

## **Globetrotter Live Limited – Written evidence (FTS0048)**

### **Introduction**

Globetrotter Live Limited is a recently established company providing Production and Technical services for the Events, Entertainment and Music Industries. The company was formed in 2019 but as a continuation from my 15 years as a sole trader in the industry before deciding that the development of the company and the size of its projects would be better suited to a limited liability legal entity. Within the committee's call for evidence, we would be classified as working within the creative industries. I am writing to the committee to offer background information to the work that I have carried out in the EU to take into consideration, as I am likely to now face considerable barriers to be able to work there which in turn will lead to a considerable downturn in the profitability of my company.

In non-industry-specific terms the work we carry out could be described as project management, the provision of specialist technical personnel (such as sound engineers, lighting designers, riggers, video technicians etc) and the source and supply of AV equipment, accommodation, catering, logistics/haulage, merchandise, music equipment and more, for hire, sales and installation. Our markets include music touring and festivals, corporate events and exhibitions and high end installation work in venues, hotels and cruise ships. In 2019 either myself or freelancers being subcontracted by Globetrotter Live Limited worked in around a dozen EU countries, along with the USA, Australia, Japan, Singapore, Mexico and the Caribbean. In the 2019/2020 trading year our turnover was around £150,000 with the biggest expenditure being freelance labour. The majority of that turnover was from work carried out in the EU. We also managed projects on behalf of other companies with a spend of around £500,000.

### **Cross-Cutting Issues**

1. The impact of the free trade agreement for the trade in services with specific regards to our historical trade is that most of the work we have carried out is no longer likely to be possible. With a small number of exceptions, the work that we carry out would require either permits or visas. With music industry touring specifically, some work would be possible as shows are typically organised far enough in advance that there is enough time to arrange the necessary permissions. About half of our work is being part of the general technical crew and because of the added expense and complexity I expect that most of that work, and the opportunities to 'climb the ladder' to key positions or extend the tour to other parts of the world, will now go to EU based competitors. The other side to touring work, where I or a subcontractor is working in a 'key' role critical to a performance (Artist's monitor engineer, tour manager etc.) then for those projects the cost of permits/visas will be deemed to be acceptable.

For the business, events and installation work, which is more profitable, the visa situation is more difficult due to the following reasons:

- Time scale: often the final working dates are confirmed too late to be able to apply for a permit or visa in time. I already can't

compete for some work in the USA because of this reason and it is now likely to be the same in the EU.

- Sponsor: Most of this kind of work is working within the EU but for a UK or US based company, which means we don't have a local 'sponsor' to justify our visa to the local issuing authority.
- Cost: This is a competitive industry and the cost of permits/visas versus being able to use an EU based freelancer or company for free means that we are at a competitive disadvantage. I am expecting that for this type of work freelancers will be expected to pay for their own work visas and permits but many countries don't have the facility for individuals to apply for a work visa without a sponsor in place.

2. The effect of national reservations for the work that Globetrotter Live carries out is primarily a matter of complexity. Each EU member state a different set of rules, with some requiring permits and others having exemptions, up to a maximum limit at an EU level. In a touring scenario, where there are multiple trades together, there are now different work requirements for different people on the same project. In the creative industries it is common for people to move from one project to another, meaning that the cumulative effect of different requirements could cause people to have 'expiring' permits mid project. The issue is so complicated that many larger companies are already revising their databases to give preference to EU based contractors. Some companies with greater resources than mine are moving to the EU altogether to avoid these problems.

In 2020 my turnover was down by over 60% as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, however despite this I still spent well over 100 days working in France and 30 days in other EU countries. At various points 5 freelancers working for me have also spent between 30 and 90 days in France. With the agreement as it stands, there is no EU-wide provision at all for the creative service industries and France, as one of the more generous states, allows a third country national to work for only 90 days in a year. This difference is enough that had it come into effect a year earlier my business would not have survived the pandemic. As it stands I have a regular client, one of my biggest, who may be forced to look for an EU-based alternative supplier due to these additional restrictions. This would be a six-figure loss to my company annually.

