



Submission to the Special Oireachtas Committee regarding the Impact of COVID – 19 on the Arts and Entertainment Sector

Introduction

The Association of Irish Festivals and Events welcomes the consultative process being entered into by the Special Oireachtas Committee on our interlinked and devastated arts and entertainment sector.

We welcome the opportunity to provide feedback in this regard on behalf of the 600 or so not for profit community based festivals and events from the Rose of Tralee International to the Cape Clear International Storytelling festival and all manner of music, art, heritage, film , literary, drama, comedy, childrens, charity, sports, cultural and environmental organisations among our members and more importantly the 35,000 or so volunteers that animate our calendar of events , commemoration, celebrations, Paddy's Day Parades, home comings and all events between.

We also welcome the €25 million stabilisation package to under write some of the priorities of the Expert Advisory Group to the Arts Council announced by Government some weeks ago. As well as the cash it really, provided much HOPE to us all – that the sector is on the official radar and that the catastrophic effects are beginning to be understood.

A.O.I.F.E. Background

A.O.I.F.E. formed in 1993 - aims to make festivals in Ireland entertaining, safe and financially sustainable by helping not for profit festival organisers develop both themselves and their festivals & events through implementing programmes of development for festival organisers, and by seeking support for the work of festival organisers from all communities.

Membership over the 27 years , fluctuates determined on the availability of the individual festivals resources – from a high before the crash in 2008 of 325 our core membership in latter years is about 130 key festivals and events.

(A.O.I.F.E.) as a key state collective network of the 2,000 member International Festival and Events Association Worldwide (I.F.E.A. World) allows us to access and disseminate new and exciting approaches that event and festival producers are taking (not alone in Ireland) but in mainland Europe, the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, Wales, USA , Canada, and indeed Australia.

AOIFE is also the state chapter of the European Festivals Association based in Brussels , which is Europe's leading network of leading Arts Festivals. Irish Members have full access to all the member benefits of the European Collective at about 1/6th of the cost.

A.O.I.F.E. also has been one of the European State Hubs for the European Festival Finder , The European Labels and The European Festivals Awards Scheme run and sponsored by the EU Commission.

Executive Director Colm Croffy has previously been Secretary to the IFEA World Festival Board and has been for the past 8 years a Member Director of the Brussels based European Festivals Association, the first Irishman to be ever elected to both positions.

We offer a full range of services to help festival organisers.

- Bespoke Tailored Group Insurance Scheme
- Help Desk & Advice
- Mentoring & Coaching
- European Festival Association – activities and services
- Ezine, Research and Advocacy
- Training Seminars
- Pop Up Advice Clinics
- Advocacy and Campaigning

A.O.I.F.E. lost its annual state support in 2012 which it enjoyed for 9 years. The network is resourced through member subscriptions, training and mentoring fees, special projects and commissions and EU projects.

In the last few years the Association has been a successful project partner to the EU Commission, Dept of Communications, Dept of Rural Affairs , Culture Ireland and enjoyed working on numerous Festival and Event development contracts for Local Authorities and Leader Companies.

The Secretariat consists of a part time Executive Director , some Admin Crew and third level interns on training programmes.

A.O.I.F.E. is a proud founding member of the Alliance For Insurance Reform, the Event Industry Alliance and is also a longstanding member of The National Campaign For The Arts, Theatre Forum , The Wheel and is reaching out and supporting in these difficult times with information , visibility and advice – EPIC, EIST , EIAI .

See Appendix B for Training and Mentoring Clients.

Sector Pre – Covid

Festivals represent a significant part of the social, cultural and economic life of Ireland. They enhance their local communities by providing artistic outlets, relations-building forums, direct and indirect financial benefits and family fun. Generally, they are planned and organised by a collection of committed individuals and it is vital that these people are supported in their efforts to ensure a vibrant festival sector in Ireland.

Critically Festivals and Events have long been identified by Tourist Authorities worldwide – as ideal small and medium sized enterprises that can bring both valued added to the product mix and sustainability to rural and peripheral economies. Failte Ireland would typically grant aid some marketing and ancillary costs of 30% of our members but only if they can prove additional international visitor bednight capacity.

Equally the Arts Council has recognised the role of local Arts Festivals in preserving the ecology of art form native or unique to a particular place, for providing opportunities for audience development , artistic experimentation and sometime providing Arts Activities in places that have no Venue. Some 50% of all AOIFE members would be funded by the Arts Council.

The most significant funder , enabler and supporter of our Sector's activity on the island are the 34 Local Authorities through their Arts, Tourism, Economic Development , Heritage and Community avenues . We have mapped an annual investment for 2019 of nearly 50% of the lions share of public funding to our sector.

