

26th of June 2020

Submission Ref: Rebooting the Economy: The Arts and Entertainment Sector

Dear Members,

We would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to forward our views, observations, and recommendations at this critical juncture. Established in 2013, the Event Industry Association of Ireland (EIAI) was founded by a concerned group of Event Practitioners and Industry Experts with the aim of improving the overall event industry in Ireland. Experienced in producing and delivering events ranging from some of Ireland's largest public hallmark events to some of its' smallest community and local events, along with being instrumental in the introduction of guidance regarding safe events, the EIAI founders had identified that the timing was opportune to come together as a representative body and to address issues and challenges within the industry. Following a series of conversational workshops and meetings, the EIAI as the industry representative body developed its core objectives, as follows;

- Support, represent, promote and further the interests of our members,
- Participate in National and International activity that addresses issues of strategic importance for the Irish Event Industry,
- Define, develop and improve industry best practice, standards and professional competency,
- Provide a platform to facilitate greater collaboration across all sectors of the industry in Ireland
- Increase focus on and support the provision of industry specific training & accreditation,

At the immediate onset of COVID-19 the Event Industry suffered disproportionately to all other sectors, when, over a few short weeks the overwhelming majority of events scheduled for 2020 in Ireland were cancelled. The public health safeguarding measures that have been implemented by Government to date and the anticipated duration of these measures, while absolutely necessary, essentially mean that the majority of businesses, organisers and workers are simply unable to generate revenue at present and many for the foreseeable future. The situation is unprecedented and absolutely devastating – the Irish Event Industry, usually an extremely ambitious, active, and competitive industry is facing a pro-longed hibernation period which has already impacted our entire eco-system on a short, medium and long-term basis.

As an industry that annually generates in excess of **€3.5bn**¹ towards the Irish economy and **€850m** towards the Irish export market, employs an estimated **45,000 workers**, and produces up to a **52:1 return on state investment**² we are now calling on our government to;

1. Recognise the Event Industry, in its' own right, to acknowledge it for the preeminent economic sector it is and assign responsibility for this sector to the Department of Business, Enterprise, and Innovation.
2. Protect and support each sector of our industry; our workers, volunteers, performers, venues, SMEs, promoters, our smorgasbord of community events right up to our national hallmark events, and our stakeholders to ensure that our eco-system endures and that our professionalism, expertise and vital skillsets are retained.
3. Enable and resource the Event Industry to utilise this recovery period to address the new challenges presented by Covid-19, improve industry best practice, standards and professional competency, safeguarding our ability to deliver events that will be: delivered in a safe and successful manner, critical to the rebuilding of our communities, significant contributors to our national economic recovery, and that will continue to grow our reputation on the Global Stage as an excellent host nation for international events.

¹ <https://eventindustryireland.com/events-industry-report-2020/>

² <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/heritage/plan-to-turn-st-patrick-s-day-into-month-long-shindig-1.3789494>

The Arts Council of Ireland, Fáilte & Tourism Ireland, local authorities and development agencies all over Ireland have identified the strategic importance of festivals and event in their strategies over, at least, the last 20 years. Internationally, this importance, is also recognised from individual countries to pan-jurisdictional bodies such as the EU and OECD. Ireland has many cherished festivals and events spanning a broad disciplinary base, they are regionally spread and take place through-out the calendar year. Coupled with this, festivals and events occupy the unique space of affording citizens and visitors an opportunity to consider identity, place and define their home place through celebration, commemoration but ultimately connection through shared experiences, and what makes us human.

The Event Industry underpinning these events of strategic national importance is unique, intricate and often mis-understood. Our "Front of House" comprises of a bustling calendar of events, world class entertainment, and kaleidoscope of sporting, business, corporate, leisure, cultural and social experiences. This often distracts from the eco-system "behind the scenes"; here you will find an industry powered by resilience, determination and devotion to the promotion of our Arts, Business, Culture, Heritage, Innovation, Tourism supporting the national economy and most crucially delivering experiences that exceed expectations, entertain, connect emotionally and enhance our attendees' quality of life.

