Briefing paper

One Year On: a-n Brexit Survey Headlines July 2017

On 23 June 2017 we launched an EU-focused survey to assess the impact of Brexit on our members, one year on from a 2016 study held just after the EU Referendum. The survey closed on 10 July. Based on the 1,200+ survey responses the key headlines are summarised as follows.

Comparisons – 2016/2017

11% of our respondents hold a non-UK passport, the majority from EU countries. This shows a slight decrease (1%) on 2016, but continues to evidence a noteworthy number of EU artists (the equivalent of around 2,200 a-n members) living and working in the UK, contributing to our economy and cultural offer.

40% of respondents travelled to Europe in the last 12 months for their practice or professional development. This represents a significant (14%) drop on the overall number travelling since 2016, which could reflect a number of changes — from a reduction in the number of EU opportunities open to them, to increasing economic hardship. However, this overall drop does not seem to have impacted the recurrent travellers, with no real change in the % of members who travelled to the EU 3+ times in a year. Of the 40% who are travelling regularly, 59% of them had travelled 1-2 times per year with a further 30% of them travelling 3+ times per year. This still equates to c9,000 a-n members making regular work or study visits annually.

Travel patterns

53% of a-n members who had travelled to the EU in the last 12 months had average stays of between 4 and 7 days. However, almost 30% also recorded long stays of over 2 weeks — this equates to c2,500 a-n members staying for over 2 weeks, and 715 who stayed longer than a month.

The top 5 EU travel destinations amongst our members accounted for almost 65% of all EU travel recorded by the survey, with France topping the list, followed by Germany, Italy, Spain and The Netherlands – the 5 most wealthy EU countries by GDP. This suggests a correlation between the popularity of destination for artists, proximity and the overall wealth of those nations.

While 42% of those who had travelled in the last 12 months had planned their visit 2-3 months in advance, 18% had spent 1 month or less in their travel planning, suggesting that impromptu short trips to support networking and employment are not only easy with current free movement in the EU, but also necessary for artists' networking and professional development.

Expected and actual impacts one year on

In our July 2016 survey and open call, members noted concern about the potential impact of Brexit on their practice and livelihoods, with 3% referencing "uncertainty" surrounding Brexit as a cause for concern, and some noting some immediate increases in costs of importing materials.

One year on, references around the uncertainty of Brexit have increased (to 14%) with strong evidence that the anxieties artists hold about its impact are now based on real life experiences.

Initial analysis regarding the frequency of member comments would suggest that 19% of respondents have seen an increase in costs related to their practice and materials, 13% have experienced a negative impact on sales, a further 10% have seen a reduction in funding and 8% are reporting a reduction in opportunities overall.

Next steps

These are first headlines — further analysis of the quantitative and qualitative information gathered through the 1,200 survey responses needs to be undertaken. In the meantime, our headlines suggest our workforce is still looking beyond the UK for employment to supplement incomes, that freedom of movement and financial transactions currently facilitate this.

About a-n

a-n The Artists Information Company is the largest artists' membership organisation in the UK with over 21,000 members. For almost 40 years our members' needs, interests and concerns have been the focus of what we do.

Advocacy is central to a-n as a professional representative body. Since 2004 we have led the way in best practice in artists' fees and payments and our guidance is the most referenced by visual artists and practitioners in the sector.

We conduct surveys and consultation with our members to evidence contemporary artists' practices, their economic circumstances and working patterns. This helps us understand how and where we might intervene best, and to develop appropriate and relevant services.

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