

# Employment and Economic Impact Assessment of Covid-19 on the Arts Sector in Ireland

Arts Council

Executive note

Reliance restricted

12 June 2020

## Contents

Introduction.....	1
Methodology and approach.....	2
1. The development of the Arts sector is essential to making Ireland a better country for all.....	3
1.1 The Arts sector is job-intensive and supports balanced regional development, as well as Ireland's international attractiveness.....	3
1.2 The Arts sector keeps our heritage alive by bringing together people of all backgrounds .....	3
2. The Arts sector was one of the first to be hit and is likely to be one of the last to recover from COVID-19 .....	4
2.1 The impact of restrictions on the Arts sector could be irreversible .....	4
2.2 The Arts sector has been significantly impacted by COVID-19 despite support from public stakeholders .....	4
2.3 Customers' behaviours will be key to the recovery of the sector .....	4
3. The Economic Impact Assessment highlights that the effects of COVID-19 could last until 2022 .....	5
3.1 Modelling different scenarios is the most effective way to prepare for what might lie ahead .....	5
3.2 The Arts sector will be more impacted than the rest of the Irish economy in 2020...6	
3.3 The recovery of the Arts sector may take until 2025 if nothing is done to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19.....	8
4. Next steps: an ambitious plan to support creative industries, today and tomorrow ..9	
4.1 An ambitious plan is needed to answer one of the greatest threats in the history of the Irish Arts sector.....	9
4.2 An objective, tailored and coordinated recovery plan for Creative Industries could maximise efficiency and leave a positive legacy.....	10
Appendix 1 - Economic impact figures.....	11
Appendix 2 - Arts sector jobs in Ireland.....	12
Appendix 3 - Key assumptions for the three scenarios .....	13

Deidre Behan  
The Arts Council  
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Dublin, 12<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Dear Deidre,

In accordance with the terms of our engagement agreement (the 'Agreement') dated 25 May 2020, we have assisted the Arts Council in a study of the economic impacts of COVID-19 on the Irish Arts sector. Our role is to provide you with our analysis and findings. We have not performed any management functions or made any management decisions.

#### Limitations of scope

We have not, except to such extent as you have requested and we have agreed to in writing, sought to verify the accuracy of the data, information and explanations provided by yourselves, and you are solely responsible for this data, information and explanations. We have therefore relied on the information provided by you to be accurate and complete in all material respects. This report has been provided to you for the above Purpose only and should not be used or relied upon for any other purpose, nor should it be disclosed to, or discussed with, any other party without our prior consent in writing.

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We appreciate the opportunity to have provided EY's Advisory services to you.

Should you have any queries or comments regarding this report or if we may be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me on +353 1 4750555.

Yours sincerely



Shane Mac Sweeney  
Partner

## Introduction

Forecasters and economists continue to debate and study the impacts of COVID-19 on the global economy. They are debating about what shape a recovery may take: the most optimistic scenario, a rapid bounce back (a 'V' curve), a longer recovery (a 'Tick' curve) or a double-dip crisis (a 'W' curve). It is increasingly apparent that a 'V' curve is now unlikely and that the recovery might take up to two years or longer depending on the evolution of the virus.

Discussion of curves and deficits can seem far-removed from the real, human impacts of what is happening. Behind this terminology, all sectors of society - families, business leaders and workers - are worrying about their health today, and their livelihoods tomorrow.

During these highly uncertain times, sectors are not feeling the burden equally. The Arts and Entertainment sector was one of the first and most severely hit, along with the tourism sector.

Arts is not only vital for our economy, but its development is at the heart of the Project Ireland 2040 aspirations to build a more sustainable and resilient economic model which is less dependent on Dublin. With a higher focus on indigenous SMEs rather than big multinational companies, the Arts sector provides a unique and locally embedded complement to Ireland's more widely publicised sectors multilateral benefit.

The Arts sector is a job-intensive sector, with many jobs classified as pillars of the Irish economy, such as in aviation, hotels, B&Bs, pubs and restaurants, festivals, museums, exhibitions, and conferences.

The Arts could act during the crisis as a *civic force field*<sup>1</sup> *enriching our cultural lives*<sup>2</sup>. It provides joy and inspiration; it helps to energise us; it is a gateway for people to experience our society and all it has to offer. Covid-19 has brought the importance and value of community into focus and in many ways the arts sector is synonymous with community as a place and an expression of positivity. For this reason and the ones presented thereafter, it should be at the heart of our recovery strategy.

<sup>1</sup> Director of the Arts Council, Maureen Kenneally, 25 May 2020

<sup>2</sup> Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Josepha Madigan, 3 April 2020

## Methodology and approach

EY were commissioned by the Arts Council in May 2020 to support the work of the COVID-19 Arts Council Advisory Group. It aims to assess at a high level the potential economic impact of COVID-19 on Arts Council-funded organisations and the core Arts sector in Ireland<sup>3</sup>.

This assessment is based on the latest data available and following the methodological guidelines of the Government of Ireland<sup>4</sup>.

The Economic Impact Assessment is based on the latest input-output tables published by the CSO as well as EY Ireland Economic Forecasts. It is based on the direct contribution of the core Arts sector to the Irish economy (e.g. creative, arts and entertainment activities). This means that the figures quoted in this report only refer to direct GVA and direct full-time equivalent jobs. Indirect and induced impacts are not taken into account so as to not overestimate the impact of COVID-19 and allow decision-makers to have more sector-specific information at their disposal.

The three scenarios have been built in conjunction with the Arts Council to assess all negative impacts generated by COVID-19:

- A health crisis creating restrictions to the way businesses operate and spend and the way people move
- An economic crisis reducing consumer purchasing power
- A behavioural shift changing consumer spending

In order to account for the diversity of the Arts sector, it may be helpful to carry out a more detailed analysis at a sub-sector level in the coming weeks, both from an economic and strategic perspective.

This analysis should integrate the particular the financial situation of Arts sector companies prior to COVID-19, the new sanitary restrictions and the potential impact at a regional level. This analysis should support decision-making by identifying strategic recommendations and assessing their costs and benefits for the Exchequer and the different stakeholders impacted.

Finally, this analysis should consider the wider impact on the creative industries sector<sup>5</sup>. This analysis would aim to maximise the efficiency of the plan in the short term and leave a positive legacy by making the Arts sector more resilient in the long-term.

<sup>3</sup> The core Arts sector is based on the latest CSO data. It corresponds to Division 90 "Creative, Arts and entertainment activities" and includes the activity of performing arts, support activities to performing arts, artistic creation, operation of Arts facilities.

<sup>4</sup> Government of Ireland, *Economic Considerations for Reinstating Economic Activity*, May 2020

<sup>5</sup> According to the UK British Council, Creative industries refer to: Literature and publishing, Radio and television, Advertising, Film and Video, Library, archives, museums, and other cultural activities, Software, Performing arts, Support activities to performing arts, Artistic creation, Operation of Arts facilities.

# 1. The development of the Arts sector is essential to making Ireland a better country for all

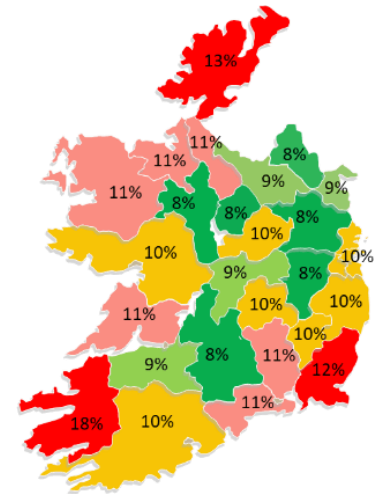
The Arts Council, local authorities, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG) and many other local stakeholders play a key role in the development of the Arts sector. Over the past three years, the Arts Council and its partners have successfully implemented an ambitious strategy *Making Great Art Work*, perfectly aligned with *Project Ireland 2040*.

## 1.1 The Arts sector is job-intensive and supports balanced regional development, as well as Ireland's international attractiveness

The wider Arts sector (e.g. Arts, Entertainment and Recreation) is fostering the development of regional economies through employment, enabling Ireland to become more balanced. With almost two thirds (67%) of all jobs in the Arts sector located outside of Dublin, the sector directly supports the ambition of balanced regional development within the Irish economy. The Arts sector also contributes directly to the wider economy. In Q4 2019 this sector contributed over €1.16 billion in GVA, directly supporting almost 55,000 jobs. The wider Arts sector is two times more job-intensive than the average sector in Ireland. Public investment in this sector is particularly relevant to fight unemployment<sup>6</sup>.

The Arts are essential to the development of other sectors of the economy, in particular, tourism. Arts and events attract tourists from all over the world. The number of overseas visitors coming to Ireland to attend a festival was projected to reach 300,000 by 2022 according to Fáilte Ireland.

The core of the Arts sector (e.g. creative, arts and entertainment activities) sustains roughly 10,000 jobs and is part of a wider supply chain. The key sectors which benefit the most from the indirect impact of the Arts sector include computing and consultancy services (16%), administration and support services (13%) and activities of membership organisations (8%).



Proportion of Arts, entertainment and tourism jobs per county in 2019  
(source: CSO, 2019, EY Analysis 2020)

## 1.2 The Arts sector keeps our heritage alive by bringing together people of all backgrounds

The Arts sector has the unique ability to bring people together from varying demographic types to enjoy one common purpose. This can create a sense of social cohesion and community. The existence of Arts centres provides a physical place where community members can gather to learn, experience, teach and enjoy the arts. As of 2016, a total of 488 venues were identified to be involved in the presentation of the Arts to the public. Without such access to the Arts, it can be difficult for communities to find a central hub that everyone can enjoy, thus contributing to local quality of life and attractiveness by keeping vibrant communities together.

The Arts sector has a significant impact on rural communities. Often Dublin and the larger cities receive much of the funding and development made available. However, the Arts sector strives for inclusivity, both on a local level in terms of individual access, and on a national level in terms of regional funding. In 2019 only 32% of Arts funding was allocated to local authorities in Dublin. The remaining 68% of funding was spread across local authorities in 25 different counties throughout Ireland.

The Arts sector supports and promotes the development, education and inspiration of young people and children. The Arts sector works in tandem with the Department of Education and Skills developing art-related educational schemes, such as the 'Arts in Education Charter', while direct investment in schools enables children to engage in and produce ambitious original work together.

<sup>6</sup> GVA per job in the Arts sector is €60,000 versus €134,200 in the rest of the economy. CSO 2019, EY Analysis 2020

## 2. The Arts sector was one of the first to be hit and is likely to be one of the last to recover from COVID-19

The Arts sector, along with the tourism sector, has been more affected than others and will be, for the foreseeable future, given the nature of its activity (public-facing), the size of its companies (SMEs), the seasonality of its activity (summer dependent) and the nature of the services offered (non-essential consumer spending).

There are three main mechanisms through which the COVID-19 crisis will have a lasting effect on the economy:

1. The actual economic and operational impact of legally restricting the opening of Arts venues
2. The ensuing recession's downward pressure on consumer spending and disposable income
3. The potentially most damaging, but hardest to quantify impacts are the behavioural changes which will result from this crisis, in terms of individuals' propensity to consume Arts products and services.

### 2.1 The impact of restrictions on the Arts sector could be irreversible

The Arts is the least confident of all sectors in its ability to operate through COVID-19<sup>7</sup>. Restrictions will have a negative and long-lasting effect on its activity.

- Government plans will reduce drastically the activity of the Arts sector until at least August 10<sup>th</sup> and social distancing could apply until 2021.
- The negative impact of restrictions will be amplified by the seasonality of some cultural sub-sectors, such as festivals.
- Spending that did not occur will not be compensated for later in the year.
- Being comprised mostly of SMEs, the Arts sector is particularly subject to cash flow issues.

### 2.2 The Arts sector has been significantly impacted by COVID-19 despite support from public stakeholders

The current impact of COVID-19 is hard to quantify due to its rapidly evolving nature. However, the magnitude of the effect will be unparalleled, as shown by early indicators. According to the Arts Council, more than 2.4m audiences were impacted by COVID-19 in Ireland, with 91% of organisations reporting cancelled or postponed events since March 2020<sup>8</sup>.