Event Industry

Front of House

Behind The Scenes



- Artists, Performers, Entertainers, Demonstrators, Educators
- Conferences and Meetings
- Exhibitions and Trade Shows
- Incentive Travel and Performance Improvement Events
- Corporate Indoor and Outdoor Events
- Private Events and Weddings
- Arts and Cultural Events & Theatre
- Festivals and Fairs
- Circus, Funfairs, Amusements, and Travelling shows.
- Musical Performance and Concerts
- Sporting Events
- Festival and Event Organisers, Promoters and Managers
- Conference, Meeting and Exhibition Organisers and Management Companies
- Corporate, Private, and Wedding Organisers and Management Companies
- Event Production & Management Companies, Administration and Operational Staff
- Structural Engineers, Fire Safety, Health & Safety, Medical, and Crowd Safety Consultants
- Programmers, Producers, Creators, Tour Professionals, Booking Agents, Talent Managers
- Local Authorities, Government Bodies and Stakeholder Organisations
- Ticket Agents, Sponsors & Funders
- Market Operators, Vendors, Traders, Exhibitors & Businesses
- Security Companies and Traffic Management Providers
- Waste Management Providers, Plant Providers, Transport & Logistics Companies, Equipment Providers, Stage and Infrastructure Providers,
- Rigging Crews, Lighting Specialists, Acoustic Engineers, Sound Engineers, Pyro-technicians, & Stage Managers
- Painters, Carpenters, Plumbers, Electricians, Set Designers, Costume Designers, Photographers and Videographers
- Site Crew, Stage Crew, Hospitality staff, general personnel, Volunteers, and Students
- PR Companies, Marketing, Designers, Merchandise Providers, Printers, and Signage Providers
- Venue Owners and Managers, Caterers, Bar Providers
- Insurers, IT Companies and service providers

Note: This list is not exhaustive of those reliant on the event industry for their livelihood, education or an opportunity to be part of something important for their health and well-being.

Covid-19 Impact

The Event Industry needs to prepare for the long-term implications of dealing with Covid-19 into 2021, and potentially beyond. While we are grateful and commend the Government for its' prompt and effective application of valuable supports that immediately provided a degree of comfort across our industry, we are filled with apprehension when considering our industry's ability to generate income while we await the lifting of restrictions. With no definitive start date combined with the knowledge that even when that date comes it will not mean that the industry can immediately activate and resume business as usual we understand that it will be a slow but steady progress.

As an industry that plans every element of our activity weeks, months and years in advance the lack of clarity surrounding the cancellation of event at the beginning of this crisis initially caused many organisations to valiantly endeavour to continue with their event plans. This lack of clarity caused many to incur additional and unnecessary expenses prior to events being cancelled. Our industry cannot afford to take that risk during the upcoming re-introductory and recovery phases. Organisers need absolute clarity and confidence with regard to the circumstances under which events can take place and need safeguarding regarding future events potentially being postponed or cancelled.

Due to this very real risk Covid-19 poses to our industry as a whole, ever mindful that each vital component of the Event Industry is considered in both the short and long term, further significant mitigation measures must be implemented. From a practical perspective every event is different and unique, as are its requirements, performers, participants, audiences, venues, workers, stakeholders, suppliers and service providers. However regardless of these differences, there are common requirements across all event types. When the industry reactivates, we will need to draw on each vital component, from the individual specialist professional worker to the large-scale infrastructure and security providers. Failure to engage with the sector in such a manner will result in substantial and irrevocable damage to the industry given the multifarious nature of the industry,

It has been understandably a difficult endeavour to fully describe the scope, gravity and scale of the impact in this submission as it simply has not been scoped to date. That said, the grave consequences Covid-19 has had across the sector is evident from the following impact statements:

Impact to Performers

We reached out to the Irish Street Arts, Circus and Spectacle Network (ISACS) and found that only 26% of their membership are in receipt of any sort of state funding via the Arts Council leaving the remaining 73% extremely vulnerable. ISACS predict a "loss of €1.16million, which is almost equal to the total funding attributed to the sector via the Arts Council in 2019".

