**Bectu briefing -** The Scottish Parliament Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee roundtable session on 'touring artists', to inform the Committee's input to the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly, as well as its inquiry on the Review of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA).

*“There is not a single way that these restrictions have been beneficial to anyone I have encountered in the creative industries. This is terrible legislation that needs changing immediately.”* **– Bectu member working as a sound engineer**

*“It's now harder for a new technician starting out, wanting to gain valuable experience and insight from working abroad. As an industry, British technicians in touring are held in high regard given the wealth of experience putting on shows everywhere. The idea that there is a generation that would not have the same ability to gain and add to that collective skillset is such a shameful waste.”* **– Bectu member working as a lighting designer**

*“Those American-based production teams are not coming anymore, I’ve been told that amongst other things, “it isn’t worth the risk”,” too much red tape”, “having to deal with work permits, carnets, cabotage is too time consuming and expensive.*

*“In terms of my colleagues in the industry, those with dual nationality or EU passports are flourishing, those without are not! Many are suffering depression and other mental health issues.”* **– Bectu member working as freelance camera/vision engineer**

**The Touring/ live events industry – from thriving to struggling**

* The UK is renowned for the skill and expertise of its creative workforce, with many of Bectu’s Scottish based members working in Touring and the live events sector contributing to its success.
* The creative industries are one of the UK’s most economically successful sectors, accounting for almost 12% of UK exports and contributing £116 billion gross value prior to the pandemic
* The music industry alone is valued at £5.8 billion per annum
* The events industry specifically adds £84 billion the UK economy each year, as well as providing a continuous economic boost to constituencies around the country through touring and the revenue created by venues
* Prior to Brexit, the UK enjoyed an 80% market share of the European contemporary music haulage industry
* It is a sector that excelled, both in terms of the performers and musicians, but also the technical crew and logistical support staff for performances
* Production companies often used the UK as a hub for their European work, due to the high level of skill and talent from UK-based technical staff
* US performers were also drawn to UK production talent, often basing themselves in the UK and hiring the same crew for European or world tours

**EU Trade Deal**

* The testimonies above touch on just some of the very real logistical, financial and wellbeing challenges facing Bectu members and other Touring/ live events technical workers post-Brexit
* The impacts of the failure to include an EU-wide cultural work permit and visa free travel for touring professionals and artists have also been well documented by the [Carry on Touring](https://www.carryontouring.uk/) campaign group, created by Bectu member Tim Brennan
* The requirements of the deal have inhibited the growth of the live events sector, and put many Bectu members, and countless other artists and technical professionals, out of work
* Acquiring visas for every European country has placed a huge financial and logistical burden on performers and their crew
* UK citizens may only work in the EU for 90 days within a 180-day period – this is shorter than the length of some tours. Many Scottish Technicians would spend more than half the year working in Europe rolling from one tour straight into the next.
* Not only has the EU Trade Deal threatened financial stability, but it has hampered the industry’s recovery after the pandemic
* Performers, as well as both US and European based production companies, are now avoiding hiring Scottish based workers, due to the logistical burden that their employment brings – leaving thousands of highly trained and skilled technical staff without work
* Bectu has long been campaigning, alongside other unions, performers, and industry professionals, for **the UK Government to reopen negotiations with the EU and secure a free cultural work permit to allow free movement of touring professionals, and to secure a Carnet exception for touring equipment, for both long- and short-term tours.**
* In 2021, CMS claimed that the Government had secured visa and work permit free access to 20 EU member states for musicians and crew for short term tours
* **This claim was severely lacking in detail in several areas**, including which professions were covered, the definition of a short tour, the aggregation of time spent in EU member states, movement between member states and details on the transportation of equipment and tour vehicles.
* CMS has since provided no detail or clarity on these matters.
* Whilst the government has published guidance for touring professionals, checklists and reminders are simply not enough

**Bectu members – case studies**

* Bectu members and thousands of other freelancers who make a living in the Touring sector have had their working patterns, sources of income and mental health and wellbeing severely impacted
* Without the opportunities provided by straightforward travel to the EU, and the ability to continue to participate fully in the EU’s cultural life, musicians and creative professionals are being forced out the sector
* European and American production companies and artists now simply avoid hiring British technical workers. Technical crew are faced with an unstable employment pattern, where months can go by without any work
* Additionally, the UK was previously very much the home of specialist touring trucks, but Brexit has seen most of these organisations move registrations to EU states to avoid bureaucracy and complications
* Drivers of now EU registered lorries need to pass the EU’s Certificate of Professional Competence test, as Brussels no longer recognises qualifications from UK drivers – the tests take five days and must be done in Ireland
* For someone who owns a business that transports equipment and musicians around Europe, to qualify 200 UK qualified drivers would cost £200,000
* This not only brings financial implications, but has an adverse effect on the mental wellbeing of thousands of technical staff
* To fully understand the impact that the EU trade deal is having on technical workers who previously toured in the EU, it is perhaps best to hear first-hand from workers – SEE BELOW

***Tim Brennan, freelance camera/vision engineer and creator of*** [***Carry on Touring***](https://www.carryontouring.uk/?trk=public_post_share-update_update-text#:~:text=Carry%20on%20Touring%20is%20the%20UK%E2%80%99s%20umbrella%20campaign,political%20and%20public%20support%20for%20UK%20EU%20touring.) ***campaign group, Bectu member***

“Since the Brexit curtain came down, I have found it increasingly difficult to find work, mainly because the larger tours source management and production teams from the USA. Those production teams used to come to Europe to tour, picking up UK technicians and equipment, which is where we would meet. 9 times out of ten, they would then keep me on for the rest of the world tour.

