

## Towards Creative Europe: Irish Performing Arts Organisations and the EU Culture Programme

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**Abstract:** Research was conducted to examine engagement with the EU Culture Programme from the Irish perspective with an emphasis on the performing arts sector. The research aimed to quantify actual levels of Irish participation and identify the barriers to, and benefits for, Irish performing arts organisations pursuing project funding from the EU Culture Programme. Extant statistical data was analysed to create a macro picture of overall Irish participation expressed through quantitative findings. These statistical findings were then examined through qualitative research conducted with individuals and organisations representing Irish international performing arts experience on either a practical or policy level. With an ultimate benefit to the artistic practice of the participating organisation, as well as to the Irish performing arts ecology as a whole, the research findings demonstrate the need for a clear national policy on the provision of support to organisations in a position to leverage EU cultural funds.

**Keywords:** EU culture programme; Irish performing arts; Irish international arts policy; cultural funding, EU cultural policy; European cultural cooperation

*Participation in EU Culture Programme-funded projects translates to opportunities for individuals who have the chance to work in an international context; build professional networks; be exposed to different practices and expand their own practice beyond domestic influences.*

### Introduction

On 23rd November 2011 the Creative Europe programme was proposed by the European Commission as the EU cultural funding instrument for the period 2014–2020. The proposed programme will provide a joint framework for the existing Culture and Media programmes, and will focus on building capacity in the cultural and creative sectors to contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy of promoting smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (Commission Communication, 2011, p.2).

The programme that Creative Europe will replace, the EU Culture Programme 2007–2013, is the current cultural financing instrument of the European Commission. The Culture Programme is delivered by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) and has a budget of €400 million ‘to develop cooperation activities among cultural operators from [eligible] countries taking part in the programme’ (EACEA, 2010, p.8). It resulted from the evaluation of the programme it replaced – Culture 2000, which operated from 2000–2006 (ECOTEC Research and Consulting, 2008). As did Culture 2000, the 2007–2013 programme predominantly supports multi-partner cooperation projects between eligible countries. Its guiding mission is ‘to enhance the cultural area shared by Europeans ... with a view to encouraging the emergence of European citizenship’ (EACEA, 2010, p.8).

The formulation of Creative Europe suggests a shift in EU cultural policy from promoting European citizenship to a more economic rationale that will ‘focus on capacity-building and transnational circulation, including international touring’ (Commission Communication, 2011, p.7). But despite concerns about the joint framework approach to the commercial and non-profit cultural sectors (Hesmondhalgh, 2012), the opportunity to access cultural funding from the EU is set to be secured until at least 2020. As such, Ireland’s ability to compete for such funds is a subject for timely consideration.

While anecdotal evidence suggests that the Irish arts sector is currently underachieving in ac-

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cessing EU cultural funds (Traynor, 2011), this article presents the findings from research conducted in 2011 to examine actual instances of engagement with the EU Culture Programme from the Irish perspective. The research aimed to identify the barriers to, and benefits for, Irish performing arts organisations pursuing project funding from the EU Culture Programme. It was guided by three questions:

- Could the Irish performing arts sector do better in accessing funds from the EU Culture Programme?
- What internal organisational actions or external domestic support mechanisms would be needed to improve levels of access to the EU Culture Programme?
- Do the potential benefits warrant such interventions?

For the purpose of the study the scope of the performing arts included theatre, dance, music, opera, circus and street spectacle as well as festivals with a strong performing arts focus. The performing arts sector was chosen as a focus for the research due to the significant resource implications of international activity for this sector.

### The EU Culture Programme: Its remit, criteria and legal competence

The Culture Programme 2007–2013 has three stated objectives:

1. Promotion of the trans-national mobility of people working in the cultural sector
2. Support for the trans-national circulation of cultural and artistic works and products
3. Promotion of intercultural dialogue

These objectives are served by three strands of activity. Strand 1, 2 and 3 deal with support for cultural actions, support for organisations active at a European level (e.g. European Youth Orchestra) and support for analysis and dissemination activities, respectively. Strand 1 – support for cultural actions – accounts for 77% of the entire Culture Programme budget and it is this strand that best applies to Irish performing arts organisations. Such cultural actions are expected to take the form of cultural cooperation projects and measures (EACEA, 2010, p.8-14).

