

# RIBA Global By Design 2018

The Royal Institute of British Architects champions better buildings, stronger communities and higher environmental standards through the practice of architecture and our 40,000 members. We provide the standards, training, support and recognition that put our members – in the UK and overseas – at the peak of their profession. With government and our partners, we work to improve the design quality of public buildings, new homes and new communities.

The UK's architecture sector is a global success story. It is the biggest exporter of architectural services in Europe and contributes £4.8 billion GVA to the British economy every year. UK architects are supporting the development of thriving, high-quality communities at home and around the world.

Between December 2017 and January 2018, the RIBA ran its second Brexit survey of UK architects. The results showed that architects continue to prioritise access to talent, trade deals and export support that builds on the UK's reputation for professionalism and quality, and greater certainty in the domestic construction market. The RIBA's Global By Design 2018 report makes a number of recommendations in support of these priorities.

Since the publication of the [RIBA's first Global By Design](#) report in 2017, the UK Government has published policy statements and opened consultations on a number of matters relating to post-Brexit UK, including welcome statements in support of an ongoing Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications agreement with the EU.

But with a year to go until the UK leaves the European Union, the RIBA's Brexit survey results shows an urgent need for the UK Government to progress beyond policy statements, to provide the certainty that architects and practices need to plan for the future.

## Background

2018 is a critical year for UK architecture. The UK Government and European Union are set to conclude their negotiations on the future relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union by the end of the year. Meanwhile the UK Government is in the process of consulting on a range of areas, from planning to immigration, which will have a long-term impact on architecture and the built environment. The answers that policy-makers arrive at must provide opportunities for a better built environment in Britain that addresses the housing crisis, supports technological advancements, provides for changing demographics, and protects the environment.

The RIBA has been working to ensure that the voice of architects is heard in the debates most important to the future of the sector on Brexit. Last year, the RIBA published [Global By Design 2017](#), containing the results of its first Brexit survey, which highlighted that mutual recognition of professional qualifications, securing the rights of EU nationals currently living in the UK, and boosting trade were the top priorities for the UK's architects.

Between December 2017 and January 2018, the RIBA conducted a second survey of RIBA members to refresh our picture of architects' priorities on Brexit and the UK's future relationship with the EU. The results show a profession that foresees both opportunities and risks ahead. With a year until the UK leaves the European Union, UK architects report growing concern about the lack of clarity on issues most important to them – low barriers to accessing the European market, training and retaining a highly-skilled domestic and international workforce, and measures to ensure that the wider construction sector remains strong.

However, the RIBA's 2018 Brexit survey shows that architecture is an innovative, dynamic and outward-facing profession, that with the right support from policy-makers can continue to adapt to the economic, technological and social changes which will define the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is increasingly clear that in the future, the sectors of the economy that will rise to the oncoming challenges of oncoming global technological and economic changes will be those that are able to be creative, knowledge-driven and flexible. The UK's architecture sector can meet this challenge, providing that the UK can train and recruit the diversity of talent which is so critical to creative success, through access to global markets, and by utilising knowledge and expertise to support a better built environment at home.

In this critical period, the best decisions that politicians and policy-makers can now make are those which will not just see the UK through to the end of 2019, or to the end of any transition period, but which create the right conditions for a better society for future generations.

## Global By Design 2018: Recommendations

### To support new global deals, with standards and professionalism at their heart, the UK Government must:

- Negotiate a deal with the European Union which supports open and free trade, in particular in services
- Commit to a continued Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications agreement with the EU
- Support continued membership of the British Standards Institute to standard setting bodies CEN and CENELEC
- Ensure that any new trade deals with key nations support the export of architecture, and include Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualification agreements

### To support growth in the UK's export of architecture, the UK Government must:

- Commit to improving its support for practices of all sizes that are seeking to become exporters of architectural services, through the provision of market intelligence and in-country support
- Support better access to export finance, on terms that support small practices in particular
- Work with industry to set a strategy for exports that works for creative service sectors such as architecture

