

Institution of Mechanical Engineers – Written evidence (PBS0006)

Introduction

The [Institution of Mechanical Engineers](#) was established in 1847 and has some of the world's greatest engineers in its history books. Today we are one of the fastest growing engineering institutions based on professional registration of competence through peer review. We work at the heart of the most important and dynamic industries such as the automotive, rail, aerospace, medical, energy and construction, and we contribute to key societal challenges such as achieving net zero, encouraging inclusion and social mobility and of course, combating COVID-19. Headquartered in London, we have membership and operations around the world and over 120,000 members in more than 140 countries. Specifically, we have over 5,000 members based in the European Union, and 86,000 here in the UK.

Evidence

Our contribution centres on responding to Questions 4 and 5 on barriers and mobility, as well as on Question 6 on Mutual Recognition.

Questions 4 and 5

Our core position as set out in our work with the Engineering the Future alliance <https://www.raeng.org.uk/publications/reports/engineering-a-future-outside-the-eu> is the essential need for free movement of ideas that can then drive continuous improvement. With respect to engineering professional services, this improvement can be embodied in updating of standards which often form the basis of trade. This improvement will be driven by both UK professionals offering services in the EU and importantly EU professionals operating here in the UK. We will be in a better position to gain business in the EU if we understand their systems and constraints as well as our own.

It is therefore essential that in our Approach (Chapter 8) and in their Proposals (Chapter 3) we clarify what we would find acceptable as something they describe as 'formally different'. There is clearly a risk that this becomes a barrier to trade in our ability to offer services that meet EU Standards. There needs to remain a route to equivalence of different systems e.g. in building design, or in maintenance and inspection. As the agreement wording develops, it could be 'stress tested' against specific case studies of cross-border trade from our own membership experiences.

A concern could arise from time limitations being imposed on length of stay. The initial EU proposals of 90 days/year for business visits and then 12 months in absolute total for any services will likely be restrictive on longer term capital projects. Our belief that as the employment of these individuals remains in their home country, these limits are unnecessary where specialist expertise require certain individuals to be 'on site' for longer.

Question 6

The lack of mutual recognition of professional standards is commonly used e.g. in North America, to create barriers to entry for professional services. As others will no doubt have advised you, it is crucial that our own self-regulation system, not only of Chartered Engineer,

Incorporated Engineer and Engineering Technician but also Personal Certification in Non-Destructive Testing, is recognised as equivalent to local overseas alternatives. The default risks becoming that all professionals need to be examined and reviewed locally as duplicate to their home certification adding unnecessary confusion and delay to important projects and restricting trade.

Summary

The Institution of Mechanical Engineers, through its licence from the Engineering Council, has a membership which includes a significant cohort of peer reviewed and professionally registered sole traders. These engineers rely on the use of equivalent standards and equivalent assessment of competence to be able to offer their services and gain business internationally. Unlike multinational organisations that may have greater resources to negotiate specific arrangements to optimise the use of their employees, these lone workers rely heavily on there being a 'level playing field' with minimal barriers. Their registration, which brings a mandatory requirement for an individual annual assessment of personal continuing professional development, provides the safeguard on standards that might otherwise be at risk in such a free market.

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