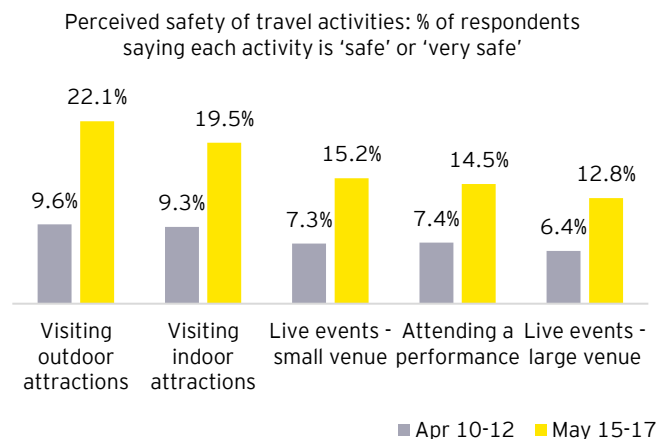
Arts sector workers have been impacted by COVID-19. 43% of sectoral employees were in receipt of the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme or the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (as of 28/05/2020). If some can work from home (e.g. painters, writers, administrative), others (e.g. performers, technicians) might be left with no revenue. Often it is difficult for some artists to access Government schemes.

### 2.3 Customers' behaviours will be key to the recovery of the sector

The concept of saving for a rainy day has never been more pertinent, with households increasing their savings and reducing non-essential expenditure, such as on the Arts, in anticipation of job insecurity. In April 2020, deposits from Irish resident households more than tripled and increased by €3.0 billion<sup>9</sup>.

People will also fear for their health and safety in the context of COVID-19 and a potential second peak. Previous crises demonstrated that countries affected (e.g. N1H1 in Mexico, SARS in Thailand or EU terror attacks) could take 9 months or longer to go back to pre-crisis level. The International Air Travel Association (IATA) do not foresee air travel returning to pre-Covid levels until 2023 which will reduce overseas demand.

Behavioural effects will differ between demographics, countries and backgrounds. This analysis remains highly volatile: despite its low level, perceived safety of cultural activities doubled between April 2020 and May 2020<sup>10</sup>.



<sup>7</sup> ONS 'Coronavirus and the economic impacts on the UK, 21 May 2020'

<sup>8</sup> Arts Council, *Survey of artists on COVID-19 impact*, April 2020

<sup>9</sup> Central Bank of Ireland, Statistical release, 29 May 2020

<sup>10</sup> Destination Analysts' Coronavirus Travel Sentiment Index Report, Released May 18 2020

### 3. The Economic Impact Assessment highlights that the effects of COVID-19 could last until 2022

#### 3.1 Modelling different scenarios is the most effective way to prepare for what might lie ahead

COVID-19 will generate three interlinked crisis following their own timeline, over the coming weeks and months:

- A health crisis creating restrictions to the way businesses operate and the way people move
- An economic crisis reducing consumer spending and investment
- A behavioural shift changing consumer preferences

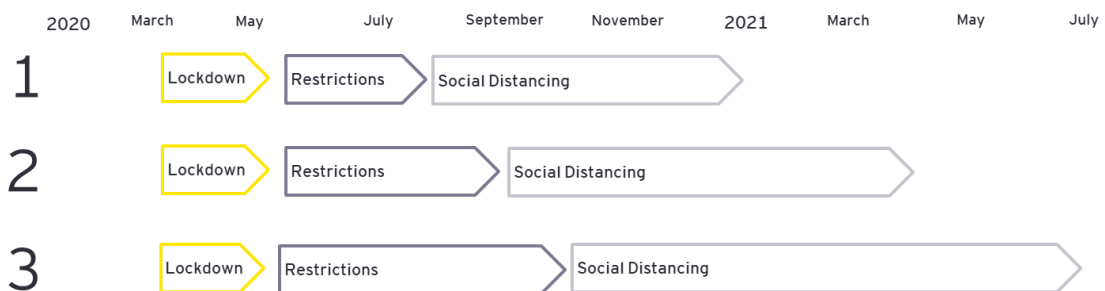
Given the evolving nature of these crisis, the Economic Impact Assessment was built around different scenarios. These scenarios are based on the latest CSO data and focused on the Creative, Arts and Entertainment activities in Ireland which represents the core of the Arts sector (e.g. performing Arts, support activities to performing Arts, artistic creation, operation of Arts facilities). A case study has also been carried out to assess the specific impact on Arts council funded organisations.

These three scenarios are built on different types of impacts, detailed in the Appendix of this document and in particular:

- The impact on activity, driven by government restrictions and social distancing guideline
- The impact on consumer spending, driven by evolving customer behaviours and purchasing power
- The impact on exports, driven by oversea visitors
- The impact on investment, driven by public and private stakeholders

As agreed with the COVID-19 working Group, the three scenarios are based on the following assumptions regarding restrictions applying to the Arts sector specifically (e.g. closed venues, closed borders, restricted businesses operations, social distancing guidelines).

The Arts sector will have to adapt over the coming months to the evolving nature of this pandemic and follow government guidelines. This situation might last until a vaccine is found.



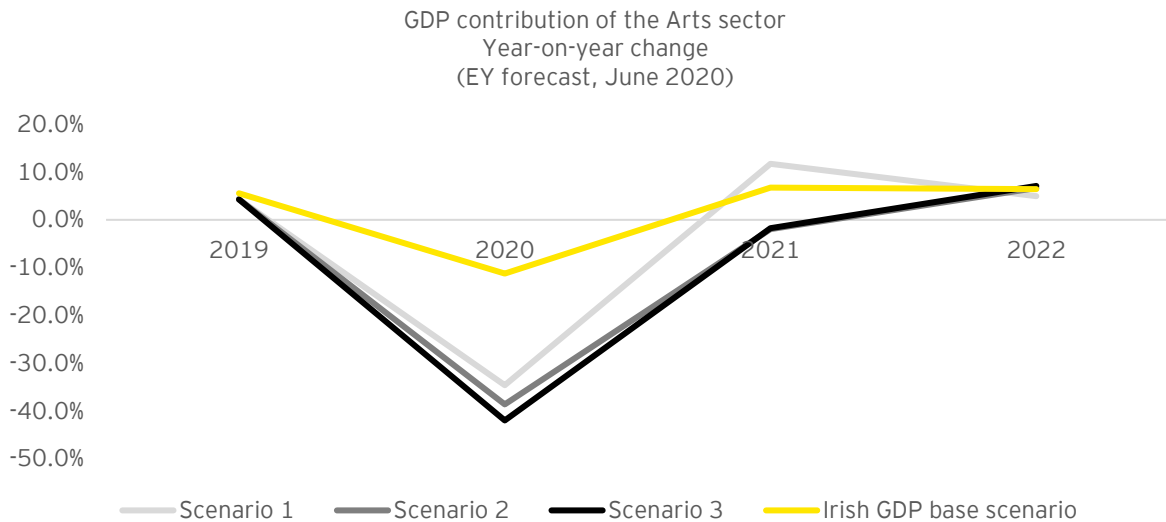
Impact assessment of COVID-19 on the Irish Arts sector, Overview of the three scenarios  
Source: EY Analysis, June 2020



### 3.2 The Arts sector will be more impacted than the rest of the Irish economy in 2020

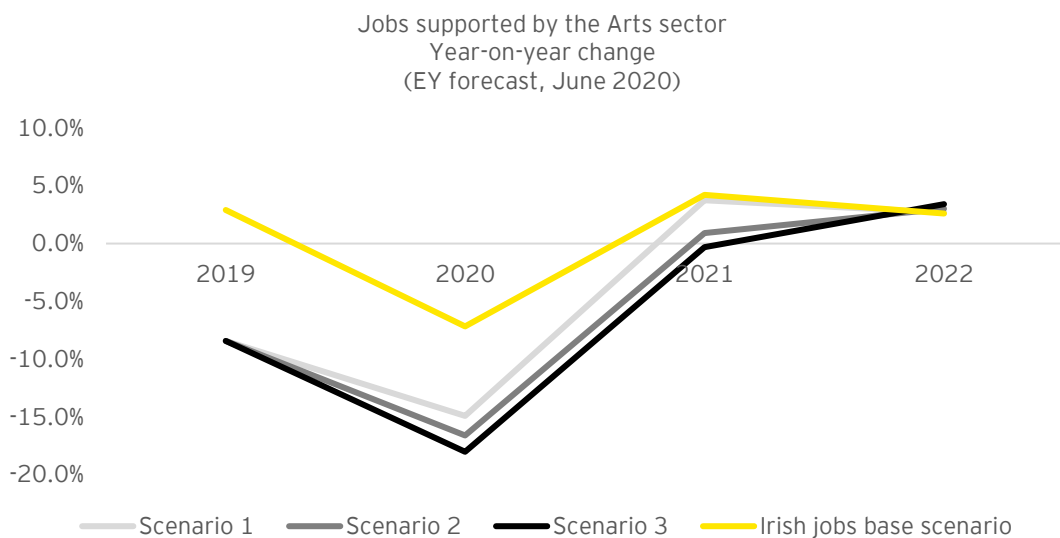
The economic impact of COVID-19 on the Irish Arts sector will be felt mainly in 2020. It should be more substantial than in the rest of the economy due to the specific nature of Arts activities and the restrictions that will keep applying to this sector during the coming months.

In 2020, the recession in the Arts sector will be between **-34.6% and -42%** compared with **-11%** in the Irish economy as a whole. This is projected to cost between €250m and €300m to Irish GDP.



The impact in terms of jobs will also be more substantial for the Arts sector due to the scale of the recession but also the fact that it is more job-intensive than the rest of the economy. The scale of the loss may be sufficiently severe to push many organisations into bankruptcy - this may mean they are not there to lead a recovery and the bounce may be much less in 2021 with a diminished sector. These downside risks could weaken this outlook further.

In 2020, the decrease in the number of jobs supported by the core Arts sector is projected to be between **-14.9% and -18.0%** compared with **-7%** in the Irish economy. COVID-19 is forecast to put between **1,500 and 1,900 arts jobs at risk**.



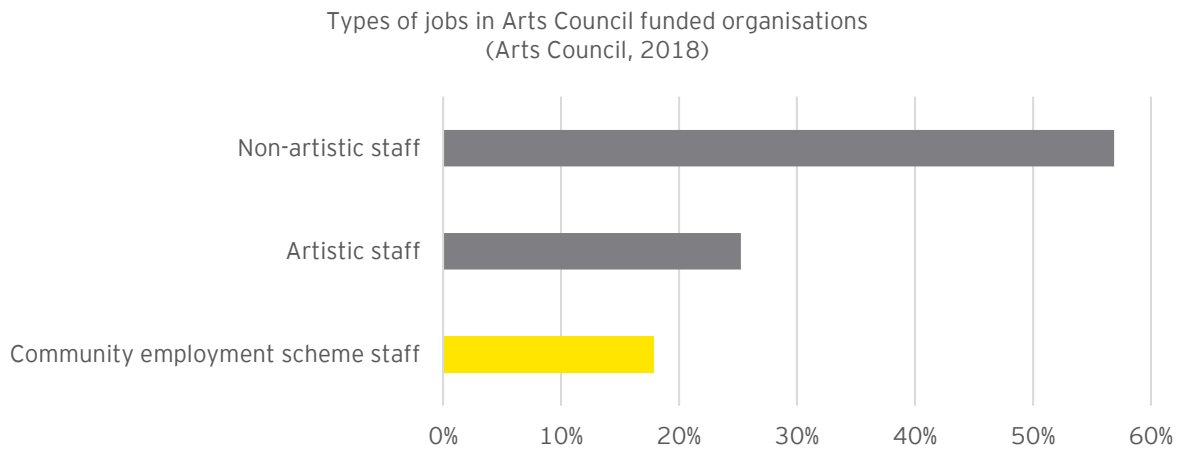
### Case study - The economic impacts of COVID-19 should be significantly lower for Arts Council funded organisations in 2020

The reliance on public sector funding rather than other sources of income such as sponsorship, sales or donations will make Arts Council funded organisations more resilient to COVID-19 impact in the short term.

