

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

- 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

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

Appendices

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

“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.

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 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

“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 €30m 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 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.”***¹

“At the same time, well-being is a cornerstone of the Government’s current response to the crisis and will be critical to the recovery phase.”²

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.”*³

→ **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.”*⁴

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.

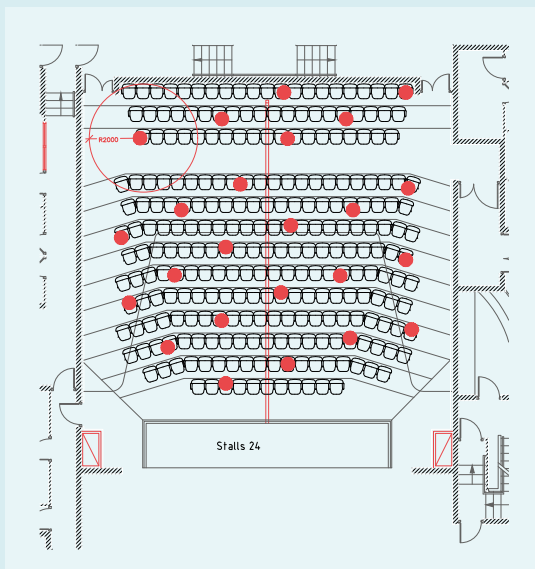
¹ Economic Considerations for Reinstating Economic Activity Dept of Business Enterprise and Innovation May 2020.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ 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 and region.

→ **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.”⁵**

→ **The digital arena has come to the fore in 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.⁶

→ **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”.⁷

⁵“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

⁶ 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.

⁷ Economic Considerations for Reinstating Economic Activity Dept of Business Enterprise and Innovation.

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

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

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.⁸

“...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.⁹

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 2020.¹⁰

⁸ Arts Council Survey of Artists April 2020. 95% of artists reported a financial impact and 30% reported it as critical.

⁹ Arts Council Survey of Arts Organisations April 2020. 47,000 events cancelled to end April 2020.

¹⁰ Estimate based on 55,000 reported participant engagements cancelled to April 2020. Arts Council survey of organisations April 2020.

“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)¹¹

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.¹² 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.¹³

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** to 31st 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.

¹¹ The Cope Foundation in Cork enhances and supports the lives of people with an intellectual disability and/or autism. They are a creative partner of Cork Midsummer Festival who operate a specifically designated socially engaged arts programme throughout its community. 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.

¹² Stability Programme Update Spring 2020 Department of Finance.

¹³ Economic Considerations for Reinstating Economic Activity DBEI et al 2020.

The Arts Council has commissioned EY (formerly Ernst & Young) to produce an initial analysis of the potential impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the arts economy. Their findings are stark.

“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.

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.**¹⁵*

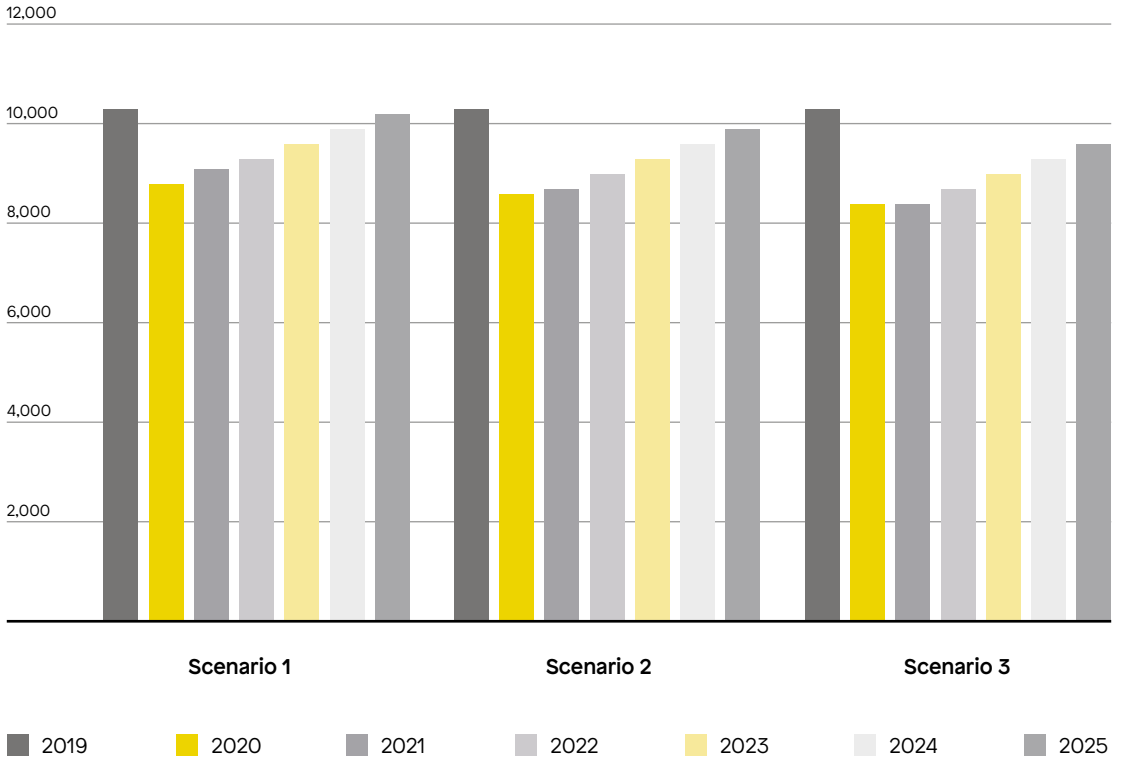
The recovery of the arts sector may take until 2025 if nothing is done to mitigate the impacts of Covid-19

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.”¹⁴

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

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



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

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.

-
- 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 releasing 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 releasing 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.

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.

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.

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
1. Financial supports for organisations at risk	Number of identified organisations June 2020; & contingency for unknown	Those at identified risk	Sector stabilisation Work opportunities	€2,000,000
2. Financial supports for strategic organisations	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
3. Commissioning schemes	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
4. Bursaries schemes	Expanded bursary schemes across all artforms/arts practice areas	Artists Groups of artists	Work opportunities Sustainability Landscape more reflective of diversity	€5,500,000
5. Cultural Recovery Taskforce	Arts, film, live entertainment, music develop a common approach; make recommendations to government	Cultural and creative sectors	Sustainability	€50,000
6. Professional development	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
7. Digital content and access	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
8. In person experiences of the arts 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
9. Physical buildings adaptations 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
Arts Council resourcing				€750,000

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 crises, 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

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

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

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

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.

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.”¹

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.

¹ 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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