As changes to freedom of movement rules loom, four parliamentarians reflect on the potential impact on key industries

**Moving targets**

The UK creative sector is worth nearly £10m an hour – underestimate it at your peril, warns Lord Clement-Jones

Our creative industries are of ever-growing importance to the UK economy, quite apart from their cultural value. Worth £87bn, they are growing three times as fast as other sectors and account for nearly 2 million jobs. They have massively benefited from our membership of the EU.

As witnesses from the creative services sector recently underlined to the House of Lords EU Select Committee looking at the impact of Brexit on non-financial services, maintaining continued access to the EU’s labour market to address skills shortages and to support continued growth is vital.

The Creative Industries Federation in its Brexit report last autumn said: “Talent and skills are fundamental to the UK’s creative success. It is vital that the government continues to recruit from the EU.”

Without the right deal, the creative industries will face big challenges for a non-EU cultural organisation. Costs between £600 to £1,000. In line with the Arts Council sector survey of the arts and culture, the continued ability for people to move at short notice freely without formal filling between the UK and EU for creative activities such as television and film production, concerts and fashion events is vital.

Our immigration system must continue to enable easy access to critical skills and talent from both EU and non-EU countries. Above all we must ensure, as the Liberal Democrats insisted during the passing of the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Act, that non-British EU citizens currently employed in the UK must have the right to stay.

The government must listen to these strong concerns when Brexit negotiations begin.

It is sheer lunacy that international students are included in net migration stats. Let’s remove them before trade talks begin, writes Lord Bilimoria.

T he Brexit decision has subjected the UK to huge levels of uncertainty as we head into some of the most complex negotiations in living memory.

The Brexiteers’ fantasy vision for Britain would see our nation become an enviable global brand, unrivalled in entrepreneurship and trading power. International trade secretary Liam Fox declared, ahead of an upcoming tour of south-east Asia, “We remain an outward-looking country, firing on all cylinders and a champion of global trade. We are most definitely open for business.”

And yet, as a result of the Brexit vote, a huge shadow of uncertainty has cast over the UK. The very question of starting up and doing business in Britain when there’s a possibility of WTO trading tariffs is one that the Brexiteers have yet to answer. We have years of uncertainty ahead.

And generations to come will feel the effect of Brexit on our world-leading universities. If you look at the world ranking over the last decade, we are just 1% of the world’s population and yet our universities always feature prominently, by comparison with European and other large nations, and are by far the best in the world along with the US. For example, London is Europe’s hub for start-ups and first jobs in fashion. To further their careers, fashion graduates need experience at a wide range of international fashion houses.

A lot of people who work in fashion are not British and many students, when they graduate, get jobs abroad. The music and advertising industries, too, work across international teams and rely heavily on the movement of national and international talent.

Although overall 6.1% of the creative industries workforce are EU (non-British) nationals, they are more heavily represented in particular sectors. It is estimated that 25% of the VFX (visual effects in film) workforce is from the EU, up to 30% in gaming is made up of EU (non-British) nationals and 10% of the design, publishing and advertising workforce are EU (non-British) nationals.

Of course we should aspire to more home-grown talent – and Sir Peter Bazalgette’s review of industrial strategy for the creative industries should address this urgently to ensure that our education and training policies fully recognise the specific needs of the creative industries – but as it is there are currently 17 creative roles which are on the government’s shortage occupation list (allowing recruitment from outside the EEA) from orchestral musicians to graphic designers. This shortage list will increase following Brexit if freedom of movement is ended and adequate visa arrangements are not put in place.

On Brexit, the ability to develop audiences by low cost touring within the EU, a significant earner for young talent, could end. One visa application targets four parliamentarians reflect on the potential impact on key industries
First there are issues around funding. The UK received the second highest of any EU nation. It’s excellent that the government has promised similar levels of funding in the National Productivity Investment Fund. But even if we do match the funding – without raiding other parts of the universities’ budgets – we still won’t have the benefits of the European system.

Worse, we will lose out on major projects like Horizon 2020. Birmingham recently won £1.4m from this programme to collaborate with partners around Europe on designing and developing a robot that can handle nuclear waste. I do not see how we can handle nuclear waste. I do not see how we can handle nuclear waste.

Currently, 5.5% of undergraduates come from the EU and, as recent figures from Cambridge show, their applications are down 14% already. More worryingly, we may retain a much smaller percentage of those students once they graduate. We have a shortage of 40,000 engineers in the UK, and not enough domestic applicants to fill the vacancies.

In response, the cry goes up, “We shall train more British engineers”. Yet it’s not as simple as that, because we cannot train them out of nowhere: 16% of all our academics at our universities are from the EU and if the reported percentages of them (up to 75%) are considering leaving, we will before long have a critical shortage of staff to lead the skills revolution we are hoping for.

Second, while we are a great distance from having a meaningful conversation about trading ties with our allies, the first step to starting that conversation is to put in place sensible, business-friendly immigration policies, starting with international students.

