



#WeMakeEvents briefing: Post-Brexit EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement impact on touring productions

#WeMakeEvents is an organisation consisting of the supply chain to the live events industry. These companies and freelancers work across multiple sectors – cultural events, corporate events and almost any form of organised gathering.

Until Government social distancing restrictions came into effect in March 2020, the UK live events industry brought in over £70 billion a year. The sector supports over 700,000 jobs, many of those are highly-skilled freelance or self-employed roles in the live event supply chain – for example, research by UK Music shows that 72% of their sector works as self-employed.

Why freedom to tour is vital to the sector:

- The UK is home to Europe's leading live event supply chain sector. As such, many productions (both domestic and international) choose to develop and start their tours in the UK - and take UK crew and equipment with them on their full European tour.
- This encompasses music tours, but also:
 - Other cultural touring productions, including theatre, comedy and dance. Many of which are largescale operations but equally can be small teams working with an emerging artist.
 - Sporting events, the most visible of these are the Six Nations Championship and Formula One World Championship but hundreds of sports tour across Europe every year appearing in front of crowds of all sizes.
 - Although not touring productions, there are very significant numbers of live event supply chain crew and equipment moving through Europe from the UK as part of the commercial conference circuit and will be equally impacted by the EU-UK trade deal.
- EU-wide touring is a major source of income for the UK live events supply chain. This is reflected in our 2020 survey, which found 70% of respondents had worked in Europe as part of their job and 42% had worked overseas for more than 30 days in 2019.
- Touring involves moving across many EU countries in a short period of time, often being in each country for only a few days at a time.
- The EU-UK trade deal poses a severe threat to our sector: in future the crew might need visas for each individual country they will be working in, as well as the requisite paperwork for the vast amount of kit needed for a production. This should be technically possible in most cases, but will add substantial complexity and cost to the tour.
- Post-Brexit cabotage and cross-trade restrictions mean that live event hauliers can cross into the EU and then make just two stops before having to return to the UK. Haulage trucks travel with the tour, making stops at each show, so this restriction makes it impossible for UK live event hauliers to be part of European tours.
- The additional cost and complexity could lead to much of the international work that used to come to UK companies and freelancers going to Europeans instead.
- The new UK-EU trade deal massively disadvantages UK crews and businesses. Whereas UK-based operators will need to navigate the new complexity for each individual EU country they will be working in, EU crew and businesses will be able to move freely around the EU27 and only have to get visas and permits for the UK leg of the tour.
- In addition, when deciding where to develop and start a European tour, international artists and tour managers will likely see that choosing an EU member state will have significant advantages over choosing the UK.



- Taken as a whole, this situation will come at a huge cost to individuals and companies, but it will also come at a huge cost to the UK economy, which will lose out from the revenue and tax receipts generated by this previously booming industry.

How the live event supply chain is reacting:

- After almost a year with all but no work due to Government social distancing restrictions, the live event supply chain is already on its knees. The news that the EU-UK trade deal will make it harder for the live event supply chain to compete with peers in Europe is devastating.
- Self-employed individuals are stuck with the situation. Unless they can acquire a passport from an EU member state, they have little recourse but to accept they will find it harder to get work on European tours.
- Businesses do have the option to set up an office in an EU member state or relocate completely – and many are beginning work on this, because they are so concerned about the impact the new trade arrangements will have on their business – but this will still represent a huge loss to the UK economy.

How the Government can address this:

- We understand that ending free movement of people was a red line in the EU-UK trade deal negotiations – but freedom for UK nationals to work **temporarily** in the EU (or vice versa) without a visa is not free movement of people, it is a sensible way to ensure mutual economic benefit from the close proximity of the UK to the EU.
- And it's not just our industry that is impacted – the same issues are faced by the film industry and the fashion industry to name just a couple – so calls to look at this issue again are only going to grow.
- We know that the EU is open to revisiting the question of the temporary movement of workers, and we would strongly urge the government to do so.
- Any deal with the EU must also address the issues post-Brexit cabotage and cross-trade restrictions rules pose for the live event haulage trucks, so equipment for tours can move freely with crew.
- A solution could take the form of a specific 'cultural passport' for artists and crew touring the EU. But the EU will probably require a broader negotiation on cross-sector short-term labour mobility – something the UK should not be afraid of.
- If the UK and EU cannot settle this issue at an EU-wide level, then the best hope for the sector is working hand in glove with the Government to negotiate practical arrangements at a member state level – but that option is definitely second best.
- The pandemic gives us a few months to do this work, but by the time it is safe to start holding live events again and the demand for European tours returns, we have to have reached a workable deal either at an EU level or directly with individual member states that allows us to compete effectively for European touring work.

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