Depending on the sub-strand, Strand 1 offers funds from between €50,000 and €500,000 for cooperation projects but support is limited to 50% of the eligible costs. With a minimum project budget of at least €100,000, the scale of funded projects is significantly large, as is the resultant amount of match-funding required. Conversely, under Strand 1.3.6, 'Support for Cultural Festivals', there is a maximum award for festivals of €100,000, representing an EU contribution of 60%, with no minimum grant amount stipulated (EACEA, 2010, p.9-10). Therefore, festivals applying under this strand benefit from greater flexibility in terms of budget size.

Cooperation actions must include partners from between three (in the case of cooperation measures) and six (for multi-annual projects) eligible countries (EACEA, 2010, p.8-9), and festivals applying to strand 1.3.6. must include works from at least seven countries (EACEA, 2010, p.62). For cooperation projects, organisations can participate as a coordinator, co-organiser or associate partner. The coordinator (or project leader) takes the largest part of the responsibility for the project in terms of implementation, reporting and financing; the co-organiser contributes to the design, implementation and funding of the project; and associate partners participate in the activities of a project but have no responsibility for financing the projects and costs incurred by them are not eligible (EACEA, 2010, p.41). In this sense associate partners have only a peripheral involvement and their participation is not considered as fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirement. Co-organisers must be established prior to, and identified in, the project application, and moreover the quality of the partnership is as-

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sessed under the award criteria (EACEA, 2010, p.45).

The restrictions of the funding criteria and the emphasis on trans-national cooperation within the programme are not arbitrary provisions and are necessitated by the application of the principle of subsidiarity, a central tenet of the EU. Two years after Article 128 of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty provided legal competence for culture in the EU for the first time, Forrest (1994), examined the implications of the provisions therein.<sup>1</sup> He noted that Article 128 represents a balance between member states that wanted culture included in the treaty to allow wider community action, and those who wanted to include it in order to set a limit on such action (1994, p.17). It is for this reason that the principle of subsidiarity was applied to full effect in the case of culture. Subsidiarity is the organising principle that holds that matters ought to be handled by the most local or least centralised competent authority. This means that the EU cannot intervene in the cultural policies of member states and will only supplement cultural actions where it is the most appropriate body to do so. Therefore the EU must, by provision of the Treaty, 'restrict its financial support to cultural cooperation between the member states' (Gordon, 2007, p.15). Furthermore the harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the member states in the area of culture is explicitly prohibited (Forrest, 1994, p.18).

### Research Methodology

The research employed both quantitative and qualitative methodologies and consisted of three stages. The first stage aimed to create a macro picture of overall Irish participation expressed through quantitative findings. This comprised of an analysis of the statistical data available from the EACEA in relation to all successful and unsuccessful applications submitted under the EU Culture Programme in the eleven years between 2000 and 2011. The second stage aimed to examine the 'lived experience' of these statistical findings and consisted of the analysis of four semi-structured interviews, and one recorded presentation sourced online. All research subjects represented Irish international performing arts experience on either a practical or policy level. The third stage then comprised of the comparative analysis of structured questionnaires completed by nine Irish performing arts organisations, all active on an international level, but who either had, or had not, participated in the EU Culture Programme.

In order to gain a reliable indication of Ireland's performance in terms of accessing the EU Culture Programme, instances of involvement were quantified and compared with rates of involvement by other countries. Though the available analytics are processed and presented in relation to all eligible countries in the Interim Evaluation of the Culture Programme 2007-2013 (ECORYS, 2010, p.52-55), documentary analysis of the spreadsheets and charts available from the EACEA website (EACEA, 2012) was conducted for this research in order to generate results specific to Ireland.<sup>2</sup>

The qualitative research took the form of semi-structured interviews and structured questionnaires. In total, five individuals were interviewed, chosen for their considerable expertise and experience of the EU Culture Programme specifically. These interviews were analysed against the research questions in order to extract findings. Two interviews were with representatives of organisations who have participated in the EU Culture Programme: Verena Cornwall, creative director of the St. Patrick's Festival and an independent arts consultant who has been involved with Culture Programme funded projects on behalf of Irish and British organisations; and Gerry Godley who, as director of the Improvised Music Company, gave an insight into the experience of an organisation recently successful in accessing Culture Programme funding for the 12 Points! Festival.