Theresa May’s stubborn policy of counting students as immigrants encourages an unwelcoming environment to UK nationals studying here. On her recent trip to India, instead of aiming at encouraging Indian students to come here, she ignored universities and international students and, in doing so, sent out completely the wrong message. We in Britain do not see international students as migrants. According to a recent ComRes poll commissioned by Universities UK, 73% of UK citizens want international students’ numbers to rise or stay level, and 64% believe that international students benefit the local economies, with a further three-quarters stating that they should stay and work for a period of time after their studies have ended.

British people don’t see international students as migrants, so it is sheer lunacy that they should continue to be included in the net migration figures. By contrast, competitor countries such as Canada, Australia and the US have both seen increases in international students, classifying them as non-permanent or temporary residents, not as migrants.

We need a new Seasonal Agricultural Permit Scheme to safeguard British growers, says Helen Whately

There are real fears that British fruit could go unpicked, left to rot on the branch, because of a shortage of labour. Fruit farms have a margin of 2% or less. From speaking to local farmers, as chair of the APPG for Fruit and Vegetable Farming, I know opinions were split over Brexit. However, all growers are worried about access to labour. The horticulture industry needs thousands of seasonal workers every year to pick and pack their produce. The British Growers Association estimates that the horticulture industry employed 80,000 seasonal workers last year. They forecast this will increase to 93,000 by 2019. Currently, the vast majority come from EU countries.

Farmers in my constituency have tried to recruit locally, but it hasn’t worked – not least because high employment rates mean there aren’t enough people looking for work. Let alone with the skills required. In my constituency, farmers employ
It is essential that we continue to recruit and retain veterinarians from the EU, says Lord Trees

You probably know your vet as the person to whom you take your pet when it has a problem. Most likely, you were given an appointment the day you telephoned, you had diagnostic tests such as blood tests and X-rays done almost immediately, and, if surgery was necessary, that was done there and then for an emergency or within a few days if non-urgent. You may also have noticed that the vet was a non-UK EU national (in recent years some 40% of vets registering to work in the UK qualified in continental Europe).

What you may not know is that, of the vets on the academic staff in our world-leading UK vet schools (four of the eight vet schools in the UK are ranked in the world’s top 10), nearly a quarter are non-UK EU nationals. They teach our future vets and contribute to the research excellence of our vet schools. And you probably didn’t realise that of the hundreds of vets who ensure the safety of the meat we eat from abattoirs and through the subsequent food chain, some 90% are non-UK European nationals.

In fact, in the UK today, in every activity in which vets are involved – safeguarding the health and welfare of both our pets and our livestock, public health, research, government service, wildlife medicine and critically, trade in livestock products (where veterinary certification is the essential passport to trade) – a large proportion of those highly trained professionals come from continental Europe to live and work here.

It hardly needs saying that, without them, our international trade in livestock products, our indigenous food chain which delivers wholesome animal-derived food to our shops and supermarkets, to say nothing of everyday animal healthcare, would face an existential crisis.

It takes a minimum of five years of intensive university education to produce a veterinary graduate who can qualify to be a member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) – the essential qualification to practise as a vet in the UK. So it is essential that we retain, and can continue to recruit, a substantial number of suitably qualified vets from overseas. It is simply not feasible to replace them in any realistic timeframe with home-produced professionals. But more than that, this contribution of an international cadre of graduates enriches the expertise, experience and innovative potential of our veterinary profession.

Of course, this particular issue is not unique to veterinary science. It is mirrored in many other activities, notably human health and social care, scientific research and development and many other skilled occupations. But our relatively small veterinary profession makes a particularly critical contribution to our society. We need to act, as soon as possible, to give assurances to those already here that they have a valuable and necessary role. It is essential that, in the forthcoming evolution of our relationship with Europe, we ensure appropriate mutual recognition of professional qualifications – under the aegis of the RCVS – together with the ability to attract and keep such valuable overseas-trained personnel.

It is essential to note that many of the vets who have come to work in the UK are then skilled professionals who have come to work in the UK - have published its three ‘Brexit Principles’ which will guide the College’s approach to navigating the United Kingdom’s exit from the European Union.

The first Principle, that ‘vital veterinary work continues to get done’, reflects concerns that changes to immigration rules could cause significant labour shortages in the UK. Specific policy statements to this Principle are designed to ensure consistent labour supply, while upskilling and extending the role of veterinary nurses.

To promote the second Principle, ensuring that "high standards of animal health and welfare remain and improve", the College will work towards advancing standards of global accreditation, and for those schools with European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education accreditation to be given priority in the event of restrictions being placed on EU graduates registering in the UK.

Further to the third Principle, that ‘the RCVS is a global force for good’, the College will seek to preserve the working rights of UK vets in the EU and work with countries to improve the accreditation of veterinary schools, both bilaterally and through overseas regulators and agencies, all while growing global membership.

Find out more at www.rcvs.org.uk/brexit