

# EU UK Cultural Exchange

## Knowing Me, Knowing You

Hosted by **Hannes Heide MEP & Bogdan Zdrojewski MEP**  
in collaboration with the **Cultural Exchange Coalition (CEC)**

24 March 2026  
14:00-16:00  
Room A3H1  
European Parliament  
and online via webex

## Programme

**14:00** - Welcome and opening speeches : **MEP Hannes Heide, MEP Bogdan Zdrojewski, The Rt Hon Ian Murray MP**, Minister for the Creative Industries, Media and Arts, (UK), **Mr Georg Haeusler**, Director Culture, Creativity and Sports DG EAC European Commission.

Opening remarks framing the session following the 2025 EU-UK Summit and the commitments set out in the Common Understanding, situating the discussion within shared strategic priorities and the wider context of EU-UK cultural cooperation.

**14:10** - prerecorded address – **Dame Evelyn Glennie**

**14:20** - Panel moderated by CEC Co-Chair **Anita Debaere**, Pearle\*-Live Performance Europe - “**The importance of cultural exchange between the EU & UK**”

The EU and the UK have recognised in the Common Understanding of the EU-UK Summit in 2025 the value of cultural cooperation and cultural exchange.

What does cultural exchange mean, and how does it manifest in practice?

Looking ahead at making cultural exchange effective, what practical cooperation mechanisms, policies, or frameworks are needed?

Panellists:

- **Lies Martens** - Rosas Dance Company (BE)
- **Suzanne Walker** - Sadlers Wells Theatre (UK)
- **Johannes Everke** - BDKV (DE)
- **Joe Pointing** - AdLib Audio / PLASA (UK)
- **Davinia Galea** - Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, (MT)
- **Peredur ab Gwynedd** - Musician with Pendulum, Musicians' Union / Carry On Touring (UK)

**15:00** - Q&A moderated by CEC Co-Chair, **Dave Webster**, Musicians Union (UK)

**15:20** - Feedback and comments, moderated by host MEPs.

- Members of the EU and UK Parliaments in attendance to give comments and reflections
- **Georg Haeusler** – Director Culture, Creativity and Sports DG EAC European Commission
- **The Rt Hon Ian Murray MP** - Minister for the Creative Industries, Media and Arts, UK

Concluding words from host MEPs

**15:40** - Tea and Coffee, networking

**16:00** - Event finishes

# EU UK Cultural Exchange

## Knowing Me, Knowing You

An evening reception celebrating the richness and vitality of UK–EU cultural exchange, hosted by the **Cultural Exchange Coalition (CEC)**

24 March 2026

18:00–20:00

British Ambassador's  
Residence

Rue Ducale / Hertogstraat  
17, Brussels 1000

## Programme

**18:00** - Guests Arrive

**18:18** - Welcome, **Caroline Read** - Deputy Ambassador, UK Mission to the European Union

**18:20** - Opening remarks - **The Rt Hon Ian Murray MP** - Minister for the Creative Industries, Media and Arts, UK

**18:25** - Remarks on Cultural Exchange - **Laurence Farreng, MEP**

**18:30** - The Mission of the CEC - **Tom Kiehl** - Chief Executive, UK Music (CEC Co-convenor)

**18:35** - Showcase set - **Imogen and the Knife**

**18:55** - Networking

**20:00** - Event close

# EU UK Cultural Exchange

## Knowing Me, Knowing You

### Panellists

#### **Anita Debaere - Moderator**

Director Pearle\* - Live Performance Europe

Anita Debaere is Director of Pearle\* - Live Performance Europe. This pan-European federation counts, through its member associations, more than 13,000 organisations in the live performance ecosystem. Pearle\* is also recognised as European employers association, taking part in European sectoral social dialogue. Anita Debaere worked in the music sector and for an energy company, before joining Pearle\*. Anita Debaere sits in different European committees, she is regularly invited to give expert views on sectoral questions at conferences, stakeholder meetings, in research and studies, in particular in relation to cultural mobility and on policy questions.

#### **pearle.eu**

Facebook - PearleEurope

LinkedIn - Pearle\* Live Performance Europe

Bluesky - @pearleurope.bsky.social



# EU UK Cultural Exchange Knowing Me, Knowing You

## Panellists

### Lies Martens

Lies Martens is an independent consultant in the arts and cultural sector, specializing in business management for artists and cultural organizations. She supports organizations and artists with financial strategy, international cooperation, and organizational development. Lies currently has a major assignment at Rosas. In the past, she also worked for PARTS, Circus Ronaldo, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Kaaitheater a.o. For Pearle\* she handles international mobility issues. She holds as well several other board positions at arts organizations.

