



MUSIC AND ENTERTAINMENT ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND

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Honourable Members of the Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport, and Media,

My name is Jackie Conboy (co-founder of MEAI) and I am joined by Rebecca Cappuccini (independent artist and spokesperson for MEAI) and Aidan Butler (MEAI committee) and former radio producer with RTE 1.

We appreciate the opportunity to address you today on a matter of utmost importance, one that resonates at the core of Ireland's cultural fabric—the significance of airplay for our musicians. As we stand at a critical juncture, it's imperative to recognise the profound impact that the music and entertainment industry has endured over the past few years, exacerbated by the unparalleled challenges posed by COVID-19. We were the first to close and the last to open, witnessing a seismic shift that has left indelible marks on our landscape. A staggering 37% of our workforce has departed, underscoring the urgent need for strategic interventions. However, it is vital to acknowledge that the issues facing our industry existed long before the onset of the pandemic, as detailed in our last three pre-budget submissions.

1. Sustaining Jobs:

The heartbeat of our industry lies in the talented individuals who dedicate their lives to creating and curating the music and entertainment experiences that define our culture. Airplay is not just about melodies; it is a lifeline for sustaining jobs. The current crisis demands a strategic focus on elevating airplay as a crucial component in rebuilding our workforce and fortifying the economic foundations of our industry.

2. Identity and Culture:

Our music is more than mere sound; it encapsulates the very essence of who we are as a people. Airplay serves as the resonant voice that amplifies our identity and culture. It is the guardian of our stories, traditions, and cultural heritage, and as such, it deserves heightened recognition and support.

3. Economic Opportunities:

Beyond the notes and rhythms, airplay is an economic catalyst, presenting opportunities that extend far beyond the studio and stage. Increased airwave visibility directly translates into higher record sales, concert attendance, and streaming numbers. Elevating the importance of airplay is essential for ensuring the economic prosperity of our musicians and the broader industry.

4. Ecosystem:

Consider airplay as the lifeblood of our musical ecosystem. It sustains and nourishes talent, creating an environment for growth, innovation, and sustained cultural relevance. A thriving music ecosystem cultivated through airplay is indispensable for the long-term sustainability of our industry.

5. Lack of TV:

In a world dominated by visuals, the lack of TV exposure for our musicians becomes a critical gap. Airplay becomes not just a channel for auditory engagement but the primary avenue for reaching audiences, compensating for the visual deficit and ensuring the continued relevance of our musicians.

6. Lack of Interest from Stations:

Despite the wealth of musical talent in Ireland, there is a noticeable lack of interest from stations in discovering and promoting new artists. Addressing this issue is pivotal for fostering a diverse and dynamic musical landscape, one that reflects the depth and breadth of our creative reservoir.

7. Definition of Homegrown:

As we navigate these challenges, we must grapple with the definition of 'Irish Song.' What truly constitutes a homegrown/domestic song or artist? Clarifying this definition is not just an exercise in semantics; it is fundamental for creating a supportive environment for our local talent and ensuring that the term resonates authentically with our cultural identity.

In conclusion, airplay is the thread that weaves through our musical and cultural heritage fabric. It sustains jobs, preserves identity and culture, creates economic opportunities, and nurtures our musical ecosystem. As we collectively strive to overcome the hurdles predating and exacerbated by COVID-19, let us recognise the transformative power of airplay in revitalising the heart and soul of Irish music. The future of our industry rests in our collective commitment to elevating airplay as a cornerstone of our cultural legacy.

Thank you for your attention and dedication to the well-being of Ireland's vibrant music and entertainment industry.