IRISH EQUITY

PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION

July 2026

IRISH EQUITY

Pre-Budget Submission — Budget 2027

Investing realistically, innovatively and sustainably in Ireland's cultural and creative future

July 2026

Irish Equity Executive member Shane Griffin speaking at the SIPTU bi-ennial conference in Galway

Irish Equity Protest in support of the writers strike, Stephen's Green

Equity President Gerry O'Brien addresses the FIA conference in Madrid

Contents

Executive Summary

It is not possible to address the working conditions of actors in isolation from the wider arts sector; the challenges actors face are inseparable from the structural conditions affecting all artists and cultural workers. This submission therefore considers both actor-specific concerns and the structure that determines their livelihoods. Our proposals are based on what our own evidence shows, what the State's own evidence shows, and decades of international research.

- This submission sets out a comprehensive case for investing realistically, innovatively and sustainably in Ireland's cultural and creative future. Its proposals combine restored national funding, targeted regional support, refundable tax incentives to mobilise private investment, sustainable levy mechanisms, a professional income scheme for artists, and legislative reform to protect artists' labour, income and intellectual property. Throughout this submission our assumptions are stated, analytical frames are kept distinct, and the most significant reforms cost the Exchequer almost nothing.

We call on Government to legislate and pilot these measures in 2027, accompanied by independent cost-benefit analysis.

National funding priorities

- **Arts Council:** €200 million for 2027 - the figure the Council itself sought for 2026 - restoring strategic capacity after the €140 million punitive standstill imposed pending the Brennan review, with guaranteed annual inflationary adjustment thereafter. The Minister has already signalled that the Budget 2027 allocation "will be a lot different" – so this submission sets a baseline.
- **Culture Ireland:** €10 million, building on the €0.8 million increase in 2026, to expand the international promotion of Irish artists.
- **Creative Ireland:** maintain programme funding for stability and continuity.
- **TG4:** increase total funding to €70 million (2026 allocation: €65.4 million).
- **Screen Ireland:** €15 million - expanding the Nationwide Additional Production Fund to €10 million and increasing the capital fund by €5 million, ring-fenced for indigenous Irish production and development.

Regional and local supports

- **Regional Uplift Fund:** €64 million, administered by the Department and delivered through local authorities, to address per-capita inequities in local arts investment that range from less than €3 to over €75 between counties.
- **Infrastructure Capital Fund:** €72 million to make local arts infrastructure fit for purpose nationwide - scaling to the effective level required the €6 million capital works pilot scheme whose principle Budget 2026 conceded.
- **Derelict buildings:** statutory power for local authorities to license vacant and derelict properties for cultural use at nominal rents (Legislative Reform, Part 4).
- **Tourism Bed Night Levy:** €2 per overseas bed night, collected by local authorities, yielding approximately €95.8 million on CSO 2025 figures (47.9 million overseas bed nights) at no Exchequer cost.
- **Multinational Cultural Levy:** a choice of €100 per full-time employee or 0.01 per cent of Irish turnover for companies with more than 250 staff or turnover above €100 million, yielding approximately €30 million; half retained locally, half pooled nationally.

Tax incentives for private investment

- **Progressive Arts Investment Tax Credit (individuals):** a refundable credit at rates from 25 per cent to 100 per cent, highest for the lowest earners, mobilising a modelled €50 million in citizen-directed investment at a net cost of €25 million.
- **Local Cultural Investment Credit (SMEs):** a 70 per cent credit on eligible local cultural spend, crowding in a modelled €25 million at a net cost of €17.5 million.
- **Commercial Theatre Production Relief:** a 40 per cent credit (rising for Irish premieres and touring, capped at 55 per cent combined), with public grant funding deducted from the credit base, unlocking a modelled €10 million at a gross tax expenditure of €4 million.

A professional income for professional artists

- **Professional Artist Income Scheme (phased, 2027-2029):** €40,000 per annum, taxable, with a withdrawal taper. Phase 1 supports 5,000 artists in 2027 (gross €200 million; net approximately €120 million), scaling through independent evaluation gates to 20,000 artists and a steady state of €800 million gross (net approximately €480 million) by 2029 - a rollout designed around the scale-up analysis in the State's own final evaluation of the BIA pilot.
- **On the State's own methodology** - the 1.39 benefit-cost ratio in the Department's commissioned evaluation, computed as the evaluation computes it, against net fiscal cost - the scheme is not a cost but a net social surplus: approximately €47 million in Phase 1, rising to approximately €187 million per annum at full scale.

Legislative and regulatory reform (near-zero Exchequer cost)

- **Arts Act 2003:** name the artist in the foundational legislation - recognition of the artist and a new rights section binding the Minister, the Council, and every funded body.
- **Artificial intelligence:** condition Section 481 on human employment; fund the AI Office of Ireland and the market surveillance authorities from the first budget of their existence; codify the performer's right of consent over AI reproduction of voice, likeness and performance, including for training.
- **Taxation of the creative professional:** address the unintended consequences of the Karshan judgment with five-year income averaging on the farmers' model (Section 657 TCA 1997), a status election ending the absurd situation of actors and other artists bouncing from short term employment to short term employment, preserved expense deductibility, and a review of the Artists' Exemption's exclusion of performers.
- **Copyright and enforcement:** amend the CRRA 2000 on buyouts, DAC transparency and equitable remuneration; enforce SI 567/2021, applying Articles 18–22 of the DSM Directive to existing contracts; and condition Section 481 on compliance with all of the above.
- **Local Government Act 2001**: a mandatory arts infrastructure function, cultural use of derelict buildings, and the statutory basis for local cultural levies.

Scale and return

- The proposed package delivers first-year investment into the wider arts and audio-visual sectors of approximately €842 million - roughly a quarter of one per cent of Modified GNI - at an estimated net Exchequer cost of €597.5 million, supporting economic activity of approximately €1.35 billion at a conservative multiplier of 1.6. As the Professional Artist Income Scheme reaches full scale in 2029, total investment rises to approximately €1.44 billion, still under half of one per cent of Modified GNI, at a net cost of €957.5 million. Sector output, investment leverage and social return are treated throughout as distinct, non-additive analytical frames.

Introduction

> *"This Government places great value on culture and the arts sector."*
>
> — Minister Patrick O'Donovan, Arts Funding (March 2026)

> *"The Government believes that culture and the arts are essential to a well-rounded society..."*
>
> — Programme for Government

> *"Our culture in all its distinctiveness and variety is what identifies us as a people."*
>
> — Josepha Madigan TD, Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, publishing Culture 2025, Ireland's first national cultural policy framework (2020).

The Irish State is eloquent about culture. Culture 2025, the national cultural policy framework, affirms "the intrinsic value of culture" and the right of everyone "to participate in the cultural and creative life of the nation."[1] The Creative Ireland Programme envisions that every person in Ireland should have the opportunity to realise their full creative potential.[2] Presenting Budget 2026, the Minister for Culture, Communications and Sport described the Basic Income for the Arts as "the envy of the world."[3] Two decades of policy documents and political statements have said, in every available register, that the arts matter.

