



Department
for Culture,
Media & Sport

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Dame Caroline Dinenage MP
Chair of Culture, Media and Sport Select
Committee
House of Commons
London
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Dear Dame Caroline,

Thank you for your letter dated 4 March 2026 to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport regarding the oral evidence your Committee heard concerning the performing arts and music sectors. I am responding as the Minister for Creative Industries, Media and Arts.

The Government recognises the significant challenges described by witnesses regarding post-Brexit arrangements, which have made it difficult for performance artists, musicians, orchestras, and supporting crew to secure work in the EU. We are particularly concerned by reports that barriers to the mobility of people and goods are resulting in lost work, increased costs, and administrative burdens, especially for early-career performers.

Alongside directly addressing the issues raised in your session, the UK and EU agreed to support travel and cultural exchange, including the activities of touring artists, at the UK-EU summit. The Government is committed to making progress and exploring how best to support cultural exchange and improve arrangements for touring across the European continent with the EU and Member States.

On 24 March, I participated in the first UK-European Commission High-Level Meeting on Culture with European Culture Commissioner, Glenn Micallef, marking a step forward. During the meeting held in Brussels, I reaffirmed the Government's commitment to deepening cooperation with EU counterparts, progressing our ambitions within the UK-EU Summit Common Understanding. Our discussions reflected a shared recognition of the conditions underpinning cultural exchange, including the working conditions for creative and cultural professionals and efforts to champion cultural relations. This demonstrates a significant step forward, however there is much more work to be done together. I also attended a panel session at the European Parliament, hosted by MEPs Hannes Heide and Bogdan Zdrojewski in collaboration with the UK-EU Cultural Exchange Coalition focused on strengthening UK-EU cultural exchange, including removing barriers to cross-border touring. As you will be aware, this event brought together senior representatives from across the UK and EU, including Georg Haeusler, Director for Culture, Creativity and Sport at the European Commission, alongside Members of the European Parliament and industry stakeholders. This engagement enabled



direct exchange between UK and EU policymakers and industry on the operational realities of cross-border activity, ensuring that these perspectives inform ongoing discussions. It also demonstrated a shared recognition among UK and EU participants of the need to continue working towards practical, proportionate solutions.

Our work in this space has been supported by sustained engagement with industry, including through the Cultural Exchange Coalition and wider sector bodies, whose insights continue to inform the Government's approach. We remain committed to maintaining this momentum as part of delivering our manifesto commitment to support touring artists and international cultural exchange.

As your session touched on policy areas beyond the remit of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), I have coordinated with colleagues across Government in order to provide the information set out below.

EU programmes

We recognise the UK's creative and cultural sectors provide a unique and valuable contribution to Europe's rich culture. However, the Government has no plans to rejoin Creative Europe. We will only join an EU programme where it is in the national interest and value for money for UK taxpayers to do so. Each programme is different and decisions are made on a case by case basis.

Bilateral Negotiations

Many of the regulatory frameworks affecting touring activity are governed either by EU-level arrangements or by established international agreements. The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) provides the overarching framework for social security coordination between the UK and EU, including provisions under which A1 certificates confirm the applicable social security legislation for temporary workers. HMRC is not involved in any international social security negotiations with EU countries. However, alongside DWP and DHSC, they continue to work intensively with EU social security authorities as an observer on the EU Administrative Commission to maintain the effective implementation of social security rules between the UK and the EU. The UK held a bilateral liaison meeting with Austria in December and expects to meet with Finland later this year.

The rules governing short-term travel for cultural activities are largely determined by the immigration frameworks of individual Member States within the wider Schengen system. In relation to taxation, the UK maintains bilateral double taxation agreements with EU Member States which set out which country is entitled to tax which type of income in which circumstances and provide relief from double taxation. These agreements establish the limits of what each country may tax, however, withholding tax arrangements for touring artists are a matter addressed by the domestic law of each country. Within this landscape, the Government engages with individual EU Member States and the EU on practical issues affecting cultural mobility, including through diplomatic posts and official-level discussions to support the effective operation of existing arrangements.

