Twitter Thread by Peter Foster

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Another head-banging day for the £112bn UK creative sector that is starting to ingest how difficult #Brexit is going to make their lives - and how little the government is really willing to do to fix the lack of a 'mobility' chapter in the EU-UK trade deal. Quick update.../1

First Equity @EquityUK put out a letter to @BorisJohnson warning that #brexit was a "towering hurdle" (you'd want Brian Blessed reading that part) to UK actors plying their trade in EU - a double whammy with #COVID19 /2

https://t.co/mXjTAISqZk

We must speak plainly. This is a bleak time for British creative practitioners.

We are actors, singers, dancers, designers, directors, stage managers, comedians, audio artists, variety performers and creatives – represented by our trade union, Equity – who are passionate about our professions and want to keep working. But the current Brexit deal is a towering hurdle to that.

Before, we were able to travel to Europe visa-free. Now we have to pay hundreds of pounds, fill in form after form, and spend weeks waiting for approval – just so we can do our jobs.

Some have already lost work in Europe or are being turned down for potential employment, because of the cost and bureaucracy that now comes with hiring British talent. Job advertisements and castings have even been asking for EU passport holders only to apply, which 29% of Equity members say they have seen.

For a sector that is deeply embedded in the international community – from touring theatre and dance to film, television and commercials – which must work fast, flexibly and to demand, this is a disastrous blow and will hit those already struggling and marginalised groups the hardest.

And the timing could not be worse. Our industry – worth £112bn to the economy each year – is reeling from the closure of venues and the banning of live events as a result of the pandemic.

Many have fallen through the gaps when it comes to financial support – 40% of Equity members are not eligible for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme or the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. And those looking for secondary jobs in sectors such as hospitality can't find them due to the impact of Covid-19.

Prime Minister, we urge you to negotiate new terms with the EU, allowing creative practitioners to travel to the EU visa-free

@EquityUK @BorisJohnson One third of Equity members say they've seen job ads asking for EU passport holders: "Before, we were able to travel to Europe visa-free. Now we have to pay hundreds of pounds, fill in form after form, and spend weeks

waiting for approval" /3

@EquityUK @BorisJohnson Worth recalling that all this goes back to the UK desire NOT to have a 'mobility' provision within the TCA - all part of 'ending Free Movement' and the professional services folk - including musicians, actors, fashion models etc -are all victim of that/4

https://t.co/hCsJo5ei0g

@EquityUK @BorisJohnson What's the government going to do about all this? Good question, which brings us to todays @CommonsDCMS hearing in which the Culture Minister Caroline Dinenage @cj_dinenage frankly pin-balled around the issues /5

@EquityUK @BorisJohnson @CommonsDCMS @cj_dinenage Have a listen, if you like from around 11.27 minutes when @DamianGreen asks her what the government is up to....given that the creative industries have been handed what he termed a "no deal" #Brexit...the minister is clearly struggling /6

https://t.co/qO1sGfHKh8

@EquityUK @BorisJohnson @CommonsDCMS @cj_dinenage @DamianGreen She starts be accepting that the EU & UK aren't going to renegotiate the TCA which (for reasons above) has no visa waiver agreement or joint declaration on exempt categories (sports, arts etc) ...so we're not going back there.../7

@EquityUK @BorisJohnson @CommonsDCMS @cj_dinenage @DamianGreen Which then raised question of striking bilateral deals with the EU...which the minister said the UK was keen to do...and then quickly said it was "very difficult"...admitting no talks had actually started...tho officials say they are prioritising targets nations/8

@EquityUK @BorisJohnson @CommonsDCMS @cj_dinenage @DamianGreen The question is whether EU member states and the EU Commission are going to allow individual member states to be picked off by the UK in separate mobility packages, on UK terms - it feels like a long shot on both fronts tbh. /9

