

Dear fellow musicians, performers, DJs, technicians etc. Here's a thread about how our lives are going to change re touring/working in the EU in (fewer than) 50 days time. Think of it as a kind of Bad News Advent calendar.

1. First things first, you'll need a passport with *at least* 6 months left on it. And you'll need full travel/third party/health insurance, since if you get ill or have an accident every penny of your care will have to be paid for. This is because the EHIC, the reciprocal health care benefit we have enjoyed as member of the EU, [ceases to operate](#) (for most UK citizens) on Jan 1st 2021.

2. To work or do a gig you're going to need a work visa, just like you do for the USA. But here's the thing. Work permits & visas and the conditions attached are a matter not for the EU but for the member states themselves. Yes, every member state controls who comes in and who doesn't and what the rules will be for work and residency. It's almost as if the Brexiters have been lying about this all along. EU members control their own borders, especially when it comes to permission to work.

So you'll need to get a work permit for every country you're intending to work or gig in and the rules are often different, as are, for example, the rules on taxation of that work, a situation that hasn't and won't *change* but which demonstrates how country-specific these matters are and always have been, so for instance Spain and France collect withholding tax from non-residents on the work undertaken in their territories, Holland and Denmark do not.

[This website](#) offers helpful and constantly-updating advice on the different work visas, permits and conditions attached for member states of the EU.

Just like getting a work visa for the USA, applying for one to work in an EU member state will cost your money and your time.

Price of the visa itself (not including all the required conditions of insurance, accommodation, tickets etc) varies from country to country (for a ballpark, a visa for Germany is 75 euros, France 99 euros, Spain 67 euros, though for US passport holders it's \$190 and for Canadians \$114), and you will need to get one for *all* the countries you plan to work/tour in. Some more useful information on applying for a work visa in a European country is [here](#).

So, to recap, every EU member state controls its own borders and tax regime. This fact is the exact opposite of the propaganda that has been spread by the Leave campaign and their leaders for the past 5 or more years.

As a result of my Twitter thread on this subject, a number of artists from non-European countries, eg Brazil or Australia, have reminded us that we in the UK are about to suffer the ordeal *they* have all had to suffer in order to perform *here* for the past few decades and to jump the same bureaucratic hurdles they have long had to jump and we are only getting a dose of our own medicine.

This is of course true, though we in the arts, at least, have been saying just as loudly over the past few years that the UK Govt's 'hostile environment' regime, rolled out initially by Theresa May as Home Secretary, now substantially enlarged and even more rigorously enforced by Priti Patel, is also bad for our industry. Arts festivals and events, for example, have been finding it ever more difficult, costly and time-consuming to bring performers or speakers in to the UK.

Further reading, [this](#) & [this](#) & [this](#) & [this](#) & [this](#).

[Fun fact: in Germany, you need to verify a contract to work there, the verification needs a passport, and the new Brexit-Blue UK passports are incompatible with the ID system they use. Cheers, Brexit Govt. Here's [Louise in Munich discovering this for herself the other day.](#)]

3. If you play an instrument, or you have DJ gear, or sound and lighting kit, you'll need an 'ATA Carnet' for it, to cross the EU border and any within the EU thereafter. This applies to all kinds of professional equipment you may need. You get an ATA Carnet from the [London Chamber of Commerce & Industry](#) and they cost £351.60 each (or £562.80 for their express 2 hr service) and they last 12 months.

If you have multiple instruments or pieces of professional equipment they can be aggregated onto one ATA Carnet, which is what some bands and all orchestras do, where the gear is all in one shipment. Whilst the cost of the Carnet remains the same there are considerable logistic challenges about larger shipments, so if you're touring Ed Sheeran or the London Symphony Orchestra you have full-time employees who can handle it. As with everything else about Brexit it is the small businesses, the self-employed and the early-careerers who will bear the brunt of the burden because they will have to handle all this mountain of red tape themselves. With orchestras (and some bands) carrying instruments of enormous value they need to factor in bonds and deposits on these mega-carnets, financial services that don't come free, either.

The point about the Carnet (which exists across the world in varying forms but which we haven't needed as member of the EU for European travel) is that it treats the export and any other duties on your gear as a single in/out entity. There is an alternative to getting a Carnet but as someone who has travelled the world with sound, music, or lighting gear, you need something solid and universally recognised that any hard-pressed customs officer at any airport or station, in the middle of the night or during a busy period, knows what they're looking at and how to process it, or you will experience very long, stressful hours and quite possibly a scheduling disaster.

The alternative is the so-called 'Duplicate List' procedure. Some people favour it because it is free, which is self-evidently a good thing. Though it is not free in terms of your time on form-filling. You need to create two detailed lists of all your equipment, with serial nos. etc, on headed stationary, and fill in HMRC form C & E 1246. You need to travel with the gear as accompanied baggage, so it wouldn't suit eg bands/orchestras whose gear travels by separate carriage or by freight.

The list must be identical on re-entry as at exit (there are restrictions connected to repairs and modifications whilst abroad) and there may be customs duty implications

on your return (hence the HMRC's insistence on the C&E 1246 declaration). Good source of info [here](#).

Using an agency to decide whether to go down the Carnet or Duplicate List routes is always an option if you have the wherewithal to pay someone else to do the drudge, though all import-export agencies right now are totally snowed under, for the obvious *looming shitstorm* reasons. [Boomerang Carnets](#) is one such, and they have this helpful summary of the choice as it stands on the eve of crash out:

“The Duplicate List can be useful when travelling to another E.U. country to prove, upon return to the U.K., that no VAT is owed. When Brexit occurs, and the U.K. is no longer part of the E.U.'s customs union, travellers and shippers will be subject to duties and VAT when travelling from the U.K. to the E.U. with temporarily exported goods. ATA Carnets will then be a more useful tool than a Duplicate List since it serves as the entry and exit documents for the countries of origination and the destination.”