**“Those American-based production teams are not coming anymore, I’ve been told by a few people I know that amongst other things, “it isn’t worth the risk”,” too much red tape”, “having to deal with work permits, carnets, cabotage is too time consuming and expensive”.**

“I have been looking for full time work utilising my technical skills, but as a 57yr old I don’t even get shortlisted. It has and is effecting my mental well-being and my confidence, the feeling of nobody wants me anymore is quite depressing. Not earning has meant I have had to live on savings, which doesn’t bode well for the future.

“In terms of my friends and colleagues in the industry, **those with dual nationality or EU passports are flourishing, those without are not! Many are suffering depression and other mental health issues.**

“Also, the cost-of-living crisis is hitting ticket sales, which in turn hits us all.”

***John Rogers, lighting designer/operator, Bectu member***

“I am now in the position where I have to have an ATA carnet (‘passport for goods’) for my small amount of lighting control equipment when working in the EU. Aside from the many wasted extra hours in airports and at borders there is a cost to this. It has at times been easier to have production hire equipment locally for me, which means I lose out on the hire fee of my equipment and makes me question investing in new kit.

**“I also have to be mindful of the amount of work I do in Europe as I am now limited, where before I wasn't.** Now hopping over to the Netherlands or France for a one-off festival in between tours suddenly becomes an issue, if I have a tour booked later in the year for instance.

**“All of this extra cost and red tape makes me less attractive to international acts on paper than a tech with the ability to work in the EU countries without a visa.** Aside from that **every hour I spend on administrating my ability to work in the EU is completely wasted** compared to not having had to do any of it in the whole of my working life up until Brexit. It's all such an unnecessary, wasteful set of obstacles to my business of making shows look great for audiences.

“It just reduces opportunity to go out, do shows, make money (and then pay tax to HMRC on that money). **It's surely harder for a new technician starting out, wanting to gain that valuable experience and insight from working abroad.** As an industry, **British technicians in touring are held in high regard given the wealth of experience putting on shows everywhere. The idea that there is a generation that would not have the same ability to gain and add to that collective skillset is such a shameful waste.”**

***Myles Hayden, sound engineer, Bectu member***

“Around a quarter to a third of my income came from working in the EU in 2018 and 2019. **In 2022 it went down to roughly 2% and this year is looking like it will be around 5%.** It should be noted here, I am dual citizen and I have both a British and Irish passport so I am exempt from the 90 in 180 days rule. **The work just isn't there today like it was pre-Brexit. For example; a 3 week-long event I work on that happens in a different country every year has simply been cancelled because it is too expensive to run.**

“Also, I work with a low budget band last year that missed the Eurostar because of a badly run carnet system in Kent, this meant doing our first show on almost no sleep in France, also very dangerous for us and our driver. We've lost sleep several times having to deal with the carnet on the way to Ireland. Not to mention that because of the sheer cost of the carnet, last year some equipment broke, as equipment does with wear and tear. We had to cancel parts of our show and give an inferior performance when performing in the EU. Just because the band couldn't afford to purchase a new carnet.

**“I've already accepted that the touring industry, one of last great industries that Britain could really claim to be a true global leader in, is in demise.** **The costs of exporting our culture are simply too high and thus my work has been diminished significantly.** I have now diversified and work more in other sectors of the industry. I recognise I am in a strong position to this as I am experienced and have strong connections in the industry, however by doing this I am taking jobs away from more inexperienced technicians and creating unemployment elsewhere. **The next generation of brilliant events workers are having their career prospects taken away from them.**

**“I think it's terrible that myself and my colleagues have had our careers quite literally taken away from us, the rug has been pulled from under our feet. What is even more bizarre is that the UK government hasn't just taken our jobs away from us, but they have gifted them to other countries in the EU.** I've met fellow workers, particularly older workers who have done the same job their whole life, developing mental health problems as a result of having to change careers. Some have left the industry completely. Work at home has become more competitive and we are being asked to work longer hours for the same money as budgets are squeezed. **There is not a single way that these restrictions have been beneficial to anyone I have encountered in the creative industries. This is terrible legislation that needs changing immediately.”**

**About Bectu**

Bectu, a sector of Prospect Union, is the UK's union for the creative industries, representing more than 37,000 staff, contract and freelance workers across the creative industries, including broadcasting, cinema, film and television, digital media, independent production, leisure, IT and telecoms, theatre, live events and the arts.   
  
Bectu aims to protect jobs, win new recognition agreements, and improve pay and conditions of service, and we campaign on issues that matter to our members, including tackling bullying and harassment, widening access to the arts, and freelancer rights and protections.  
   
Further information about the union is available at: [www.bectu.org.uk](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=http%3a%2f%2ftracking.bectu.org.uk%2ftracking%2fclick%3fd%3d0IoMmMZ1gMM-ZhoG3yb37xLv4CzLy_SOu6pf2SxiWg7MPdEOWOWMo60BOgFEM6V8tyAFxrjkRf10ZXahLlOzN82AFttvb7N8fsdPZxyX-BNnRoWIGodj-kxFBEJJsWZR1w2&c=E,1,7zyznpo1NnIM6JGnMdmdGCQ1osfdAUa1XnTwJ3AIlOdvn6iw1-xA7McrBYUNL-PwEx4LU01iFue1ysN4IMAXtscdy4wGDItOTCmoiqTPzPB6KUPcVTc7-WKa&typo=1)