A further two interviews were conducted with individuals who offered an authoritative perspec-

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tive on the subject: Katie Lowry, officer at the Irish Cultural Contact Point was interviewed jointly with Fionnuala Sweeney, Head of International Arts at the Arts Council of Ireland/ An Chomhairle Ealaíon; and Jane Daly, Co-director of the Irish Theatre Institute, who offered her insight as a member of the expert panel for assessment of performing arts applications for the EU Culture Programme 2007-2013 and also a past applicant to the programme.<sup>3</sup> Content from an online video recording of a presentation made by Gavin Quinn, director of Pan Pan Theatre Company – the Irish performing arts organisation that has been most prolific in accessing the programme funds – at the Irish Theatre Institute in March 2011 (Irish Theatre Institute, 2011), was incorporated as a secondary source and integrated with the findings from the research interviews.

Finally, a further nine organisations were invited to complete a structured questionnaire conducted by e-mail or telephone.<sup>4</sup> All of the organisations chosen had an international dimension to their work, and the selection represented a balanced mix of organisations who have participated in the EU Culture Programme and those who have not. The questionnaires focused on attitudes to the EU Culture Programme against attitudes to international activity more generally. The results were analysed to identify broader evidence in support of the findings from the interviews; and to determine barriers to participation by consulting organisations who have not engaged with the Culture Programme to support their international activity.<sup>5</sup>

### Quantifying Ireland's participation in the EU Culture Programme

In the twelve years between 2000 and 2012, the data shows that a total of 101 projects had some level of Irish participation, with a total of 98 organisations participating as coordinator, co-organiser or associate partner. Isolating the years of the Culture Programme 2007–2013, a total of 30 Irish organisations have participated.<sup>6</sup> At 30% of all participating Irish organisations, since 2007 nine performing arts organisations have accessed the EU Culture programme. Three of these organisations – Cork Midsummer Festival, the Improvised Music Company and West Cork Music – have done so as project coordinators and six as co-organisers.

These statistics provide only a limited picture of Irish engagement in the programme however. The real measure of Ireland's performance in accessing the EU Culture Programme only comes into view in the context of Europe-wide access to the programme. With 77 out of a total of 10,114 applications, Irish organisations account for 0.8% of all organisations applying to the programme since 2009.<sup>7</sup> Ireland's percentage of all 3,307 successful organisations in the same period is 0.9%. With Ireland's population of approximately 4.5 million people also representing 0.9% of the entire population of the European Union (Eurostat, 2011), the statistical analysis of this research suggests that Irish organisations are in fact performing to an appropriate and correlatory level in terms of accessing funds from the Culture Programme.

However, the interim evaluation of the Culture Programme 2007–2013 provides an interesting consideration through which to view these statistics. Referencing the 'small country effect', the evaluation report highlights the case that many smaller countries have been successful in applications to the programme to an extent greater than their share of the population (ECORYS, 2010, p.52). As the countries most resembling Ireland in terms of population size and cultural infrastructure, Denmark and Finland were chosen for comparative analysis. Denmark's population of approximately 5.5 million accounts for 1% of the total population of Europe as does Finland's population of 5.3 million.

While Ireland is responsible for only 0.8% of all applications, (a little below its percentage of the EU population), Denmark and Finland's rates of application are slightly above their share of the population at 1.5% and 1.8% respectively. The gap is starker when Ireland's percentage

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of successful organisations is compared with those of Denmark and Finland. Compared with Ireland's 0.9% share, Denmark shows a healthy share of 1.6% of all successful organisations. Finland however, provides the best example of the 'small country effect', with an impressive share of 2.3% of all successful organisations - over twice its share of the EU population. While the percentages here appear small, it is worth remembering that Ireland's share of 0.9% over 4 years represents 26 organisations across 25 projects. This demonstrates the potential reach and impact of an increase of even 0.5% in the share of all successful applications, which would translate into approximately 13 further organisations associated with 12 projects

A further important consideration arising from the statistical analysis is that Ireland performs better, on average, than Denmark or Finland in terms of successful applications as a percentage of applications made (50% compared to 31% and 40% respectively in 2012). It follows then that there is scope for Ireland to increase its participation rate in the EU Culture Programme, particularly if we are to fully take into account the ramifications of the 'small country effect' named above. Director of the Irish Theatre Institute (ITI) and member of the expert panel for assessment of performing arts applications for the Culture Programme, Jane Daly's observation on the issue of performance provides the context for these statistics:

