



Permits Foundation International Symposium: A Decisive Time to Support Family Access to Employment in Global Mobility Policy

Conference Summary

At Permits Foundation's biennial conference *Family Matters in Global Mobility* held in London on 12 October, high level speakers from both business and government emphasised that now is the time to speak up for dual careers in the global workplace.



Permits Foundation Conference Programme

The event hosted by PwC and chaired by **Permits Foundation Board Member Julia Onslow-Cole**, focussed on the benefits of highly-skilled migration and the importance of legislation enabling family access to employment. The conference highlighted the progress being made internationally, with more countries adopting best practice, despite the challenging political climate.

Business plays an important role in advocating change. It is key that governments hear directly from business about the positive impact good policy in this area makes.

Julia Onslow-Cole, Permits Foundation Board Member and Head of Global Immigration at PwC

Opening the conference, **Permits Executive Director Michiel van Campen** gave an overview of the Foundation. His [presentation](#) showed why having a broad diverse base of sponsors from the public and the private sector is so important to making an impact in achieving legislative change. Examples of how the Foundation carries out its advocacy work were given and country priorities were listed. These include our ongoing work in India and South Africa where we are providing input to developing legislation. More recently Permits Foundation has been looking towards China and we are working with our sponsors, developing the vital business networks needed in order to effectively advocate here.

Permits Foundation campaigns for partner access to employment because this is a vital component of highly skilled migration policy, responding to a growing need to attract and retain talent. Supporting dual careers in this way helps governments and businesses to remain globally competitive - and it also strengthens employee and family integration.

Michiel van Campen, Executive Director, Permits Foundation



Garvan Walshe, Advisory Board Member at [Migration Matters Trust](#) was our first guest speaker. He stressed the need for a humane approach to migration policy, the benefits this would bring to economy and society and the need for business to speak up rather than advocate behind the scenes as has traditionally been the case. He praised the work of the Foundation in understanding the important factor of the context of peoples' lives when often they are considered as units of labour. He suggested that in Brexit there was much work to do and little to be gained by adding extra policy burdens with ramifications for family members.

Migration is only going to increase, as moving gets cheaper and the competition for talent makes finding the right people become more important for businesses. Now more than ever, the private sector needs to articulate the case for humane and realistic migration governance at a time when nationalist populists are making the political weather.

Garvan Walshe, Advisory Board Member, Migration Matters Trust

G rard Martellozo Senior Advisor & Former Vice-President Human Resources at Schlumberger talked about the importance of dual careers and diversity in relation to corporate social responsibility. He outlined several Schlumberger programmes, underpinning what they do in the area of CSR and the support they offer to their global workforce. As one of the most culturally diverse companies in the world employing staff in over 85 countries and with 71% of their dual careers staff declaring mobility, Schlumberger has developed communication and training to help these employees. To complement this, they work with organisations such as Permits Foundation in order to improve dual career prospects.

Schlumberger sees diversity of its workforce as an important part of its cultural philosophy and a business imperative. This rich diversity means that we have a very large number of dual career employees of many nationalities and enabling them to work anywhere in the world is of major importance to us.

G rard Martellozo, Senior Advisor to the CEO, Schlumberger

We were extremely pleased to be able to show our delegates a video message from **Leena Nair, Chief HR Officer and Member of Unilever Leadership Executive (ULE) UK** who is our Permits Foundation Patron. With Unilever one of the founding members of Permits Foundation, Leena highlighted how the support from our sponsors is invaluable, driving us forward in achieving further success in our global campaigns. The video message will soon be made available on our website.

The work that Permits Foundation does is critical in creating a more inclusive world, creating a more globally mobile world and creating a world where dual careers are respected and supported.

Leena Nair, Permits Foundation Patron and Chief HR Officer, Unilever

In the second panel session, we heard from **First Secretary Mr Ramaswamy Balaji**, speaking on behalf of the Deputy High Commissioner of India to London (who had been called away on business). He spoke warmly about the work of the Foundation and that there are currently policy changes expected in India around improving their visa programme in order to attract talent. We very much appreciated the kind words from Mr Balaji particularly because India remains a priority country for the Foundation. We will be visiting India again at the beginning of November, meeting key government representatives for what we hope will be a final push for our proposal for an intra-corporate transfer visa with spouse working rights. We look forward to building our networks and talking with stakeholders there.