Cross-Government Coordination

DCMS coordinates cross-government work to address the issues affecting artists and their crews touring. We work closely with the Cabinet Office who is responsible for the UK-EU relationship, including other departments responsible for the relevant policy areas. This includes the FCDO and UK diplomatic posts; DBT on trade policy and market access; the Home Office on immigration and border policy, the DfT on transport and logistics issues; HMT and HMRC on customs processes and social security coordination, and Defra on CITES. Through this engagement, DCMS shares industry feedback, coordinates policy development and works to ensure guidance reflects the practical needs of touring professionals.

Cabotage

The Government continues to engage with the creative industries and the live touring sector to understand the practical impacts of current arrangements, including for organisations that operate 'own account' vehicles transporting their own equipment. Officials also maintain dialogue with the EU on transport-related matters within the framework established by the TCA. We will continue to consider practical options to facilitate touring activity where these are consistent with the UK's wider international transport agreements.

A1 Forms

Processing times for A1 certificates have previously been affected by sustained pressure across National Insurance services. This reflects a combination of increased demand following the UK's exit from the EU and wider changes to National Insurance Contributions, including adjustments to employer contribution rates and thresholds taking effect in April 2025. These changes have generated additional contact and casework across National Insurance systems, with consequential impacts on A1 processing capacity. We recognise the consequences that delays can have for touring professionals and production teams.

HMRC has increased resourcing and service levels are now being met, with 80% of online applications processed within 15 working days and 80% of postal applications processed within 40 working days. The Government will continue to monitor performance closely and work with industry to ensure that the service meets the needs of touring professionals. We will continue to focus on improving processing reliability and providing clear guidance so that the system operates as effectively as possible within the existing coordination rules.

Orchestral Tax Relief

The Government supports the creative industries, including orchestras, through funding and through the tax system. Orchestra Tax Relief (OTR) provides tax relief on productions' costs and provided £50 million of support in 2023-24. There is currently no other country in the world which offers such a tax relief for orchestras. OTR is available for costs incurred on goods or services that are used or consumed in the UK. This change came into effect in April 2025. It replaces the previous rule that qualifying costs were those incurred on goods or services provided from the UK or the European Economic Area (EEA). This does not amount to a blanket exclusion of touring-related costs. Orchestras may continue to claim relief on UK travel and accommodation costs, and on international travel where the journey begins or ends in the UK. Costs relating solely to non-UK accommodation and journeys between non-UK destinations are no longer eligible.

To ease the transition to the new rule, orchestras with concerts in train on 1 April 2024 were permitted to continue claiming relief on goods or services provided from within the EEA until 31 March 2025. These changes refocus the costs to UK taxpayers of OTR on UK expenditure and activity. This does not prevent qualifying productions from touring in the EEA (nor elsewhere). The Government carefully considers the design of OTR to ensure it is well targeted, effective in achieving its policy objectives, and represents value for money for the taxpayer.

ATA Carnets

ATA Carnets are an *optional* Customs facilitation, issued by authorised national chambers of commerce under the international framework. The issuing body determines the issuing fee and the level of financial security required. These are commercial charges linked to the operation and risk structure of the ATA guarantee system; they are not fees set by the UK Government. The level of security reflects the declared value of the goods, the countries being visited, and the potential customs duties and import taxes that could arise in those territories under international customs rules. While the Government does not set carnet fees, officials maintain

engagement with issuing bodies and industry stakeholders to understand the practical impacts of carnet requirements on touring professionals. The Government also continues to support efforts to modernise the carnet system, including HMRC's leading role in digitising ATA carnets, working with international partners in parallel, which aims to simplify processes and reduce administrative burdens for users over time.