I would not say at all that Ireland is underperforming in the context of the culture programme, Ireland just isn't competing. That is the problem ...I think that if we were competing ... then we would be far more successful. (Daly, 2011)

The existence of an un-tapped opportunity was further observed by Gerry Godley, Director of the Improvised Music Company (IMC):

There is huge opportunity – a huge European opportunity for Irish artists because of our absence from the sphere in many ways. Certainly in my area there is a big gaping Irish shaped hole. (Godley, 2011)

### **Barriers to participation: the practical and ideological limitations of the Culture Programme**

The inherent administrative challenges of the EU Culture Programme can be seen as a potential deterrent to organisations contemplating an application to the programme. The interim evaluation report for the Culture Programme 2007 - 2013 found that:

in the case of multi-annual co-operation projects (and to an extent cooperation measures), the administrative capacity required to apply for, receive and properly account for large amounts of EU funding might be expected to constitute a hurdle which smaller organisations struggle to overcome. (ECORYS, 2010, p.34)

The original qualitative research finds that for Irish performing arts organisations this is very much the case (Cornwall, 2011; Cunningham, 2011; Daly, 2011; Lowry, 2011) and the challenge is particularly relevant given that most Irish performing arts organisations are small to medium sized enterprises (Lowry, 2011). The general tenor of the findings in this regard are summed up by Jane Daly:

I think it's a resource issue, it's a matching funding issue, I think it's because people haven't found the right partners to work with...They don't have the administrators or the experience in the organisation to actually go through the process – I mean it's huge and you have to have everything in duplicate and in triplicate and legal statements etc.- it's a huge draw on administrative resources. (Daly, 2011)

While contributors to the research proposed that organisations could participate as a co-organiser in order to avoid the greater part of the administrative and accounting burden (Cornwall, 2011; Daly, 2011; Duke, 2011; Sweeney, 2011), significant financial barriers to participation, even at that level, were highlighted. Research subjects identified the lack of suitable domestic opportunities to secure the match-funding requirement for projects as a considerable challenge (Cornwall, 2011; Daly, 2011; Irish Theatre Institute, 2011). Furthermore, the investment required to network and establish essential partnerships in Europe was cited as a

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barrier, particularly in light of the emphasis on partnership and collaboration in the programme criteria (Cornwall, 2011; Daly, 2011).

Given the scale of projects funded by the EU Culture Programme, the significant match-funding commitments required, and the financial barriers faced by Irish organisations, all parties warn that the EU Culture Programme is not a way of shoring up a loss in domestic funding (Cornwall, 2011; Daly, 2011; Godley, 2011; Irish Theatre Institute, 2011; Lowry, 2011). Instead the project should be seen as an adjunct to the organisation's other activities, without any expectation that the funds will underwrite the operational costs of the organisation. Verena Cornwall, creative director of the St. Patrick's Festival and an independent arts consultant who has been involved with many Culture Programme funded projects, proposes a suitable approach to the programme:

If I want to do something [I think] how could it be better, how can I enhance that by going to Europe. Rather than thinking 'I'm a bit broke - how do I get some money out of Europe'? (Cornwall, 2011)

Another barrier to participation cited was geographical isolation (Godley, 2011; Lowry, 2011) as emphasised by Gerry Godley:

I think there are philosophical reasons ...and they are geographical too - our relative isolation and our lack of being plugged into networks. So for example if you are a venue in Ghent you're working with Dutch, German, Danish partners all the time. It's in the DNA. It's not so straightforward for us to do that, both geographically and culturally, and linguistically because remember you're moving outside of the anglophone European footprint as well. (Godley, 2011)

Language was seen as an issue by all the interviewees. Though not a problem for musical forms (Godley, 2011), the respondents recognised that the 'language-driven' (Daly, 2011) nature of much of Irish theatre potentially presents a barrier to participation (Daly, 2011; Godley, 2011; Lowry, 2011).

