

MAC Call for Evidence – Museums Sector Response

October 2017

This is a joint response to the Migration Advisory Council Call for Evidence from the Museums Association and the National Museums Directors Council, which together represent the vast majority of the UK's world-leading museums sector.

About the MA

The Museums Association (MA) is a membership organisation representing and supporting museums and people who work for them, throughout the UK. Our membership of over 8000 includes all types of museums, from small volunteer-run local museums to large national institutions and people working in all types of roles from directors to trainees. Founded in 1889, the MA was the world's first professional body for museums. We lead thinking in UK museums with initiatives such as *Collections for the Future*, *Museums 2020* and, most recently, *Museums Change Lives*. We receive no regular public funding, and we do not wish to do so. For more information about the Museums Association, see our website: <http://www.museumsassociation.org/home>

About the NMDC

The National Museum Directors' Council (NMDC) represents the leaders of the UK's national collections and major regional museums. Our members are the national and major regional museums in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland, the British Library, the National Library of Scotland, the National Archives and Royal Botanic Gardens Kew. While our members are funded by government, the NMDC is an independent, non-governmental organisation. For more information about NMDC and our activity see our website: www.nationalmuseums.org.uk

Summary

The museums sector has severe concerns about the impact of Brexit on museum staff, audiences and the sharing of collections, ideas and expertise across European borders. Some of these concerns relate to the overall settlement that is achieved by the government in negotiating Brexit (as summarised below in part 3), but many of our key concerns relate to the introduction of a new and more limiting migration and border regime.

We believe that restricting immigration for EU citizens could threaten the international status of the UK's world-class institutions in their ability to work with the best curators, conservators, researchers, scientists and museum professionals available. Museums employ a wide range of specialist and non-specialist staff across a broad range of roles; and while the UK has substantial domestic skills and knowledge within the museums sector, our sector's global reputation also rests upon access to the skills and knowledge of those coming to the UK from other countries. We believe that restricting access to and creating a more hostile environment for a culturally diverse workforce would undermine the competitiveness, attractiveness and success of the UK's museums.

Our answers to the MAC consultation questions below give further detail on our concerns around a future limiting of migration to and from our European neighbours.

1. EEA Migration Trends

• Please provide evidence on the characteristics (e.g. types of jobs migrants perform; skill levels, etc) of EEA migrants in your particular sector/local area/ region. How do these differ from UK workers? And from non-EEA workers?

Museums in the UK have a large number of staff from other EEA countries, across all job types. Precise data is difficult to ascertain. The government's own figures¹ show that 4.6% of people working in the cultural sector are non-UK EU nationals. We believe this is broadly consistent with the proportion of non-UK EU workers in the museums sector.

However, this simple figure conceals substantial differences amongst different types, sizes and locations of museums, and different job types.

National and large regional museums tend to employ a larger number of staff overall, and a larger proportion of non-UK EEA staff members than small, rural and independent museums; EEA employees account for up to 15% of the workforce in most large national museums.

Non-UK EEA nationals are employed across all job types in museums. This includes highly skilled and highly trained specialist roles, such as:

- Museum Directors
- Specialist conservators
- Specialist curators
- Collections managers
- Scientific and cultural researchers
- Education, outreach and programming roles
- Technicians
- Events Managers
- Administrators

Non-UK EEA nationals are also employed in less specialist roles in museums. In particular, they play an important role in the catering and retail offer of many museums, including national museums.

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https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/640628/DCMS_Sectors_Economic_Estimates_2017_Employment_and_Trade.pdf

All non-UK EEA staff members now face considerable uncertainty over their future status in the UK, and many museums are concerned about the potential impact on their staff, reputation and operations.

• To what extent are EEA migrants seasonal; part-time; agency-workers; temporary; short-term assignments; intra-company transfers; self-employed? What information do you have on their skill levels? To what extent do these differ from UK workers and non-EEA workers?