In 2018, the 311 Arts Council funded organisations spent €166m<sup>11</sup> directly employing 1,725 staff. The Arts Council, the local authorities and other grant funding covered 41% of this amount. These organisations are dependent on public support. In 2020, the Arts Council forecasts that they should continue to benefit from it. The organisations who had arrangements with the Arts Council or local authorities will continue to be supported. Of the 46% of artist contracts which have been postponed, 92% of local authorities intend to honour commitments to artists through alternative work or postponement of activities<sup>12</sup>.

Because of the specificities of this business model, the economic impacts on Arts Council funded organisations should be between 40% and 50% less severe than in the rest of the Arts sector. The GVA generated by these organisations should decrease by 15% to 20%<sup>13</sup> which could put between 80 and 120 jobs at risk in 2020.

The job structure of Arts Council funded organisations is quite specific with a relatively high proportion of staff on the community employment scheme (18%). Despite their positive social impacts locally, these jobs are likely to be particularly impacted as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. The situation should go back to normal a year sooner than the rest of the Arts sector in 2022 or 2023 because of a higher reliance on public funding.



<sup>11</sup> Arts Council, AAR, 2018

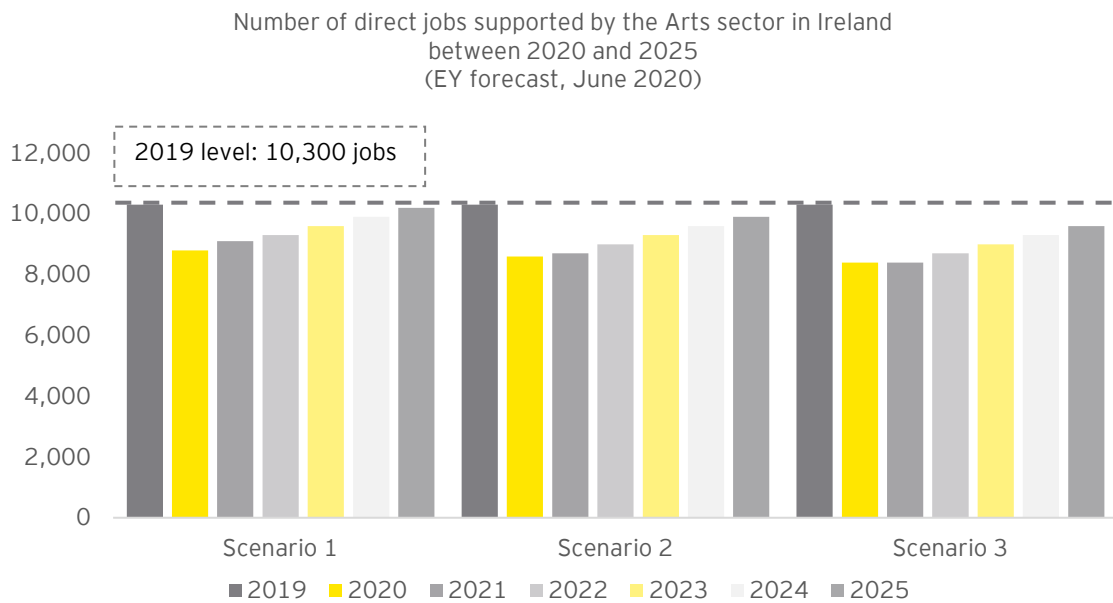
<sup>12</sup> Arts Council, *Survey of local authorities on COVID-19 impact*, March 2020

<sup>13</sup> A more granular analysis is needed to assess in which arts sub-sector each of the 311 organisations is operating and how likely they are to be impacted by COVID-19

### 3.3 The recovery of the Arts sector may take until 2025 if nothing is done to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19

The recovery of the Arts sector to pre-crisis levels will not follow a V curve due to the specificities of this sector. What has not been spent during the first months of 2020 will not be compensated later in the year due to cancelled events, fewer overseas visitors, rainy day savings, reduced private investment, prolonged social distancing guidelines and the apprehension of people regarding social gatherings.

While it is hard to assess impacts until 2025 not knowing how the pandemic will evolve over the coming months, the data currently available predicts that the arts sector will not go back to 2019 levels in terms of jobs until 2025. Changes in public consumption of and spending on the arts, currently unknown, will likely have a further negative impact on this forecast because some organisations could close down and not be there to support a potential recovery after 2023.



## 4. Next steps: an ambitious plan to support creative industries, today and tomorrow

### 4.1 An ambitious plan is needed to answer one of the greatest threats in the history of the Irish Arts sector

The high-level economic impact assessment of COVID-19 on the Arts sector reveals the damage this health, economic and behavioural crisis could cause in terms of jobs, tourism attractiveness and balanced regional development throughout Ireland.

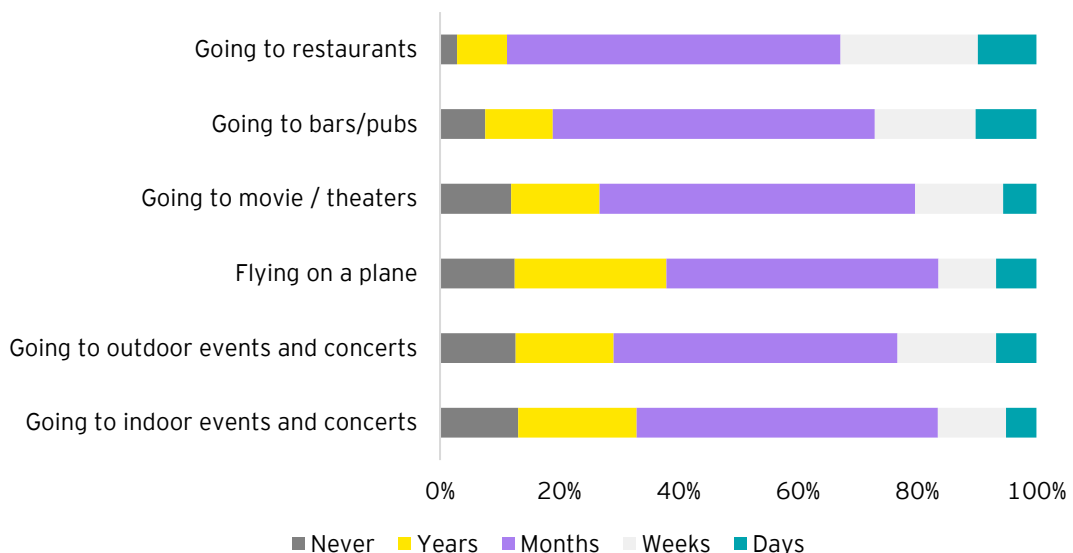
More than any other sector, the Arts sector will be impacted harder and longer for five main reasons:

1. Social interactions are within its DNA
  - Restrictions will apply to this sector for longer than others and paralyse its activity. Social distancing measures will be particularly difficult to implement while remaining profitable.
2. Lost income to date is lost for good
  - We cannot expect expenditure in the coming months to compensate for the exhibitions, plays or festivals that were cancelled due to COVID-19.
3. Arts events are highly seasonal
  - Restrictions during spring and summer season disproportionately effects revenues.
4. SMEs are at the crux of the sector
  - Profitability, cash flow and investment capacity are limited which reduces the sector survival rate.
5. Arts & leisure spending is considered non-essential
  - In the context of an economic downturn, this spending would be most likely cut first.

Thankfully, just over 10% of the sector will continue to benefit from public support but the remaining 90% are primarily dependent on consumer spending.

For the Arts sector, a V shape recovery is highly unlikely because the crisis will have long-lasting effects on people's minds and purchasing power. 13% of people are still saying in May 2020 that they will never feel comfortable going back to a concert and another 20% say it will take them a year.

How long will it take for you to feel comfortable doing the following? (UK)  
(source: EY Future Consumers' Index, UK data, May 2020)



It is very likely that incentives will have to be put in place to bring people back to Arts venues when it is considered safe to do so by those in authority. Otherwise, the 43% of Arts sector employees in receipt of TWSS or PUP will be at great risk once Government supports begin to weaken or are removed.

## 4.2 An objective, tailored and coordinated recovery plan for Creative Industries could maximise efficiency and leave a positive legacy

During the next few months, every sector will assess the impact of COVID-19 to demonstrate that support mechanisms should be put in place. It will be key to provide unbiased information to the government in order to build trust and support decision-making. Every recommendation should assess potential costs and benefits at a national and regional level, from a social and economic point of view.

This assessment objectively demonstrates that the COVID-19 crisis will not only have negative economic impacts, but would present challenges for the delivery of the tourism, culture and heritage component of Project Ireland 2040. To this extent, it is aligned with government guidelines detailed in the report *Economic Considerations for Reinstating Economic Activity*.

An efficient plan should consider two imperatives in order to be efficient:

1. The diversity of the different Arts sub-sectors should be taken into account to ensure an efficient use of public spending

Given the extreme diversity of the Arts sector, and to ensure an efficient use of public funding by putting in place the correct incentives, it will be crucial to implement a plan tailored to the needs and difficulties of the different sub-sectors (e.g. cash flow, insurance, demand, skills, etc.).

The diversity of stakeholders should also be considered (e.g. organisations supported by the Arts Council, businesses depending on advertising and sponsorship, suppliers of services relying partly on the activity of the sector, individual artists with no source of income, foreign companies needing to fly to Ireland).

During COVID-19, some activities such as live events will suffer more than others. No strategy would be consummate if it did not account for this diversity.

2. The coordination with the wider Creative Industries sector could be a positive legacy of an ambitious and coordinated recovery plan

Lessons can be learnt from France and the UK regarding their holistic approach of the creative industries sector (including in particular film, video, software, museums, library, literature, archives, radio, television and advertising). A recovery strategy could not only be used to support the Arts sector but to serve as a tool to have a more coordinated approach to make the Arts sector more resilient in the long term.

Before COVID-19, not all the sub-sectors were in the same financial situation. In order to be more precise in estimating the number of jobs at risk and the recovery potential, it would be useful to co-construct an assessment methodology with key industry stakeholders and government officials. It could also be an opportunity to share strategic findings regarding best practice, identified in other sectors of the Creative industries.

Not only will the sector be supported in the short-term, it will be more resilient in the long-term (e.g. skills, partnerships, clusters, export strategy, innovation, resources).