Alongside the practical barriers, the research revealed a different ideology behind the international activity of those organisations that participate in the EU Culture Programme, and those active on an international level but which don't participate in the programme. For the latter, the purpose of their international activity is presented as 'touring' as distinct from partnering with EU organisations (Kelly, 2011; Lovett, 2011; Roche, 2011; Smith, 2011). For Druid Theatre Company and the Irish Chamber Orchestra such touring is in the context of promoting existing bodies of work to new international audiences (Kelly, 2011; Smith, 2011), with a rationale complementary to Culture Ireland's cultural diplomacy remit of 'promoting Irish arts worldwide' (Culture Ireland, 2011). This rationale is of a different ideological nature to the transnational partnerships required by the EU Culture Programme.

The promotional agenda that underpins traditional models of touring runs counter to the values of European reciprocity and mutuality currently promoted by EU cultural policy and its instruments. The interview subjects were asked for their opinion on the difference between 'transnational cooperation', as promoted by the criteria of the Culture Programme, and the concept of touring. All were cognisant of the difference between the two:

There is a huge difference ...one of the first things you spot when you're doing the assessment of the criteria is you spot very quickly what is a tour and what is a cooperation. (Daly, 2011)

Though touring is an admissible method of 'trans-national cooperation' (ECORYS, 2010, p.vii, Lowry, 2011), it is clear that to meet the programme criteria of 'European added value' (EA-CEA, 2010, p.45; Godley, 2011) such activity must derive from a genuine engagement with other organisations in Europe and be what Gavin Quinn, artistic director of Pan Pan Theatre Company, terms as 'genuinely European' (Irish Theatre Institute, 2011):

In a basic way it's working and exchanging across borders. Within the EU Culture Programme it's usually

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within a specific project framework – the partnership framework. It's working, touring and exchanging... (Lowry, 2011)

This concept of 'genuinely European' relates to the 'common cultural heritage' that the Culture Programme is designed to promote by supporting partnership and cooperation (Commission Communication, 2007, p.2). In that sense the research revealed that the EU Culture Programme is not a suitable funding avenue for every organisation (Daly, 2011; Irish Theatre Institute, 2011). If the ethos of cooperation as embodied by the criteria of the programme is in no way complementary to the mission of an organisation, then it may be more prudent to avoid committing considerable resources to pursuing European cultural funds.

### Expanding creative horizons – the benefits of participation

As a funding avenue for Irish performing arts organisations, the research reveals that the EU Culture Programme does not match the objectives of all organisations and that it does not represent a replacement for losses in domestic funding. However, for organisations that wish to genuinely engage in European cooperation projects some benefits were identified. The research found that the primary benefit of participation in EU Culture Programme funded projects is to the artistic practice of the organisation, and that participation also leads to further European mobility, after the duration of the funded project.

The contributors to the research referenced exposure to diverse artistic practices (Cornwall, 2011; Godley, 2011; Johnson, 2011) and art form development (Daly, 2011; Sweeney, 2011) as key benefits of participation. In all cases participation in the Culture Programme was found to lead to further mobility. Further projects with partners were reported (Edelstein, 2011; Irish Theatre Institute, 2011) and all expressed that they had, or would, collaborate with European organisations again (Cunningham, 2011; Edelstein, 2011; Johnson, 2011; Uprichard, 2011). Verena Cornwall illustrated how involvement in cooperation projects can beget further participation:

The week after we were in Meridians I had a phone call from the largest outdoor EU Consortia called 'In Situ' who had just been awarded €500,000 to ask us to join ... I don't think that unless we had put our hand in the air and said to Europe and the European partners, 'we are out and doing things' that [they] would necessarily have connected us ... with the idea of doing that. (Cornwall, 2011)

Aside from the benefits accrued to participating organisations, the research also highlighted the multiplier effect of participation in terms of the inclusion of individual artists, cultural managers and even other organisations in the project activities (Cornwall, 2011; Cunningham, 2011; Godley, 2011; Johnston, 2011; Roche, 2011; Uprichard, 2011). Each funded project requires the participation of individual musicians, performers and other artists who all reap the benefits of trans-national mobility. Furthermore, there are also instances where Irish artists have participated in projects that do not have an Irish co-organiser. Representing a UK-based organisation, Verena Cornwall is involved in a circus arts cooperation project for which participation in the project activity is open to individuals from all over Europe, including – via Tralee Circus Festival – Irish circus artists who can expect to:

... meet a completely wide range of people from other practitioners who are emerging through to established festival directors like myself and everything in between - and each other. (Cornwall, 2011)

Participation in EU Culture Programme funded projects translates to opportunities for individuals who have the chance to work in an international context; build professional networks; be exposed to different practices and expand their own practice beyond domestic influences. It may be the experience of these individuals that can fully reveal the value of the EU Culture Programme.