Non-UK EEA staff members are employed throughout the museums sector, and therefore feature in the same roles as UK workers at every level.

The museum sector employs a large number of people on a freelance or short-term contract basis depending on the skills they have to offer. Specialist conservators are a good example of the kind of specialist skill which is often brought in on a project basis.

Restricting freedom of movement and the right to work could prevent international experts from working in the UK, impacting on opportunities for international collaboration and damaging museums' reputation. These changes would presumably work both ways, effecting outward migration, and potentially preventing UK museum professionals from engaging in international work as well.

Where staff are employed in catering, cleaning, security and similar roles, many larger museums operate these services on a contract basis. We have limited statistical information about the status and turnover of staff in these companies, but anecdotally we understand that staff employed by contracted agencies often include a larger proportion of non-UK EEA nationals.

• Are there any relevant sources of evidence, beyond the usual range of official statistics, that would allow the MAC to get a more detailed view of the current patterns of EEA migration, especially over the last year?

No.

• Have the patterns of EEA migration changed over time? What evidence do you have showing your employment of EEA migrants since 2000? And after the Brexit referendum? Are these trends different for UK workers and non-EEA workers?

No.

• Have you conducted any analysis on the future trends of EEA migration, in particular in the absence of immigration controls?

No.

• Have you made any assessment of the impact of a possible reduction in the availability of EEA migrants (whether occurring naturally or through policy) as part of your workforce? What impact

would a reduction in EEA migration have on your sector/local area/region? How will your business/sector/area/region cope? Would the impacts be different if reductions in migration took place amongst non-EEA migrants? Have you made any contingency plans?

We are concerned about the operational and reputational impact on museums of a sharp reduction in non-UK EEA staff. Creating a climate in which these staff are unable or feel unwelcome to work in the UK's museums will make it more difficult for museums to carry out their duties in terms of providing public access to public collections; and will lead to a decline in the skills which ensure that our museums sector is considered world-leading.

It is not possible to simply replace all roles currently filled by non-UK EEA staff with home grown talent. Due to the nature of collections and the specialist skills and knowledge required, many curatorial and scientific roles require recruitment from an international pool.

Uncertainty over the future of non-UK EEA nationals in the UK is particularly concerning in terms of a 'brain drain', which will exacerbate the 'hollowing out' of many museums which have been forced to cut curatorial and scientific roles due to public funding cuts.

There is also a pipeline issue of training and skills development – it takes time to build workforce skills and specialist expertise. In a climate of ongoing public funding cuts this is even more of a challenge.

Very few museums have made contingency plans for the loss of their non-UK EEA staff – it is difficult to plan when so little is known about the likely outcome of negotiations and future arrangements. Most are still hopeful that a solution can be found that will enable existing employees to remain in post, and ideally that they will have continued access to the EEA labour market. Some museums have already reported increasing challenges in recruiting for senior specialist roles due to the uncertainty over the future of non-UK EEA citizens' right to work in the UK.

Some progress has been made by the Creative Industry Federation² in recommending a post-Brexit visa system which would allow non-UK EEA workers in the cultural sector, including freelancers, to access the UK labour market. We believe that the Government must prevent post-Brexit immigration policies from impacting negatively on Britain's thriving cultural sector - it would be a significant step backwards if museums' access to the brightest and best talent were restricted.

² https://www.creativeindustriesfederation.com/sites/default/files/2017-10/GlobalTalent_v10.pdf

2. Recruitment Practices, Training & Skills

- **Please provide evidence on the methods of recruitment used to employ EEA migrants. Do these methods differ from those used to employ UK and non-EEA workers? What impact does this have on UK workers? Have these methods changed following the Brexit referendum?**

Museums generally recruit through competitive processes internally and/or externally and appointments are made on merit after fair and open competition. As noted above, many museums contract out some key museum services such as catering. Recruitment may differ for these posts.

- **Do recruitment practices differ by skill-type and occupation?**

Yes, see preceding question.