However, saying that we value something is not a policy. And if everyone values it so much why are the conditions of work within the arts sector continually declining to the point that artists experience deprivation at three times the national level?

No single government document, policy, or action plan on the arts has contained a diagnosis of the sector. Not one has identified the market failures that make public intervention necessary, and no policy has ever named the mechanisms by which those failures impoverish the people who make the work, or matched an appropriate policy instrument to each failure it proposes to correct.

Culture 2025 committed the Government to doubling public funding for arts and culture from €288 million to €576 million by 2025; the framework's final year instead delivered a total arts and culture spend of €380,993 (€195 million short of its target) and delivered a standstill allocation to the Arts Council, held at €140 million pending a governance review.

Aspirational language is not analysis and holds no guarantees. A vision – no matter how elegant and inspirational - without a diagnosis and a plan is simply a wish.

What our evidence shows

Equity's *The Cost of Pretending* survey (August 2025; 41 per cent of membership) found a median annual income for professional actors of €10,000.[4] Actors spend most of their working time in live theatre but earn most of their income in film and television - and 65 per cent of respondents earned

[1] Culture 2025 - A National Cultural Policy Framework (Government of Ireland, 2020), statement of values.
[2] Creative Ireland Programme, vision statement.
[3] Minister Patrick O'Donovan TD, Budget 2026 press conference, 7 October 2025.
[4] Irish Actors' Equity, The Cost of Pretending: A Survey of the Working Lives of Irish Actors (August 2025).

no royalty payments whatsoever for their audio-visual work, in defiance of rights they hold under Irish and EU law. Across the water, Equity in the UK has distributed more than £100 million in royalty payments to performers since 2017 under collectively bargained agreements - in a jurisdiction whose performers hold weaker statutory rights than Irish law already provides.

The most common contract duration for an actor in Ireland is less than one month. These are the earnings and conditions of a professional workforce inside a combined arts and audio-visual economy whose gross value added runs to billions of euro.

What the State's evidence shows

The Department's own two-year impact assessment of the Basic Income for the Arts found that, in October 2024, one in two members of its control group - working artists receiving no payment - were experiencing enforced deprivation, against 15.7 per cent of the general population; the evaluators note that the control group "is a reflection of the wider arts sector."[5]

The Department commissioned this research, received it, and published it. Its own cost-benefit analysis found every euro invested in the scheme returned €1.39 in monetised social benefit - €1.75 by the pilot's final year.[6] The State has measured the poverty of its artists to two decimal places, priced the return on relieving it, failed to bring deprivation to the national level, declared the relief the envy of the world - and in the same budget froze the funding of the agency responsible for the sector in which those artists work.

What the State has declined to find out

There has been no comprehensive economic impact analysis of the arts in the Republic of Ireland since the EY report of 2020, built on data from the final quarter of 2019, which found the arts sector generating €1.16 billion in gross value added and supporting some 55,000 jobs.[7] CSO national accounts record the Arts, Entertainment and Recreation sector contributing over €1.8 billion in GVA in 2022, supporting approximately 40,000 jobs. Northern Ireland, with a fraction of this State's resources, published a full economic impact study of its arts sector in 2025. And the contrast within the State's own practice is sharper still: the audiovisual industry has a current, commissioned economic and skills analysis - published by Screen Ireland in January 2025, finding total gross value added above €1 billion and 15,899 full-time equivalent jobs - while the arts sector, whose workforce feeds that industry, has had nothing since 2020. The State measures the industry; it does not measure the workforce. A sector this valuable, by the Government's own repeated declaration, does not have a current evidence base - because the State has not commissioned one. This submission asks the Government to act on evidence it has already gathered and published, and to build the evidence base it has so far declined to build.

Our demands follow from the evidence: **name the workforce in the legislation**; **fund the labour that produces the value and guarantee its participation in the value it creates**; **fund and protect the core arts infrastructure of organisations, places and people; and build the evidence base appropriate to a multi-billion-euro sector**.

---

[5]Feldkircher, M. and O'Donnell, O., Basic Income for the Arts Pilot Scheme: Impact Assessment After Two Years (Department of Culture, Communications and Sport, September 2025).

[6]Alma Economics, Cost-benefit analysis for the Basic Income for the Arts (Department of Culture, Communications and Sport, September 2025): overall benefit-cost ratio of 1.39, rising to 1.75 in 2025, computed against the net fiscal cost of the scheme.

[7]EY, The Arts Sector in Ireland (2020), using Q4 2019 data; CSO, national accounts, Arts, Entertainment and Recreation, 2022; Arts Council of Northern Ireland / Simetrica-Jacobs, Economic Impact Report (2025); Alma Economics, Economic and Skills Analysis of the Audiovisual Sector in the Republic of Ireland (Fís Éireann/Screen Ireland, January 2025): total GVA of €1,061.4m and 15,899 total FTEs, averaged 2021–2023.

The Context

The Economics that explain why the arts need permanent public funding

The economics of live performance has been understood for more than sixty years. Baumol and Bowen demonstrated in 1966 that the performing arts suffer a structural "cost disease": productivity in most of the economy rises continuously, while a play or a string quartet requires the same number of performers, working the same number of hours and days, as it did a century ago.[8] Because production costs track inflation labour needs to become more "productive". However productivity increases in live performance are minimal, so the relative cost of live performance rises indefinitely. The funding gap is met in the first instance by the artists themselves as the only way to deliver productivity gains is to pay less and less. The funding gap in the performing arts is therefore not evidence of organisational failure or inefficiency: it is simple arithmetic.

Add to this the standard of the public-good and externality characteristics of cultural provision - the "option, existence and bequest" values the market cannot price, along with the spillovers to education, tourism, wellbeing and national reputation that no box office captures.[9] A state that declares culture intrinsically valuable but funds it through annual discretionary grants, as though the gap were temporary, does not understand the economics of the thing it says it values.

Actors median annual earnings are now €10,000; more than half of eligible applicants to the Arts Council now receive no funding at all; the real value of individual awards is declining; no funded organisation can plan for growth on existing allocations. Because the policy does not understand the gap.

Why artists are poor

Artists' poverty is not a personal failing and cannot be solved by "working harder" or "upskilling." It is the predictable output of a labour market whose structure depends on portfolio careers of short engagements that suppress bargaining power engagement by engagement.[10] The data confirms all of this. Average weekly earnings in Arts, Entertainment and Recreation were €582.36 in the final quarter of 2022 - 65 per cent of the national average - and fell in a year inflation rose by 7.8 per cent; almost three-quarters of performing arts workers earned below the national hourly average.[11] In 2024, 60.8 per cent of Writers Guild of Ireland members earned less than €20,000 from writing. National average weekly earnings passed €1,000 in the first quarter of 2025: the median professional actor now earns, in a year, what the average Irish worker earns in ten weeks.

The State's own BIA research gives us the clearest picture of this precarity: 76.2 per cent of artists work as self-employed; barely a third work exclusively in the arts; one-third undertake unpaid arts work; three-quarters feel pressure to leave for other employment; fewer than half believe a sustainable career in Ireland is possible. The final evaluation of the pilot found that a €325 weekly payment increased time spent on artistic creation by around four additional hours per week - a measure of what stability buys, and of how far even an income floor sits below a professional income.