## Appendix 1 - Economic impact figures

Scenario 1					
% Change	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Intermediate consumption		5.4%	-3.5%	9.7%	5.6%
Consumer spending		2.8%	-42.8%	8.0%	3.1%
Investment		1.3%	-32.2%	28.2%	7.5%
Exports		11.1%	-52.8%	6.8%	5.5%
Value €m	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
GVA	688.7	718.1	469.6	524.6	550.5
Change YoY		4.3%	-34.6%	11.7%	4.9%
Intermediate consumption	175.1	184.5	178.1	195.4	206.3
Consumer spending	421.9	433.7	248.1	267.9	276.3
Investment	141.6	143.4	97.2	124.6	134.0
Exports	125.2	139.0	65.6	70.1	73.9
Total output	863.8	900.6	589.0	658.0	690.5
Change YoY		4.3%	-34.6%	11.7%	4.9%
Loss of revenue (output)		36.8	-311.6	69.0	32.4
Scenario 2					
% Change	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Intermediate consumption		5.4%	-4.4%	7.8%	7.1%
Consumer spending		2.8%	-47.7%	-7.5%	3.1%
Investment		1.3%	-35.8%	20.0%	9.3%
Exports		11.1%	-58.8%	4.9%	6.8%
Value €m	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
GVA	688.7	718.1	440.8	432.1	460.8
Change YoY		4.3%	-38.6%	-2.0%	6.7%
Intermediate consumption	175.1	184.5	176.5	190.2	203.7
Consumer spending	421.9	433.7	227.0	210.0	216.6
Investment	141.6	143.4	92.0	110.4	120.7
Exports	125.2	139.0	57.3	60.1	64.2
Total output	863.8	900.6	552.8	570.8	605.2
Change YoY		4.3%	-38.6%	3.2%	6.0%
Loss of revenue (output)		36.8	-347.8	17.9	34.4
Scenario 3					
% Change	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Intermediate consumption		5.4%	-5.1%	5.9%	8.5%
Consumer spending		2.8%	-51.8%	-15.0%	3.1%
Investment		1.3%	-38.8%	12.0%	11.1%
Exports		11.1%	-63.6%	2.9%	8.1%
Value €m	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
GVA	688.7	718.1	416.7	409.4	438.4
Change YoY		4.3%	-42.0%	-1.7%	7.1%
Intermediate consumption	175.1	184.5	175.2	185.4	201.2
Consumer spending	421.9	433.7	209.0	177.7	183.2
Investment	141.6	143.4	87.8	98.3	109.2
Exports	125.2	139.0	50.6	52.1	56.3
Total output	863.8	900.6	522.6	513.5	549.9
Change YoY		4.3%	-42.0%	-1.7%	7.1%
Loss of revenue (output)		36.8	-378.0	-9.1	36.4

## Appendix 2 - Arts sector jobs in Ireland

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Scenario 1	10,300	8,800	9,100	9,300	9,600	9,900	10,200
Scenario 2	10,300	8,600	8,700	9,000	9,300	9,600	9,900
Scenario 3	10,300	8,400	8,400	8,700	9,000	9,300	9,600

Note: 2019-2022 figures are based on EY forecast models of the Irish Economy. 2023-2025 figures assume that jobs will grow by 3% per year (Oxford Economics Model of the British Arts sector +1 percentage point due to a sharper decline in EY model in 2020 so the bounce back effect would be stronger).

### Appendix 3 - Key assumptions for the three scenarios

		2020	2021	2022	Rationale
Number of weeks of lockdown	Scenario 1	7	0	0	Under scenario 1: Number of COVID-19 daily cases declines regularly from June 2020
	Scenario 2	7	0	0	
	Scenario 3	7	0	0	
Number of weeks of restriction (activity of the arts sector is stopped)	Scenario 1	12	0	0	Under scenario 2: Number of COVID-19 daily cases declines regularly from June 2020 but social distancing measures still apply to avoid a second peak in the autumn
	Scenario 2	15	0	0	
	Scenario 3	19	0	0	
Number of weeks of social distancing	Scenario 1	21	0	0	Under scenario 3: There are major concerns regarding a second peak which justifies restrictions and social distancing measures to be extended until a vaccine is found
	Scenario 2	21	13	0	
	Scenario 3	17	26	0	
Cost of one day of lockdown	All scenarios	-84%	-84%	-84%	Source: Copenhagen Economics, 2020 quoted by the Irish Government in <i>Economic Considerations for Reinstating Economic Activity</i> , March 2020
Cost of one day of restrictions	All scenarios	-84%	-84%	-84%	
Cost of one day of social distancing	All scenarios	-30%	-30%	-30%	EY Assumption based on the impact of social distancing guidelines on UK restaurants attendance during the two weeks before COVID-19 (Source: Davis Coffey Lyons; RSM UK; CGA, March 2020)
Exports impact	Scenario 1	-57%	+6.8%	+8.1%	In 2020, exports are falling due to travel restrictions. Forecasts are replicating the most optimistic scenario from the UNWTO (May 2020). In 2021 and 2022, exports are replicating the rest of the Irish economy.
	Scenario 2	-57%	+6.8%	+8.1%	
	Scenario 3	-57%	+6.8%	+8.1%	
Public spending impact	All scenarios	0	0	0	It is assumed that public spending will not be affected by the COVID-19 crisis
Investment	Scenario 1	-35%	+28%	+8%	It is assumed that investment in the arts sector will be aligned with the rest of the Irish economy. Figures are based on EY Ireland forecast, May 2020
	Scenario 2	-35%	+28%	+8%	
	Scenario 3	-35%	+28%	+8%	



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## Arts Council Response to Special Committee on Covid-19 Response

June 25th, 2020

## The Impact of the Covid-19 Crisis on the Arts

The cessation of activity in March 2020 has had a profound personal impact for artists and arts workers and major structural impacts for organisations.

An overwhelming majority of individual artists reported wholesale cancellation of work in 2020 and beyond.<sup>1</sup>

*.. all my earnings come from writing and the industry around that - readings, chairing panels, judging competitions, programming and teaching. In one morning, I lost earnings that would have paid my mortgage for a year, and over the duration of lock down my loss has doubled. I've had trips to Australia, Cork, Spain, Dublin, Liverpool and West Cork cancelled. I have no work in my diary for the first time in 8 years and after many years of building my career. I have no idea of what awaits at the other side. Or how I cope financially while we wait.*

**Paul McVeigh writer (May 2020)**

The Arts Council estimates **117,000** events will have been cancelled in 2020 by the organisations it funds; and **4.4 million** attendances at events will not now happen.<sup>2</sup>

Activity cancellations have an impact on artists, participants, volunteers, communities, organisations and arts workers and everyone who engages with the activities as audiences. Arts Council funded organisations estimate that **120,000** people will not participate in artistic and creative activities which had been planned for 2020.<sup>3</sup>

*For Yvonne, being in a supported studio environment is essential for her to continue her arts practice. She is currently not able to continue her work at home and it's not clear yet from the COPE Foundation when she (and the other artists) will be able to re-start.*

**Jessica Carson, support artist/project manager working with visual artist Yvonne Condon. (Cork)<sup>4</sup>**

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The arts sector is labour intensive and the employment impacts of the crisis are profound. Approximately **14,000 people** who work in the arts, leisure or recreation are (May 2020) claiming either PUP or TWSS.<sup>5</sup> The sector which includes the arts is regarded as a “High Impact” sector where more than 50% of the workforce is availing of PUP or TWSS.<sup>6</sup>

*The organisation will not be in a position this year to employ the services of a number of highly skilled contractors reliant on GIAF for a significant portion of their annual income and will not be employing a further 110 people for the wider festival team as usual.*

### **Galway International Arts Festival**

Overall financial projections received from Strategically Funded organisations and arts centres indicate a net deficit position for these organisations of just over **6.4 million euro** to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

This deficit arises from the difference between reduced core costs (with organisations overall making savings in core costs of approximately 15%) and sunk costs, where artistic expenditure was irrecoverable; lost ticket income; lost catering, lost sales and merchandising income; lost commercial and rental income and other sources. The situation is most acute in those organisations whose reliance on earned income is greatest.

A sample of 99 of the organisations who provided budget data at the beginning of 2020, indicates projected **income falling from €101m to €50m**, a fall of 50.5%, should the organisations be unable to return to normal operation by December 2020.

Arts organisations are typically not-for-profit and cannot trade their way out of deficits which will arise. The Arts Council has identified buildings-based organisations as hardest hit.

In all sub-sectors of the arts - including literature, music, visual art and film, and all the performing arts - there has been severe disruption to the pipeline of production – fewer books, less music, no plays or opera - and unknown impacts will accrue into 2021. In opera for example, 2021 productions would by now have been contracted with artists and others and this has not taken place.

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Yvonne communicates primarily through her art and gestures and works closely with Jessica who is her support artist and project manager. At this time Jessica is providing a statement about the value of the Cope/CMF partnership to artists such as Yvonne.

<sup>5</sup> Stability Programme Update Spring 2020 Department of Finance

<sup>6</sup> Economic Considerations for Reinstating Economic Activity DBEI et al 2020

*The impact of restrictions on the arts sector could be irreversible. The arts is the least confident of all sectors in its ability to operate through COVID-19, with a below 50% score.*<sup>7</sup>

*The economic impact of COVID-19 on the Irish Arts sector will be felt mainly in 2020. It should be more substantial than in the rest of the economy due to the specific nature of Arts activities and the restrictions that will keep applying to this sector during the coming months.*

***In 2020, the recession of the Arts sector will be between -34.6% and -42% compared with -11% in the Irish economy as a whole. This is projected to cost between €250m and €300m to Irish GDP.***

*The impact in terms of jobs will also be more substantial for the Arts sector due to the scale of the recession but also the fact that it is more job-intensive than the rest of the economy. The scale of the loss may be sufficiently severe to push many organisations into bankruptcy – this may mean they are not there to lead a recovery and the bounce may be much less in 2021 with a diminished sector. These downside risks could weaken this outlook further.*

*In 2020, the decrease in the number of jobs supported by the core Arts sector is projected to be between -14.9% and -18.0% compared with -7% in the Irish economy. COVID-19 is forecast to put between **1,500 and 1,900 arts jobs at risk.***<sup>8</sup>

***The recovery of the Arts sector may take until 2025 if nothing is done to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19***

*Unlike other sectors in the economy, the recovery of the Arts sector to pre-crisis levels will not follow a V curve due to the specificities of this sector. What has not been spent during the first months of 2020 will not be compensated later in the year due to cancelled events, fewer overseas visitors, rainy day savings, reduced private investment, prolonged social distancing guidelines and the apprehension of people regarding social gatherings.*

*While it is hard to assess impacts until 2025 not knowing how the pandemic will evolve over the coming months, the data currently available predicts that the arts sector will not go back to 2019 levels in terms of jobs until 2025. Changes in public consumption of and spending on the arts, currently unknown, will likely have a further negative impact on this forecast because some organisations could close down and not be there to support a potential recovery after 2023.*

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<sup>7</sup> Employment and Economic Impact Assessment of Covid 19 on the Irish arts sector EY June 2020

<sup>8</sup> ibid



## Arts Council Response to Special Committee on Covid-19 Response

June 25th, 2020

# 1. Executive Summary

## **“Boldest measures are the safest”**

*Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission 27.05.2020*

The Advisory Group is recommending:

- the creation of an immediate €21.4m Survival Fund to allow the Arts Council deal with current challenges arising from the Covid-19 emergency
- the creation of a €30 m Sustainability Fund in 2021, to support the arts through the continuing impacts of the crisis

With the Survival and Sustainability Funds, the Advisory Group is recommending that the Arts Council:

1. Provides emergency financial support for arts organisations to avert closure and to protect employment
2. Gives priority to enhanced commissioning schemes and increased bursary and professional development schemes for independent artists, arts workers and arts organisations
3. Establishes a Cultural Recovery Taskforce bringing together the arts, film, broadcasting and related sectors to ensure national coherence and co-operation across sectors.
4. Supports the arts sector in addressing the challenges of digital presentation and dissemination in the near and longer term, as well as in exploring new ways for people to make and engage with art in person
5. Works with the arts sector and other partners, including local authorities, to address the challenges of adapting existing physical spaces and exploring new ones.

The Advisory Group is also recommending that the incoming coalition government:

6. maintains current wage supports (PUP and TWSS) for individual artists, arts workers and organisations until the sector and sub-sectors can again operate at full capacity
7. ensures that the fundamental principle of fair remuneration for artists is reflected in all public policies; and supports the rights of artists in discussions of Article 13 of EU Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market
8. commissions a review of taxation practice as it relates to the arts in Ireland and internationally to make recommendations around the tax

regime, including an examination of VAT, gifting to the arts, and possible measures on artists' incomes.

- 9.** establishes an ongoing capital funding scheme for arts buildings to enable adaptation for the safety and confidence of workers and the public in areas such as structural changes, signage and contact-free tech, and also to enable the use of new spaces for the arts in the medium term.
- 10.** all stakeholders with responsibility for the arts, including the Arts Council, local authorities, Creative Ireland and others, should be tasked by government with responsibility for agreement on a common approach to sustaining local, regional and national strategic arts infrastructure, including but not limited to arts centres.