First Secretary Ramaswamy Balaji

South Africa is another priority country for Permits Foundation so we were extremely interested to hear the presentation from **Stephen Marlin, Associate Director at PwC South Africa**. The current White Paper on international migration in South Africa provides a real opportunity to engage with policy makers there for legislative change that (alongside the critical skills visa) could allow family members on an intra-company transfer visa to work and study. Permits Foundation will be working to do what we can on this issue with our valued network in South Africa before the window of opportunity closes in November 2019. We welcome support from our sponsors who are active in this area.

South Africa is modernizing its migration policy in recognition of the need to attract and retain highly-skilled foreign nationals and grow the economy while at the same time addressing socio-economic challenges. From a business perspective, this represents an opportunity to adopt more positive immigration practices, including those that enable access to work for family members of international employees.

Stephen Marlin, Associate Director, PwC South Africa

Wibke Bittner, Head of Administration & ServiceCenter, Global Assignments at Volkswagen Group provided us with an overview of the work that Volkswagen are doing to improve dual career prospects in China. She highlighted key factors affecting policy development in this immense country including the incredible diversity of visa regulations existing from province to type of contract. Case examples were provided to show how Volkswagen, through their partner support programme, have actively helped employee spouses to access employment or gain skills while on assignment.

Partner support is a critical success factor for international assignments – more global networks, less red tape.

Wibke Bittner, Head of Administration and ServiceCenter, Global Assignments, Volkswagen Group

In our third panel, we looked at areas where the Foundation has seen success (the UK, US and EU) but where recent political change might pose a risk of policy roll-back. We began with **Professor Manning, Chair of the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC)**. He explained that it was important for business to respond to the MAC's [call for evidence on the economic and social impact of the UK's exit from the EU](#). He welcomed feedback as it will help to inform migration policy development in the UK. The consultation deadline is 27 October. The MAC have been gathering evidence in many different ways – including talking to stakeholders at events such as this one – and they will continue to do so in the coming months.



Professor Alan Manning

Permits Foundation has a great working relationship ‘across the pond’ with the Council for Global Immigration (CFG I). Since 2001, we have worked together and seen significant improvements in the US, helping to bring about legislative change allowing spouses of L1 and certain E visas (treaty traders) to access work. We were thankful to **Andrew Yewdell, Global Immigration Specialist from the CFG I** for talking us through the key pieces of legislation that might affect other categories of spouse visa - in particular the H4 visa - in a “buy American hire American” policy environment. Permits will continue to work together with CFG I and our other stateside sponsors, to prevent roll-back, as our aim remains to move the US into our best practice category of countries.

The parallels between the immigration politics in the US and those in the UK are uncanny. We are facing legislative and regulatory uncertainty in the US, but this much is clear: changes are coming.

Andrew Yewdell, Global Immigration Specialist, Council for Global Immigration

Our final guest speaker of the day was **Jean Lambert, Green Member of the European Parliament (MEP)** for London and the European Parliament’s Employment Committee Rapporteur on revision of the Blue Card Directive. She provided us with an update on Blue Card, highlighting the concern [shared by Permits Foundation](#) that in the proposed revision, family members may be subject to a labour market test before being granted access to work. Thankfully, amendments have been put forward by the European Parliament that would delete this reference to a labour market check and Jean and other MEPs will be pressing for this amendment in upcoming negotiations. Permits Foundation will be contacting key negotiators in Brussels and will keep our sponsors updated on progress.

The European Parliament is clear on this issue - if we want to attract highly-qualified workers we have to stop putting barriers in the way.

Jean Lambert, Member of European Parliament

Questions from the Floor

We had a good round of questions from conference attendees with topics ranging from how to advocate in challenging policy environments and how to press the importance of the issue to governments where enabling dual careers is less of a priority. Our regional networks are important to us, enabling us to make timely contacts with government where there are opportunities to act and particularly in our priority countries. For sponsors interested in how and where we advocate, please take a look at our [sponsor brochure](#).

