

# New Brexit survey: 40 per cent of overseas architects considering leaving UK

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An RIBA survey has revealed that 40 per cent of non-British EU nationals working as architects in this country are now considering moving abroad

With this group making up a quarter of all UK-registered architects, the impact of a such an exodus could be significant.

The figure was released today by the institute as part of its wider investigation into the concerns and opportunities for the profession in the wake of last year's EU referendum.

The survey of 1,100 architects also showed that 61 per cent of the RIBA's members had seen projects delayed – a worryingly higher figure than the 51 per cent who reported stalled schemes in the AJ's own survey in August. A further 37 per cent reported schemes being cancelled, while four in 10 said they had seen an increase in materials prices and construction costs.

More than 65 per cent said they were concerned about the future impact of Brexit on their businesses.

RIBA president Jane Duncan said: 'We can't shut our doors to talent and expect the world to open its markets to us. The UK needs an immigration system that recognises the benefits and importance of the UK being an attractive place to work for ambitious architects from around the world.

'It's vitally important that the government acts to confirm that those already working and studying in the UK will be able to remain.'

“ We can't shut our doors to talent and expect the world to open its markets to us ”

Jane Duncan

However, the figures also revealed that many architects were hopeful Brexit could lead to wholesale reform of the UK's 'inefficient public procurement system', and the RIBA claimed its members had 'made it clear that with the right decisions the short-term impacts of Brexit could be mitigated, and the UK could position itself as a global-facing nation'.

In response to the survey the RIBA has published a set of five priority recommendations for government in a new document *Global by Design: How the government can open up new opportunities for UK architects*.

The institute says that for the UK to thrive as a global hub for architecture, the country must:

- > have access to the best talent and skills
- > sign trade agreements that open access to foreign markets
- > provide support for education, research and innovation
- > take action to address the UK's competitiveness crisis including infrastructure investment
- > maintain common standards and low compliance costs.

Duncan added: 'Architects recognise that the UK must shape a new role for itself after we exit the EU – and we are already responding to that challenge. But we need leadership and support from the government if the UK is going to maintain and strengthen its role as a global centre for architecture.

'We need the government to secure agreements that ensure that our qualifications continue to be recognised in the EU and increase access to new markets outside of the EU, maintain high common product and environmental standards consistent with Brand UK abroad, and address the structural challenges that threaten the UK's attractiveness as a place to live, work and invest.'

But procurement expert and architect Russell Curtis of RCKa said: 'Until we start to get a sense of the government's Brexit strategy, it seems premature to predict the likely effects on the profession. It's right that we should be trying to influence the negotiations in favour of an open, accessible market but, sadly, I think the concerns of architects are pretty low down on the list of government priorities.'

He added: 'I'm intrigued by the suggestion that extracting ourselves from the obligations of the OJEU system will result in an improvement of the public procurement market. While it is flawed, at least OJEU requires a degree of transparency and consistency. The responsibility for inefficient public procurement actually lies solely in the hands of UK public bodies; nowhere else in Europe do they make such a hash of it.

'Unleashed from the shackles of OJEU, rather than becoming more streamlined and efficient, I fear we'll simply see further fragmentation and increased opacity within the market.'

But David Green, director of Belsize Architects and former head of the European division of the Bank of England, said: 'It is very good to see the RIBA taking the initiative on the opportunities and risks from Brexit.

'The most pressing need is for architects to lobby politicians to make sure that they understand what architects, and other components of the UK global construction design hub, need to have retained in our future relationship with the EU.'

Are you from a EU country and considering leaving the UK to work elsewhere? Leave a comment below to tell us why.

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