A response to the  
**Covid-19 crisis** for  
the **Arts in Ireland.**

# Survive Adapt Renew

**Report of the  
Expert Advisory Group  
June 2020 to the  
Arts Council.**

## Contents

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- 2** Statement of the Advisory Group
- 4** Executive Summary
- 10** Impact of the Covid-19 Crisis on the Arts
- 14** Measures Recommended
- 19** Table of measures & estimated costs 2020

### Expert Advisory Group

**Lenny Abrahamson** Filmmaker

**Anne Clarke** Theatre and Opera Producer Landmark Productions

**Angela Dorgan** Chair of the National Campaign for the Arts

**Professor Sarah Glennie** Director National College of Art and Design

**Martin Hayes** Musician

**Maureen Kennelly** Director of The Arts Council

**Fintan O'Toole** Journalist and Commentator

**Professor Kevin Rafter** (Chair) Head of the School of Communications, Dublin City University and Chair, Arts Council

**Dr. Gabriel Scally** Visiting Professor in Public Health, University of Bristol

Report researched and written by **Una Carmody**.

The Group would like to thank all the team at the Arts Council.

Thanks to Alan Gray for economic advice.

## Appendices

- 21** Nationwide Impact Statements  
May 2020
- 31** The Arts and Health;  
The Arts in Health  
by Dr. Gabriel Scally

# Statement of the Advisory Group

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**“You don’t know what you’ve got ‘til it’s gone.”**

—Joni Mitchell

**For the arts in Ireland, the coronavirus pandemic has created a paradox: they have never been more obviously needed and appreciated; yet neither have they ever faced a more profound existential threat.**

There has been a hunger for stories, images, drama and music. In the darkest days of the pandemic, Irish artists and performers recognised the deep need for cultural engagement. They found new ways to meet that need; poets telephoned hundreds of Irish people to read a poem for Poetry Day; the Abbey Theatre commissioned new plays in its *Dear Ireland* series; music, dance and opera performances were made available free online including Culture Ireland’s *Ireland Performs*; festivals presented online versions of their now cancelled physical programmes; galleries and museums show-cased their collections digitally.

The scale of the public’s response to these initiatives showed how necessary the arts are to the wellbeing of the nation—all the more so in troubled times.

Yet, much of the arts sector is unravelling and without an urgent response from the State, the damage will be irreparable.

When theatres, galleries and arts centres all over Ireland closed their doors on March 16th 2020, thousands of artists and arts workers saw their livelihoods disappear—months, and in some cases years, of planning for events ended overnight.

The calendar of festivals, so vital to the lives and livelihoods of communities all over Ireland, was reduced to blank space; informal sessions of traditional music fell silent. Vital income from the sale of tickets, as well as all of the other ways that arts organisations have found to make money—private hires, catering, retail—disappeared at a stroke.

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The fragile infrastructure is the “underlying condition” at the heart of the arts. Arts organisations of all kinds now face an uncertain future, including the immediate and very real possibility of closure for some.

Independent artists, companies and arts organisations have a proven record of resilience, of improvisation and of working their way around inadequate systems of public support. They are among the most entrepreneurial sections of Irish society, consistently finding imaginative ways to create world-class work even in bleak economic circumstances.

But no amount of courage or determination alone can overcome the current crisis for the arts; nothing can make a live event viable if an audience can no longer gather in the ways it has always done before. Socially distanced performance at 10-15% of normal capacity is unsustainable.

The Covid-19 crisis has struck at the heart of what every artist is driven to do: present work to an audience. For theatre, dance, music, opera—and for the network of arts centres around Ireland—socially distanced performance is unsustainable, even for a brief period. For artists working with communities, and the people who are nourished by that work, including the many thousands of young people who engage in creative activities, uncertainty remains about how and when it can recommence.

As other sectors adapt to the new Covid-19 world and return to a viable level of activity, the arts will not be able to keep buildings open or to sustain livelihoods.

Immediate, and ongoing, financial support (including the vital extension of the PUP and TWSS wage supports until the sector can operate at full capacity) is necessary to stabilise the sector; lay new foundations for sustainability; maintain employment and work opportunities; enable art to continue to be created individually and collectively; and enable the public to have access to the arts.

The members of the Expert Advisory Group were asked in May 2020 to examine the stark reality, and collectively to frame recommendations to assist the Council in its work in responding to the crisis, in the belief that the Arts Council has a leadership role to play. We share a belief and trust in the power of artistic works and their essential significance for our common life as citizens. We are confident that there are realistic pathways to a sustainable and exciting future for the arts in Ireland—so long as those pathways are identified with urgency and coherence. The long-term diminishment of the quality of Irish life that will result from a failure to act now is beyond reckoning.

A fundamental principle underlying everything in this report is that artists, arts workers and arts organisations should be benefited by the detailed working out of every measure; the measures are designed to support their work and to strengthen the sector through facilitating their creativity. We are indicating the need for significant additional funding in 2021 for the Arts Council to sustain work begun in 2020.

The recommendations in this report to the Arts Council—and to government—are, we believe, indivisible from each other, real and challenging, and part of the roadmap for the Irish state to ‘save the arts’.

—Expert Advisory Group, June 2020

# Executive Summary

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—Ursula von der Leyen,

President of the European Commission

27.05.2020

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5. Works with the arts sector and other partners, including local authorities, to address the challenges of adapting existing physical spaces and exploring new ones.

**The Advisory Group is also recommending that the incoming coalition government:**

6. Maintains current wage supports (PUP and TWSS) for individual artists, arts workers and organisations until the sector and sub-sectors can again operate at full capacity.
7. Ensures that the fundamental principle of fair remuneration for artists is reflected in all public policies; and supports the rights of artists in discussions of Article 13 of EU Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market.
8. Commissions a review of taxation practice as it relates to the arts in Ireland and internationally to make recommendations around the tax regime, including an examination of VAT, gifting to the arts, and possible measures on artists' incomes.
9. Establishes an ongoing capital funding scheme for arts buildings to enable adaptation for the safety and confidence of workers and the public in areas such as structural changes, signage and contact-free tech, and also to enable the use of new spaces for the arts in the medium term.
10. All stakeholders with responsibility for the arts, including the Arts Council, local authorities, Creative Ireland and others, should be tasked by government with responsibility for agreement on a common approach to sustaining local, regional and national strategic arts infrastructure, including but not limited to arts centres.

## Rationale for the recommendations

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**A strong public narrative of support for the arts will signal reassurance and hope for those working in the arts and the wider public.** A commitment to building resilience, inclusion and sustainability in the sector affirms public recognition of the mission and value of the arts.

→ *“The arts/culture sector is likely to be amongst the last to recover when this crisis is over given the huge uncertainty around the recovery of both participant and audience confidence. While physical distancing remains in place, it will be extremely difficult to predict a return to normality with any certainty.”*<sup>1</sup>

*“At the same time, wellbeing is a cornerstone of the Government’s current response to the crisis and will be critical to the recovery phase.”*<sup>2</sup>

**A package of measures such as those proposed will...***“have the dual benefit of tangibly contributing to the Government’s commitment to sustaining our personal and collective wellbeing at this time, while also providing critical supports to the economy.”*<sup>3</sup>

→ **Public confidence in attending events has been severely affected.** Research carried out in Ireland in the first week of June 2020 found that *“there are widespread concerns at attending live arts events—peaking for indoor performances”* and *“these national levels of concern are shared by frequent, regular and occasional attenders.”*<sup>4</sup>

Measures are required to build confidence in engagement with the arts sector.

→ **The arts sector is wider than the organisations and individuals currently funded by the Arts Council;** and evidence of high levels of new applicants for Arts Council schemes is emerging. The Arts Council anticipates that it will be required to support people not previously covered by its funding.

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<sup>1</sup> Economic Considerations for Reinstating Economic Activity Dept of Business Enterprise and Innovation May 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

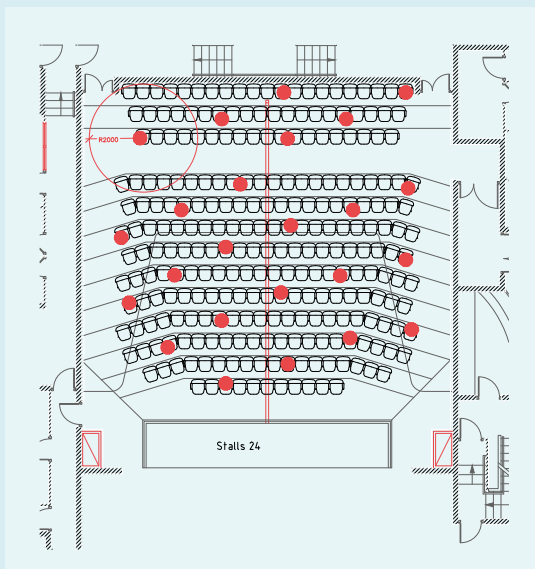
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<sup>4</sup> Public sentiment survey on arts engagement in wake of Covid-19. Carried out by Behaviour and Attitudes as part of its online omnibus survey comprising a nationally representative sample of 1,000 adults aged 16+ quota controlled by: gender, age, employment, education, income, region.

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A Response to the Covid-19  
Crisis for the Arts in Ireland

→ **Audience capacities will be severely curtailed after the reopening of the sector;** all arts centres, theatres, music venues and other auditoria will see their seating capacity reduced to approximately 15% of normal capacity. The Advisory Group acknowledges the particular challenges faced by the performing and live arts in making and presenting work in a time of social distancing.



**Town Hall Theatre Galway;**  
Plan of the stalls showing saleable seats with 2m social distancing.  
24 seats for sale.

→ **“At the same time, arts organisations cannot access the same range of supports as other SMEs and planning for recovery is severely affected as a consequence.”<sup>5</sup>**

→ **The digital arena has come to the fore during the Covid-19 crisis, with arts activity moving online and a strong public response.** Digital dissemination will play a major role in the future sustainability of the arts; potentially adding to the revenue models of organisations and futureproofing the sector against further closures. There is a need to identify and test what that role may be, ensuring the highest technical standards and production values, whilst critically ensuring the fair remuneration of artists online.<sup>6</sup>

→ **At this time of change, there is a real opportunity to actively promote equality of access and opportunity and invite new and diverse voices to contribute to a renewed and relevant arts environment, effecting real change in who engages with, participates in, and experiences the arts.**

**These measures are intended as true stimulus measures, enabling work and money to begin to flow through the system again, activating additional activity and work into 2021 and beyond, and public interest and re-engagement. “Mitigation measures will be required to ensure that key national cultural infrastructure survives and can contribute to the recovery phase”.<sup>7</sup>**

<sup>5</sup>“In common with the wider SME sector—but without access to the liquidity supports it can access—not-for-profit bodies in the cultural, heritage and language sectors reliant on private income will begin to confront cash-flow problems, particularly when the TWSS expires.” Note on Covid-19 Labour Market and Liquidity Supports available to the Cultural Heritage and Language sectors. DCHG May 2020

<sup>6</sup> 57% of artists surveyed by the Arts Council. April 2020 who had been asked to provide digital content, had been asked to provide the content for free.

<sup>7</sup> Economic Considerations for Reinstating Economic Activity, Dept of Business Enterprise and Innovation.



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The outcomes from the measures proposed will be:

- Stabilisation of the arts sector in 2020
- New foundations for sustainability laid in 2020/2021 through the operation of the Sustainability Fund
- Work and employment opportunities for artists and arts workers, and investment in organisations
- Art and artworks will continue to be created through the period of adaptation, and those who participate in creative activities will be supported
- The public will have continued, safe access to the arts, sometimes in new ways, as a source of solace, inspiration and communal solidarity
- The arts landscape will become more reflective of the diversity and creative energy of contemporary Ireland

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In every case, the recommended measures are:

- *Equitable*
- *Proportionate*
- *Targeted*
- *Cost-effective*
- *Costed*

The measures are mindful of key policy areas for the Arts Council including:

- Primacy of the artist, including the need to ensure there is not a “race to the bottom” in terms of artist pay and that the principles of the “Pay the Artist” policy are honoured in any measures proposed
- Primacy of the public, and the responsibility to continue to deliver art to the people of Ireland, safely and appropriately
- The Equality, Human Rights and Diversity implications of any measures

# Impact of the Covid-19 Crisis on the Arts

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***In 2020, the recession of the arts sector will be between -34.6% and -42%*** compared with -11% in the Irish economy as a whole. This is projected to cost between €250m and €300m to Irish GDP.

