

Committee on Budgetary Oversight

5.30 pm on 24 January 2024

Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media

Opening Statement

Good evening Chairperson and members of the committee. I am Mary Nash, Principal Officer in the Arts, Film and Investment Unit of the Department. With me is my colleague, Anthony Donnelly of the Film Unit. On behalf of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media, I thank the committee for this evening's invitation. We welcome the opportunity to discuss the progress on the Committee's recommendations.

I will speak to issues raised in several recommendations while colleagues in the other two Departments will discuss issues relevant to their areas.

Recommendation 4 relates to defining the term quality employment and training.

In the context of the audiovisual industry the term *quality employment and training* is wide-ranging. Regulation 3 of the 2019 Film Regulations allows for *the provision of quality employment and training opportunities* as an option that can satisfy the Minister to allow for the issuing of a Section 481 Certificate. In practice, the provision of quality employment opportunities and provision of training opportunities are separate determinants. Since 2019, to provide training opportunities, a Skills Development Plan (**Tab F**) must be provided in all cases and must contain minimum outputs and outlays. The provision of quality employment is addressed by requiring producer and qualifying companies to undertake to fully comply with all employment and other relevant legislation under Tab M. In addition, the Department lays down criteria under the Safe to Create programme with additional requirements being introduced this year, with the objective of eliminating damaging behaviours such as bullying, harassment, humiliation and victimisation from all creative workplaces and providing respectful and dignified workplaces.

In 2023, Screen Ireland commissioned *The Cultural Dividend Generated by Ireland's Section 481 Film and Television Incentive* and as part of the study sought to define quality employment. Interestingly, the definition of quality employment or 'good jobs' is a growing, but contested, area of research. The term can be subjective and open to interpretation.

Recommendation 11 addresses collaboration and accreditation in the area of training.

As part of its role as the development agency for the Irish audiovisual industry, Screen Ireland builds links between industry and education to establish structured and certified work-based learning programmes from new entrant up to senior career progression levels.

Rather than enumerate lists of courses, a recent example may illustrate more effectively. Screen Ireland in collaboration with Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin) developed a new Level 8 programme for screen professionals to gain accredited recognition for their skills learned on-the-job.

Potential learners can gain entry to this programme via RPEL - Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning. This means that screen industry professionals who have not had the opportunity to engage in formal study to Level 7 who can demonstrate that they have achieved comparable learning in the workplace, are eligible for the programme. It is an 18-month taught part-time programme, with delivery being flexible to allow participants to continue in full-time careers.

The resulting degree – a Bachelor of Arts in Screen Industry Practice will be comparable to other BA honours degrees in TU Dublin.

It will be open to people across the screen industries and is not a professional or department-specific qualification.

Recommendation 14 speaks to stakeholder engagement.

A stakeholder forum will be held in Dublin in February. The configuration will incorporate a mixture of plenary and breakout sessions and workshops. The objective will be to consider the four areas identified by this Committee i.e.

- 1) maximise the benefits of Section 481;
- 2) employment Rights;
- 3) copyright issues;
- 4) the fourth topic will incorporate 'other matters which are of concern to the film Industry some identified in advance.

There will be a particular focus on ensuring that all stakeholders are given the opportunity to express their views and have their voices heard.

Finally to update the Committee on the latest metrics. In 2023, the Department issued 118 Certificates to 75 companies. This brings the total number of Certificates issued to 435 for the period 2020 to 2023 or an average of 109 per annum. The 118 Certificates issued last year included 25 for Animation Projects, 30 for feature films, 44 for TV drama and 19 for Creative Documentaries.

While this overview touches only briefly on a range of issues, Anthony and I are happy to expand any on topic and to engage with questions.