

**TOGETHER WE ARE**  
**EDINBURGH**  
**INTERNATIONAL**  
**FESTIVAL**

**UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement: Barriers to trade in goods and opportunities to improve the UK-EU trading relationship**

**Edinburgh International Festival**

The International Festival is the original Festival in Edinburgh, and each year presents a curated programme of national and international artists across music, theatre, opera, and dance for the three-week Festival every August.

On an annual basis c2,000 artists from around 40 different nations are invited to perform at the Festival. Scottish artists usually make up around 30% of this number.

The International Festival is therefore mostly involved with invitations for international artists and companies to enter and perform in the UK, rather than touring outwards from the UK.

**Visas**

Visa nationals are required to obtain the appropriate visa in advance of travel to the UK and the international Festival supports the application process with each invited artist.

For non-visa nationals, since Brexit, a separate letter of invitation to each individual travelling to Edinburgh is now required to be issued, which has added a substantial layer of administration and resource given the number of invitations the Festival makes.

From April 2025, with the expansion of the Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA), all invited individuals will also require the ETA unless travelling on a visa. At £10 per person cost, and the Home Office announcing an increase to £16 (subject to Parliamentary review), this will for larger companies (including orchestras with 100+ artists travelling) add both material extra cost and administration to their touring costs.

Artists and companies comment to the Festival that since COVID/Brexit, the number of UK visa offices available overseas to process UK visas is much reduced. The additional reductions in the availability and reliability of a priority service for busy international artists is also causing further problems. The process can be challenging and time consuming and expensive for artists to secure visas, especially in global south territories. A passport in a visa application process for days or weeks at a time also severely limits an artist's ability to continue to work and tour, effectively restraining their trade, prior to their visit to the UK.

**Work Permits**

The International Festival remains on the Home Office Permit Free Festival (PFF) List, which means that certificates of sponsorship (and a sponsorship licence from the Festival) are not required for the artists and companies appearing in the Festival. This is an invaluable on-going exemption that enables the International Festival to continue operating at scale.

**Freight**

Since Brexit, and contributing geo-political issues, the cost of freight to the UK has significantly (c20%) increased and the reliability of the travel routes have become much less known. In arranging and managing tours across multiple territories, that are time-sensitive, this has become a much more complex and costly undertaking, with additional paperwork, costs and duties requiring additional resource and time.

**General**

Whilst the barriers to inviting international artists to the UK, have not been impacted in the very significant way that touring out of the UK has been, there is a sense that touring to the UK adds cost and administration to a visit, compared to multiple dates in Europe within one visa zone with less freight and travel challenges. The concern is that some companies may decide it's not worth the extra workload necessary to tour to the UK or seek to pass those additional costs to UK presenters.

**Roy Luxford**  
**Creative Director**  
**Edinburgh International Festival**  
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