**EU Withdrawal Round Table Meeting**

**Meeting Notes**

**Wednesday 26 May**

In attendance:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Naomi Conway  | Belfast International Arts Festival |
| Richard Wiggly  | Ulster Orchestra |
| Ian Wilson | Grand Opera House |
| Noel Kelly | Visual Arts Ireland |
| Paula McColl | Moving on Music |
| Brendan McGoran | Output Belfast |
| Mark Gordon | Score Draw Music |
| Una Nic Eoin | Prime Cut  |
| Mary Cremin | VOID |
| Max Beer | Dumb World |
| Laura Salt | Camerata Ireland |
| Kevin Murphy | Playhouse, Derry |
| Unknown | British Council |
| Fleur Mellor | Theatre and Dance NI |
| Matthew Greenall | Walled City Music |
| Kevin Murphy | Derry Playhouse |
| Brendan McGoran | Belfast City Council  |
| Jo Wright | ACNI |
| Noirin McKinney | ACNI |
| Sonya Whitefield | ACNI |
| Graeme Stevenson | ACNI (Chair) |
| Karly Greene | ACNI |

Graeme welcomed attendees and provided a presentation on the key changes to legislation as it impacts individual artists and organisations. The purpose of the meeting was to:

1. To establish what the known and anticipated impacts are of EU withdrawal from a NI perspective
2. To gather evidence to amplify the issues being felt by organisations and their members.
3. To consider what supports are needed to offset / mitigate impacts

There was then a general discussion of the impacts from a range of perspectives. The following provides a summary of the points made by contributors:

**Noel Kelly (Visual Arts Ireland)**

***All-island body and representative organisation for professional visual artists in Ireland***

Recent conversation in Brussels with Culture Action Europe demonstrate a malaise about the whole topic. Rising sense that Brexit is regarded as a UK issue now and it should be seen in the EU as a ‘third country’ issue. This means that the ‘ears aren’t as open as they used to be’.

In practical terms supplies of materials are getting more difficult to get in NI. Many suppliers aren’t now prepared to ship to NI, therefore specialised materials are no longer available. As a consequence we are having to identify alternative suppliers in the EU rather than the UK.

There is a definite lack of knowledge amongst our members regarding import and export. Information that is available is so abstract it’s difficult for artists to understand how it impacts on them. Lack of knowledge about the importing of works within GB / NI. Various consumer channels become unstuck as they are engaged.

Significantly worried about the visibility and promotion of NI artists in the EU – starting to see evidence that is becoming more difficult to advertise NI artists out to the world – whose going to cover the burocracy and legal costs.

More difficult bringing artists in – not in a position to become guarantor in any serious way on visas – this has led to some artists pulling out from commitments. More manageable because of on-line engagement but the physical engagement lost. UK visa system has become a greater tension than it was.

Getting advice on changes to copyright and in particular, and its assignment in the country of manufacture / creation. Now outside the EU there could be implications for what copyright protection is on specific works if an artist is travelling outside the UK and its impact on the protection of copyright.

The creative voice is very weak and we don’t see any strengthening despite the multiple networks around the UK. We were comfortable within the EU but need to extend further out into the international arena.

Need to make NI more attractive – we need a cultural agency that breaks through burocracy and makes it easier for small organisations to create that cultural flow.

As an all-island body, its been interesting not to be approached on the role that all island bodies can play. We can offer an active role from both sides of the border.

Regarding the logistics, I would be interested in understanding what it means to get EU funding as an incorporated body in the RoI but delivering in Northern Ireland. There is the ability to apply but may not be just as easy as incorporating.

Workers’ rights will also need consideration – may become an issue when jurisdictions deviate into two distinct areas. Not sure if organisations are primed to understand the complexity of employment law. Do organisations have the knowledge levels to be worried?

**Una Nic Eoin (Prime Cut Productions)**

***Production and touring company, based in Belfast.***

One of the major issues is the inability to access Creative Europe funding – you have no autonomy over how money is spent, you may as well say third world as oppose to third country. You are often engaged as a token gesture and may not have artistic input.

Is there a way that ACNI can work with Arts Council, Dublin and Culture Ireland (that has an all island remit) and has actively support our trips to the Edinburgh Festival that are expensive to get to – is there a way the sector can access it that is less punitive than a third country status?

 In the last 10 years we have spent 7 in Creative Europe projects as a lead or partnership. There were three shows that were highly successful for us – not possible without Creative Europe intervention.

We have toured big productions to France and Germany in the last 5 years. France particularly bureaucratic because of administration. Doesn’t matter how good the show is, when you add the additional wok, you become replaceable and it’s just not worth the hassle.

Touring companies in three way bind:

1. Major source of funding has been cut because of Creative Europe
2. Become ‘replaceable’ because of the additional workload needed in the receiving country e.g. France
3. If N/S touring impacted upon, that represents about 25% of income.

It’s not just about the grant you get, it’s the legacy, creative exchange, artist development and community development work that’s impacted upon.

Has to be about joined up thinking between Dublin and Belfast. Need to get some cross-sector working on this, some greater solidarity, otherwise I’m not sure what the future is for any of us.

Simplistic to say incorporating is the answer to problems – need registered bank account and address. It will create another core. Given that 90% of core funded arts organisations are stretched beyond their own jurisdiction. Will an artist holding an Irish passport be able to access EU funding via Creative Europe?