[www.liesmartens.eu](http://www.liesmartens.eu)



# EU UK Cultural Exchange

## Knowing Me, Knowing You

### Panellists

#### **Suzanne Walker**

Executive Producer, Sadler's Wells

Suzanne Walker is an arts producer with over 35 years' experience. She joined the world-leading dance organisation Sadler's Wells in 2006 as Director of Programming before establishing its prolific Producing & Touring Department in 2011 as Executive Producer.

Under her direction, Sadler's Wells has produced 64 major productions and 87 new works including Russell Maliphant's PUSH with French ballerina Sylvie Guillem, Sutra by Flemish-Moroccan choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and British sculptor Antony Gormley, Kate Prince's Message In A Bottle, based on the songs of Sting, and a remount of German choreographer Pina Bausch's The Rite of Spring performed by dancers from across the African continent.

She has toured work to some of the most prestigious theatres and festivals around the world, such as Sydney Opera House, China Shanghai International Arts Festival, Chekhov International Theatre Festival in Moscow, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris, Park Avenue Armory, New York, and Santiago a mil Festival in Chile.



[www.sadlerswells.com](http://www.sadlerswells.com)

Instagram - @sadlers\_wells

# EU UK Cultural Exchange

## Knowing Me, Knowing You

### Panellists

#### **Johannes Everke**

CEO, BDKV, the German Promoters Association

Johannes Everke is CEO of BDKV (German Association of the Concert and Event Industry) that represents around 500 private companies who run some 300.000 cultural events in all genres of live culture per year and attract some 110 million fans. A trained lawyer by profession, he has a background in live entertainment, cultural policy, urban economic development and city marketing. He is a member of various industry and professional committees such as the German Cultural Council, the German Music Council, the advisory board of the German artists social fund KSK, the Club Foundation Hamburg or the Reeperbahn Festival.

[www.bdkv.de](http://www.bdkv.de)

LinkedIn - Everke



# EU UK Cultural Exchange

## Knowing Me, Knowing You

### Panellists

#### Joe Pointing

Head of Logistics, Adlib, members of PLASA

As Head of Logistics at Adlib, Joe oversees the full spectrum of transport, travel, and crewing operations for one of the UK's most respected technical production companies. Adlib is a leading independent provider of audio, lighting, and video services to concert touring, supporting some of the world's biggest artists and productions across major venues and festivals.

Joe is attending as a representative of PLASA — the lead international membership body for those who supply technology to the event and entertainment industries. PLASA brings the entertainment technology industry together through events, membership, training, and industry media, promoting best practices and skills, publishing safety standards, and facilitating trade and networking opportunities. Spanning production specialists, global manufacturers, iconic venues, rental houses, and freelancers, PLASA represents the industry at government level and contributes to the development of standards and qualifications.



[www.adlib.co.uk](http://www.adlib.co.uk)

[www.plasa.org](http://www.plasa.org)

# EU UK Cultural Exchange

## Knowing Me, Knowing You

### Panellists

#### **Davinia Galea**

Managing Director, ARC Research & Consultancy and Interlocutor for the Malta Philharmornic Orchestra with Pearle\*

Davinia Galea is a cultural policy expert and consultant working at the intersection of cultural cooperation, strategy, and European cultural networks. With a background as a professional musician, she brings sector insight to policy and advocacy discussions, particularly in relation to cross-border mobility and collaboration. She specialises in European cultural cooperation, festival ecosystems, and European Capital of Culture processes, and is currently engaged in the Victoria 2031 European Capital of Culture candidature. Davinia works closely with international networks, including the European Festivals Association and Pearle\*, and regularly contributes to dialogue on the structural conditions shaping cultural exchange. Her work focuses on enabling sustainable cultural partnerships and advancing frameworks that support artists and organisations working across borders.