3. Personally, I can't say what the size of the industry is due to it being relatively new and fragmented in structure. The official estimates vary widely depending on whether they are referring to music, music touring, theatre touring, non-music events, corporate AV work or any combination of the above and/or other creative or technical type of work. I do know from the published estimates by trade bodies and government departments that the industries that are affected by this agreement are worth many billions of pounds to the UK economy. Although touring and events took place for decades before the EU, this is an example of an industry that has grown out of the opportunities that free movement of people and the single market presented, and the industry is now many times the size it was prior to the EU. For the industry to maintain this

success and size it is completely reliant on the mobility of its professionals being able to work without barriers.

### **Creative Industries**

13. The UK's creative sector, especially the technical side, is respected across the world and dominated the industry across Europe. The skillset and experience of the UK's technical crew, AV equipment suppliers and logistics companies are amongst the most valuable parts of the industry and are sought after globally, requiring very little input from Government to be able to function. The industry grew out of the opportunities presented by free movement of people and the single market and employs hundreds of thousands of people. However, the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement has essentially missed out this entire multi-billion pound industry and constructed a complex set of barriers preventing it from being able to access its biggest market. To this industry and its requirements, the agreement is the same as a 'no deal' and I would expect to see it shrink back to not much more than servicing UK-only events, with the result of tens of thousands of people looking for alternative employment. Larger companies are likely (some are already in the process) to move to an EU country with the associated loss of jobs in the UK. The agreement has removed the events haulage industry's cabotage exemption that existed long before the EU and this is forcing them to also move to the EU which will cause extensive job losses and also increase the cost of UK events.

### **Conclusion and Opinion**

If the agreement had based its provision for the movement of people on the examples of Norway and Switzerland, which were often cited during the referendum debate as non-EU countries that are successful in the service sectors, then the creative industries would have been largely unaffected and could have been seen as a very public example of a successful post-Brexit British export. The sector could definitely be just as successful outside of the EU as it was when we were a member, providing the right trading conditions exist. The right trading conditions absolutely do not exist with the agreement in its current form.

Had the publicly-reported offer from the EU to allow an EU-wide 90/180 days access been written into the agreement and tweaked to allow crew as well as artists, although much worse than retaining free movement of people, would still have been considerably better than the agreement as it stands, as it would have allowed companies such as mine to carry out the same type of work as before albeit with a time limit. I cannot see how that proposal is incompatible with a political commitment to remove free movement of people, as it can only ever be used for temporary work and not to settle, claim welfare support or to look for long term employment. The other important point about that offer is that because the industry in the UK is disproportionately large compared to the rest of the EU, the offer was actually unequally weighted in the UK's favour despite being proposed by the EU.

Personally, I believe that ending free movement of people is going to have such a devastating impact on the creative industries, as well as others, that in the

long term free movement of people and single market membership should be additional public referenda separate to the EU membership referendum of 2016.

In the short term, to prevent huge job losses and the collapse of an industry that is already suffering from the economic effects of the pandemic, we absolutely must have an EU-wide agreement and not the complexity of individual EU countries setting different criteria. Returning to the EU's 90/180 day agreement could offer a temporary solution that people could work around while better access was negotiated, and would at least allow UK based companies and freelancers to carry out some work in the EU.

The other solution which would be acceptable for the sort of work my company is involved in, would be the option of industry-specific EU wide visas or passports. If we could pay an annual or similar long-term fee to get a document that allowed temporary work across the whole of the EU in any country for any client, then we would be able to carry on trading as the extra cost and complexity would be consolidated into a single document, that we could take ownership of rather than becoming uncompetitive by expecting clients to take on the administrative and financial burden for us.

The final point I would like to make is that with the limited information given by the government prior to publishing the agreement, most of the industry was led to believe that the 90/180 day offer was likely to be the situation and as such had no time or warning to prepare for the extra regulations that are now causing huge barriers to our ability to work in the EU. I believe that as an industry we should also be supported by the Government with measures such as subsidised Carnets, Government-funded legal advice and travel insurance and compensation for work that is lost due to the terms in this agreement.

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