Capacity of small to medium scale organisations makes incorporating very difficult. Two jurisdictions need to look at support for organisations looking to incorporate themselves in RoI.

**Ian Wilson (Grand Opera House)**

***Receiving Venue***

Bring in between 2 to 7 articulated lorries per week. A number of issues: 1. Costs associated with the ATA Carnet; 2. N/S movement of goods via lorries – GOH ‘route’ with Bord Gáis Energy Theatre in Dublin – shows move from Dublin to Belfast and Belfast to Dublin. E.g. Six, the musical in early October moving from Belfast to Dublin and the following week Grease will move from Dublin to Belfast. 3. Lorries arrive in sequential order to enable a ‘get-in’. Concern that delays or random checks will disrupt this flow and the sequencing of lorries.

As a consequence, autumn shows will not open on a Monday, but a Tuesday instead – this will have a financial impact as the number of performances will be reduced, with knock on for box-office, bar takings and merchandise sales.

Also GOH contributes to the movement of lorries across the water; air travel for visiting companies. Once we know how the Carnet system works we will have a clearer understanding of it, but very concerning.

**Paula McColl (Moving on Music)**

***Leading promoter of jazz, folk, roots, traditional, classical and other music in Northern Ireland***

Bringing musicians into NI – very worried Brexit will have a negative impact on the diversity of music here. There is already a big difference in the fees we can pay artists here and those payed in Europe. As an organisation, we are registered to provide Certificates of Sponsorship so there will be increased paperwork and cost involved. But there is an additional worry regarding the extra costs for artists we would like to invite (e.g. visas, carnets, musical instrument transportation, a lot of which can’t be sourced in NI).

We may need to adjust our fees to ensure they are paid a fair wage and are also able to cover the additional costs brought about by Brexit. We may become this black area of the map where artists aren’t prepared to go anymore.

The other main concern would be for artists wishing to out and travel to EU. There is a huge disparity in the fees paid here compared to EU. For many, the only reason they can survive is because they tour the EU. For Irish Traditional musicians, the work isn’t here, it’s in the EU countries they tour and the increased costs associated with this may make it unviable.

Mark Gordon (Output Belfast)

EU offer of visa free touring was rejected by UK, because it meant it would have needed to be reciprocated. A DCMS Export Office would need to be a network of organisations, across the cultural and creative industries. Touring Fund may be made available, but may be for England only.

**Jo Wright (ACNI)**

Still involved in the International Showcase Fund (Offers vital export support for UK-based artists, bands, songwriters and producers who have been invited to perform or create new music at international showcasing festivals or conferences).

This a partnership with the PRS Foundation (invest in the future of music by supporting talent development and new music across the UK). Because of COVID we have been adapting the fund to ensure virtual support – still part of the Horizons programme as well, along with Culture Ireland.

Looking to ensure an allowance within International Showcase Fund to cover visa costs – not confirmed as yet. Won’t help touring will support larger scale showcase events.

**Kevin Murphy (Playhouse, Derry)**

***Receiving, producing and touring venue***

Is Brexit being picked up as part of the Cultural Taskforce? The Terms of Reference stop short of mentioning Brexit, with focus on re-opening following the pandemic.

Playhouse is registered in RoI and it shouldn’t be avoided – does duplicate company structure and would have to have a good reason for doing it other than to access Creative Europe funding. For all organisations, have to be all island. We are still part of the Common Working area – no new regime. Complication when going beyond these islands.

**Noirin McKinney (ACNI)**

Concern that N/S relations are not as strong as they work. The impact of Brexit will take political will to overcome.

**Naomi Conway (Belfast International Arts Festival)**

Getting to grip with COVID as we prepare for the October festival – where we are planning to be a predominantly live festival. Still finding it hard to get clarity on the new rules for individual artists.

No one source for information. More information on visas but not in terms of freighting and brining stages in. We do share staging with companies in the south of Ireland who come in from GB to Dublin and then to NI. Considerable additional costs – reliant on grant aid and small amounts of earned income.

**Richard Wiggly (Ulster Orchestra)**

Covid masking a lot of this. Our big issue relates to international artists. We are reliant on a lot of agents to bring us through but need to put in more thought about how we can support international artists travelling to NI.

**Mary Cremin VOID**

***Void is a contemporary art gallery based in Derry that commissions and produces a visual arts programme***

Biggest issue for us is increased costs associated with moving artwork to and from GB and EU. We have already been hit by customs duty and there is very little clarity around it. It is impacting on our budget line.

In terms of art work travelling to us, we are trying to transport them earlier in order to mitigate against any border issues. We are talking to artists about alternative arrangements if their travel to install work in NI is impacted upon.

It is impacting on our work with international artists. There are more limited opportunities for partnership working via traditional funding routes.

**Brendan McGoran (Belfast City Council)**

We’ve just submitted an application to be the next UNESCO City of Music. Designation, if successful will run from October to 2023. We have also developed a Belfast City music strategy.

Music is a huge part of our cultural life, economy and wellbeing. Touring is an important part of the work done by NI artists.

**Next Steps**

* There was support for this group to become a more regular touch stone for the Arts Council on matters relating to Brexit and the NI protocol. Its diverse membership, a definite strength.
* The evidence generated from this meeting will be fed into DfC, and DCMS channels to highlight the impact of Brexit on the NI arts and culture sector.
* Evidence will also be used to support dialogue with the Arts Council, Dublin on North / South issues, particularly in relation to touring and Creative Europe funding.