Impact to Entertainers

In a recent survey conducted by Entertainers Ireland Stand Together (EIST) Ireland the following results outline the stark reality facing practically every entertainer in Ireland going forward:

- 96.77% had their financial situation impacted.
- 71.9% described their current loss of up to €20,000
- 87.39% would currently not be able to sustain themselves financially without government assistance.
- 89.91% surveyed are not represented by any body, agency or union committed to negotiating a fair and equitable future deal with Government.
- 74.08% at the point of been surveyed were awaiting a return to employment/self-employment with no pathway confirmed or in place.

Impact to Workers

Covid-19 has resulted in a loss of livelihood and the potential loss of industry specific skilled workers who may abandon employment in the event industry in the future. It is important to note that many of the specialist roles required in the Events Industry are highly skilled, industry specific and were in high demand and short supply coming into this crisis.

Due to the seasonal nature of the industry, with January and February being notoriously quiet and inactive a large portion of our workforce had not yet been employed and as such did not qualify under the current TWSS system. To successfully restart the industry it is essential that we retain our skilled employees and that we resource them with opportunities to remain motivated and upskilled in the interim period of closure and to enhance on an ongoing basis their skills and competency.

Impact on Festivals & Events

The Festival and Events sector has been obliterated by Covid-19, wiping almost every event from our calendars; the local GAA Club fundraising events, bespoke music camping festivals, local town concerts and the eagerly anticipated UEFA Euro2020 programme of events. Many of these events and cultural activities sit outside the remit of Arts Council and Fáilte Ireland funding criteria. Therefore, the support package allocated to the Arts Council and Fáilte Ireland funding will not and could not adequately filter down through the industry eco-system. With respect, the Event Industry was also not part of the consultation process nor were we part of any Advisory Group associated with this support package.

Impact on Conference Organisers

To get a sense of the impact on Conference Organizers we would like to draw attention to a recent positioning document³ produced by the Association of Irish Professional Conference Organisers that identifies a national economic impact of €51m across 90 conferences in 2019. In added that the same group of organisers produced 175 conferences internationally with approximately 30% of the revenue generated benefitting Irish based companies.

Impact on Businesses

It is critical that dedicated financial supports be provided directly to individuals, businesses and events in order to support them to sustain themselves, re- open and re-commence trading. As the Members may be aware insurance was a key issue prior to Covid-19 and it is critical now that this matter be addressed. In a recent survey⁴ commissioned by Event Industry Ireland these were the current thoughts⁵ of our businesses:

- 45% of companies believe they will be back up between 12 and 18 months time.
- On reduced revenue the majority of companies do not believe that they can last more than 6 months.
- Half of the firms believe that less than three quarters of their business can operate with physical social distancing in place.
- “Company revenue and cashflows are under severe pressure and consequently layoffs will follow.”

With many businesses reporting an 80%-90% decline in revenue - many have ceased operating temporarily as we await further instructions. Given the nature of the industry, those working within it are accustomed to change, risk, innovation and adopting new ways of working. However, it's evident that without State support and clear guidelines, these risk conscious businesses are somewhat stranded unable to pivot towards new models of employment or facilitate best industry practice as the risk is too great.

Social Community Impact

In the hierarchy of events Local and Community events present on the smaller scale, however, their combined social and economic impact is phenomenal. From placemaking to engagement, participation, integration, skills development and employment, local and community events empower, enable and engage society. That said the combined social and economic impact of

³ <http://ajpco.ie/new/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Covid-Position-Document.pdf>

⁴ <https://eventindustryireland.com/events-industry-report-2020/>

⁵ <https://eventindustryireland.com/events-industry-report-2020/>

these events cannot be understated. Community events have been commonly used by local government and other stakeholders to revitalise urban and rural communities.