- **What are the advantages and disadvantages of employing EEA workers? Have these changed following the Brexit referendum result?**

See responses above relating to specialist knowledge.

Museums do not differentiate between UK and non-UK EEA workers, and all appointments are made on merit; however, it is widely agreed that having a culturally diverse workforce brings a broader mix of ideas and creativity to the sector.

Museums attract a high number of international visitors, so recruiting a multi-lingual, multi-cultural workforce is also of key importance in maintaining the UK's status as a world-leading tourist destination.

- **To what extent has EEA and non-EEA migration affected the skills and training of the UK workers?**

It is unlikely that inward migration is limiting the UK workforce's access to skills and training. If anything, the success of many Museums Studies courses across the UK has been driven partly by demand from non-UK students, and has helped to make a museum-based education more accessible to UK students.

- **How involved are universities and training providers in ensuring that the UK workforce has the skills needed to fill key roles/roles in high demand in your sector? Do you have plans to increase this involvement in the future?**

UK universities are world leaders in Museums Studies and the number of courses available has increased dramatically in recent years, partly due to demand from non-UK students. Museums across the UK engage with universities to make these courses successful, and to ensure a high quality workforce for the future. Many museums are also looking to recruit a more diverse workforce from non-traditional routes into the sector.

- **How well aware are you of current UK migration policies for non-EEA migrants? If new immigration policies restrict the numbers of low-skilled migrants who can come to work in the UK, which forms of migration into low-skilled work should be prioritised? For example, the current shortage occupation list applies to high skilled occupations; do you think this should be expanded to cover lower skill levels?**

We are particularly concerned about the possible introduction of new visa systems in the UK and the rest of the EU/EEA which rely on minimum earnings requirements. This would have a damaging effect on the development of young, freelance and mid-career museum professionals. Museum employment is not generally highly remunerated, and many posts would not meet the existing minimum salary requirement for Tier 2 visas of £35,000. Few museum posts currently qualify under the Shortage Occupation List. We believe that any new immigration rules must ensure that those in the cultural and creative sectors – including those at an early stage in their careers – are able to work in the UK and the EU and contribute to our cultural and scientific life.

3. Economic, Social and Fiscal Impacts

- What are the economic, social and fiscal costs and benefits of EEA migration to the UK economy? What are the impacts of EEA migrants on the labour market, prices, public services, net fiscal impacts (e.g. taxes paid by migrants; benefits they receive), productivity, investment, innovation and general competitiveness of UK industry?
- Do these differ from the impact of non-EEA migrants?
- Do these impacts differ at national, regional or local level?
- Do these impacts vary by sector and occupation?
- Do these impacts vary by skill level (high-skilled, medium-skilled, and low-skilled workers)?

The museum sector does not collect data on the costs and benefits of EEA migration to the UK economy. However, there are foreseeable consequences for the museum sector of restricting movement of non-UK EEA and UK workers to and from European countries, not solely in relation to recruitment and retention of a full and diverse workforce.

The MAC should consider movement of people in the context of movement of cultural objects, as restriction of one impairs the other. The movement of cultural objects in and out of the UK requires people to transport, courier, handle, register, conserve and curate these objects.

Restricting movement of people could have a huge impact on the cost of museum exhibitions, if European museums ask their UK counterparts to cover the increased costs they incur as a result of immigration and customs requirements.

Partnership and collaboration with international partners is also a key part of many aspects of museums' activity, from the borrowing and lending of objects and touring exhibitions to collaboration on joint research projects.

The impact is not just for individual institutions: partnerships enable museums to have an impact beyond the UK and play a major role in promoting Britain internationally, encouraging tourism and contributing to the UK's soft power.

Some museums are already experiencing problems with collaboration with European partners and networks due to Brexit, whereby institutions from countries within the EU are being chosen as the lead partner for projects over UK organisations. In the event that the UK does not retain access to programmes such as Horizon 2020 and its successors, the UK could lose further access to funding and risk its competitive advantage in research and innovation.

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