The tax system now compounds the structure: following the Karshan judgment, performers face engagement-by-engagement reclassification as PAYE employees, taxed like employees while

[8] Baumol, W.J. and Bowen, W.G., Performing Arts: The Economic Dilemma (Twentieth Century Fund, 1966).
[9] Throsby, D., Economics and Culture (Cambridge University Press, 2001); O'Hagan, J., The State and the Arts: An Analysis of Key Economic Policy Issues in Europe and the United States (Edward Elgar, 1998).
[10] Menger, P.-M., "Artistic Labor Markets and Careers," Annual Review of Sociology 25 (1999); Rosen, S., "The Economics of Superstars," American Economic Review 71(5) (1981); Abbing, H., Why Are Artists Poor? The Exceptional Economy of the Arts (Amsterdam University Press, 2002).
[11] Performing Arts Forum research, Q4 2022 (CSO Earnings, Hours and Employment Costs data); Writers Guild of Ireland member survey, 2024; CSO, average weekly earnings, Q1 2025.

secured like neither employees nor the self-employed. The trends, without intervention, are certain: the income gap will widen, artists on average will grow poorer, and the arts will become the preserve of those with independent means - a narrower, more exclusive sector that neither reflects nor represents the country.

Why our proposals work? They match the policy instruments to the failures

The very first principle of policy design, (Tinbergen,1952) is that a government needs at least as many instruments as it has objectives.[12]

Irish arts policy has, in effect, one instrument - the annual discretionary grant - chasing every objective at once: production, access, infrastructure, artists' incomes, regional equity, international promotion. That is the design fault at the centre of the arts funding system, and no increase in the size of the single instrument will correct it.

This submission is built the other way around: each identified failure is matched to the instrument that corrects it.

- **The Baumol gap** - permanent, compounding - is met by restored and index-linked grant-in-aid: €200 million for the Arts Council.
- **The absence of private and risk capital** - arts sponsorship and investment in Ireland are negligible by international standards - is met by refundable, progressive tax credits for individuals and SMEs, and a commercial theatre production relief with a statutory no-double-cover rule.
- **Free-riding on the cultural brand** - tourism and foreign direct investment trade daily on a cultural reputation they do not fund - is met by a €2 bed night levy and a modest multinational cultural levy, at no Exchequer cost.
- **Income volatility and labour-market failure** - the precarious, poverty afflicted labour market described above - is met by a Professional Artist Income Scheme and by five-year income averaging on the model the tax code already applies to farming, another trade of volatile incomes and productive fallow periods.
- **Rights enforcement failure** - 65 per cent of actors receiving no royalties despite holding the legal right to them - is met by legislative and regulatory reform costing almost nothing: CRRA amendment, DSM Directive enforcement, Section 481 conditionality, and a performer's statutory consent right over artificial intelligence.
- **The evidence failure** - no sectoral impact analysis since 2020 - is met by a commitment to independent evaluation built into every measure proposed here, beginning with a full cost-benefit analysis of the 2027 pilot year.

On Eurostat's measures, Ireland sits at or near the bottom of the EU for public cultural expenditure as a share of national income - approximately 0.4 per cent on the combined cultural services and broadcasting measure, a position that adjusting for Modified GNI does not improve.[13] In 2026 the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport received €1.51 billion, a 9.5 per cent increase - while its flagship arts agency stood still. The problem is not that Ireland cannot afford its culture. It is that the money moves through a structure never designed to reach the people who make the work.

The multiplier, honestly stated

Because artists and arts organisations spend locally - on venues, staff, printers, suppliers - arts investment has an unusually high degree of local capture, and international studies report cultural multipliers ranging from 1.5 to 2.5. This submission deliberately applies a single conservative

[12] Tinbergen, J., On the Theory of Economic Policy (North-Holland, 1952).
[13] Eurostat, general government expenditure by function (COFOG), cultural services and broadcasting.

multiplier of 1.6 throughout, keeps sector output, investment leverage and social return as distinct, non-additive frames, and calls for independent research to establish the true multiplier as part of the evaluation of the 2027 pilots of these proposals.

Our proposal

This Pre-Budget Submission recommends a coherent suite of instruments: restored national funding, regional and infrastructural investment, refundable tax incentives, cultural levies, a professional artist income scheme, a creative professional tax framework, and legislative reform.

With Phase 1 of the Professional Artist Income Scheme, the package mobilises approximately €842 million of first-year investment into the wider arts and audio-visual sectors - roughly a quarter of one per cent of Modified GNI - at a net Exchequer cost of €597.5 million, supporting approximately €1.35 billion in economic activity, and rising to approximately €1.44 billion as the scheme reaches full scale in 2029.

The State says, in every framework document it publishes, that this sector is among the most valuable things Ireland possesses. This submission takes the State at its word - and shows it, market failure by market failure and instrument by instrument, what acting on that word would look like.

Irish Equity President Gerry O'Brien with Equity, Northern Ireland

Legislative and Regulatory Reform

The measures in this section carry almost no Exchequer cost. They are the least expensive recommendations in this submission, and among the most consequential: they ask, in the main, for the enforcement of rights the Oireachtas has already legislated for, and for the naming in law of the creative professionals who make the work.

1. Amending the Arts Act 2003

The Arts Act makes no mention of, or provision for, the artist.

The foundational legislation of Irish arts policy concerns itself with what art is created and with the organisational structure of the Arts Council - not with the people whose labour creates the art. The Act defines "arts" as:

> *"any creative or interpretative expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form, and includes, in particular, visual arts, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, film, circus and architecture, and includes any medium when used for those purposes."*

The definition names the expression but not the person who makes it. That absence has produced a sector in which the people who make the art are pushed to the margins of the policy and funding framework – the creative professionals who develop, create and sustain the arts and culture sector have been rendered invisible.

We propose the following amendments to prioritise and protect artists, their labour, and their intellectual property rights.

1.1 Recognition of the artist

Insert into the Act:

> *"This Act recognises that all art, in whatever form, is made by the labour of creative people, and that such people have general and particular rights including, but not limited to, welfare, working conditions and copyright. The term 'artist' is a title earned by creative people through their continued and professional commitment to their work, and through the creation of a body of such work over time. This Act recognises the work of creative people as an essential contribution to cultural, social and economic development, and ensures their protection under this Act."*

1.2 Recognition of artists' rights

Incorporate into the Act the principles of the State's Intellectual Property Protocol, as maintained by the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment: the Act shall acknowledge and protect the moral and economic rights of artists, ensuring fair remuneration, attribution, and control over the use and distribution of their works. The commercialisation of an artist's creative or interpretative intellectual property should maximise the economic benefit to the artist and the societal benefit and return to Ireland from its public investment in the creative industries.

1.3 Support for artists' welfare

In acknowledgement of the unique and precarious nature of artists' career development and income, the Minister shall develop and implement policies that aggregate income over the lifetime of the artist, to improve the social and economic conditions of artists, including access to income schemes, social welfare, healthcare and pension schemes. The taxation counterpart of this provision - income averaging for creative professionals - is set out in Part 3 below.

