

Appearance before the
Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media
by the



Music & Entertainment Association of Ireland

23rd June 2021

Opening Statement

1. The Music & Entertainment Association of Ireland would like to thank Deputy Niamh Smyth, the Joint Committee, and the Clerks of the Committee for their work, and invitation to MEAI to appear here today to discuss the impact of Covid-19 on the Music & Entertainment (M&E) sector. MEAI would also like to thank most sincerely the members of this committee, and to members of the Oireachtas who have raised issues relating to this sector and offered their voice and assistance to MEAI on numerous occasions.
2. On March 12th, 2020, the Music & Entertainment Industry ground to a sudden halt as a result of Covid-19. As the days passed beyond the initial lockdown, it became apparent that as long as social distancing was a requirement to slow the spread of Covid-19, this industry would be at its mercy. As of today, the 23rd June 2021, we are now on day 469 of 'lockdown' or severe restrictions which prevent this sector from working.
3. On the 27th April 2021, MEAI made a written submission to this Joint Committee on the Impact of Covid-19 on the Music & Entertainment Sector. In that submission we highlighted a number of areas of concern for consideration including:
 - Social Protection
 - Banking Issues
 - Business Supports from Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment
 - Sector Specific Support from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and
 - Guidelines, Consideration & Provision for reopening.
4. Since then, the landscape has changed considerably and issues relating to certain topics in that submission need urgent and swift action.

These issues are:

 - A. The proposed cuts to the PUP from September and transitioning of the lowest rate recipients to Jobseeker's thus classifying them as 'unemployed.'
 - B. The need for Social Protection and sector supports when the sector is in a state of phased reopening and for those supports to continue until the sector can function fully without restrictions and/or social distancing.

- C. The Music & Entertainment Business Assistance Scheme (MEBAS) contains criteria not shared by other Government Supports, namely 'minimum business costs' and 'publication of recipients.'
 - D. Failte Ireland Guidelines which state "*No live or loud music permitted. No live performances are permitted*" are preventing the sector from a phased reopening process and we would like to see test gigs conducted in licensed premises and social settings so that guidelines can be created for the safe and responsible return of live entertainment in those settings.
 - E. Banking Issues and Mortgage/Loan repayments are still an issue
 - F. We would also recommend that the VAT rate for this sector be aligned to the VAT rate for the Tourism and Hospitality sector which would be a meaningful stimulus and support to the sector when reopening can take place.
5. Finally we would like to state that there is a general lack of understanding and various misconceptions of the nature of the Music & Entertainment sector and how it works. The members of the Oireachtas who we have been fortunate enough to engage with over the past 16 months all have understanding of the severity of the problems, and have empathy and sympathy for the situation, but this compassion and comprehension isn't necessarily reflected in the supports that have been given up to now.

Appearing on behalf of the Music & Entertainment Association of Ireland are:

Jackie Conboy

Matt McGranaghan