

**SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT EUROPEAN & EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE**  
**CONSULTATION ON BREXIT IMPLICATIONS:**  
**FESTIVALS EDINBURGH RESPONSE**

1. The Edinburgh Festivals are Scotland's world-leading cultural assets. The 12 major Festivals year round in Edinburgh generate over £300 million each year for Scotland's economy, collectively attract more than 4.5 million attendances – more than the FIFA World Cup – and position Scotland around the world as a dynamic, open and outward looking nation. They are distinctively Scottish yet profoundly international, profiling Edinburgh as the world's leading festival city and a global cultural capital punching far above its weight, and thereby making a strong contribution to tourism, cultural exports, creative industries and attracting international talent to live, work, study and do business here.

2. Festivals Edinburgh is the strategic development and representative body for the 12 major Festivals and has compiled the following comments on issues shared across the 12 Festivals, in response to the questions posed by the Committee's consultation exercise. While there is naturally a huge focus on the potential fiscal impacts of Brexit, the wider cultural, social and economic implications must also be given due weight if Scotland and its people are to continue to play a full part on the world stage. As leading actors in Scotland's cultural sector, the Edinburgh Festivals call on the Committee to ensure that the future health and international connectedness of the sector are taken into account in all stages of the Brexit negotiations.

**Case studies of impact of Brexit to date**

3. Due to the drop in the strength of sterling and weakened confidence in stock markets, there have been several immediate effects on costs and funding:

- Increased costs to artists and producers of bringing international work to Edinburgh's Festivals
- Discussions with corporate sponsors taking longer to conclude, with a risk of lower sponsorship commitment than before given the drop in value of sterling assets and negative effects of business uncertainty on share values
- Trusts and Foundations warning of lower funding available to distribute to beneficiaries for the same reasons

4. Some of Edinburgh's Festivals have also reported increased caution among international partners in committing to medium and long term collaborations because of the uncertainty about the status of partners from Scotland and the UK, with examples of discussions not being entered into or failing to progress. Others, by contrast, have reported a wave of support from their international networks, a reinforcement of the importance of international exchange, and a wish to work together more closely.

5. On the positive side, the weakening of sterling in the international currency markets may have contributed to stronger international visitor numbers in the past two months. Ticket sales have been buoyant in the peak season of August 2016, with for example Fringe ticket sales up by over 7%, ticket sales at the Edinburgh International Book Festival increasing by 3.5% and the International Festival bringing in ticket income of over £4 million for the first time.

### **Scotland's future relationship with the European Union**

6. Membership of the European Union and the single market bring a range of international benefits relevant to Edinburgh's Festivals that should be priorities for protection as part of Scotland's future relationship with the European Union.
7. The **free movement of people** – into and out of Scotland and the UK - is critical to international cultural exchange, the health of Scotland's cultural sector, and the international outlook of Scotland's citizens. Further commentary on the potential impact is provided in this response at paragraph 13. onwards .
8. **Trade in cultural products and services** should be protected: Scotland must be able to influence EU regulatory, tax and trade tariff regimes that will influence future trade in the cultural and creative industries.
9. The ability of Scottish cultural organisations to participate in **EU networks and funding programmes** must be safeguarded - including the Creative Europe programme, ERDF, ESF, and Horizon 2020. As with the UK Chancellor's guarantee to underwrite UK university research projects currently funded by the EU, there should be similar provision made to replace funding for EU schemes that currently support the development of the culture sector.
10. It is vital that the countries of the EU and beyond continue to see Scotland as an open and outward looking nation. Edinburgh's Festivals have an important role to play in **international relations** as leading cultural assets for intercultural exchange, reputation building and creative exports. Scotland's future policy environment needs to support the Festivals to the fullest extent in offering international experiences, insights and connections for Scottish and UK audiences, to foster a global and welcoming outlook.

### **Alternatives to EU membership**

11. To safeguard the conditions for Edinburgh's Festivals to sustain and grow our substantial impact for Scotland and the UK, we would want any alternatives to preserve:
  - the free movement of people;
  - the free market in goods and services without additional tax and trade tariffs;
  - the ability of Scottish and UK cultural organisations to participate in EU networks and funding programmes; and
  - social and economic development support for the cultural and creative industries at least equal to that on offer from current EU membership.
12. As part of the Brexit negotiations, there should also be a commitment to repurpose elements of the UK's EU funding contribution to provide stimulus for the cultural and creative industries to increase their trade in cultural goods and services, given their track record of growth at almost double the rate of the wider UK economy.

## **The position of EU citizens in Scotland**

13. Given the international reputation, networks and ethos of the Edinburgh Festivals, we have a high proportion of international staff including EU nationals. The language and cultural skills and international networks of these colleagues are critical for sustaining high quality intercultural exchange. We would like to see the position of EU nationals living and working in Scotland safeguarded and bilateral agreements entered into where necessary to ensure the continued right to live and work in Scotland. Any erosion in the rights of EU nationals to work in Scotland for Edinburgh's Festivals will affect our ability to maintain world class programmes.

14. The Edinburgh Festivals collectively feature over 25,000 performers each year, from 70 countries. If the current visa system for non EU nationals were extended to EU citizens there is potentially a very high impact of increased cost and administration around visas and work permits. The current system is complex and time consuming, and can result in artists not being able get visas in time due to other touring commitments. This effect that would be magnified greatly if EU national were included and could damage the range and quality of the Festivals' programmes.

15. Performers and cultural workers who regularly tour or work internationally find it very difficult to find a three-week period in the three months before travelling when they can surrender their passports while their visa applications are processed. In most cases the only solution involves a significant additional cost to speed up the process or obtain a second passport – something which is not possible in all countries. These costs are particularly hard to meet for performers travelling in groups such as dance companies or music ensembles with small budgets. A waiving of visa requirements for EU based artists would be required to avoid these negative effects on our cultural and creative economy.

15. The Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, Edinburgh International Festival, Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival and Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo have permit-free status for visiting performers which avoids those festivals having to issue a certificate of sponsorship for each individual to obtain a work permit. We would also want to see the potential wider use of this model explored for EU nationals, for other types of workers, and for other Festivals and cultural organisations.

**Festivals Edinburgh**

**September 2016**