

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol | Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Diwylliant a'r berthynas newydd â'r UE | Culture and the new relationship with the EU

Ymateb gan: Theatr Byd Bach | Evidence from: Small World Theatre

Small World Theatre

The impact of the new relationship on artists and creative workers touring and working cross border (including touring and working in Wales).

Brexit makes everything complicated, costly and time consuming.

Touring has become more expensive on many fronts: with increased ferry costs, ATA Carnet charges, fuel consumption and our impact on the planet.

Using an ATA Carnet creates more work for the team (an additional 2-3 days for an administrator or tour manager to navigate the system and complete the overly complicated paperwork). Customs and Excise advice available in the UK is geared towards commercial companies.

The impact of the new trading arrangements relating to cultural activity.

With all the disadvantages of this change it is as if a 'Cultural Iron Curtain' has fallen. It is impacting on creative thought, ambition, innovation, and aspiration. The desire to share and learn, to exchange and prosper, to make meaningful links and to bridge divides has been squashed and tempered.

Wales is lumped in with the whole Brexit ethos. This schism creates yet more obstacles for Welsh artists to deal with in accessing EU audiences. This may limit how we showcase our unique culture and perspective on Global matters.

Trading arrangements are not just financial; the exchange of ideas is crucial to a viable future where artists, musicians and theatre makers develop concepts and visions with EU partners to create a world worth living in.

The availability of guidance and support for the sector relating to the new relationship between the UK and EU.

Searching for guidance, arranging a multi-country tour and administrating the paperwork is a large amount of time and extra expenses which makes touring too daunting to contemplate for a small arts organisation or individual artists. Cultural exchanges will be too complicated and too expensive to even contemplate. We just won't see the quality and variety of EU or world artists in our country.

Using an ATA Carnet

We struggled to find an organisation or advisor that would help. Information online is geared towards commercial companies and not-for-profit companies like ours seemed to be at a disadvantage. We were given several bits of wrong information at the beginning, and Customs and Excise staff seemed reluctant to give us advice in case it was wrong.

We began by enquiring about Duplicate Lists to save cost, but after several days of enquiries, we took the advice of Wales Arts international and applied for a carnet. (Duplicate Lists were suggested by the UK but they are not recognised at an international border).

Fortunately, we discovered the name and number of the International Documentation Manager in Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, who was incredibly helpful. We were able to pay the lowest cost and complete the transaction in time to receive the paperwork by post and performance in a cross-cultural exchange in Ireland.

Notes:

The Arts Council of Wales were able to support us by referring us to Wales Arts International. Katie took a genuine interest in our case and shared industry knowledge with us. This set us off on the right track.

It was more helpful speaking to Customs and Excise in Ireland than in the UK - they seemed more aware of the process and more willing to share information.

We were asked by Customs and Excise UK staff to report back once we had worked out what to do. Often people said things off the record. Staff are angry that their workloads have increased, and they wonder where the extra revenue is going.

The impact on access to funding programmes and networks

It can feel that Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are competing for funding that replaces EU funds. We also feel that we are disadvantaged by England-based artists.

EU funding criteria was focussed and impactful. As a company based in Cardigan, we saw our local work benefitting some of the communities in the most deprived areas in Wales. The competition is now so great when applying to charitable organisations and trusts, that many excellent projects fail to happen.

Any changes to the UK-EU relationship that might improve cross border working for the cultural sector.

It would make things better if Wales could re-join the EU.