### To create a new, holistic approach to skills and immigration in architecture, the UK Government must:

- Swiftly initiate a review into 'Routes to Registration' for architecture
- Take greater action to increase confidence of EU nationals currently living and working in the UK, supported by an ongoing Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications agreement
- Create a post-Brexit immigration system that is more efficient and flexible in line with the RIBA's recommendations in [Building a post-Brexit immigration system that works for UK architecture](#)

### To enable the construction sector to deliver for UK communities, the UK Government must:

- Continue dialogue with new and existing authorities, to support a more robust package of devolved housing and planning powers
- Continue to provide funding through the Housing Infrastructure Fund, and further loosen restrictions to provide greater flexibility to local authorities in the pooling and co-ordination of locally generated housing and infrastructure funding streams
- Support better outcomes through the planning system by ringfencing funding for local authority planning departments

## Global deals with standards and professionalism at their heart

- **74% of architects state that access to the EU single market is necessary to expand international work**
- **Almost half (47%) of architects working at large practices are concerned that no MRPQ agreement would mean they lose valued staff**
- **Ensuring retention of common product standards is a top regulatory concern**
- **54% think that new trade agreements with priority trading nations will further boost exports**
- **60% want new MRPQ agreements to boost architecture exports**

The UK's architecture sector has a worldwide reputation for quality and professionalism. The RIBA's 2017 research report [Global Talent, Global Reach](#) found that the UK is the only major exporter of architectural services in Europe, with the biggest export markets in the Middle East, Asia and Europe. If the UK wants to compete globally, the UK Government must ensure that plans for future trade relationships promote, and do not undermine, this reputation.

The UK Government and European Union are currently negotiating the details of our future relationship. The EU is not only an important export market for UK architecture but supplies with the UK with goods, services and skills that support the UK's architecture and construction sector. The RIBA's Brexit survey showed that 74% of architects want the outcome of this negotiation to ensure frictionless access to the European market so they can expand international work. This concern is particularly prevalent among Northern Irish architects, many of whom undertake cross-border work on a daily basis.

The sector's success in exporting services is in part due to the skills of EU architects attracted to work in the UK because of the sector's reputation, which is supported by a Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualification (MRPQ) agreement with the EU. It is welcome that the UK Government and European Commission has supported the RIBA's call to ensure that qualifications already recognised by Architects Registration Board recognised by the end of the transition period will continue to be recognised post-Brexit. However, architects have been clear that they want the agreement to continue for new entrants into the profession. Nearly half of architects working at large practices have said that the loss of MRPQ agreements will lead to staff losses. Both the UK and European Commission must prioritise a continued MRPQ agreement as part of any deal on our future relationship.

Architects responding to the RIBA's Brexit survey also raised retention of common product standards as a top concern. The EU is the UK's primary market for the import and export of construction materials. The UK's membership of EU standard setting bodies CEN and CENELEC via the British Standard Institute (BSI) provides a leadership role in promoting a high quality of standards in materials. Divergence from these standards could leave in UK in an awkward half-way house, unable to compete with cost of products from outside the EU, but risking its reputation for supporting the best standards. The UK Government should actively support BSI's continued membership of CEN and CENELEC.

Supporting this reputation for quality will help the UK architecture sector continue to export further afield. As with the European Union, the UK Government must look to support the export of services through new trade agreements. The RIBA recommends that the UK seeks to explore new MRPQ agreements with priority markets such as the United States, Australia and New Zealand, ensuring that it is easier to export architectural services, with 60% of architects identifying such agreements as key to supporting exports outside the EU.

**To support new global deals, with standards and professionalism at their heart, the UK Government must:**

- **Negotiate a deal with the European Union which supports open and free trade, in particular in services**
- **Commit to a continued Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications agreement with the EU**
- **Support continued membership of the British Standards Institute to standard setting bodies CEN and CENELEC**
- **Ensure that any new trade deals with key nations support the export of architecture, and include Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualification agreements.**

## Supporting growth in architectural exports

- **One in five (20%) of architects have considered undertaking more work internationally**
- **2 in 5 architects want more financial support (39%) and market information (37%) made available for practices looking to export**
- **A third of architects want more in-country (33%) or 1-2-1 support (28%) from the Department for International Trade**

Since the EU referendum, one fifth of architects have considered undertaking more work internationally. However, international work is often the preserve of larger practices, many of whom have higher degrees of resilience to the barriers that architects can face when trying to export their skills abroad, such as the regulatory environment and costs.

