

# ***Running Up That Hill: Arts Funding and Economic Sustainability in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

**Wednesday 22 and Thursday 23 October 2025**

**University of Galway**

**Sponsored by Research Ireland Laureate Award 'The Price of Performance' (2023-2025), the College of Arts, Social Sciences and Celtic Studies, and Arts in Action, University of Galway**

## **KEYNOTES**

### **Artist Panels include:**

Dr Ali FitzGibbon (Belfast)  
Branar (Galway)  
Cathie Boyd (Glasgow)  
Catherine Wheels (Musselburgh)  
Dogstar (Inverness)  
Kabosh (Belfast)  
Lian Bell (Dublin)  
Oceanallover (Dumfries and Galloway)  
Rough Magic (Dublin)

### **Performances By:**

Felispeaks  
Oceanallover with Burren College of Art MFA Students and  
Dr Liam Carr (University of Galway/Pacesetters)

### **Keynote Speaker:**

Una Mullally, *Irish Times*

### **Roundtable: On Funding and Financial Sustainability**

Jaine Lumsden, Theatre Officer, Creative Scotland

Toby Dennett, Strategic Development Manager, Arts Council Ireland

Dr Javier Stanziola, Director, Strategic Development and Partnerships, Arts Council Northern Ireland

### **CALL FOR PAPERS**

'If we accept that culture is a dimension of existence and a sector, we must acknowledge that we are dealing with a context of duality, which is at once symbolic (and not typically empirical) and practical (including as it does a workforce). These two aspects are not contradictory. We can promote the

sustainability of the cultural and creative sectors (CCSs) and support culture as a public, common and social good that is intrinsic to our humanity and measurable by core value-based systems, not the market.’ (Mujica et.al., International Federation of Arts Councils and Agencies, ‘Culture as Public Good’ 2024, p. 13)

In many European countries, arts and culture are deemed a ‘public good’<sup>1</sup> in government policy and thus, recognized as valuable for society in both tangible and intangible ways. However, promises in policy do not necessarily result in consensus regarding the value of a public good and its subsequent resource allocation. The fiscal fortunes of public goods are inherently intertwined with the general health of the public purse, subject to fluctuations in both political will and economic growth annually. The appetite to protect culture as a public good varies from country to country and government to government, though in recent years it has gained traction through global networks (UNESCO, ‘Culture as a Public Good’, Mondiacult 2022). However, almost a decade and a half on from the 2008 economic crash, for many artists working in post-austerity economies, a sense of recovery has not emerged despite strong economic growth nationally and the ensuing international momentum regarding policy commitments. If economic growth is reported as strong, and government policy recognizes and protects culture as a public good, then why is this not felt on the ground by artists working and living in these economies?

Levels of public subsidy allocated for arts and culture across the three regions at the centre of this research project – Republic of Ireland, the North of Ireland/Northern Ireland, and Scotland – vary significantly. Exact comparisons are not possible due to the distinct remit of the ‘arts and culture’ portfolio per region, thus, the information below must be analysed with that caveat. See 2024 figures:

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Public good’ is defined by the UN Secretary-General Report ‘Our Common Agenda’ (2021) as resources that belong to humanity and cannot be adequately provided by individual states or non-state actors:

<https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/>

Country	Year	National Budget for Arts and Culture (in millions)	Government Grant to Arts Councils (in millions)	National Lottery
North of Ireland/Northern Ireland (POP 1.9M)	2024*	£87.6	£11.66	£10.08
Republic of Ireland (POP 5.38M)	2024	€369.4	€134	Included in government grant
Scotland (POP 5.44M)	2024	£195.2	£51.4**	£32.5

\*2023-24 ACNI Annual Reports are the most recent reports available, accessible here: <https://artscouncil-ni.s3-assets.com/acni-annual-report-and-accounts-2023-24.pdf>

\*\* The Scottish figure varies between this figure of £51.4 from the [Scottish government 2025/26 budget](#) to £66.5 according to [campaign for the arts article](#).

By comparison to these regions, Berlin's 2024 arts budget was €947 million for a population of approximately 3.58 million. What does Berlin know that the other regions do not? How, why, and who determines the level of public subsidy for arts and culture which results in these dramatically distinct budgets?

While the Republic of Ireland's funding came to €369 million in 2024 with Arts Council Ireland allocated €134 million, a significant increase on previous years, Arts Council data reveals that 'the total eligible funding requests from the Arts Council in 2023 was €231.3 million, up from €93.9 million in 2019. This represents an unprecedented level of demand for Arts Council supports' (Arts Council Ireland). By the time you add in the real costs of inflation, this increase is at best standstill funding.

There is no universally agreed method of assessing arts and cultural value financially within public policy, and yet, for funding to be delivered so that arts and culture can be resourced, a financial value must be ascertained. This conference invites papers of maximum 20 minutes in duration to examine, discuss, and reflect on the economic and financial structures that support the independent theatre and performance sector, and by extension the arts sector, in the twenty-first century. As 'The Price of Performance' research project sponsored by Research Ireland (2023-2025) comes to a conclusion, this conference explores how financial resources are sourced by independent artists and

organizations particularly on the island of Ireland and Scotland, how resource allocation occurs within public funding schemes, and what constitutes the evidence that underpins the rationale for resource allocation. Topics may include but are not limited to:

- Financial and economic structures and schemes for arts funding
- Value assessment and methodologies in arts and cultural policy
- Political will in relation to enhancement of arts and cultural funding and policy
- Histories and contemporary paradigms of public funding for arts and culture within European nations, the EU and globally
- Comparative and transnational research in arts and cultural policy
- The cost of green practice and how to finance it
- Impact of rising global tensions of making, presenting and touring work
- The impact of inflation and financial fluctuation on artistic practice and presentation

Please email abstracts of max 300 words followed by a brief biographical note of 150 words to: [miriam.haughton@universityofgalway.ie](mailto:miriam.haughton@universityofgalway.ie) and [patricia.obeirne@universityofgalway.ie](mailto:patricia.obeirne@universityofgalway.ie) by Friday 11 July 2025. There is no conference fee but online registration is required by 1 September 2025, accessible here: <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/universityofgalway4/1676763>