*The impact in terms of jobs will also be more substantial for the arts sector due to the scale of the recession but also the fact that it is more job-intensive than the rest of the economy. The scale of the loss may be sufficiently severe to push many organisations into bankruptcy – this may mean they are not there to lead a recovery and the bounce may be much less in 2021 with a diminished sector. These downside risks could weaken this outlook further.*

*In 2020, the decrease in the number of jobs supported by the core arts sector is projected to be between -14.9% and -18.0% compared with -7% in the Irish economy. Covid-19 is forecast to put between **1,500 and 1,900 arts jobs at risk.**<sup>15</sup>*

***The recovery of the arts sector may take until 2025 if nothing is done to mitigate the impacts of Covid-19***

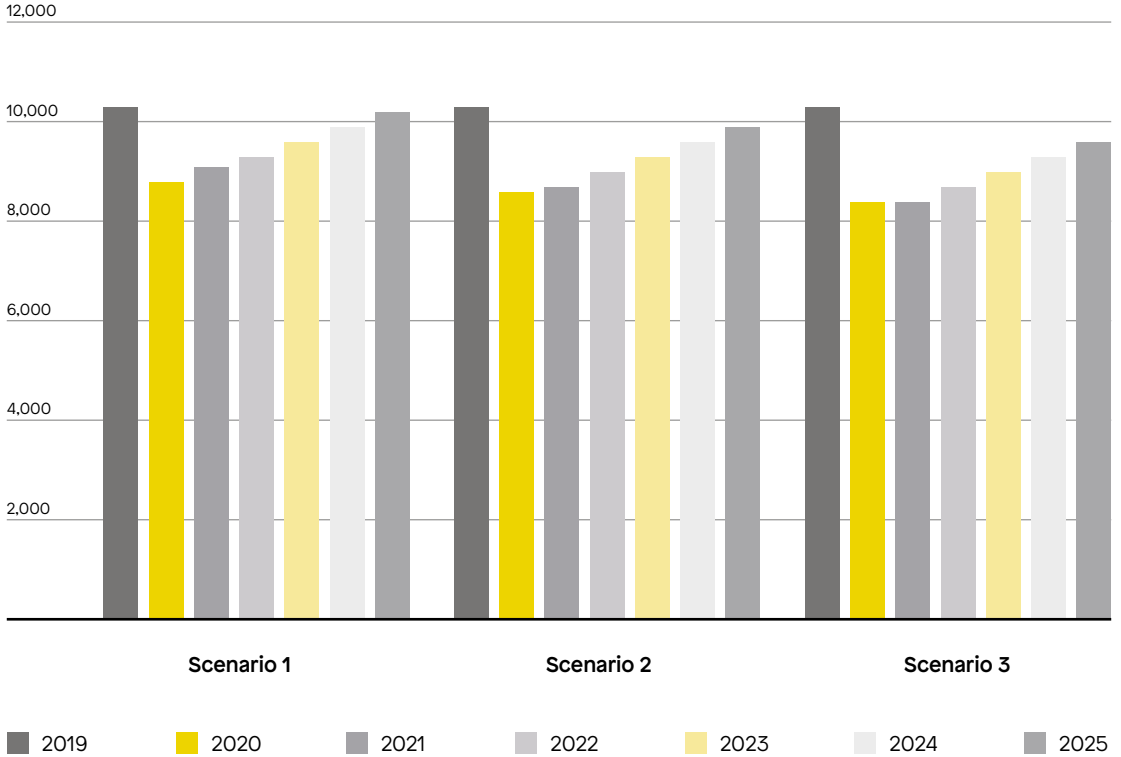
*Unlike other sectors in the economy, the recovery of the arts sector to pre-crisis levels will not follow a V curve due to the specificities of this sector. What has not been spent during the first months of 2020 will not be compensated later in the year due to cancelled events, fewer overseas visitors, rainy day savings, reduced private investment, prolonged social distancing guidelines and the apprehension of people regarding social gatherings.*

*While it is hard to assess impacts until 2025 not knowing how the pandemic will evolve over the coming months, the data currently available predicts that the arts sector will not go back to 2019 levels in terms of jobs until 2025. Changes in public consumption of and spending on the arts, currently unknown, will likely have a further negative impact on this forecast because some organisations could close down and not be there to support a potential recovery after 2023.”<sup>14</sup>*

<sup>14</sup> Employment and Economic Impact Assessment of Covid-19 on the Irish arts sector EY June 2020.

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## Number of direct jobs supported by the Arts sector in Ireland between 2020 & 2025 (EY forecast, June 2020)



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### Scenario 1

Covid-19 restrictions until Aug 2020;  
social distancing until Dec 2020

### Scenario 2

Covid-19 restrictions until end Sept 2020;  
social distancing until April 2021

### Scenario 3

Covid-19 restrictions until end Oct 2020;  
social distancing until July 2021

## Measures Recommended

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# Survive

## Immediate stabilisation measures

July 2020–July 2021

It is considered essential that the Arts Council put in place a suite of financial and professional supports for artists, arts workers and arts organisations in the immediate term.

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- 1. Financial supports for a small number of arts organisations** which find themselves at risk of collapse in order to avert closure and protect employment. It is crucial that these organisations are supported and the negative impact of closure announcements averted.
  - 2. A national and local approach to the survival of strategic arts organisations**, particularly arts centres and other buildings-based organisations to meet financial commitments for 2020. This will allow co-ordinated planning of adaptation mechanisms, including imaginative mapping and potential use of alternative spaces including outdoor spaces. This is recommended in order to avert contraction of activity in arts centres, support employment and infrastructure, and encourage new ways of working.
  - 3. Enhanced and expanded commissioning schemes for individual artists and arts organisations across all artforms to create and present work in 2020 and beyond.** Existing commissioning schemes to be adapted with mechanisms which recognise the needs of those who may not previously have sought financial support from the Arts Council, and the role that diversity and equality plays in realising the full potential of Ireland's artistic and cultural talent. This expansion is recommended in order to restart the production of creative work, with its attendant benefits in all areas, including economic activity and the employment of artists and arts workers.
  - 4. Enhanced and significantly expanded bursary schemes**, open to artists and groups of artists who wish to develop their professional practice. Existing bursary schemes to be adapted with mechanisms which recognise the needs of those who may not previously have sought financial support from the Arts Council, and the role that diversity and equality plays in realising the full potential of Ireland's artistic and cultural talent.
  - 5. The convening of a national Cultural Recovery Taskforce to guide recovery through linked sectors**, to monitor implementation of this report and to act as an ongoing liaison between the sector and the government and with a channel through which recommendations can be made. The makeup of the taskforce would include representatives from arts, film, live music, TV and other interests (such as Culture Ireland) as well as representative organisations. This taskforce would create new opportunities for partnerships and common working and also serve as a forum for diverse voices to ensure equity in future planning.
  - 6. A range of professional development schemes and grants**, including professional mentoring and coaching supports for arts organisations in change management, business planning, digital presentation and other areas and grants for professional development and training opportunities for arts workers who are temporarily underemployed. A higher skills base will allow the arts sector to plan and adapt more flexibly and underpin the sustainability of the sector into the future.



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# Adapt

## Measures to enable the arts to make and present work

September 2020–December 2021

### 7. Digital content and access measures

The arts sector requires a range of supports to explore and experiment in the creation and dissemination of digital content into the future. Measures in this area include:

**a)** A fund for immediate implementation for organisations to access the digital tools they need in the immediate term to create and disseminate work, using this adaptation opportunity to test and model modes of delivery, including potential revenue income. Funded initiatives to be monitored and learning widely disseminated through the sector.

**b)** A fund which supports the arts sector and the Arts Council to address the challenges of digital creation and dissemination of work for different artforms, and to participate in the current international experimentation and exploration in this area, with the goal of providing Irish arts with access to the highest technical standards and production values and access to audiences nationally and internationally. A key feature of any such platform would be the ability to generate income which would flow back to the creators of the work, with the aim of generating a new income stream in coming years, as well as providing an international showcase for Irish artists.

### 8. New and adapted in-person experiences of the arts

**a)** A fund to support the arts sector to test new models for creating in-person experiences of the arts ranging from intimate encounters to reimagining of the public and civic space. Imaginative and exciting examples of this type of personal art delivery have already emerged, including the Poetry Day initiative where a poet telephoned and read poetry to an individual; or a delivery system for the arts, where people at home can select from a menu of arts experiences which are then delivered to them. The wellbeing objectives of such in-person delivery initiatives would be prioritised, using personal delivery to support people, families and communities to process and share their experiences.

**b)** Co-ordinate communications with the public for the arts, building visibility, interest and confidence in the safety measures which have been taken through public campaigns based on market research.

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c) Wintering out “*If we winter this one out, we can summer anywhere*”.

—Seamus Heaney

A sector-led initiative for organisations (many of whom had work at an advanced stage of preparation) where leading festivals will be asked to devise and present a week-long celebration of the performing arts, located in flexible buildings at the end of 2020, taking place within socially-distanced guidelines, working together to imagine a festival programme and its practical application.

The programme will hold out the possibility of exploring new venues for theatre and the performing arts, new methods of delivery, flexible methods of staging, trialling digital recording and dissemination, and providing first-class arts experiences for audiences hungry for live performance.

It will demonstrate what is possible in programming and practical terms, drawing on learnings from theatres that have resumed activity in other parts of the world; it will provide much-needed employment for artists, and for the arts workers—stage managers, production managers, technical and other support staff—without whom no performing arts activity is possible; it will be a light at the end of the tunnel that is 2020, and a sign of what might be possible in the future.

## 9. Physical buildings adaptations

a) Expand upon work done to date to disseminate a set of protocols for building-based arts organisations to ensure they are updated regularly as health advice evolves, on how to adapt buildings as workplaces, and as spaces for the experience of art.

b) Address the need for a small number of safe, shared, centralised work spaces for types of artistic work which cannot be safely carried out in existing spaces such as costume and production facilities.

c) Work with the performing arts sector and others in society to select by autumn 2020 a small number of performance spaces nationally where live performances can happen at a scale which is feasible from an audience numbers perspective—outdoor, large or adaptable spaces—and work with national organisations to physically adapt and programme these spaces for a period of months and use them for presentation of *Wintering Out*.

d) Work with local authorities nationwide to explore the possibilities of expanded and innovative performance spaces in each county area for 2021.

# Mitigating Measures Recommended

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## Renew

### Measures to enable the arts to renew

January 2021–January 2022

Although the timescale is unclear, the Covid-19 pandemic will end. When it does, there will be a need to remember, reopen and re-engage.

New models of engagement with the arts will have been tried and new models will have emerged.

The arts sector will be professionally stronger and more resilient as will its connections with the communities it serves.

- The Advisory Group recommends that the Arts Council in 2021 maintains its strong commitment to supporting the arts sector and the people within it. It is recommended that the Arts Council continue its significant commitment from 2020 to commissioning, bursaries, supporting the sector to address the challenges of digital, and build capacity and resilience.
- The Group recommends that the Arts Council provides additional adaptation and “bridging” grants to people and organisations in 2021 as they continue to deal with the fallout from the crisis with the aim of ensuring the sustainability of operations, employment and the creation of work.
- The Group further recommends that the Arts Council funds a series of projects in communities such as health care settings, where artists collaborate with communities to memorialise and document the process which has been undergone and mark their experiences.