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### Removing the barriers – creating the conditions for success

Another objective of the research was to identify the organisational actions and domestic support mechanisms that could improve access to the EU Culture Programme for Irish performing arts organisations. The evidence from the research is that the single most important action that organisations can take is to invest in the building of partnerships with European counterparts. All of the respondents to the structured questionnaire, who had been involved in EU Culture Programme funded projects, had been invited by already established professional contacts rather than via online partner searches. The experience of the Dublin Dance Festival is typical:

Dublin Dance Festival became involved in E-Motional Bodies and Cities at the invitation of the project's leader, Cosmin Manolescu, who had known and worked with DDF Director Laurie Uprichard on East-West exchanges for more than a decade. (Uprichard, 2011)

Quality and depth in these partnerships is cited as a key success factor (Cornwall, 2011; Daly 2011; Godley, 2011; Irish Theatre Institute, 2011; Lowry, 2011), and engagement with formal networks such as IETM - The International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts (Irish Theatre Institute, 2011) or Europe Jazz Network (Godley, 2011) is seen as important for the development of such relationships. In the case of all of the organisations who have participated, membership of formal networks and a long-term investment in partnership building has been a key success factor (Cornwall, 2011; Cunningham, 2011; Daly, 2011; Edelstein, 2011; Godley, 2011; Johnson, 2011; Uprichard, 2011).

Along with strong partnerships, Daly suggests that organisations carry out an audit of their resources to ensure that they have the capacity to manage a project on the scale of an EU Culture Programme project (Daly, 2011). It is further suggested that first-time participants act as a co-organiser before attempting to participate as a lead partner (Cornwall, 2011; Daly, 2011; Duke, 2011; Sweeney, 2011;). It should be noted however that the Improvised Music Company participated as a lead partner for its first Culture Programme funded project. Lowry advises that if the proposition and the partnerships are sophisticated, then an organisation should not be discouraged from applying in a leadership capacity (Lowry, 2011). On the theme of organisational resources, Pan Pan director, Gavin Quinn, observes that projects 'should be run as if it is a completely separate project within your organisation, otherwise you are going to get into trouble' (Irish Theatre Institute, 2011).

In terms of the domestic support mechanisms required to make the EU Culture Programme more accessible to Irish performing arts organisations, along with 'the need for practical, accessible information in an easy to understand language' (Lowry, 2011), the issue of match-funding supports was also addressed. When asked about the prospect of introducing a match-funding scheme akin to those found in some other eligible countries (Gerth, 2006, p.9), the proposition was not seen as particularly realistic at the current time (Godley, 2011; Daly, 2011; Lowry, 2011; Sweeney, 2011), with the Head of International Arts at the Arts Council of Ireland, Fionnuala Sweeney, making the point that it would have to be at the expense of something else (Sweeney, 2011). On the issue of financing, Lowry added that projects can generate income (though not profit) and proposed that sponsorship as well as, for example, earned revenue from ticket sales can be considered opportunities for financing the match-funding requirement.

However, while lateral approaches to financing are possible, the considerable financial commitment required, renders many of these approaches as high risk strategies that may run contrary to sound financial management. Therefore, given the difficulties outlined, a policy on supporting organisations to leverage EU Culture Programme funding will require considerable

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leadership. Since 2005 the remit for international arts in Ireland has been divided between the Arts Council of Ireland, the government agency for funding and developing the arts in Ireland, and Culture Ireland, the national body for promoting Irish arts worldwide. A situation that Jane Daly suggests has led to a policy vacuum on the issue:

I think there is a need for them [the agencies] to sit down collectively and to see what the impact of that policy has been and if anything has fallen between two stools. And if so then it has to be shored up somehow...there needs to be a very clear policy around the Culture Programme: where does it sit, who is responsible in terms of supporting organisations, what are the agency's policies? (Daly, 2011)

While it should be acknowledged that Culture Ireland is a partner in the Improvised Music Company's 12 Points! Festival project, interventions beyond a case by case basis are unlikely from Culture Ireland given its over-riding cultural diplomacy remit. Since European 'trans-national cooperation' and the priority of 'intercultural dialogue' are not about promoting Irish culture in Europe, the development of a policy for leveraging European funding does not fit comfortably with Culture Ireland's principle objective.