# EU UK Cultural Exchange

## Knowing Me, Knowing You

### Panellists

#### **Peredur ap Gwynedd**

Guitarist, Pendulum and Media Composer

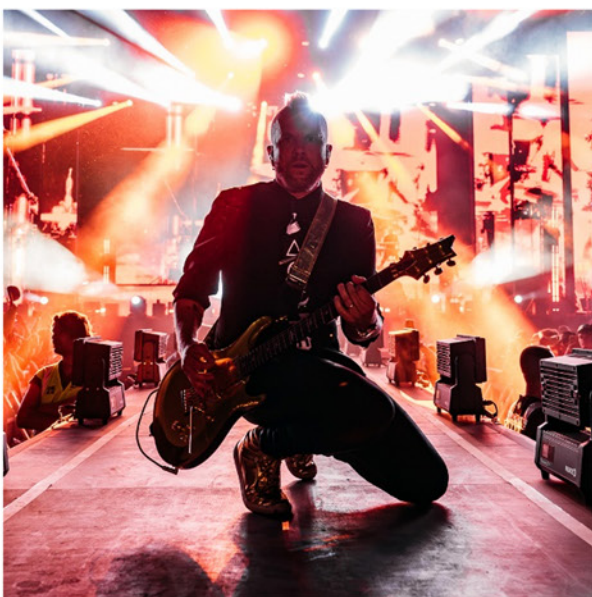
Peredur ap Gwynedd is a guitarist and media composer known for his work with the Drum & Bass/Rock phenomenon Pendulum.

Before joining Pendulum he recorded and toured with such notable artists as Natalie Imbruglia, Faithless, Sophie Ellis-Bextor, Tinie Tempah, Mylène Farmer and Anastacia.

He has also written and produced music for many advertising campaigns including Dolce & Gabbana, Smirnoff, Rimmel and Veet, and composed and produced music for many international TV companies.

[www.apgwynedd.com](http://www.apgwynedd.com)

Instagram - @perryguitar666



# EU UK Cultural Exchange

## Knowing Me, Knowing You

### Q&A

#### **Dave Webster - Moderator**

Head of International, Musicians' Union

Dave joined the MU in 2004 following a busy career as a freelance drummer, percussionist and teacher. He first worked for the MU in the London office and was London Region Senior Organiser from 2007 to 2013. Dave then headed up the Live Performance Department until 2022 when, following the UK's departure from Europe Dave was made Head of International, focusing his work on tackling the difficulties caused for musicians by Brexit as well as aspects MU members face when working overseas such as visas, CITES, travelling with instruments. Dave has a TUC seat on the UK Domestic Advisory Group, is currently Chair of LIVE Touring and the newly formed Cultural Exchange Coalition.

The Musicians' Union is a globally-respected organisation which represents over 36,500 musicians working in all sectors of the music business. As well as negotiating on behalf of musicians with all the major employers in the industry, the MU offers a range of services tailored for the self-employed by providing assistance for professional and student musicians of all ages.



[www.themu.org](http://www.themu.org)

# Cultural Exchange Coalition

## March 2026

Europe's cultural and creative sectors have long formed one of the world's most dynamic and integrated cultural ecosystems. For decades, performers, technicians, producers and creative businesses from the EU and the UK have collaborated seamlessly across borders, supporting festivals, venues and institutions, enabling emerging talent to reach new audiences and reinforcing Europe's global reputation for artistic excellence. This exchange has generated significant economic and social value, sustaining local economies through ticket sales, increased tourism and related spending, and supporting a broad supply chain of SMEs in production, logistics and event management.

Today, those links remain strong in spirit but constrained in practice. Since the UK's exit from the EU, significant administrative and financial barriers are **limiting opportunities for cultural exchange on both sides of the Channel**. Touring has become financially unviable or too complex for many, particularly young and emerging talent. The effects are felt not only by performers and crew but also by local businesses, event organisers, audiences, and the wider economy. Cross-border partnerships have been further weakened by the UK's exit from Creative Europe (2021-2027), which cut off crucial support for the film, media, performing arts and cultural sectors. We are working with UK and EU partners to address the following key challenges:

**Mobility of people:** UK touring artists, companies and crew must navigate new, complex rules for short-term paid work which vary between the 27 Member States, while the UK's Permitted Paid Engagements rules are too restrictive for many EU professionals. Longer engagements in the EU are often constrained by the 90 in 180-day rule, resulting in lost work or additional cost.

**Movement of goods:** ATA carnets are required to bring instruments and kit into the UK and EU Member States, adding substantial cost and paperwork. New customs rules and VAT requirements make selling merchandise too costly or too complicated, reducing a vital revenue source, particularly for smaller acts.

**Transport and logistics:** Under the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA), "own account" and specialist transport is restricted by cabotage rules that limit the number of stops, making touring impractical or much more expensive. Many orchestras work as "own-account" operators, using their own customised vehicles to safely move valuable instruments.