# Table of Measures & Estimated Costs 2020

Measure no. and detail	Scope of scheme	Targeted at	Outcomes	Costs 2020
<b>1. Financial supports for organisations at risk</b>	Number of identified organisations June 2020; & contingency for unknown	Those at identified risk	Sector stabilisation Work opportunities	€2,000,000
<b>2. Financial supports for strategic organisations</b>	To provide funding covering projected deficits end 2020 where the deficit cannot be traded out of in 2021  To provide 2021 funding for arts centres to act as employment/ creative hubs	50 arts centres Strategically funded organisations	Sector stabilisation Work opportunities Continued access to the arts for the public	€6,000,000
<b>3. Commissioning schemes</b>	Expanded commissioning schemes across all artforms/arts practice areas  Open Call schemes Project Awards New R&D commissioning scheme	Artists Groups of artists/arts workers Arts organisations	Work opportunities Art and artworks will continue to be created Sustainability Landscape more reflective of diversity	€4,000,000
<b>4. Bursaries schemes</b>	Expanded bursary schemes across all artforms/arts practice areas	Artists Groups of artists	Work opportunities Sustainability Landscape more reflective of diversity	€5,500,000
<b>5. Cultural Recovery Taskforce</b>	Arts, film, live entertainment, music develop a common approach; make recommendations to government	Cultural and creative sectors	Sustainability	€50,000
<b>6. Professional development</b>	Arts organisations access coaching, mentoring and training supports in change, business, digital etc.  Arts workers access training	Arts organisations Arts workers	Sector stabilisation Sustainability	€645,000

# Table of Measures & Estimated Costs 2020

Measure no. and detail	Scope of scheme	Targeted at	Outcomes	Costs 2020
<b>7. Digital content and access</b>	Grants to arts organisations to allow better digital dissemination Sector and Arts Council explore how to integrate digital into creation and dissemination	Arts organisations Arts/technology/ broadcast organisations	Sustainability Landscape more reflective of diversity	€460,000
<b>8. In-person experiences of the arts</b> a) Personal delivery initiatives b) Public information c) Wintering Out	a) New scheme inviting proposals to model new experiences of the arts b) Public information campaigns c) Performances and events	a) Artists, arts organisations and arts workers b) public c) a group of national festivals/audiences	Sector stabilisation Work opportunities Art and artworks continue to be created Public access	€800,000
<b>9. Physical buildings adaptations</b> a) Protocols b) Shared workspaces c) New national spaces d) New local spaces	a) continue to work with sector to develop b) exercise to determine what is required and invite proposals c) work with OPW and sector to identify d) work with LA sector	Infrastructure development for adaptation Arts sector nationally	Sector stabilisation Work opportunities Sustainability	€1,200,000
<b>Arts Council resourcing</b>				€750,000

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# Nationwide Impact Statements

**Collected May 27 2020**  
through Local Authority Arts Offices  
for the Expert Advisory Group

## Carlow

*“VISUAL closed its doors, staff were laid off and over 320 events cancelled, impacting the livelihoods of hundreds of cultural workers. Our Arts Centres sit within communities; they are public places of gathering, thinking and growth, where imagination and far-reaching vision are nurtured and explored. It is more vital than ever.”*

—**Emma Lucy O’Brien**

VISUAL Artistic Director and Chief Executive

*“Dance and performance fundamentally relies on connection and the live experience, making a new dance show will be a daunting task for United Fall, but the desire to create and connect drives us. My biggest worry is what our industry will look like post-Covid.”*

—**Emma Martin**

Dance Artist

## Cavan

*“Shortly before Covid-19, I felt I had conquered the unconquerable; I had almost managed to create a sustainable living as a freelance artist in Ireland. I worked all winter producing a Fanzini Productions tour and Cavan Arts Festival, that I cannot be paid for now; I am a committed professional and won't give up without a fight, but that fight should not be a struggle for the very survival of the arts in a nation that prides itself on its artists.”*

—**Kim McCafferty**

Producer

## Clare

*“Covid-19 has proven that loneliness is as central to this pandemic as physical sickness. No man is an island and most art that passes me lately sounds less like inspiration and more like quiet S.O.S's tinged with bravery. We're all soldiering on. But while we're fighting against this we need to have enough faith in our structures to remember what exactly we're fighting for.”*

—**Godknows Jonas**

Musician

*“In 2020 40,000 fewer people will attend glór arts centre and our programme of over 500 events has been decimated with €350,000 of revenue streams wiped out and 78% of the team currently not working. Without strong intervention, I fear that Clare's incredible culture and artscape that stretches from Lough Derg to Moher will veer too close to the cliff edge.”*

—**Orla Flanagan**

Director, glór

## Cork

*“Alongside the gallery environment, my client contacts have been eliminated entirely. I am still working full time but without any certainty whatsoever that exhibitions, commissions or installations will go ahead. With this uncertainty, I expect that my work and practice will just hobble along ad-hoc style.”*

—**Michael Quane**

RHA

## Cork (continued)

*“Last year the three West Cork Music Festivals were worth €3.3million to Bantry, this year an impact of €750,000 would be a good result; last year we brought over 4,600 people to Bantry, this year possibly 500; last year 225 musicians and writers came from all over the world, this year maybe 25; last year the festivals created 200 live events over 22 days, this year perhaps 8 live events and 30 virtual ones; last year we spent €180,000 on artist fees, this year, including cancellation fees, €100,000; last year the Festivals’ spend on accommodation in Bantry was €70,000, this year maybe €5,000.”*

**—Francis Humphrys**

CEO, West Cork Music

*“Social distancing casts a worrying doubt on the viability of theatre as an artform. While the future is uncertain, Corcadorca is working hard to re-imagine what theatre can be, and how we as makers of theatre can continue to excite our audiences as well as challenge and inspire them.”*

**—Fin Flynn**

Manager, Corcadorca

*“I am concerned about the arts becoming less accessible. In a world of social distancing, those on the margins are being pushed further away. Instrumentalisation of the arts for other agendas could heighten and we need non-exploitative ways that the arts can be part of imagining and practicing alternative ways of being together.”*

**—Kate O’Shea**

Artist

## Donegal

*“Artlink has no paid staff so is only able to sustain its programme through FÁS, volunteers and freelance staff, however recently we created a virtual 3D replica of the gallery and hosted 3 exhibitions, one of which was chosen for #IrelandPerforms.”*

**—Rebecca Strain**

Artist, Artlink studio and gallery, Buncrana

*“LUXE were in Hong Kong in January when our Chinese New Year processions were cancelled. Since then all our work has gone. We are dependant on the Covid payments to keep us afloat as we prepare beautiful work to promote Ireland at the (postponed) WORLD EXPO in Dubai.”*

**—Mark Hill**

LUXE Landscape Theatre Company

## Dublin

*“Packed meeting rooms in busy community centres where ideas were being tested; lively youth spaces where key decisions were being taken collectively; daily conversations between artists, youth workers and young people, keeping lines of communication open as we worked towards a major public manifestation. Now it’s a withdrawal of public platforms for many unheard voices and fewer people exposed to urgent themes, less art in the public domain, less media attention, less visibility and less chance of further funding next year.”*

**—Fiona Whelan**

Artist



## Dublin (continued)

*“Draíocht was born out of demand by its local community, supported by a pro-active County Council. The mixed economy model that we depended on is in tatters. 2020 will see us carry a large deficit, 10 staff are on the Covid payment, 13 part time staff are on temporary layoff. We are not just an arts centre, we are part of a community.”*

—**Emer McGowan**

Draíocht Arts Centre, Blanchardstown

*“Most people think that artists spend all day in their studios, but artists serve the economy with services and materials like hardware, salvage, framers, techies, model-makers, photographers, cinematographers and many others. New opportunities will arise from this crisis, there are things to be said and artists most of all will find compelling ways to say them.”*

—**Marie Hanlon**

Artist

*“When the lockdown happened my immediate future just disappeared. As we came to terms with the new normal, organisations I worked with looked for my help as they too reacted and adapted. I'm now working day to day, trying to make new things happen, trying to create, trying to record what's going on, trying to help where I can.”*

—**Colm Keegan**

Writer

*“50,000 annual audience, 300 plus events, over 5,000 young people self-expressing through engagement in the arts, 30 full and part-time staff employed, a rich culture of local pride and expression; all in danger of disappearing as a result of Covid-19 and its restrictions. We make a difference every day; do not let this end here.”*

—**Michael Barker-Caven**

Artistic Director, The Civic, Tallaght

## Dublin (continued)

*“Dance Theatre of Ireland has over 2,000 community members who attend classes and our 20 dancers have no work. We hope that we will somehow have enough money at the end of all this to re-open; as a non-profit company and charity, struggling at the best of times to “make it”; the issues and cost of social distancing, cleanliness, ventilation, reduced numbers inside, supervision, insurance, health and safety, are simply overwhelming. HELP!”*

—**Loretta Yurick & Robert Connor**

Dance Theatre of Ireland, Dun Laoghaire

## Galway

*“When the lockdown happened I lost access to my art studio and all my art materials. I had just spent a year making a large body of work for two solo exhibitions in Dublin and Clare which were both postponed indefinitely, resulting in a significant loss of revenue from projected art sales.”*

—**Cecilia Danell**

Artist (Next Generation Artist)

*“For the first time in its 43-year history Galway International Arts Festival will not go ahead as planned. The organisation has lost €3.1m of its income which will have a massive impact on the livelihoods of many artists, their creative teams and crew. GIAF will not be in a position to employ a number of highly skilled contractors who are reliant on the Festival for a significant portion of their annual income and will not be employing a further 110 people as part of the wider Festival team.”*

—**John Crumlish**

Executive Director, Galway International Arts Festival

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## Kerry

*“While the company has survived many challenges in its long history, this Covid crisis represents Siamsa’s extinction event. The loss to our communities, our artists and our audiences of over thirty years can’t even begin to be quantified.”*

—**Róisín McGarr**

Executive Director, Siamsa Tire

*“With theatres and rehearsal spaces closed, no teaching, no creating shows and no live performances for the foreseeable future; my work and my ability to earn a living have been severely impacted. I have lost a residency which I have had over 14 years; all the work I have invested in, the programmes and communities I have built, will suffer and may possibly disappear unless supported.”*

—**Catherine Young**

Dance Artist

## Kildare

*“My practice and my capacity to engage with community groups—a significant source of income for me—have been massively impacted. The longer term prospects of continuing to work as a professional artist are worrisome, particularly with the tenuous artist support systems in place in Ireland.”*

—**John Conway**

Artist

## Kildare (continued)

*“The unknown parameters and timeframe of this crisis makes planning very difficult and future viability uncertain. The financial impact is devastating, it is crucial that we safeguard the sector and ensure that the years of investment, experience, and artist support infrastructure are not lost.”*

—**Linda Geraghty**

Director, Riverbank Arts Centre

## Kilkenny

*“The absence of Kilkenny Arts Festival is a profound loss to the artistic, cultural, societal and economic well being of our city and nation; as we work energetically and collaboratively to devise and deliver new models of engagement, the very pronounced challenges are acute and threaten the very survival of the Festival in its 47th year.”*

—**Olga Barry**

Festival Director, Kilkenny Arts Festival

*“This intense ordering and prioritising of society’s needs, and the increased use of terms like “essential” or “frontline”, the emergency has ramped up an uneasy self-consciousness among artists; inducing in many of us a burden to internally or publicly validate and justify the value of what we do.”*

—**Ramon Kassam**

Visual Artist, Kilkenny

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## Laois

*“Working conditions in the arts were already bleak and unsustainable; we have the studies to prove it. Now Covid has wiped out entire livelihoods overnight; artists have offered solace, escape and reassurance to the public throughout this crisis. More than ever, artists must be supported and prioritised as valuable and vital contributors to society who can imagine a way forward from all this.”*

—**Louise White**

Theatre Director, Laois.

