

## **2019 International survey of the North East's arts and heritage sector**

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### **Overview**

In spring 2019, the North East Culture Partnership's International Group decided to commission its third survey looking at the international priorities of the region's arts and heritage organisations. The survey seeks answers to six key qualitative questions and aims to define the sectors' ambitions and priorities for future international working and partnerships.

### **Background**

Following the first international survey conducted by the North-East Culture Partnership (NECP) in 2015, NECP commissioned Candle and Bell to produce a film about the international working of the North East's arts and heritage sector:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0TEVTa-5Bc&feature=youtu.be>

Summarising James Ramsbotham (Chief Executive, North East Chamber of Commerce) from this film, businesses come from all over the world to invest in the North East, and the quality of our culture sector is an important factor for the region's profile and distinctiveness.

Our 2015 survey was held before the EU Referendum and in autumn 2017, NECP conducted a second survey (post-referendum) to see whether, and how, the international landscape had changed. 69 people/organisations answered the questions about transnational partnerships vs. the 45 who replied to the 2015 survey (a 53% increase).

Now, in autumn 2019, NECP has carried out a third international survey, seeking answers to six key qualitative questions. Double the number of organisations answered this survey compared with the 2015 one.

### **Results**

**Question 1: In the last 12 months, has your organisation received direct advice, support or input on international working from any of the following organisations?**

Information Source	ACE	British Council	DIT	Local authority	University/academic institution	None	Other	Total
No. enquiries	15	22	8	10	15	41	2	113
%	13	19	7	9	13	36	2	

Out of the 113 enquiries made, 36% had not sought advice from any of the 5 information sources listed in the survey. The British Council was the major source of advice, with 19% of enquiries.

**Question 2: Has your organisation delivered any projects through international relationships or partnerships in the past 12 months?**

36 of the 90 organisations (40%) replied that they had delivered any projects through international relationships or partnerships in the last 12 months, and 54 (60%) had not.

**Question 3: In the past 12 months, has your organisation experienced any issues or difficulties in securing international artists to come to the UK?**

59 organisations had not experienced any experienced issues/difficulties in bringing international artists to the UK over the last 12 months. However 10 had – and 70% of these cited the lack of financial support for international work in the creative sector as the main limiting factor, with uncertainties around Brexit and the falling pound major factors too.

**Question 4: Can you briefly explain one example of International working that your organisation has been involved with in the past 12 months?**

The 34 organisations who chose to answer these questions were working with at least 29 countries between them: Barbados, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, China, Cyprus, Denmark, Eire, Finland, France, Hungary, Iceland, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Malaysia, Montenegro, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, USA.

Seven organisations advised that they had received funding for their international projects from: The European Commission's Erasmus+ and Creative Europe funds, Arts Council England, Quebec Arts Council and Quebec Government Office in London, international loans, and self-funding via earned income and participant donations.

The international working took many forms, and was for many reasons: relationship building and partnership working, settling asylum seekers, as part of a local apprenticeship scheme, workshops, commissioning an opera, residencies, film documentaries, choirs, activism, film, visual arts, staff development for arts and heritage professionals, International touring for orchestra; visiting international musicians; international exchange of practice, performances, actor training, exchange visits, co-production of plays, student recruitment, artist exchanges and research projects, trade delegations, artistic projects, exhibitions, international study visits, international poetry festivals, collaboration in visual arts.

**Question 5: In the next 12 months, do you envisage the international focus of your organisation...**

This question asked about intentions for the next 12 months and 89 organisations responded; only 34 of these had answered question 4 as to which organisations they were currently working with.

Continue to focus on Europe	<b>10</b>
Including Europe but increasing our focus on the Rest of the World more than previously	<b>19</b>
Not changing at all	<b>50</b>
Shifting to prioritise the Rest of the World	<b>10</b>

In this case, 56% of organisations would continue to work with the countries they already are and 33% plan to expand their collaboration beyond the European Union.

**Discipline analysis**

Organisations were not asked to state their name this time, just the discipline they fitted into, with several organisations involving more than one discipline. The following table shows that this latest international survey does cover a broad spectrum of art and heritage specialisms:

Theatre	Dance	Not discipline specific	Visual Arts	Combined Arts	Libraries	Literature	Museums	Music	Heritage	Film	Local Government	Other
9	4	17	6	9	5	4	4	9	5	6	25	6

**Conclusions**

1. We need more structured support from UK funders and agencies: Only 36% of respondents had sought advice from any of the 5 information sources listed regarding international working. This suggests that the sector could benefit from an awareness raising seminar to which these 5 major organisations are invited.
2. Of the 34 organisations who advised which countries they have been working with during the last 12 months, 41% of the 29 countries were in the EU, and 59% outside.
3. International working remains strong with cultural organisations in the North East: 40% of the organisations had worked internationally during the last 12 months.
4. International working is a positive activity for cultural organisations: There was considerable diversity in the reasons for international collaboration, from relationship building, to workshops, commissioning works, residencies, training, performances and exchange of best practice, and exhibitions.
5. Organisations have ambitions to explore new markets beyond Europe: 56% of organisations would continue to work with the countries they already are, with 33% planning to expand their collaboration beyond the European Union within the next 12 months.

6. Limited access to funding: Only 7 organisations out of the 90 (8%) had received external funding. Respondents cited support from the European Commission's Erasmus+ and Creative Europe funds had funded some activity, as had Arts Council England, Quebec Arts Council and Quebec Government Office in London.
7. Funding is a barrier: However, while 59 organisations had not experienced any experienced issues/difficulties in bringing international artists to the UK over the last 12 months. 10 had experienced issues, and 70% of these cited the lack of financial support for international work in the creative sector as the main limiting factor, with uncertainties around Brexit and the falling pound major factors too. Based on the 2017 international survey, the top six countries of interest were the: USA, Germany Sweden, Netherlands, China, Spain, France and Australia. Therefore, advice and travel money to enable NE cultural organisations to make and develop international partnerships in these countries would be particularly beneficial.