural exchange.
* Many resident UK musicians are themselves citizens of another EU member state who contribute massively to the cultural and economic success of the UK. We want to retain this talent. What does their future look like?
* MU members are at the whim of airlines when it comes to travelling with instruments on aircraft. The EU Passenger Rights Directive is our means of pressurising member states to adopt fair, consistent and transparent policies for airlines. Leaving the EU may diminish its influence over the Passenger Rights Directive.[[3]](#endnote-3)
* The BMU has worked with European and UK partners to ensure a European Musical Instrument passport is available to musicians travelling with instruments containing protected species. Leaving the EU would mean we have to ensure the UK continues to adopt the passport.

4. Funding

* 2014-2020 the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund were due to invest in the region of €11.8million across the UK.
* It is not clear how much of that money will be received in the UK.
* Losing the European Social Funds for arts organisations will hit an already financially precarious sector hard.
* Central and Local Governments do not have the capacity to plug the financial gap.[[4]](#endnote-4)

5. Workers rights

* The BMU supports the work being undertaken by its Trade Union umbrella organisation the TUC to ensure that UK workers continue to be protected by the current EU legislation that is in place. Much of the protection afforded to UK workers comes from EU developed legislation such as; Working Time and Paid Holidays, Equal Rights, Maternity,Paternity and Parental Rights; TUPE; Data Protection; Information and Consultation procedures and European Work Councils; Health and safety, for example.
* The MU has been successful in negotiating enhanced rights for freelance and self employed musicians into their Collective Bargaining Agreements. Will these negotiated rights be diminished by any adverse affect on statutory rights?
* The promise to have these rights transferred over is just , in the words of Keith D Ewing in his paper ‘What Will happen to Workers Rights after Brexit an ‘unsecured political promise’ .[[5]](#endnote-5)

6. A People’s Vote / 2nd Referendum

* The BMU supports the principle that the UK voting public are given the opoportunity to vote on the ‘exit’ deal negotiated with the EU. We want the people’s vote to contain an option to ‘remain in the EU’.

On all these issues and no doubt there will be many more, the MU has been involved in informing and working with other UK music organisations such as the ABO, Equity and UK Music to argue that musicians and performers do require and deserve specific consideration if we as a sector are to continue to be a leading economic actor for the UK, cultural exchange continues and a sustainable professional career remains a reality.

The MU has;

* Given Evidence to the House of Lords European Union Committee. [[6]](#endnote-6)
* Attended the Labour Party and Conservative Party conferences in 2018 to campaign on our request for a touring visa
* Lobbied its 30,000 members to send a campaign postcard to,their MP urging them to support a Touring Visa for Musicians.[[7]](#endnote-7)
* Met with the Minister for Culture, Communications and the Creative Industries Margot James to discuss the issue.[[8]](#endnote-8)
* Worked in conjunction with the TUC, ABO, UK Music, Equity, The Writers Guild.
* Lobbied the UK general public to support the MU in its campaign[[9]](#endnote-9)

As Horace Trubridge, General Secretary of the BMU says:

‘The MU was vehemently against Brexit right from the start……Brexit threatens the whole culture of our country. Music and the performing arts more generally, rely on exchange of ideas and interaction between performers of different nationalities. Music flourishes in an open world with no borders – not a closed off island that looks inward on itself’

Dave Webster Live Performance Organiser Musicians’ Union 2018.

Reference material:

1. <https://labourlist.org/2017/10/musicians-union-brexit-threatens-the-cultural-fabric-of-our-great-nation/> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. <https://labourlist.org/2017/10/musicians-union-brexit-threatens-the-cultural-fabric-of-our-great-nation/> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. ABO – Brexit – the impact on British Orchestras. [http://www.abo.org.uk/media/141873/ABO-Brexit-report.pdf](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/LUIuC46W4uJPWlFOhULM?domain=abo.org.uk) [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. <https://labourlist.org/2017/10/musicians-union-brexit-threatens-the-cultural-fabric-of-our-great-nation/> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Keith D Ewing ; ‘What Will Happen to Workers Rights after Brexit ; [http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/13926.pdf](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/V1_FCQkAvs6WR0hPnjKH?domain=library.fes.de) [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. House of Lords European Union Committee 19th Report of Session 2017-19. ‘Brexit: movement of people in the cultiural sector’ : [https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/lords-select/eu-home-affairs-subcommittee/news-parliament-2017/movement-people-cultural-sector-report/](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/SLFkCWPWmIj3nDixoeTU?domain=parliament.uk) [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. <https://www.musiciansunion.org.uk/Home/News/2017/Jun/Take-Action-for-Free-Movement-in-the-EU-post-Brexi> [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. [https://www.musiciansunion.org.uk/Home/News/2018/Jun/Minister-Meets-With-Musicians-Union-to-Discuss-Fr](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/ZvPhCvQmDCW6wgC50lxk?domain=musiciansunion.org.uk) [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. [https://www.musiciansunion.org.uk/Home/About-Us/Supporters](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/unjdC28GOIkw5ls1uYLj?domain=musiciansunion.org.uk) [↑](#endnote-ref-9)