

Statement to Joint Oireachtas Committee on Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

Governance in relation to funding in the arts sector

My name is Feargal Ó Coigligh. I am Assistant Secretary General of the Culture Division at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. I am accompanied by Mary Nash Principal Officer in the Arts, Film and Investment Unit and Sinead Copeland Principal Officer in the Creative Ireland Unit of the Department. I thank the Joint Committee for inviting us to discuss governance in relation to funding in the arts sector.

The Culture Division of the Department is responsible for overseeing much of the State's cultural services as well as leading on programme for the Decade of Centenaries up to 2023.

The State's cultural services are, in the main, delivered through agencies and it follows that the majority of the Department's funding is channelled through them.

- The current programme budget for 2018 is just under €130m – this funds on-going operations and funding schemes of the Department and its agencies.
- The capital budget provision for 2018 is just under €30m. This funds investment in national cultural institutions, arts and cultural centres and funding support offered by the Irish Film Board.

Of the total programme budget of €160m in 2018 €68m is provided for the Arts Council, €18m for the Irish Film Board and €45m for our National Cultural Institutions. These include the National Museum of Ireland, the National Gallery of Ireland, the National Library of Ireland, the National Archives, the Irish Museum of Modern Art, the Chester Beatty Library, the National Concert Hall and the Crawford Gallery in Cork. Funding of €4.5m is provided to the Culture Ireland unit of the Department to promote Irish arts and artists on the world stage and €6m is provided for the Creative Ireland Programme.

The Department also supports a range of smaller institutions and organisations with funding such as the Hunt Museum, Marsh's Library and Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, as well as operating capital grant schemes for investing in arts and cultural infrastructure.

The governance relationship between the Department and its agencies is covered by legislation and policy. The Arts Council, Film Board and many of the National Cultural Institutions are established by legislation which sets out the role of the Minister, the Board and the Director in relation to their powers and functions.

In addition, the Department and its agencies are subject to relevant Government policy. The Department communicates policy direction to its agencies through annual funding letters, performance delivery agreements and an annual oversight agreement. The allocation of funding by the Department is subject to certain conditions including compliance with Public Financial Procedures, the Public Spending Code, the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, national and EU procurement rules and procedures, pay and employment procedures and other circulars issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

A significant part of the work of the Culture Division entails ongoing interaction with all its agencies in relation to funding, reporting, staffing, the appointment of Boards and Directors, the delivery of services and overall compliance.

In relation to the arts specifically, the Arts Council is the body established by the Oireachtas as the national agency for promoting and developing the arts in Ireland. At €68.2m, the Arts Council will receive the majority of the Division's current funding in 2018.

It should also be noted that the Arts Act 2003 also empowers the Minister to promote the arts both inside and outside the State. The Act enables the Minister to set the overall policy framework for arts and to channel public funding to the Arts Council. Furthermore the Act recognises the role that local authorities and other public agencies have promoting the Arts. For example, public service broadcasting has a key role in this area. The work of promoting and cherishing the arts and our culture is a task shared by many public and private bodies. It should be noted that Arts Act 2003 specifically provides that the Arts Council is independent in its funding decisions and the Department cannot become involved in these decisions.

In relation to recent initiatives taken by the Department the most notable has been the establishment of the Creative Ireland Programme - launched in December 2016. This followed the success of *Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme*. 2016 was a year of extraordinary cultural reflection and inclusive celebration. The Government recognised that it was important to harness that energy with a new Programme. The Creative Ireland Programme also served as the vehicle to implement much of what was set out in the Draft Framework Policy Document *Culture 2025*.

2017 was the first year of the Creative Ireland Programme and saw many successes – it was also a learning opportunity for the Department to make new connections, explore new policy areas and provide an opportunity to work right across Government. Collaboration is at the heart of the Creative Ireland Programme and provides a framework within which new ideas can be explored such as Cultural and Creative education, the Creative Economy, Health and Wellbeing. The Arts Council, Film Board, National Cultural Institutions, other Government Departments and local authorities are key partners in this collaboration. The Creative Ireland Programme is also about the future, when many of today’s jobs will no longer exist. We know that the most valuable economic resource will be the human imagination – the capacity of every individual person to innovate and create, to solve problems. Developing imaginative and creative skills is crucially important.

2017 saw some significant successes for the Programme which we will build on in 2018:

- The establishment of Creative Ireland Co-ordinators and Culture Teams in every local authority with the assistance of €2m provided by the Departments of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and Housing, Planning and Local Government. The local Culture and Creativity Plans listed over 750 projects, events and initiatives which took place nationwide in 2017 of which an estimated 250 were directly attributable to the Creative Ireland Programme. The Department will double its funding for this element of the Programme in 2018.
- Education is at the heart of the Programme. In December 2017, Creative Youth – a Plan to enable the Creative Potential every Child and Young Person in the country – was launched – a joint effort between the Departments of Culture, Education, Children and our colleagues in the Arts Council. I know the Arts Council will be launching their Creative Schools Initiative shortly to encourage further creativity and culture in our classrooms.

- A pilot scheme giving professional artists and writers easier access to social welfare supports was launched in June.
- A widespread and comprehensive communications strategy was embarked on to engage citizens with the programme using traditional and digital platforms. To complement this, the Department took part in various major events in 2017 as part of the Creative Ireland Programme. These were chosen in order to promote the objectives and underlying values of this new Programme. For example, the live-streaming of the ILLUMINATE talks and performance programme at Electric Picnic was attended by 11,000 people but attracted over 271,000 online views on the Creative Ireland Programme Facebook live stream.

The Creative Ireland Programme is an initiative which is driven by a unit within the Culture Division of the Department. The objectives of the Programme spread right across the full spread of the Department's functions as well as that of its agencies. It also spreads right across Government as seen at the Creative Ireland Forum last month which was addressed by the Taoiseach, the Ministers for Culture, Education, Business, Health and, appropriately, the European Commissioner for Education, Youth, Culture and Sport.

It is an an initiative which will strengthen the place in Irish society of culture and creativity and bring to the fore the important role that the Arts Council, Irish Film Board and National Cultural Institutions all play in the life of the nation.

- Go raibh maith agaibh