When we asked about the social impact of cancelled local community events a Local Authority Community Project Manager stated;

“Many of our events in local areas tend to gather communities together, crowds as such. Anti-Social behaviour by its nature does not like attention or groups witnessing what anti-social elements may be happening. There for events and animation of public space has been a critical tool in terms of providing activities for assisting in minimising anti-social behaviour. The lack of community events that failed to occur during the Covid-19 timeframe has led to a spike in anti-social behaviour”

Events build a community's identity and sense of place, leading to positive community standards, such as inclusiveness, diversity and tolerance. Community matters now more than ever. Going forward if these events “For, Of and By” the community are deemed non-essential we can expect further breakdowns and anti-social behaviour in our neighbourhoods. Events of all categorisations will form a crucial part of our Nation's recovery and healing process, aiding our communal mental health and social well-being.

Impact on Education & Volunteerism

While some sectors within the industry have been able to pivot and reimagine themselves in the form of virtual and hybrid events, for most of the industry engaged in live events of all types, work may not return for sometime and in the meantime they wait. In addition, so do the volunteers in their thousands and the 3rd level students who are without their on the ground training which is a significant, irreplaceable, and important component of their educational programme throughout their academic journey.

Impact on Consumer / Market Confidence

Much will need to be done by all stakeholders to restore consumer / market confidence. To reboot this industry we need national followed by international attendees, clients and customers to participate and to have confidence in our product - without them we don't have events.

Where events were seen as spaces of freedom, relaxation and recreation, many consumers may fear that events have now become counter to such feelings and experiences. However, the events industry has risen on countless occasions to various complex challenges such as climate change, gangland violence and increased terrorist threats, Ever adopting without precluding the consumer's needs in its mitigation plans, the events industry will once again rise to the challenge.

As a country famed for its ability to reinvent and regenerate, we believe that the events sector can achieve the position of world leaders in Event Health and Safety in this new world of Covid-19. Yes, there are challenges ahead but by its very nature the events sector is an industry built, quite literally, on overcoming what was once thought to be insurmountable challenges. And with State recognition and support, we believe that the challenges imposed by Covid-19 upon the events sector can also be understood, overcome and provide an innovative commercial context for future industry growth. We are not denying the challenges but with this committees' support we can accept our limitations and go beyond them. (paraphrase-Brendan Behan)

Kindest regards,

Elaine O' Connor & Mary Weir,
Co-Founders - Event Industry Association of Ireland (EIAI)
+353 1 6854527
hello@eiai.ie / www.eiai.ie

Key Recommendations

1. Recognition, Representation & A Recovery Plan

- 1.1 Recognise the Event Industry, in its' own right, to acknowledge it as the preeminent economic sector it is, and to assign responsibility for this sector to the Department of Business, Enterprise, and Innovation.
- 1.2 Enable Event Industry consultation with or representation on all relevant Taskforce groups i.e. Business, SME, Insurance Reform etc.
- 1.3 Support the Event Industry by immediately establishing an Event Industry Taskforce that is fully representative of the industry, together with other relevant experts to:
 - deliver an interim report to the July fiscal stimulus package for the Event Industry
 - deliver industry specific guidance regarding safe operating in a COVID-19 environment
 - support and inform government with regard to the safe re-introduction of events and mass-gatherings
 - deliver a clear roadmap to re-opening, to include contingency plans and strategies regarding potential changes in guidelines and/or circumstances in the future
 - deliver a medium-term report that comprehensively assesses the catastrophic impact on the Event Industry
 - support the industry to review and update relevant Codes of Practice(s), Guidance Documentation, and Legislative Instruments
 - deliver a report that informs and assists both the Programme for Government and National Recovery Plan
 - to review and assess the potential impact of insurance reform on the Event Industry

2. Event Industry Support

- 2.1 Provisions be made to support key statutory agencies and stakeholders, such as the local authorities, H.S.E., and An Garda Síochána, to enable them inform, support and enable event organisers, particularly during the transitional phases.
- 2.2 Support to be provided to all relevant government agencies and local authorities to enable them to update and implement the necessary systems and processes required to support and facilitate safe public events and event spaces.

