

NMDC and Museums Association response to House of Lords EU Home Affairs Sub-Committee into UK-EU movement of people post-Brexit

February 2018

1. 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. NMDC acts as an advocate on behalf of members and their collective priorities and provides them with a valuable forum for discussion and debate and an opportunity to share information and work collaboratively. 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
2. 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>
3. We welcome the opportunity to respond to the House of Lords EU Home Affairs Sub-Committee inquiry into UK-EU movement of people post-Brexit, and the impact on people in the fields of sport and culture.
4. As set out in the joint response from the NMDC and the MA to the MAC Inquiry Call for Evidence in November 2017, 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), but many of our key concerns relate to the introduction of a new and more limiting migration and border regime.
5. We believe that a more restrictive migration system 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.

6. Museums in the UK have a significant number of staff from other EEA countries, across all job types. The government's own figures show that 4.6% of people working in the cultural sector are non-UK EU nationals. Recent research¹ by the Museums Association found that one third of museums employ non-UK EU staff, and overall 4% of museum sector workforce are non-UK EU citizens. However, this simple figure conceals substantial differences amongst different types, sizes and locations of museums, and different job types.
7. 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 some large national museums.
8. 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
9. 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. 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.
10. 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.
11. Restricting freedom of movement and the right to work could prevent international experts from working in the UK, impacting on opportunities for

¹ Museums in the UK: 2018 Report, Museums Association,
<https://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=1244881>

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.

- 12.** 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.
- 13.** 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.
- 14.** 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.
- 15.** 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.
- 16.** 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.
- 17.** 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.
- 18.** 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.

- 19.** 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.
- 20.** Some progress has been made by the Creative Industry Federation 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.

In case of any queries regarding this response or if you require any further information please contact Kathryn Simpson, Policy and Projects Manager, National Museum Directors' Council: kathryn.simpson@nationalmuseums.org.uk / 020 7942 4076 or Alistair Brown, Policy Officer at the Museums Association: alistair@museumsassociation.org / 020 7566 7862.