The Arts Council of Ireland does provide support under its 'Travel and Training Awards' to cover some of the costs associated with making an application under the EU Culture Programme, including the cost of face-to-face meetings. This demonstrates a commitment to promote participation in the programme. However, with a spend in the region of 1% of the total Arts Council budget financing the agencies international arts remit, that agency is not equipped to address the project match-funding issue (Staines, 2011). Furthermore, the fact that the Irish Cultural Contact Point (CCP), is accommodated in the Arts Council of Ireland should not be considered a significant indicator that the agency is driving the agenda, since the CCP's remit comes directly from from the European Commission (Cultural Contact Point, 2011).

In addressing the match-funding issue, Verena Cornwall summarises the central problem:

The funds the Arts Council has to fund activity in Ireland are very limited ...similarly, Culture Ireland's funding is about enlisting companies who already have performance work to go abroad to promote that or to actually present that. So there isn't a fund that we have identified to pay for our match-funding. (Cornwall, 2011)

It is clear from the research that the remit and resources to leverage the EU Culture Programme will need to be assigned to the appropriate agency, before progress in this respect can be made.

## Conclusion

Despite being responsible for a share of all successful applications to the EU Culture Programme equal to Ireland's share of the EU population, the Irish arts sector lags behind countries of a similar population and cultural infrastructure, who punch above their weight in this regard. This study examines Irish participation in the EU Culture Programme for the first time. It serves to bring current voices on the topic together and provides an overview of the Irish experience of the instruments of EU cultural policy at a time when that policy is shifting. Ahead of the introduction of Creative Europe, the research findings demonstrate the current barriers to participation in the Culture Programme from the perspective of the Irish performing arts sector.

The shift in EU cultural policy from the rationale of promoting European citizenship to a more economic rationale will have an impact on the ability of Irish organisations to participate - for better or for worse. Regardless, the fundamental barriers to participation as identified in the research are likely to remain and domestic intervention is required to address them. The research highlights the need for a clear national policy on the provision of support to organisations in a position to leverage the funds. Also identified are some key actions for organisations

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to take in order to improve their ability to participate: commitment to long-term networking and international partnership building is essential, as is the development of projects that are 'genuinely European'.

The findings show that the EU Culture Programme should only be pursued where it provides a genuine match for the objectives of an organisation, and that the programme does not represent an alternative to domestic funding. However, for organisations that wish to engage in European cooperation projects, the EU Culture Programme offers an opportunity to do so with an ultimate benefit to the development of the artistic practice of the organisation, as well as to the performing arts ecology as a whole, via the many individual practitioners who stand to benefit from participation in the funded project activities. Regardless of the design of Creative Europe, without a strategic approach to removing the barriers to participation at a domestic level, Irish organisations will struggle to fully capitalise on the opportunities presented by EU cultural funding in the long term.

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## NOTES

1. This article has been renumbered in subsequent treaties. It is Article 151 in the Amsterdam Treaty and more recently it was renumbered as Article 167 with the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty.
2. The original research project examined data up to and including budget year 2011. The findings have been updated to include data from 2012 for the purpose of this article.
3. Housed at the Arts Council of Ireland, the Cultural Contact Point (CCP) is one of a network of CCP's across the EU member states charged with providing information and support to organisations wishing to apply for EU cultural funds. CCP's are financed under the EU Culture Programme.
4. See bibliography for a list of questionnaire respondents.
5. The Dublin Theatre Festival (DTF) was interviewed in 2011 as an organization active internationally without participating in the EU Culture Programme. Since the research was conducted, DTF has been successful in applying as a co-organiser under Strand 1.1. in 2012.
6. It is important to note that involvement by associate partners has not been recorded in official documentation for the 2007 cycle, therefore 30 organisations does not necessarily represent a decrease in participation in the current cycle.
7. Comparative data is only available from 2009, statistical data presented here is averaged over four years 2009–2012.

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