@EquityUK @BorisJohnson @CommonsDCMS @cj_dinenage @DamianGreen The musicians industry body @ISM_music boss @DeborahAnnetts says they have a scheme that - from the sounds of it - would narrowly grant visa-waiver to musicians (who face £600 bill for single gig in Spain) but minister @cj_dinenage sounded sceptical (probably rightly)/10

@EquityUK @BorisJohnson @CommonsDCMS @cj_dinenage @DamianGreen @ISM_music @DeborahAnnetts The over-riding impression is that the government doesn't really have answers...which may explain why @FashionRoundTab haven't even had a reply to their letter of two weeks ago, per @TamaraCincik - the government doesn't really anywhere to go /11

@EquityUK @BorisJohnson @CommonsDCMS @cj_dinenage @DamianGreen @ISM_music @DeborahAnnetts @FashionRoundTab @TamaraCincik But this stuff is going to affect huge numbers of not-so-glamorous creatives - like the group of textile designers led by @DesignersGuild boss Simon Jeffreys who wrote to @BorisJohnson explaining how the deal was hitting his business /12

Letter to the Prime Minister from the CEO's of DESIGNERS GUILD, OSBORNE & LITTLE, COLEFAX AND FOWLER PLC, ROMO, EDMUND BELL, SANDERSON GROUP PLC

Dear Prime Minister, February 1, 2021

We are a group of independently owned and managed British companies in the home furnishing sector, designing and distributing furnishing fabrics and wallcoverings worldwide. Our brands are well-established and highly regarded internationally, especially in Europe. We are grateful for the financial support that has been provided throughout the pandemic. However, we are writing to highlight a serious issue with the Trade Agreement as it is currently drafted and to ask for your urgent support in resolving it. This is damaging our, and other, industries and will result in the loss of UK jobs and UK revenue.

Together we provide jobs for some 2,500 people and our combined turnover exceeds £350 Million. This issue also affects every UK business involved in import/export between the UK and the EU. This is threatening the loss of UK jobs and UK revenue.

We pride ourselves on our British heritage and have built extensive creative and distribution facilities in the UK. Many of us have won the Queen's Awards for Export, often multiple times.

We source our fabrics from the UK, the EU, India, China and Turkey. Sourcing decisions are based on where the textile can best be produced for the design in question and to the best quality available.

We are extremely concerned about one particular aspect of the current provisions for cross-border movements of goods in the Trade Agreement. **Unless the Trade Agreement is revised accordingly, we will have no other option but to relocate part, or all, of our distribution hubs into the EU. This would mean the loss of UK jobs and UK revenue.**

We believe that the problem identified with the Trade Agreement is a result of oversight rather than intent. As the Trade Agreement stands:

- Goods of EU origin can be imported into the UK without duty.
- Goods of UK origin can be sold into the EU without duty.
- **Goods of EU origin that are imported into the UK and then sold back into the EU at a higher price are charged duty on arrival.**
- **Goods of non-UK, non-EU origin that are imported into the UK are charged duty on arrival. The same goods, sold to the EU, are charged duty again on delivery.**

In other words, since January 1st, 2021, all of our sales to the EU of textiles which were originally manufactured by mills in the EU, are now subject to 8%-12% duty upon their arrival. Duty of course is charged not on their original cost but as a percentage of our selling prices so the impact on our margins is crippling.

@EquityUK @BorisJohnson @CommonsDCMS @cj_dinenage @DamianGreen @ISM_music @DeborahAnnetts @FashionRoundTab @TamaraCincik @DesignersGuild They've fallen victim to the Rules of Origin hubbing issue - they print textiles in EU, have them shipped to UK...but now of course they can't ship them back to the EU without incurring tariffs. Solution? Open distro in the Netherlands.... /13

@EquityUK @BorisJohnson @CommonsDCMS @cj_dinenage @DamianGreen @ISM_music @DeborahAnnetts @FashionRoundTab @TamaraCincik @DesignersGuild A lot of this pain is masked by #COVID19 - there are no concerts, fashion shows, tourism etc - which gives the govt some breathing space. But ultimately the deal is what it is - no one should expect miracles. ENDS