Ensuring that the UK prioritises trade agreements which support trade in services is clearly a priority for the sector. So too is the establishment of new Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualification (MRPQ) arrangements. Enabling architects trained in the UK to work without barriers in another jurisdiction, where the standard of architectural education is comparable, reduces administration and cost for architecture businesses, boosting the competitive advantage of UK firms looking to export to these and other markets. Comparable agreements already exist between the US and Canada and between the US, New Zealand and Australia. Currently, UK architects are at a disadvantage in accessing those markets. Additionally, many of the sector's biggest exporters are those who employ high numbers of international architects. Export-focused practices tell us that this is because international architects bring insights, cultural understanding, language skills and a range of design skills which strengthens the ability to win and deliver work around the world.

Even with the right trade agreements in place, the costs and risks associated with working overseas will still be too high for many of those practices without the right support. The UK's architecture sector is dominated by small businesses, with 71% of the sector employing 10 people or less. Among the challenges facing small practices seeking to export are getting the right information about their target markets, securing the financial backing to take their business to the next level and a lack of on-the-ground support when working overseas.

The Department for International Trade's export support services, from market intelligence to export finance, can make the difference between success and failure – but too often architects report that these are too difficult to access and insufficiently tailored to the needs of small, service sector businesses. Two in five architects responding to the RIBA's Brexit survey stated that greater access to financial support and to market information are necessary to boost exports, while one in three architects wanted more in-country or 1-2-1 support from the Department for International Trade. This demonstrates that a new approach to providing trade support for the creative service sector, from offering finance on more attractive terms to practical in-country support and dispute resolution, is vital to unlock the sector's full export potential.

To support this work the RIBA will publish a new paper this year outlining further, detailed recommendations on trade support for the UK's architectural sector, in response to the priorities raised by RIBA members.

### **To support growth in the UK's export of architecture, the UK Government must:**

- **Commit to improving its support for practices of all sizes seeking to become exporters of architectural services, through the provision of market intelligence and in-country support**
- **Support better access to export finance, on terms that support small practices in particular**
- **Work with industry to set a strategy for exports that works for creative services sectors such as architecture.**

## A holistic approach to skills and immigration in architecture

- UK architects are concerned about skills gaps, and ensuring that routes to qualification reflect the needs of modern practices
- 86% of architects believe that access to international skills and talent is important to the future success of the sector
- 60% of EU architects have considered leaving the UK since the EU referendum

Architecture relies on the skills and talent of its people. If the UK Government wants to support a truly diverse and thriving sector, it must take a holistic view of education and immigration so its workforce reflects the UK's economic and societal needs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. That means supporting an education system that draws people from all backgrounds into careers in architecture. It also means ensuring that the UK remains an attractive place for those from the EU, and further afield, to live and work.

Architecture is a prestigious career that empowers individuals to make a real difference to the world around them. Routes to qualification are both academically rigorous and provide on-the-ground training but we know that many of the RIBA's members want to see routes to qualification reflecting the needs to practices today. To support greater diversity in the sector, the RIBA is supporting the work of the Architecture Apprenticeships Trailblazers Group. We hope these apprenticeships will attract new talent and allow practices to develop staff in different roles. However, the RIBA believes that there is still significant scope to create greater flexibility in architectural education to support a more diverse profession and meet the skills needs of UK practices into the future. The RIBA was very disappointed that UK Government announced in March 2017 that it would further delay its 'Routes to Registration' review which would allow this process to take place. In 2015 the RIBA Education Review recommended significant reforms to architectural education. We believe that this is an essential part of widening access and increasing diversity within the profession. Since the referendum result, the need to support an ongoing pipeline of UK-based talent into the sector has become an even greater priority. Given that it takes seven years to train as an architect, routes to qualification must be attractive otherwise the sector will risk students turning away from careers in architecture.