3. Economic Support

- 3.1 That businesses and events within the Event Industry be allocated their own bespoke short-term financing and grants directly from the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation
- 3.2 That all relevant public bodies and agencies maintain their event budgets
- 3.3 Continued suspension of commercial rates for empty places of entertainment and the warehousing of event equipment for the duration of closure
- 3.4 Reduction of all relevant Vat rates to 0% VAT across the sector for a period of time (to be discussed) after restrictions with regards to mass gatherings are removed.
- 3.5 With respect to SMEs, the EIAI supports the mechanisms proposed by SME Recovery Ireland and IBEC.

4. Workforce

- 4.1 That there is a continuation of the Covid-19 assistance payment scheme until such time as it can be replaced with an equivalent to the “Back to Work” allowance scheme that will

enable workers to access government supported training, upskilling and avail of ad-hoc work opportunities.

- 4.2 That there is a continuation of the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme (TWSS) until such time as restrictions with regards to mass gatherings are removed. And that structure of it is changed so that it would apply through the TWSS (employer) system, enabling payments to be made directly available to the employer, for staff registered to them at that point in time, be that new starts or long term staff.
- 4.3 Provision of financial and other supports to enable the EIAI to develop an industry specific upskilling, educational and accreditation programme, in order to develop a sustainable, competitive and skilled workforce.

5. Rebuilding Consumer & Market Confidence

- 5.1 That an Industry led roadmap to recovery is developed as a matter of urgency with the support of a Government initiated Event Industry Taskforce
- 5.2 That measures to safeguard consumers, clients and workers are developed in collaboration with all stakeholders
- 5.3 That measures agreed need to be fully actionable by all individuals, businesses and events within the industry.
- 5.4 That learnings from trialling events on a small scale and case studies to be thoroughly interrogated in order to avoid where possible false starts and the shutting down of events.
- 5.5 That a Government funded Communication Campaign be provided for the re-opening of the industry to affirm with the general public that safety is at the heart of what we do and while yes, there will be some changes to the pre-covid experience, they can still expect a great experience.
- 5.6 A cultural change amongst event attendees is necessary, as an industry we will promote the adoption of standardised messaging with regard to new rules that have been implemented for attendee's protection along with offering transparency regarding new safety and sanitary practices.

6. A Sustainable Outlook

As an industry we embrace the concept of green and sustainable practices and are aware that much improvement is required to deliver ever-improving, sustainable, low-carbon enterprises.

- 6.1 Sustainability and circularity must become a guiding principle in the roadmap to recovery for the entire Event Industry eco-system.
- 6.2 A clear set of sustainability guidelines, following the guiding principles of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, is needed and should be integrated into updated Code of Practice(s) so that this becomes standard across the industry.
- 6.2 Funding/supports to be made available to businesses/events within the industry to educate, encourage and enable them to transition to a more sustainable green recovery
- 6.4 Support to be provided to all relevant stakeholder and agencies to assist them with the adoption, implementation, and support of event sustainability guidelines and practices.

We would like to acknowledge and thank our members, our advisors, partner organisations and associations, for their assistance in the compilation of this submission, in particular:

Association of Irish Stage Technicians
 Association of Irish Festivals and Events
 Event Industry Association Ireland
 Event Production Industry Covid-19 Working Group
 Give Us the Night

Irish Event Industry Alliance
 Irish Street Arts, Circus and Spectacle Network
 The Showman's Guild
 TUDublin