1.4 Emphasis on copyright protection

The Act shall acknowledge and protect the inherent copyright and related rights of all artists in the work they create, guarantee that artists retain control over their creations, and ensure appropriate compensation for the use of their works, acknowledging the protections afforded by the Copyright and Related Rights Act 2000 and Directive (EU) 2019/790 on copyright in the Digital Single Market.

1.5 Inclusion in policy development

Amend Section 5 (functions and directions of the Minister): the Minister shall consult with **all** representative bodies of artists when formulating policies affecting the arts sector, ensuring that artists' perspectives and needs are adequately represented.

2. Artificial Intelligence and the Performer

Ireland's global cultural reputation is built on the distinct, irreplaceable human talent of its creatives: our actors, musicians and writers. The rapid proliferation of unauthorised generative AI threatens the foundation of that reputation. AI models train on, clone and replicate copyrighted human work without the three conditions any legitimate use requires: **consent, credit and compensation**.

Equity is aware of instances in which publicly funded broadcasters have commissioned AI-generated music from overseas providers in place of work by Irish composers, stripping income from the very artists public funding exists to sustain.[14] As the State prepares Budget 2027, it must recognise that the cultural sector and cultural identity cannot survive if human creativity is treated as free training data. The State must use its fiscal and regulatory levers to shield Irish creative workers from systematic displacement.

2.1 Condition Section 481 on human employment

Production companies in receipt of the Section 481 film tax credit are already legally required to provide "quality employment and training opportunities." Automated systems that displace human actors, musicians and writers undermine the plain meaning of that condition. Government must update the Section 481 regulations so that relief is withheld from any production that uses generative AI to replicate a performer's voice or likeness, clone an author's script, or synthesise a musician's score without a collective bargaining agreement, explicit individual consent, and fair remuneration. The detailed regulatory amendments are set out in Part 7.

2.2 Resource the enforcement architecture from its first budget

The Regulation of Artificial Intelligence Bill 2026, published in June, establishes the AI Office of Ireland (Oifig IS na hÉireann) as the central coordinating authority for the EU AI Act, with a statutory requirement to be operational by 1 August 2026, alongside fifteen sectoral market surveillance authorities - including Coimisiún na Meán for AI in audiovisual media.[15] Budget 2027 is the first budget of the AI Office's existence. It must include dedicated operational funding for the Office and the market surveillance authorities to monitor, investigate and penalise AI developers who scrape Irish literary, musical and dramatic works without a licence. An enforcement architecture that is not resourced to enforce cultural rights will default to enforcing everything else first.

2.3 Codify the performer's consent right

[14] [Documentary evidence of the specific instance(s) to be appended or cited before submission. A formal submission should not name an individual broadcaster without documentary support.]

[15] Regulation of Artificial Intelligence Bill 2026 (published 17 June 2026); Statutory Instrument No. 366/2025 designating the national competent authorities under Article 70 of the EU AI Act.

Legislation must codify a performer's right to consent before their voice, likeness or performance is reproduced by an AI system, and extend that right to training data: all publicly funded arts production should be explicitly excluded from AI training datasets in the absence of consent. The copyright amendments giving effect to this are set out in Part 5.

2.4 Reinforce the creative safety net

To counter the economic disruption AI automation is already causing, Budget 2027 must reinforce income supports designed for artistic workers: within the permanent Basic Income for the Arts successor scheme, and in the Professional Artist Income Scheme proposed in this submission, priority of access should be afforded to actors, musicians and writers whose traditional income streams have been demonstrably diminished by the proliferation of uncompensated AI content.

3. Taxation of the Creative Professional

3.1 The Karshan problem

The Supreme Court's decision in *Revenue Commissioners v Karshan (Midlands) Ltd* (2023) replaced the established tests for employment status with a five-question framework, and Revenue's subsequent guidance confirms that no ongoing or continuous commitment is required for an employment to exist: an individual engaged for a single job can be an employee.[16] For performers, the unintended consequence is severe. An actor may now be classified as a PAYE employee engagement by engagement - taxed like an employee while retaining none of an employee's security. Each classification strips away the deductibility of the real costs of a professional practice: agent's commission, training and coaching, travel, self-promotion. An actor with five short engagements in a year can be whipsawed between tax regimes five times, with emergency tax applied at each transition, while remaining, for every other purpose, a self-employed professional carrying all the risk of the trade.

The tax code compounds unfairness. The Artists' Exemption applies to income of up to €50,000 from original and creative works - the writer of the play, the composer of the score - but explicitly excludes the interpretative artist who performs them.[17] The State's tax structure recognises the creation of the work and is silent on its performance. The actor is taxed as if their work were neither art nor enterprise.

3.2 The instrument: treat artists as the tax code treats farmers

The remedy is not a special rate band for creatives - a dedicated bracket delivers its largest benefit to the highest earners and is poorly targeted at the volatility that Karshan aggravates. The correct instrument already exists in the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, applied to another trade whose income is irregular, determined by forces outside the individual's control, and punctuated by fallow periods that are part of production rather than idleness: **farming**.

Section 657 permits farmers to average taxable income over five years precisely because annual assessment taxes volatile incomes at penal marginal rates. Every argument that justifies averaging for the farmer applies with equal force to the actor, whose good year funds the development years either side of it. The United Kingdom already operates averaging for creators of literary and artistic works; Ireland should go further and extend it to all professional artists, including performers.[18]

[16]Revenue Commissioners v Karshan (Midlands) Ltd t/a Domino's Pizza [2023] IESC 24; Revenue, Guidelines for Determining Employment Status for Taxation Purposes (2024).
[17]Section 195, Taxes Consolidation Act 1997. The exemption applies to income tax only, up to €50,000, for original and creative works in defined categories; interpretative artists do not qualify.
[18]Section 657, Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 (farm income averaging over five years). United Kingdom: averaging for creators of literary or artistic works, Income Tax (Trading and Other Income) Act 2005, ss. 221–225.

We propose a Creative Professional tax framework comprising four amendments to the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997:

- **Income averaging (the farmers' model).** Registered professional artists may elect to average taxable professional income over five years, on the model of Section 657, with an equivalent step-out provision. The cost is one of timing, not of revenue forgone: averaging is largely self-reversing over the cycle, with a cash-flow cost estimated at €1–2 million and a near-zero net cost over five years.
- **A status election to end the whipsaw.** Registered creative professionals may elect to be assessed under self-assessment for all professional income, notwithstanding engagement-level status determinations, so that the Karshan framework's engagement-by-engagement test does not move a performer between tax regimes multiple times within a single year.
- **Preserved deductibility.** Where PAYE classification is applied to an engagement, the performer's professional expenses - agent's commission, training, travel, self-promotion - must remain deductible, through a sectoral flat-rate expense regime with an actual-cost election.
- **Review of the Artists' Exemption.** The exclusion of interpretative artists from the Section 195 exemption should be reviewed, with a view to extending relief, in full or in part, to performers' professional income. Because most performer incomes sit in the lower bands, the cost is bounded: an estimated €5–8 million net, against a current exemption cost of approximately €10 million per annum for some 3,000 creators.