If for any reason the equipment/instrument you take with you is going to stay in the EU when you come home (ie you sell/rent it/give it away), you will need a C88(SAD) [export declaration](#) (a mere 8 parts, 12 pages to complete) from the UK Govt.

Oh, and if your (valuable, old) instrument contains materials derived from any endangered species, eg ivory from elephants, you will need either a [FED0172 certificate or a CITES form](#) too, from the APHA Centre in Bristol.

If you have a lot of equipment don't forget that the boxes, crates and pallets have to be [ISMP15 compliant](#) or you'll get turned back at the border.

Another option, for some, is to hire your gear once you've crossed over into the EU, which might work fine for backline/PA-type rigs but most musicians want to play the actual instruments they own, ditto photographers, DJs, sound mixers, and so on. Filming in Beijing once with a tight schedule & budget, we took what we thought was the expedient decision to hire cameras & digital stock *in situ*, to find on day one of the shoot (of only 4) that the formats of the gear were all wrong and new stock had to be hastily re-ordered at enormous expense and shipped from Hong Kong, losing us a day's filming, more or less, in the process.

4. Remember, you need to get offered the gig in the first place, competing against our creative counterparts still in the EU, none of whom will cost their employer any of this additional expense or bureaucratic hassle. Ditto dancers, actors, singers, designers, technicians & specialists of all kinds. Here's [one actor's experience](#), which is, sadly, pretty typical.

5. Then there's getting there. You'll need your van/haulier to get an EU haulage licence, neither quick nor cheap nor easy (around 80,000 hauliers in the UK are currently after one of the 1,800 currently available).

Crossing from a non-EU country to an EU one by lorry you'll need to factor in a long-ish wait at the border.

The Pre-Brexit average waiting time/document processing at Dover-Calais was a few minutes per vehicle, whereas Ukraine to Poland (non-EU to EU) can be anything from 1 to 32 hours. You can even watch the waiting times for each border crossing point in real time, for example [here](#).

Bear in mind that considerably fewer HGVs and vans cross between Ukraine and Poland than cross the channel to England, and that instead of multiple road border points, there's that bottleneck of Dover-Calais taking the lion's share of traffic, you can get an idea of what's in store for our poor haulage industry. [Their alarm](#) is becoming more obvious by the day.

If you prefer to understand the Brexit haulage nightmare via an individual's experience rather than a national organisation battling with an increasingly dysfunctional government, you could do a lot worse than follow the excellent [Ciaran the Euro Courier](#) on twitter who is delightfully frank and extremely well-informed.

[By the way, these rules and restrictions mostly don't apply to going to the lovely Republic of Ireland, which we LOVE. Thank you, kindly Irish people!]

6. When you get across the channel, you need to check with your phone provider whether they have or have not imposed the new higher data roaming charges that can apply now the [UK has withdrawn](#) from the EU's roam-anywhere deal. If you connect with your fans/followers/customers via social media using phone networks, these costs could be colossal, so make sure you know the answer to this, or wait till you find somewhere with free wi-fi. How long the major networks keep the lower charges into 2021 will need to be monitored, especially if the £ takes another tumble as bad as the one it took after the 2016 referendum.

7. Maybe you've heard about the possibility of an Artists'/Musicians' Passport, advocated by creative industry unions like [The Musicians' Union](#), which will save all this bother & expense. You can read their campaign and sign the MU's petition [here](#).

You can read their open letter to the UK Govt on the imminent threat to livelihoods in the Creative Industries and the lack of clarity with so little time left to prepare for 1st January [here](#).

However, as I write this is a dream not a reality. I doubt the words 'Artists' Passport' have even crossed Lord Frost's lips. That's because Frosty & his Brexit Overlords in Downing St are *way* more concerned about fishing, an industry over ONE HUNDRED TIMES smaller than the Creative sector.

Don't get me wrong, I have nothing against the wholly understandable struggle of coastal communities and the uncertainty of their future. None of us having anything against the fishing industry *per se* but their predicament has been weaponised all over the media by unscrupulous politicians who said nothing when the UK's fishing quotas were sold to foreign companies long before all this, and who seem not to have noticed that the fishing industry's problems are as much to do with access to their main export market (the EU) as with territorial waters and what's swimming in them. This is but

one example of what is happening to them, thanks to Brexit, posted by a [shellfish-exporting business in Scotland](#) just yesterday.

This post is both frustrating and heart-breaking. We are all in the same capsizing boat together, business of all sizes, and the self-employed across the country, in every field; we are not at loggerheads *with each other*, since we are all facing the same chaotic nightmare of red tape, confusion and expense.

As far as can be gleaned from the documents published about the negotiations under way, none of the issues I have outlined above will be resolved in the flimsy deal Trumpy Johnson will try to sell as a triumph. Maybe that'll change in the remaining days left. Maybe....

Final thought. Everything we do as creative artists - everything - is about removing the barriers between people. We do collaboration, reducing conflict, bringing people closer, unity, friendship, enjoyment & shared experience. We'll cope, somehow, of course, but forgive us for thinking that the putting up of all these new hurdles, fences & frontiers is pointless, retrogressive & counter-productive and that the swindlers who sold the empty, nationalist elixir are basically bad people.

Howard Goodall November 2020