Attendees expressed interest in hearing more about the sort of sectors experiencing migration and wider issues that might impact migration such as NAFTA. The delegates also discussed the way we talk about migration and how it should be rephrased. There were suggestions that business make more of a case for the global footprint and added value of migration while addressing the feeling people have that they are displaced in their own communities. It was suggested that we could learn from Ireland, where the narrative for migration has always been positive and framed as a national success story.

In particular there was an interest in how sponsors could get more engaged – what windows of opportunity existed and how evidence could be provided by business. On Brexit, Professor Manning explained that the MAC welcomed input from business before the consultation deadline of the 27 October but that there would still be dialogue and back and forth communication after that. Jean Lambert suggested that on Blue Card, action would need to be fairly swift as there was a desire in Brussels to complete negotiations before the end of the Estonian Presidency (31 December 2017). From the Foundation, we reiterated that the business community needs to make its voice heard. The Foundation has already written to and plans to meet with EU officials on Blue Card. Sponsors will be kept informed of our progress and opportunities to get involved here. Regarding Brexit, **Permits Foundation Chair Gill Gordon** announced that the Foundation will be carrying out its own survey in the coming months and she encouraged sponsors and other stakeholders to participate.

The forthcoming Permits Foundation survey represents a timely opportunity for our network to contribute to the discussion on migration in relation to Brexit, helping us to promote policies that enable dual careers in the global workplace.

Gill Gordon, Permits Foundation Chair and Human Resources Director at Schlumberger

In the closing section of the Conference, we heard from **Founding Board Member Katy van der Wilk Carlton**, who reflected on her time at Permits Foundation since setting it up in 2001 and on the opportunities ahead as she hands the Executive Director baton forward to Michiel. Katy recalled the key moments for Permits Foundation such as breakthroughs in the US and EU and how changes to legislation thanks to the efforts of the Foundation and its networks have made real differences to people working on international assignment. In summing up, she quoted a memorable example from one of the survey respondents who was finally able to work again thanks to legislative change and whose child had said - "I didn't realise women could work too, Mum," Making the importance of the Foundation's work really hit home.

In closing the conference, **Permits Foundation Chair and Schlumberger Human Resources Director Gill Gordon** thanked the speakers, delegates, sponsors and patrons for their contributions and re-emphasised the take home points from the conference (outlined below). We couldn't let all the work that Katy has done over the years go unrecognised and we ended the conference presenting Katy with personal a gift from the Board and Team – we look forward to continuing our work with her and capitalising on her experience as she will remain on the Permits Foundation Board.

It's encouraging that companies and countries are increasingly taking a wider view of the positive impact of allowing family members to work. In addition to enhancing international mobility and economic growth, it also impacts on gender equality, health and well-being and full and productive employment, in line with the UN's sustainable development goals.

Katy van der Wilk-Carlton, Permits Foundation Founding Board Member



Gill Gordon and Katy van der Wilk-Carlton

Take home points from the Conference

- Enabling family members of highly-skilled employees to access employment helps significantly in the attraction and retention of talent, bringing about a triple win for families, business and governments.
- Global businesses are looking to enable dual careers in their work environments because they recognise the benefits from a number of perspectives – CSR, diversity and inclusion, better integration, economic growth.
- The global political landscape around migration is changing and business needs to make its voice heard, to underpin the benefits that migration brings to economy and society.
- Permits Foundation advocacy and evidence gathering provides that opportunity.
 - Businesses should respond to the MAC Consultation. Permits Brexit survey will be out soon.
 - Advocacy in our priority countries is ongoing. Opportunities to support our work will be conveyed to sponsors in our news alerts, online and via social media.
- The network supporting the Foundation is crucial to its success, showing government that there is a broad base of support for what we are striving for. We thank our sponsors for their (financial) contribution and ask other corporations looking to promote dual careers in the global work place to [join us](#).

If you have any questions about the conference, please do get in touch via contact@permitsfoundation.com

Further details regarding the Brexit Survey will be made available in the coming weeks at www.permitsfoundation.com and on twitter @PermitsLobby