Together these measures cost the Exchequer almost nothing across the cycle, and they answer, precisely where it bites, a reclassification that was aimed at gig-economy platforms and has landed on the national theatre profession.

4. Amending the Local Government Act 2001

The following amendments will help ensure an additional flow of investment into local cultural economies, driving employment and production opportunities.

4.1 Mandate for arts infrastructure provision

Amend Section 67 of, and Schedule 13 to, the Local Government Act 2001 to provide:

> *"It shall be a mandatory function of each local authority to provide, fund, and maintain local arts infrastructure, which may be building-based (arts centres, galleries, theatres) or network-based (community arts networks, digital platforms), to ensure equitable access to cultural services across their administrative areas."*

4.2 Facilitation of cultural use of derelict buildings

Insert a new section:

> *"Local authorities shall have the power to identify derelict or vacant buildings within their jurisdiction and repurpose them for cultural use, including the granting of temporary licences or leases to artists, cultural organisations, or community groups for the use of such properties, thereby promoting cultural activity and community engagement."*

4.3 Imposition of cultural levies

Amend Part 12 of the Local Government Act 2001 to allow:

> *"Local authorities may, subject to public consultation and approval by the elected council, impose additional levies on businesses and tourists (including a cultural contribution levy) to fund local cultural initiatives, infrastructure and programmes."*

This amendment provides the statutory basis for the Tourism Bed Night Levy and the local collection of the Multinational Cultural Levy proposed in the Investment, Revenue and Income Measures section of this submission.

5. Amending the Copyright and Related Rights Act 2000

The buyout contract - issued, in film and television, through the designated activity company (DAC) incorporated for each production - is the instrument through which performers' statutory rights are stripped in practice. One example shows the machinery at work.

Why this is important

Normal People (2020) was financed principally by the BBC and Hulu, with Element Pictures as production partner, and was supported by the Section 481 tax credit. Its continuing commercial value is divided territorially between the three: Hulu holding United States rights, the BBC its customary markets including Europe and Australia, and Element the remaining territories. The series remains in licence around the world, and each rights-holder continues to earn from it. The resident Irish actors who performed it were engaged on buyout contracts.[19]

One of the most successful Irish screen exports of the last decade generates recurring licensing revenue on three continents, part-financed by the Irish taxpayer - and the Irish performers whose work carries it received a one-time payment, with no participation in the value their performances continue to create.

Screen Ireland's own commissioned economic analysis cites Normal People among the productions that have increased visitor numbers to Irish filming locations: the State's screen agency celebrates the series' continuing national value; its performers hold no share of it.

Section 298(6) of the CRRA declares an agreement void in so far as it purports to exclude the right to equitable remuneration; SI 567/2021 guarantees fair and proportionate remuneration. The buyout, issued through a DAC and presented to the performer as non-negotiable, extinguishes in practice what the Oireachtas has guaranteed on paper. The following amendments close the gap between the statute and the set:

- Clarify and enforce limitations on the scope of rights assignments - especially in buyout contracts - ensuring that partial assignments are respected and that fair and proportionate remuneration is maintained throughout the lifecycle of a work.
- Mandate written reassignment of rights from designated activity companies (DACs), consistent with the Act's requirement that assignments of rights be effected in writing, and create penalties for non-compliance.
- Incorporate stronger protections for equitable remuneration, building on Section 298(6) of the Act - *"An agreement is void in so far as it purports to exclude or restrict the right to equitable remuneration"* - and on Articles 18–22 of Directive (EU) 2019/790, ensuring artists are remunerated proportionately to the actual or potential revenues generated by their work.
- Create a legal obligation of transparency in DAC and IP reassignment practices, through reporting requirements on production companies covering the terms of rights acquisition, reassignment documentation, and the distribution of revenues to rights holders.
- Codify a performer's statutory right to consent before their voice, likeness or performance is reproduced by an artificial intelligence system, including reproduction for the purposes of training AI models.

---

[19] Production financing and territorial licensing structure as publicly reported: principal finance from the BBC and Hulu, Element Pictures as production partner, with Section 481 support. Contractual terms of resident Irish performers as documented in agreements held by Irish Actors' Equity on behalf of its members. Location-tourism effect: Alma Economics, Economic and Skills Analysis of the Audiovisual Sector in the Republic of Ireland (Fís Éireann/Screen Ireland, January 2025).

6. Enforcing SI 567/2021 (EU DSM Directive)

SI 567/2021 transposed Directive (EU) 2019/790 into Irish law in November 2021. Transposition without enforcement is a right without a remedy - and the comparison across the water makes the cost of non-enforcement measurable. Equity in the UK has distributed more than £100 million in royalty and residual payments to performers since 2017 under its collectively bargained agreements[20] - in a jurisdiction that never transposed the Directive at all. British performers are paid because their agreements are enforced. Irish performers hold stronger statutory rights, and are not. The gap between the two systems is not law; it is enforcement. We call on Government to:

- Apply Articles 18–22 to existing contracts, as provided for by Article 26 of the Directive.
- Codify the obligation that artists' contracts must ensure fair, adequate and proportionate remuneration, including residual payments.
- Explicitly prohibit contractual practices that prevent artists from benefiting from the future revenues generated by their work.

7. Amending the Section 481 Regulations

Budget 2026's enhancement of Section 481 relief for the visual effects industry confirms that the regulations are readily amendable when Government wishes to amend them. And the case for conditionality is concrete: productions supported by the credit - *Normal People* among them - have engaged resident Irish performers on buyout terms while the continuing licensing value of their work accrues to rights-holders on three continents (Part 5). We call for a conditional requirement of compliance with artists' rights protections, under which productions in receipt of Section 481 support must:

- Use contracts compliant with the Copyright and Related Rights Act 2000, SI 567/2021, and Directive (EU) 2019/790.
- Engage all artists on equitable terms consistent with international standards (the PACT/Equity UK agreement or equivalent).
- Provide evidence of equitable remuneration schemes, residuals tracking mechanisms, and collective bargaining agreements.
- Refrain from using generative AI to replicate a performer's voice or likeness, clone an author's script, or synthesise a musician's score, except under a collective bargaining agreement, with explicit individual consent and fair remuneration.

Linking State fiscal support to the defence of human intellectual property and genuine employment ensures that Ireland's creative industries remain robust, sustainable, and distinctly Irish on the global stage - and that the taxpayer never again subsidises the displacement of the workers the credit was built to employ.

[20] Equity (UK), "Pay day: £100 million paid out to performers since 2017 thanks to Equity's fight for royalties" (2025), equity.org.uk.

Investment, Revenue and Income Measures

Progressive Arts Investment Tax Credit (Individuals)

Objective

To stimulate private investment in the arts by offering progressive, refundable tax credits to individuals, and to open access to investment to people from low socio-economic backgrounds. The scheme is designed to mobilise support from family, friends and wider networks, and is structured so that the ability to invest is not restricted to wealthier groups: the lower a supporter's income, the higher the rate of credit.

Eligibility

– Any individual or household investing in Irish-based artists or non-profit arts organisations.

