

FAO: Joint Committee on Media, Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sport and the Gaeltacht

Ref: JCM-I-393 – **Opening Statement (c)**

Re: Invitation to Joint Oireachtas Committee’s Pre-Legislative Scrutiny of the Online Safety and Media Regulation Bill dated Thursday 27th May 2021 at 12.30pm

From: Joint Creative Audiovisual Sectoral Group

C. Opening Statement Document

A National Media Creative Content Fund

The Joint Creative Audiovisual Sectoral Group welcomes the opportunity to talk with this Joint Committee with specific reference to the proposed levy scheme in the Online Safety and Media Regulation Bill. We believe this levy could seed a National Media Creative Content Fund that will stimulate the audiovisual creative industry, allowing the Irish production sector to compete internationally by bringing local stories to a global audience and in doing so creating and sustaining additional high quality jobs and cultural capital.

Audiences are consuming high quality, high budget content, with exponential growth in the Subscription Video on Demand (SVOD) sector with Netflix and Disney+ the market leaders. The budgets required to compete with this content are impossible for the indigenous sector to fund on its own. A Content Fund can become an enabler of this quality programming, as Irish producers will be in a stronger position if they approach the international market with a greater proportion of the budget already in place. This would transform the industry here in Ireland and combined with existing funds (i.e. Broadcasters, Section 481) it would deliver the additional funding required to compete at the highest level.

The National Media Creative Content Fund would support Irish independent producers to develop and produce a range of high end Irish programming aimed at both the domestic and the international markets. Recent examples would be Golden Globe and BAFTA nominated **Normal People** and Golden Globe, BAFTA and Academy Award nominated animated film **Wolfwalkers**. These projects used Irish production companies, Irish directors, Irish composers, Irish crew, Irish writers and Irish post- production facilities. The projects supported by this Content Fund would be authentic and relevant to Ireland, but with international appeal.

It would be mandatory that all qualifying projects would be owned or co-owned by the Irish independent producers. This will retain the intellectual property (IP) with the producers, allowing them to build a catalogue and a set of assets and thus to expand. The downstream benefits of retaining the IP cannot be overstated. It is how the Scandinavians and the Israelis have transformed their creative industries.

There would be an emphasis on projects which will be carried on online platforms and players, as well as on more traditional broadcasting channels. This will allow this content to be consumed by younger audiences.

A National Media Creative Content Fund would allow the Irish creative sector to develop its own distinctive brand, based on what Ireland is best known for – its people, its warmth and its scenery. There are huge downstream benefits to the Irish economy of an Irish audiovisual brand. Visiting the locations of *Game of Thrones* is the single biggest tourist attraction in Northern Ireland.

We recommend that thought be given to establishing the National Media Creative Content Fund on the West Coast of Ireland.

The Benefits of the Fund

- Preserves Irish storytelling against huge international competition
- Encourages Irish *and* international broadcasters/platforms to fund Irish productions
- With Irish independent producers retaining IP, allows these companies and the industry to grow and prosper
- Ireland's unique position as an English speaking country within the EU – series in English are far more attractive internationally
- High end, high budget programming employs large numbers of highly skilled people on both full time and contract basis
- Huge downstream benefits in tourism from Irish based series

The National Content Creative Sector believe that there is significant untapped potential within Ireland and we look forward to engaging with the Committee to discuss these issues further.