*“20 years as a leading midlands arts centre, presenting to and working with diverse and growing audiences of all ages, artists, local arts groups and schools has devastatingly ended with a loss of 5 staff, 75% of our earned income lost (min. €470,000), c.30,000 audience engagements gone and 100s of artists with lost income.”*

—**Michelle de Forge**

Director, Dunamais Arts Centre

## Leitrim

*“We have cancelled the culmination of years of work. Closing was swift; re-opening fully is not possible and partially will be complex. We have addressed our commitments and challenges and are moving forward with dynamism and care. We need financial stability in 2021 to reach into the lifeblood of our County.”*

—**Sarah Searson**

Director, The Dock, Carrick-on-Shannon

## Leitrim (continued)

*“The 2020 Iron Mountain Literature Festival has been cancelled, with a very direct impact on the writers and musicians scheduled to take part (loss of fees, engagement with community, publicity and book and CD sales) and a gap in a community link between literary, environmental and music events.”*

—**Vincent Woods**

Festival Director

*“When the virus has been defeated it is then that the arts community will be called upon to help the country to recover psychologically from the pandemic.”*

—**John McKenna**

Traditional Music Society

## Limerick

*“Social distancing regulations mean our theatres will remain completely unviable and we will be unable to present the work of local amateur and professional theatre companies, musical societies, schools and performers of every kind. Performance spaces are essential in every community, take them away and our communities are deprived of a fundamental resource, especially in times such as these.”*

—**Louise Donlon**

Lime Tree Theatre and the Belltable

*“The pandemic has been devastating for my artistic practice, forcing me to reassess how I create and share my work while wiping out vital income streams. Artists have been finding innovative ways to share our work throughout this crisis, providing much needed solace and support, despite arts funding in Ireland already being a fraction of the European average.”*

—**Fiona Linnane**

Composer

## Louth

*"It's a devastating effect personally and as a performer, all concerts have been cancelled and there is no way of knowing when they can begin again. Artists like myself and my husband need immediate financial support to help us through at least the next year, when hopefully we can begin to earn money again in concert halls across the world."*

—**Zoe Conway**

Irish Fiddle Player and Composer

*"By year end we will have cancelled over 500 events, lost over 21,000 in audiences and will face a €300,000 loss of earned income. The Centre is a vital cultural hub in Drogheda and the North East but what is an arts centre without artists and arts workers who have lost their income overnight—the whole sector needs urgent financial support now."*

—**Collette Farrell**

Director, Droichead Arts Centre

## Mayo

*"The artists who are suffering most in this crisis are the ones who are early to mid-career, struggling to establish a practice and build a profile. These are the ones who are sinking and in dire straits, the ones who are locked out of studios, can't pay rent, have children to support, and have lost the tiny meagre income they were just beginning to build."*

—**Alice Maher**

Artist

## Mayo (continued)

*"The closure of Ballina Arts Centre is denying our community the much-needed opportunity for soul-lifting events while denying artists from the area and beyond the chance to earn their living. The Centre has an even more financially precarious future, which could affect the jobs of the staff, as well as impinging on our ability to fulfill our community role and our full potential."*

—**Sean Walsh**

Director, Ballina Arts Centre.

*"It's a precarious time for artists because it's all so unpredictable. There are some online opportunities, but I don't have a babysitter so having the time to make or write a proposal is very slim."*

—**Katie Moore**

Artist

## Meath

*"The now-cancelled 2020 Hinterland Festival has cost a considerable amount with no prospect of income for this year. We rely hugely on local business that've been so badly affected by Covid-19; we fear that this financial support will be reduced next year, leaving the continuance and viability of our festival in a precarious position."*

—**Geraldine Gaughran**

Chair, Hinterland Festival of Literature & Arts, Kells

*"A live capacity theatre audience is like air to a playwright, financially and artistically. All playwrights are freelance and live on a percentage of box office income; without an audience there is no income, no career, no theatre, no more playwriting."*

—**Deirdre Kinahan**

Playwright

## Monaghan

*“The impact of Covid-19 has again highlighted how inadequate the funding to the Arts Sector is. This crisis has been detrimental to theatres, artists and employees. New social distancing guidelines need to be compensated for. The future of theatre cannot live on fresh air.”*

—**Cathy Bennett**, Operation Manager

—**Eileen Costello**, Artistic Director,  
The Garage Theatre

*“We provide a wide range of arts experiences for children in Monaghan and nationally and have been severely impacted by the current crisis. We are striving to adapt and completely reimagine our entire body of work for the foreseeable future and to ensure that once we come through this, that our fragile arts infrastructure is not irreparably damaged or completely lost.”*

—**Thomas Johnston**

Ceol Connected

*“I have no access to my studio so it's hard to make work. My international residencies are on hold, I have no income from this source and it's difficult to proceed with projects. I was very fortunate to have been awarded a Bursary this year. However, €3,000 was subtracted from my award in order to support other projects in the exceptional circumstances relating to the Covid-19.”*

—**Siobhán McDonald**

Artist

## Offaly

*“Since the lockdown my work in schools and the community has ground to a halt. A huge amount of unpaid time and effort is going into re-imagining how meaningful connections can be made in an unknown normal. There is serious doubt about continued funding, while more people are turning to the arts for well-being in this time of stress.”*

—**Caroline Conway**

Visual Artist

*“We work with the most vulnerable members of our society. We are adapting for physical distancing and safety and we will get there as long as we are supported. Art is a form of connectedness and its contribution to our wellbeing has never been more evident or needed. It is not only about the artist but all the individuals involved.”*

—**Rowena Keaveny & Julie Spollen**

Anam Beo, Arts, Health and Wellbeing

## Roscommon

*“The main impact is in the educational and community aspect of my work which is not transferrable to an on line platform. I have spent 12 years developing this form of practice and with the indefinite timeframe of social distancing protocols the future of my work is unknown.”*

—**Naomi Draper**

Artist

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## Roscommon (continued)

*“The reality is that for the remainder of 2020 at least, our theatre space will remain dark. With a loss of €65,000 in box office; €56,000 in payments to artists and no performance opportunities for artists or our local community groups, we are concerned as to what the future holds for rural venues, which play a vital role in local communities.”*

—**Averyl Dooher**

Director, Roscommon Arts Centre

## Sligo

*“From a team of 15 we are now just 3 working from home. We endured severe cuts during the recession and funding had never restored; the coming recession presents us with an existential crisis. The challenges of reopening while keeping artists, staff and public safe are complex and worrying for an organisation with no resources to spare.”*

—**Emer McGarry**

Director, The Model

*“This pandemic crisis has led to an enormous loss in an already precarious income, damningly illustrating years of lack in structural support for the arts in Ireland.”*

—**Shane Finan**

Artist

## Tipperary

*“The anxiety levels that I find myself in are very great and I am not a lone entity: with a family and a now-unemployed partner to support, the pressure to provide while sustaining creativity, originality and engaging citizens is very great, grave and enormous. I am especially worried that we, the artists, will be trotted out to “reinvent” a post-pandemic Ireland, with all the support of a postage stamp.”*

—**Aideen Barry**

Artist

*“I cannot stress enough how devastating the crisis is for the sector. Not only have months (and in some cases years) of work vanished overnight, the stress on artists, technicians and production staff is enormous. Now we are only able to offer a limited platform for artists and try to provide audiences with a sense of togetherness and community.”*

—**Cliona Maher**

Artistic Director, Clonmel Junction Arts Festival

## Waterford

*“All of my work was cancelled or postponed except online activity; but the Covid payment means I can focus on my own writing and reflect on my practice. Some online work is coming in; however I am worried that I will have no income in the near future.”*

—**Lani O’ Hanlon**

Writer and Dance Artist, Waterford

*“I now am now employed one day a week and also working online with 12 young people towards their writing of a play. I applied for the Arts Council’s Covid Bursary to do this work but unfortunately my application wasn’t successful. This essentially is being done for free...the show must go on.”*

—**Ben Hennessy**

Artistic Director, Little Red Kettle Theatre Company

## Westmeath

*“Our resident artists no longer have access to studios, tools and supports to work and earn a living. Our outreach with vulnerable members of our society has been suspended indefinitely. The assistant manager has been temporarily reassigned and the remaining staff have been retained under the Wage Subsidy Scheme to deliver on our commitments to artists and to quickly adapt to audience engagement online.”*

**—Luan Gallery and Abbey Road Artists’ Studios**

## Wexford

*“The National Opera House has receding hopes that it can reopen to audiences at all this year. Beyond the significant financial impacts the closure has had on the company, its staff and their families, the darkening of such a vibrant cultural hub has deprived artists of their income and ability to engage the community in cultural expression, which is more vital than ever.”*

**—David McLoughlin**

Chief Executive, Wexford Festival Opera

*“This has affected me as a classical musician enormously. Freelance playing and concerts have all been cancelled, forcing me to let nearly 50 musicians out of concert agreements. My husband is a freelance theatre lighting technician who has also lost his work; we are wholly reliant on the Covid payments to support our family and are feeling real stress not knowing when and how this will disappear.”*

**—Beth McNinch**

Musician

## Wicklow

*“Cultural contact has slowed to a trickle—and the void is formless and difficult to address. The simple human engagement, connection, sharing, and joy which constitute the beating heart of the creative pursuits with which I’m involved across all ages and contexts have been in suspended animation since March...and it’s impossible to envisage when, and how, reanimation will be possible.”*

**—Eamonn Sweeney**

Musician

*“We closed our doors on 12th March, cancelled 134 events and lost €244,580. Local artists have lost their livelihoods (€192,000) and the arts centre, a centre of community, is devastated. In the coming months it is imperative we renew and restore to reduce the immense sense of isolation felt by so many and to build social well being.”*

**—Niamh O’Donnell**

Director, Mermaid Arts Centre

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# The Arts and Health; The Arts in Health

June, 2020

by Dr. Gabriel Scally

In 1946, in the preamble to its constitution, the World Health Organization (WHO) defined health as; *'a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'*.

This definition has stood the test of time, even though in many circumstances the inherent breadth of the composition of health has been neglected in favour of a purely mechanistic approach to dealing with illness.



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There are two different strands in the connection between the arts and health. Firstly, there is the connection between general well being in a population and exposure to and engagement, whether active or passive, with the arts. The second area is entirely congruent with the first, but encompasses a more direct engagement between the arts and individual health. Important though this is, it is the whole population perspective that is of greatest concern at this time.

In respect of the general health and well being of the population, the arts can be regarded as creative interventions or additions to society which can result in an improved level of population health. Comprehensive research has confirmed the individual and social value of the arts in the production of health and well being. As societies and communities across Ireland emerge from under the shadow of coronavirus the opportunity exists to utilise a vibrant and resurgent arts sector to drive the enhancement and vitality of life that has been stifled during severe social restriction and the economic and psychological hardship that this entails for many people.

Even in the best of times, the benefits to the population resulting from the arts may not be evenly distributed socially or geographically. Similarly, it may not benefit all age groups equally. We know that the coronavirus is at its most cruel when it infects those in our communities who are elderly and frail, or have serious health ailments that would normally be under control but increase vulnerability to the effects of the virus. Evidence from elsewhere indicates that people from ethnic minority populations suffer disproportionately from the effects of Covid-19. All this speaks to the need for an active and outward-facing approach to development and promotion of the arts, and one that is aimed at the groups who would potentially need and benefit most.

Vincente Navarro, the distinguished Catalan academic from Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, has written of the need to;

*“broaden health strategies to include political, economic, social, and cultural interventions that touch on the social (as distinct from the individual) determinants of health.”<sup>1</sup>*

Although the use of the term cultural by Navarro undoubtedly refers more to behavioural than artistic interventions, the road is wide open for the arts to forge direct and effective approaches to improving health in Ireland. This approach to the active creation of good health is sometimes termed ‘salutogenesis’. This is, perhaps, reflected in the Irish government’s Healthy Ireland framework which has as one of its goals, ‘... to create economic, social, cultural and physical environments that foster healthy living.’

A purely resource and asset based approach to the support of the arts in Ireland will tend to eliminate the potential contribution of cultural and artistic dimensions to improving health, particularly in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is likely that mental health problems in particular will be created or exacerbated by the effects of the crisis. Indeed, the Royal College of Psychiatrists in the UK has warned of a ‘tsunami’ of mental health problems in the aftermath of the pandemic. There can be no better time to recognise that the arts are not some optional type of entertainment, or a pleasant societal indulgence, but an essential and potentially restorative part of human consciousness and social being.

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<sup>1</sup> Navarro V, What we mean by social determinants of health. *Int J Health Serv.* 2009;39(3):423–441. doi:10.2190/HS.39.3.a

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