Definition of investment

– Commissioning new work.
– Purchasing original work directly from artists.
– Providing funding for the production or presentation of work.

The scheme will be particularly effective as start-up and early-career support, where artists rely most heavily on personal networks. Approval requires a full project plan with relevant partners (production companies, presenting venues, arts centres) and timelines.

Credit structure

Income band (EUR)	Refundable credit rate	Annual ceiling per supporter
Up to €30,000	100%	€3,000
€30,001 – €50,000	75%	€5,000
€50,001 – €100,000	50%	€10,000
Over €100,000	25%	€20,000

The credit is **refundable**: where it exceeds the supporter's income tax liability for the year, Revenue pays the balance directly. Without refundability the scheme's equity objective fails - a supporter earning €28,000 has an annual income tax liability below €3,000 and could not otherwise benefit in full. Refundability makes the credit function, in effect, as a citizen-directed grant administered through Revenue: the Exchequer bears the cost, but the allocation decision - which artist, which project - is made by the public rather than by a panel. That is the point. It is a demand-side instrument in a funding structure currently dominated by supply-side discretion.

Example

An early-career actor could raise €30,000 from ten supporters contributing €3,000 each. A supporter earning €28,000 receives the full €3,000 back through a combination of credit and direct refund. Several actors pooling contributions could raise €100,000 - a realistic budget for a professional production.

Cost

Modelled on €50 million in qualifying investment mobilised annually at a weighted-average credit rate of 50 per cent, the gross Exchequer cost is €25 million.[21]

Impact

- Local economic impact: funds spent on venues, staff and services circulate locally, with taxes paid on employment.
- Complementarity: private investment augments, rather than replaces, Arts Council funding, freeing public resources for more strategic interventions.
- Equity of access: the progressive rate structure and refundability mean the scheme works for the communities in which most artists actually live.

Local Cultural Investment Credit (LCIC)

A tax incentive for small local businesses investing in their cultural economy.

Objective

To stimulate sponsorship and investment from small businesses into local arts activity, building stronger cultural economies in towns and regions.

Eligibility

- Small businesses investing in local cultural projects: community arts, local professional theatre, artist commissions, creative placemaking.

Credit structure

- 70 per cent tax credit on eligible spend, with relief capped at €25,000 in credit per business per year (equivalent to eligible spend of approximately €35,700).
- Enhanced collaboration bonus: an additional 5–10 per cent credit for businesses investing collectively through Cultural Investment Pools.
- Carry-forward option: unused credits may be carried forward for up to three years, keeping the scheme accessible to businesses with fluctuating turnover.

Oversight

Investments validated by the Arts Council or local authority arts offices to ensure transparency.

Cost

Modelled on €25 million in eligible spend annually, the gross Exchequer cost at the 70 per cent rate is €17.5 million.

Impact

- Local multiplier effect: spending circulates through venues, hospitality, transport and other services.
- Crowding in: brings in sponsorship that would not otherwise exist, especially from SMEs, where arts sponsorship is currently negligible.
- Social impact: collective investment pools build cohesion, civic engagement and social inclusion, while driving professional production, community arts and festival development.

[21] Weighted-average rate assumes qualifying investment distributed across the four bands broadly in proportion to household disposable income, with band ceilings binding at the 100 per cent rate. The assumption should be stress-tested with Revenue ready-reckoner data.

Commercial Theatre Production Relief (CTPR)

Objective

To unlock new private investment in commercial theatre through a relief comparable to Section 481 in film, drawing on statutory practice in the UK, France, Spain and the United States.

Structure

- 40 per cent tax credit on qualifying expenditure (sets, writers, cast and crew, venue hire), with at least 80 per cent of qualifying spend incurred in Ireland.
- Enhanced relief of 50 per cent for premieres of original Irish works.
- A 5 per cent bonus for productions touring beyond their original run in Ireland, and a 10 per cent bonus for international touring, with total combined relief capped at 55 per cent.
- No double cover: non-repayable public grant funding allocated to a production is deducted from the credit's calculation base - following the approach set in France

A necessary caution

A direct tax expenditure of this kind cannot function where the only other capital in a production is Arts Council or local authority funding. Publicly grant-funded productions are eligible only where genuinely additional capital - international co-production finance, international festival guarantees, or private investment - is demonstrated. The relief exists to crowd new money in, not to recycle public money through a second channel.

Oversight

Audited post-production by the Department to verify delivery of jobs, regional spend and wider economic benefit.

Cost

Modelled on €10 million in qualifying expenditure annually at a blended rate of 40 per cent, the gross tax expenditure is €4 million. The net cost is lower once payroll taxes and VAT on induced spending are counted.

International practice

- United Kingdom: Theatre Tax Relief rates were made permanent from April 2025 at 40 per cent (45 per cent for touring productions), sustaining regional venues and programme diversity.
- France: operates statutory credits for live musical and theatrical performance (15 per cent, rising to 30 per cent for SMEs), with public subsidies deducted from the credit base - the precedent for the no-double-cover rule above.
- Spain: a 20 per cent credit for live performing arts under Article 36.3 of its Corporate Income Tax Law, certified by INAEM; since 2021, credits are transferable to third-party financers - a statutory route for mobilising private capital into live performance.
- United States: Massachusetts launched a five-year Live Theater Tax Credit pilot in July 2025, awarding up to $7 million a year to attract pre-Broadway and touring productions.

Impact

- Crowds in investment that would not otherwise exist.
- Drives employment, supports risk-taking, and helps more new work reach production.
- Reduces dependence on Arts Council deadlines and complements existing funding.
- Enhances cultural tourism and Ireland's international reputation.

Supporting Creative Economies at a Local Level

Equity's *The Cost of Pretending* survey (August 2025) found that actors spend most of their working time in theatre but earn most of their income in the audio-visual sector. It is vital both that the quantity of theatre work increases and that the payment for that work improves. Most theatre work takes place in local arts centres across the country, and increasingly it is these arts centres that are producing the work. Most are owned - and in many cases were built - by local authorities, with whom responsibility for operations and upkeep rests; for many, the ongoing cost remains a challenge. The following measures are designed to support local authorities in developing their local creative economies.

Regional Uplift Fund

The inequity in per-capita investment in arts programmes at local authority level is unacceptable and represents a failure to vindicate the human right of cultural access. Put simply, it cannot be right that one county spends €3 per capita while a neighbouring county spends €75.[22] We propose a Regional Uplift Fund of €64 million, managed by the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport and distributed through local authorities, to build capacity within the existing infrastructure of arts centres and galleries, increase employment, and drive production capacity in the regions.

Infrastructure Capital Fund

The national infrastructure of arts centres and galleries built and supported by local authorities has not been upgraded in decades. Beyond the environmental requirements for new heating, insulation and LED lighting, there are significant structural deficits affecting health and safety, inclusion and accessibility. Budget 2026 conceded the principle with a €6 million arts capital works scheme; the need is two orders of magnitude larger. We propose a capital allocation of €72 million to make local arts infrastructure fit for purpose nationwide, managed by the Department with recommendations from local authorities and the Arts Council.