For the €42 million we have determined on annual year we have research that identifies that our organisers (contrary to the widely held view) have to raise an additional €100 million on average through their local fundraising, merchandising, sponsorship, box office and local business (especially Hospitality) commercial support to ensure that the calendar of events happen.

This annual programme is curated with as little as 200 FTEs to the sector but over 25,000 volunteers.

See Appendix A .

The Annual programme that the sector runs delivers some €440 million of indirect economic spend to their locality and region.

Audience is typically 65% Regional/ local with 35% International and CSO and Failte Ireland Figure's for 2019 season suggesting some 5.1 million attendees of which 800,000 would be overseas.

Sector Post – Covid

From our Not For Profit Community Festival / Events Sector we have a database of some 700 - North and South

About 30 were produced in the first 10 weeks of the year

- Possibly the November/ December list of Halloween to Santa's Sleds might happen which would be about 120.
- So from 670 - 120 might happen. **About 78 % cancelled for full year**
- Of that 550 number ; some 30 are bravely platforming an online version.
- Anecdotally some 35 % may never happen again.
- Our sector would contract hundreds of performers, musicians and artistes who are all out of work.
- Our sector relies on the suppliers to our activity – Marqques, Sound Stage and Lighting , Production , PR , Advertising etc etc – all without our engagement.
- Our sector typically animates the domestic tourist agenda – which is needed for Autumn but no clarity over resources or attendance and insurance of lost costs means no confidence to prepare.

Sector Season 2021

- IT is not a reboot ; it is a complete rebuild
- Work must be undertaken in late Autumn at a grass roots level to ascertain what the groups, festivals and events require for support to create successful and safe events in 2021.
- The sector has no high street , Hospitality or vintner partners to work with for revenue as they are all in the teeth of their own economic woes.
- Funding schemes designed for facilities with accounts, marketing , and management staff with out of synch KPIs are of no use.
- Insurance and other regulatory issues must be tackled (AOIFE is a founding member of the Alliance for Insurance Reform)
- The Sector next season will have no performers , musicians , artistes, theatre companies, sound crew, production companies, supplier companies to our larger events if GOVT support is not maintained for this sector and its operatives until normal trading conditions occur.

Key Recommendations for Committee To Consider

- 1) Maintain Covid Payment to all those engaged in the sector last to be animated
- 2) Wage Support Scheme to be continued for all supply business to our Arts / Entertainment Sector
- 3) Events Sector (which is not IDA , Enterprise Ireland or even LEO engaged) be allocated its own bespoke short term financing and grants direct from Dept of Enterprise NOT THROUGH County or CITY Councils

- 4) VAT and Regulatory costs holiday be made available to sector for 18 to 24 months
- 5) Insurance Reform be prioritised
- 6) A Simple Seed Start Up Fund similar to the Dept of Rural Affairs Support for the Irish Shows Association be developed with AOIFE to pump prime the groups who face significant financial challenges for next year.
- 5) Immediate formulation of an Industry led and Dept. level resourced Task Force on the Events Sector that could feed into the July fiscal stimulus package and then a fuller report as to how the catastrophic effects on our sector can be recovered from the medium term .

Colm Croffy , Executive Director , June 26th 2020

Appendix A**ROI State Funding Anticipated Investment Into Not For Profit Festivals and Community Events 2019 per millions**

Agency	Investment Anticipated
Local Authorities, FI Regional Grants, Economic Grants, Arts Grants, Heritage Grants, Community Support Grants, Social Amenity Grants ,Library Support discretionary etc.	€19.5
Failte Ireland	€3
Arts Council (Direct, Small, Deis, Travel, Project, Touring, Special Projects)	€10
Leader	€3
Gaeltacht	€1
Culture Irl.	€5
Creative Irl.	€4
Dept. of Rural Affairs	€1.4
Heritage Council	€5
OPW	€2.5
Total	€41.8

Recent Training / Mentoring Clients & Partners



**Cork
County Council**
Comhairle Contae Chorcaí



Derry City & Strabane
District Council

Comhairle Chathair
Dhoire & Cheantar
an tSratha Báin

Derry Citty & Strabane
Destrict Council



ROSCOMMON
LEADER PARTNERSHIP



Comhairle Cathrach
& Contae **Luimnigh**

Limerick City
& County Council



Comhairle Contae **Lú**
Louth County Council



IRD Duballow



Comhairle Cathrach
& Contae **Phort Láirge**
Waterford City
& County Council

An Chomhairle Oidhreacht
The Heritage Council



Ennis
Chamber
Advancing business together



Comhairle Contae **Chiarraí**
Kerry County Council



NORSKE



FESTIVALER

For your bespoke training & mentoring programme contact

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