Musical Instrument Certificates and CITES

The Government recognises the importance of Musical Instrument Certificates (MICs) in enabling musicians to travel internationally with instruments containing protected materials, while meeting our obligations under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). MICs are the only CITES permit that is currently issued free of charge. Following a public consultation on proposed changes to introduce a flat rate fee for all CITES permits, the Government [confirmed](#) in February 2026 that no changes to fees will be made at this time. Any future consideration of fees will take place after wider changes and efficiencies have been made to the CITES permitting system.

CITES sets out the requirements for regulating international trade in endangered species, including the designation of CITES Points of Entry/Exit (PoE). CITES requires that any import, export, or reexport of CITES listed species takes place only through ports formally designated for CITES checks, where UK Border Force can complete the necessary documentary and, where required, physical inspections to enforce wildlife trade controls. Designation therefore depends on whether a location has the appropriate inspection facilities, infrastructure and operational capability to undertake CITES checks. Not all transport hubs meet these requirements, including some passenger rail terminals. There are currently 37 CITES-designated air, sea, and land ports around the UK. However, there are no plans to designate St Pancras International (Eurostar terminal) as a CITES PoE at this time. This position follows an assessment by the UK Border Force, most recently conducted in early 2025 as part of the new CITES PoE review, which concluded that the terminal does not have the necessary infrastructure or capacity to undertake CITES inspections. The terminal operator would be responsible for providing appropriate inspection facilities, which would require a commercial decision by Eurostar. In addition, corresponding EU terminals would need to be CITES designated by their respective CITES Management Authorities.

The Government will continue to engage with the music sector and other stakeholders to ensure that the CITES permitting system remains proportionate and takes into account the needs of travelling musicians. The designation of CITES PoEs will be kept under review and we will revisit the assessment should the relevant infrastructure or commercial circumstances change.

Merchandise

Since the UK's departure from the EU Single Market and Customs Union, the movement of goods between the UK and EU is subject to customs formalities and, where applicable, duties. Under the TCA, merchandise can generally move tariff-free between the UK and EU where it meets the relevant rules of origin and is accompanied by the appropriate origin statement. However, as merchandise sold at performances constitutes goods traded for commercial gain, it is subject to the same customs procedures as other exported products, including customs declarations and associated administrative requirements. Where merchandise does not meet the TCA's rules of origin requirements, customs duties may apply when goods enter the EU. Goods imported for commercial sale may also be subject to import VAT and other domestic requirements in the destination country. The Government continues to engage with industry to understand the practical implications of customs procedures and rules of origin for touring professionals and exporters, and to ensure that guidance and support for businesses trading goods with the EU remains clear and accessible.


Practical Support and Guidance

The Government recognises the importance of clear and accessible information for touring artists, performers and other creative professionals operating internationally and navigating a range of regulatory requirements. Guidance is already available across a number of Government sources, including GOV.UK pages covering visas and immigration rules, HMRC guidance on social security coordination and A1 certificates, and information on customs processes and ATA carnets. Departments work to ensure that this information is kept up to date and accessible. The Government also works closely with industry bodies and professional organisations, which play an important role in interpreting and disseminating guidance tailored to the practical needs of touring professionals. Officials continue to consider how guidance can be made clearer and easier to navigate, including through improved signposting and coordination across existing resources.

Conclusion

The Government fully recognises that the international mobility of our creative and cultural sectors is a vital component of the UK's soft power and economic growth. We are acutely aware of the testimony provided to the Committee regarding the cumulative impact of administrative requirements on touring professionals, particularly those at the outset of their careers. We understand that visible progress is important to industry confidence and engagement.

DCMS is keen to make practical improvements to support touring artists and the wider sector, while respecting and upholding the UK's international obligations. Many of the regulatory frameworks discussed are governed by international agreements. The Government is therefore focused on delivering meaningful improvements within our domestic and administrative competence, and on engaging constructively with the EU and Member States to address the challenges facing cultural and creative professionals. DCMS will continue to lead an integrated, cross-Government approach to ensure that our world-class creative sectors can navigate these requirements effectively and continue to flourish on the global stage.

Yours sincerely,


The Rt Hon Ian Murray MP
Minister for Creative Industries, Media and Arts