Tourism Bed Night Levy

Tourism levies are already under consideration by several local authorities and are common across Europe as a tool for reinforcing local cultural economies.

6.4m	47.9m	€95.8m
Overseas visitors to Ireland, 2025 (CSO)	Overseas visitor bed nights, 2025 (CSO)	Annual yield of a €2 cultural levy per bed night

Central Statistics Office inbound tourism data record just over 6.4 million overnight visitors from overseas in 2025, accounting for just under 47.9 million bed nights.[23] A €2 cultural levy per bed night, collected locally by local authorities, would yield approximately €95.8 million annually. This levy does not include domestic overnights, and the estimate deliberately takes the 2025 figures - 3 per cent below 2024 - as its base rather than assuming growth.

[22] Analysis of local authority adopted budgets, Division F ("Operation of Arts Programme"), per capita using Census 2022 populations. Data compiled by G. Turley and S. McNena, localauthorityfinances.com (University of Galway); 2026 revenue budget data for all 31 local authorities published Q1 2026 (total budgeted expenditure €8.7bn, a national average of €1,585 per person). [Confirm the €3–€75 range against the 2026 dataset before submission.]

[23] CSO, Inbound Tourism December 2025 (full-year 2025 figures): 6.4 million overnight overseas visitors; 47.9 million visitor nights.

Multinational Cultural Levy

A partnership approach to funding Ireland's cultural future.

Multinationals benefit from our educated workforce, our cultural brand, and our quality of life. Contributing to culture is a way to reinvest in the communities that host and sustain them, creating goodwill with employees and communities alike. In a competitive labour market, MNCs can showcase their contribution to vibrant local cultural ecosystems, reinforcing Ireland's image as a place to live and work. This is as much an employer-brand investment as a public levy.

We propose that MNCs be offered a choice between an employment-based and a turnover-based contribution, recognising the difference between technology and pharmaceutical corporations and more labour-intensive service organisations. With approximately 300,000 people directly employed in IDA Ireland client companies, a modest levy could produce upwards of €30 million toward the development and sustainability of local cultural economies. The levy would be collected at local authority level, with 50 per cent retained for immediate local use and 50 per cent pooled nationally to ensure equitable distribution.

How it works

- Eligibility: MNCs with more than 250 employees or Irish turnover greater than €100 million.
- Option A: €100 per full-time employee.
- Option B: 0.01 per cent of Irish turnover.
- Default: Option A applies if no option is selected.

A Professional Artist Income Scheme

The Basic Income for the Arts pilot concluded in February 2026, and Budget 2026 committed to a permanent successor scheme, now open for applications for 2026–2029 at €325 per week. The State's final evaluation of the pilot found that the payment increased time spent on artistic creation by around four additional hours per week - while reducing non-arts employment by over three hours - and closed only part of the deprivation gap between artists and the general population. That is a meaningful finding - and a limited one. An income floor is not a professional income. Building on the strengths of the scheme, we propose a comprehensive redesign that acknowledges that artists' incomes fluctuate greatly across a career, and that a sustainable career requires resilience and full-time commitment. The scheme below is designed to fund careers, not to subsidise persistence.

Eligibility criteria

- Professional experience: applicants must demonstrate an average annual income from artistic work over the past five years of no less than the 50% of the current median in their sector (for actors, €10,000 per annum), demonstrating sustained engagement in their work and career.
- Residency: applicants must meet the Habitual Residence Condition, confirming their commitment to the Irish cultural landscape.
- Professional affiliation: applicants must hold membership of a recognised union or representative arts organisation.

Income support

- Annual payment: €40,000 per annum (€3,333.33 monthly), disbursed through the Department of Social Protection.
- Taxation: the payment is taxable income in the normal way, so the Exchequer recovers a substantial share automatically through income tax, USC and PRSI.
- Withdrawal taper: where an artist's professional income (excluding the payment) exceeds €40,000, the payment is withdrawn at 50 cent per additional euro earned, reaching full

withdrawal at €120,000. Because the payment is itself taxable, the combined marginal effective rate never exceeds approximately 80 per cent: no artist is ever worse off for earning more.

Ongoing support

- Healthcare: access to comprehensive health services, including mental health support tailored for artists.
- Education and training: opportunities for continuous professional development and skill enhancement.

Exiting the scheme

- Participants will be expected to continue earning at least the sector median each year while on the scheme.
- Should earnings fall below that level, support will be provided to get the career back on track.
- If earnings remain below the median for three consecutive years, the participant will exit the scheme; this does not preclude reapplication at a later date.

Social return

The Department's own commissioned cost-benefit analysis of the Basic Income for the Arts (Alma Economics, 2025) estimated a benefit-cost ratio of 1.39: every euro invested returned €1.39 in monetised social benefit, with the annual ratio rising from €1.31 in the pilot's first full year to €1.75 in its final year, and to an estimated €1.43 under the lower administrative costs of a scaled scheme.[24] Applied to the net Exchequer cost of the scheme proposed here, that ratio implies the scheme is not, on the State's own methodology, a cost at all: it is a net social surplus. One caveat should be stated plainly. The 1.39 ratio was estimated for a €325 weekly payment; marginal social returns are likely to diminish at the higher payment level proposed here, and the application is therefore illustrative. It is equally worth stating how much headroom the figure carries: the ratio would have to fall by more than a quarter before the scheme dropped below social break-even.

Implementation: a phased rollout, 2027–2029

The phasing follows the logic of the State's own evaluation. Its scale-up analysis estimates that a basic income leads artists to produce roughly 22 per cent more art at prevailing prices - and that a full-sector rollout would therefore move the market itself, lowering average prices by an estimated 9–25 per cent, with artists on the tightest margins hurt most, and with supply and demand responsiveness varying across sub-sectors in ways the current evidence cannot resolve. The evaluation describes its scale-up modelling as illustrative, and the long-run effects of a permanent scheme - on entry to the profession and on artist migration - as carrying considerable uncertainty. The rational response to that analysis is not to abandon scale; it is to phase it, converting each expansion into an evidence gate. A three-year rollout uses the payments and evaluation infrastructure the Basic Income for the Arts successor scheme has already built.

- **Phase 1 (Budget 2027):** 5,000 artists, prioritising disciplines with the strongest professional-income evidence base. Gross cost €200 million; estimated net cost approximately €120 million.[25]

[24] Alma Economics, Cost-benefit analysis for the Basic Income for the Arts (Department of Culture, Communications and Sport, September 2025). The 1.39 ratio is applied here to estimated net Exchequer cost, mirroring the CBA's own method: the report computes its benefit-cost ratio against the net fiscal cost of the pilot - gross cost less tax revenue and social protection savings. Social return is a distinct analytical frame and is not added to the output-multiplier estimates in the Summary of Recommendations.