In addition, administrative burdens to reclaim taxes following additional or double artist taxation (**withholding tax**) continue to make touring more expensive and put pressure on cash-flows.

The EU and UK agreed on a Common Understanding in May 2025 to "support travel and cultural exchange...including the activities of touring artists," but that pledge has yet to turn into formal discussions or real progress. With the 2026 review of the TCA and the next EU-UK Summit expected in summer, now is a critical time to push for action.

# What are the benefits of cultural exchange?

- **Boosts local economies** by driving tourism, ticket sales and spending linked to festivals, performances and cultural events. Visiting audiences generate demand for hospitality and retail, while events attract investment and media attention, raising the international profile of host cities, driving return tourism and long-term economic impact.
- **Grows the cultural and creative sectors** by enabling people-to-people collaborations, leading to co-productions, touring opportunities and shared distribution networks. Local businesses benefit from access to new talent, knowledge exchange and expanded markets, helping them to scale internationally and strengthen their competitiveness.
- **Supports emerging talent and skills development** through exposure to new audiences, new collaborators, and world-leading cultural institutions. Mentoring, residencies and joint training initiatives foster professional development, equipping the next generation with the tools to thrive in an interconnected cultural landscape.
- **Reinforces Europe's cultural leadership and shared values** by sustaining centuries of artistic collaboration and encouraging contemporary reinterpretation. By presenting a united and diverse cultural voice, Europe strengthens its soft power and global influence.

## Policy asks

### 1. Bespoke solutions to support mobility of touring artists

#### In the EU:

We strongly welcome the reference in the EU Visa Strategy to “explore new rules for extended short stays for selected categories of third-country professionals, such as touring artists”.

These should include:

- a. Short-term touring:** The EU and Member States should align and expand existing national exemptions for short cultural engagements, so that performing artists and essential crew can undertake short, ad hoc paid work across the Schengen area within the 90 days in any 180-day period, under clear, predictable and consistent conditions.
- b. Longer engagements:** A dedicated touring visa for artists and crew, allowing stays in the Schengen area beyond the 90 days in any 180-day period.

In the UK:

#### **c. Broaden eligibility for Permitted Paid Engagements (PPE)**

To align UK entry requirements with the needs of the creative workforce, the UK should broaden the eligibility criteria for PPEs under the Standard Visitor Visa to be based on professional practice and being established in the field. The current requirement for the engagement to relate to a single, full-time occupation is too restrictive for many EU creative workers who often combine several roles and income streams.

#### **d. Exempt short-term cultural engagements by EU nationals from sponsorship requirements**

The UK should remove the burdensome requirement under the Creative Worker route for EU nationals to be sponsored by a UK organisation that holds a sponsor licence, particularly where activity is temporary, project-based and limited in duration. The current rules create significant administrative burdens and added costs for visiting artists and host organisations.

## Policy asks (continued)

### 2. A cultural exemption for ATA carnets

The UK and EU Member States should work to reach bilateral agreements to remove logistical and financial burden of ATA carnets for cultural professionals.

### 3. Cabotage exemption

The UK and EU should negotiate an exemption for cultural activities and “Own Account” operators as part of the 2026 TCA review.

### 4. Merchandise

The UK and EU should seek a bilateral agreement to exempt merchandise carried by touring artists and companies from certain customs and VAT requirements.

### 5. Withholding tax

EU Member States and the UK to introduce minimum thresholds in their right to levy withholding tax on performance and artists' fees once they are earning over a certain amount (e.g. €30,000), in line with the Commentary on Article 17 of the OECD Model Tax Convention, to lighten administrative work obtaining tax credits in the country of residence.

### 6. Creative Europe/AgoraEU

The UK should seek to participate in Creative Europe to open new funding avenues for UK-EU creative collaboration, talent exchange, and co-productions. With the new AgoraEU programme beginning 2028-2034, the UK must signal its intention to participate at the earliest opportunity, including the possibility of joining in 2027.

## About the Cultural Exchange Coalition

The CEC brings together over 150 organisations from across the cultural and creative sector, including music, visual arts, dance, theatre and orchestra, with a shared ambition to transform the inaugural UK-EU Summit's Common Understanding commitment to support cultural exchange into meaningful actions.

A full membership list is available [here](#). We welcome new members.

Find out more on our website or via email us at [info@culturecoalition.net](mailto:info@culturecoalition.net).