Architects responding to the RIBA Brexit survey also recognised the value of international talent to the UK. 86% of architects identified access to international talent and skills as a top priority. Worryingly, 60% of EU architects told us that they have considered leaving the UK, a rise on the previous year (40%). With over 20% of architects currently working in the UK from the EU, the RIBA is very concerned about the immediate impact of the loss of valued EU architects, and calls on UK Government to be more robust in ensuring that EU nationals currently living, working and studying in the UK feel truly welcome.

The UK Government is due to publish its Immigration White Paper this year, which will outline options for a post-Brexit immigration system. The RIBA's policy paper [Building a post-Brexit immigration system that works for UK architecture](#) contains detailed recommendations on creating a system that supports access to international talent. Broadly, this means a system which does not carry over the rigidity of the existing process, but creates the efficiency and flexibility that UK practices need to hire in skills and talent at the right time. These recommendations are tied with a need to ensure that Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications continues with the EU, and new agreements are developed with key markets outside the EU.

**To create a new, holistic approach to skills and immigration in architecture, the UK Government must:**

- **Swiftly initiate a review into 'Routes to Registration' for architecture**
- **Take greater action to increase confidence in EU nationals currently living and working in the UK, supported by an ongoing Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications agreement**
- **Create a post-Brexit immigration system that is more efficient and flexible, in line with the RIBA's recommendations in [Building a post-Brexit immigration system that works for UK architecture](#).**

## Supporting the construction sector to deliver for communities

- **Over two thirds (68%) of architects have reported projects put on hold, and more than two in five (43%) of architects reported project cancellations since the EU referendum**
- **71% of architects are concerned that Brexit will have a negative impact on the built environment**
- **27% of architects have considered increasing workloads in the UK in response to Brexit, rising to a third (32%) for architects that work in small and medium-sized practices**

Supporting the development of a well-designed, high-quality built environment can provide solutions to many domestic concerns from the housing crisis to climate change. The result of the EU referendum brought into sharp relief the need to improve the quality of life for people and communities across the country. Architects have the skills to bring together innovations in design, material and construction to create better spaces for people to live and work, across the UK.

The overall health of the UK's architecture sector is inextricably linked to the strength of the UK's construction sector, and the wider economy. Despite a widely acknowledged need to get Britain building, the RIBA's Brexit survey shows that two thirds of architects have experienced projects put on hold and two in five have experienced project cancellations since the referendum. The majority of architects are concerned that Brexit will have a negative impact on their local built environment.

With one quarter of architects looking to increase their workload in the UK in response to Brexit, rising to a third of those working in small and medium-sized practices, it is vital that the construction sector is given greater certainty at this critical time. Given the importance of driving up local engagement with the development of housing and infrastructure, the RIBA believes that there are measures that UK Government, working with local authorities, can use to improve both confidence and outcomes in construction. The RIBA continues to call on UK Government to explore opportunities to devolve powers on areas such as housing and infrastructure, in line with recommendations in the RIBA's 2016 report [Closer to Home: Next Steps in Planning and Devolution](#).

Devolution of powers should be matched by an ability for local authorities to access finance for development. The RIBA welcomed the launch of the £5 billion Housing Infrastructure Fund. It is positive that the UK Government has looked to support strategic goals through the provision of finance on a competitive basis to local authorities. To give even greater support to local authorities, the UK Government should further loosen restrictions to provide greater flexibility to local authorities in the pooling and co-ordination of locally generated housing and infrastructure funding streams, such as S106 and CIL money, Right to Buy receipts, and new homes bonus payments.

Expertise in the planning system helps drive greater certainty for developers and more confidence for communities. Many local authority planning departments are grappling with a shortage of skills and resources at a time when the services they deliver have been made a top priority for politicians. The RIBA has long recommended that the UK Government should support better planning through the introduction of ringfenced funding for planning departments.

**To enable the construction sector to deliver for UK communities, the UK Government must:**

- **Continue dialogue with new and existing authorities, to support a more robust package of devolved housing and planning powers**
- **Continue to provide funding through the Housing Infrastructure Fund, and further loosen restrictions to provide greater flexibility to local authorities in the pooling and co-ordination of locally generated housing and infrastructure funding streams**
- **Support better outcomes through the planning system by ringfencing funding for local authority planning departments.**