[25] Recovery of approximately 40 per cent models taxation of the payment (income tax, USC and PRSI on €40,000 stacked on median sectoral earnings), taper recoupment from higher earners, and displaced social protection payments. The pilot's own fiscal returns offset nearly 37 per cent of gross cost at a €325 weekly payment (Alma

- **Phase 2 (Budget 2028):** expansion to 12,000 artists, subject to independent evaluation of Phase 1 against the benefit-cost framework established for the pilot.
- **Phase 3 (Budget 2029):** full implementation at 20,000 artists - a steady state of €800 million gross, with an estimated net annual cost of approximately €480 million and, at the 1.39 ratio, monetised social benefits of approximately €667 million per annum: a surplus in the region of €187 million.
- Economic activity: at a conservative Type II multiplier of 1.6, Phase 1's gross investment supports activity of approximately €320 million, rising to €1.28 billion at the steady state.
- Social return in Phase 1: at the 1.39 ratio, the €120 million net cost yields approximately €167 million in monetised social benefit - a surplus of some €47 million.
- Phasing reduces the first-year Exchequer ask by 75 per cent while committing to the same destination, and converts the scheme's expansion into an evidence-led process the Department of Public Expenditure can underwrite.

Summary of Recommendations

> *"...the Arts Council allocation will be a lot different." - Minister for Culture, Communications and Sport Patrick O'Donovan, Budget 2026 press conference, October 2025.*

Budget 2026 held the Arts Council at a standstill €140 million pending the Brennan review, with the Minister explicitly framing Budget 2027 as the moment of reset. This submission names the number: €200 million - the figure the Arts Council itself sought for 2026 - as the restoration of strategic capacity, alongside the investment, revenue and income measures below. A single illustrative Type II multiplier of 1.6, consistent with published Irish and UK creative-sector studies, is applied to gross investment; sector output, investment leverage and social return are distinct, non-additive analytical frames and are not combined here. The social return of the Professional Artist Income Scheme is accordingly reported separately, at the 1.39 benefit-cost ratio estimated in the State's own commissioned analysis of the Basic Income for the Arts.

Measure	Investment into wider arts sector	Estimated net cost	Projected impact
Arts Council funding	€200m	€200m	Restores strategic capacity after the 2026 standstill (€140m); names the number for the post-Brennan reset the Minister has signalled.
Culture Ireland	€10m	€10m	Expands international promotion of Irish artists (2026 base increased by €0.8m).
Creative Ireland	—	—	Programme stability and continuity.
TG4	€70m	€70m	Irish-language broadcasting and regional employment (2026 allocation: €65.4m).
Screen Ireland	€15m	€15m	Strengthens Irish production capacity, jobs and exports (2026 allocation up €2.1m).

Economics, 2025); a somewhat higher ratio is defensible at €40,000, which pushes more of each payment into higher tax bands. To be validated against Revenue micro-simulation.

Measure	Investment into wider arts sector	Estimated net cost	Projected impact
Regional Uplift Fund	€64m	€64m	Reduces per-capita inequity in local authority arts investment (€3–€75); boosts regional employment and production capacity.
Infrastructure Capital Fund	€72m	€72m	Scales the €6m capital works scheme conceded in Budget 2026 to the level the national infrastructure requires.
Tourism bed night levy (€2/night)	€95.8m	€0	Dedicated cultural reinvestment, collected locally; aligned with widespread European practice.
Multinational Cultural Levy	€30m	€0	Corporate partnership with culture; sustainable local funding source grounded in c. 300,000 IDA client-company employees.
Progressive Arts Investment Tax Credit (refundable)	€50m	€25m	Citizen-directed, demand-side investment; fully accessible to low and middle earners; start-up and early-career support.
Local Cultural Investment Credit (businesses)	€25m	€17.5m	Crowds in SME sponsorship; strengthens local creative economies.
Commercial Theatre Production Relief	€10m	€4m	Unlocks private and international capital; more new Irish work; cultural tourism.
Professional Artist Income Scheme (Phase 1, 2027)	€200m	€120m	5,000 artists in 2027, scaling to 20,000 by 2029 through evaluation gates; social surplus of c. €47m at the State's own 1.39 benefit-cost ratio.
Arts Act 2003 reform			Defines the artist as a worker; embeds artists' rights and welfare in legislation.
Local Government Act reform			Mandates cultural infrastructure provision; empowers levies; unlocks derelict buildings for cultural use.
Copyright and Related Rights Act 2000 amendments			Clarification and enforcement of performers' rights; transparency of DAC companies.
Transposition and enforcement of SI 567/2021 (EU DSM Directive)			Fair remuneration, transparency and contract-adjustment rights for performers, enforced in practice.
Amend Section 481 regulations			Condition relief on CRRA and DSM Directive compliance; Budget 2026's VFX enhancement confirms the regulations are amendable.
TOTALS (Budget 2027)	**€841.8m**	**€597.5m**	**Estimated economic impact of c. €1.35bn at a 1.6 multiplier; total investment rises to €1,441.8m at the 2029 steady state.**

These recommendations deliver first-year investment into the wider arts and audio-visual sectors of approximately **€842 million** - roughly a quarter of one per cent of Modified GNI - at an estimated net Exchequer cost of €597.5 million. As the Professional Artist Income Scheme scales to 20,000 artists by 2029, total investment rises to approximately **€1.44 billion**, still under half of one per cent of Modified GNI, at a net cost of €957.5 million.

This suite of recommendations combines direct public investment, private participation, and sustainable levy mechanisms. It delivers realistic careers and incomes for our members, secures our cultural infrastructure, and generates significant economic activity. It would bring Ireland's investment in the wider arts and culture sector close to the EU average, incentivise greater public engagement, drive local investment, support local creative economies, and create real work opportunities for our members and across the wider sector.

Irish Equity President Gerry O'Brien, with Brían Ó Súilleabháin, addresses young actors at Bow Street Academy

Conclusion

The median professional actor in Ireland earns €10,000 a year, inside a combined arts and audio-visual economy generating billions in value - and the State already knows it. Its own commissioned evaluation of the Basic Income for the Arts found one in two unsupported working artists in enforced deprivation, and found that every euro invested in relieving that poverty returned €1.39 to society, rising to €1.75 by the pilot's final year. The evidence is not in dispute. What is missing is the coherent policy and funding framework that acts on it.

This submission supplies that framework. It matches an instrument to each market failure the State's policies have never diagnosed: restored Arts Council funding of €200 million; a phased Professional Artist Income Scheme built on the State's own evaluation; refundable tax credits to bring citizens and small businesses into cultural investment; tourism and multinational levies at no Exchequer cost; a fair tax framework answering the Karshan judgment with the income-averaging farmers already enjoy; and legislative reform - costing almost nothing - that names the artist in law, enforces the copyright and remuneration rights performers already hold, and conditions Section 481 on the human employment it was built to create.

The first-year ask is €842 million - roughly a quarter of one per cent of Modified GNI, at a net cost of €597.5 million - supporting an estimated €1.35 billion in economic activity.

We call on the Government, in Budget 2027, to act on its own evidence: name the workforce in legislation, fund the labour that creates the value, protect the infrastructure of people, places and organisations, and enforce the rights already written in Irish law.

The State has declared, in almost every policy and action plan it has published, that culture is among the most valuable things Ireland possesses. This is what taking that declaration seriously looks like.

Irish Equity President Gerry O'Brien speaking to the membership at the Stephen's Green protest