OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee

Thursday 14 November 2019

Session 5

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Thursday 14 November 2019

CONTENTS

CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
27th Meeting 2019, Session 5

CONVENER

*Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
*Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
*Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
*Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green)
*Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
*Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD)
*Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Orlaith McBride (Arts Council of Ireland)
Agnieszka Moody (Creative Europe Desk UK)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Stephen Herbert

LOCATION

The Robert Burns Room (CR1)

Scottish Parliament

Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee

Thursday 14 November 2019

[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:30]

Arts Funding

The Convener (Joan McAlpine): Good morning and welcome to the committee's 27th meeting in 2019. I remind members and the public to turn off their mobile phones. Any members using electronic devices to access papers should ensure that their devices are turned to silent.

We return to the committee's art funding inquiry. The purpose of this session is to consider comparative approaches to the funding of the arts, building on the research that we commissioned from Drew Wylie Ltd earlier in the year. I welcome our witnesses. Orlaith McBride is director of the Arts Council of Ireland—An Chomhairle Ealaíon—and Agnieszka Moody is director of Creative Europe Desk UK. We have received apologies from the chief executive of the Arts Council of England, Dr Darren Henley OBE. He was confirmed to give evidence at today's meeting, but has withdrawn due to the purdah rules that are in place as a result of the coming United Kingdom general election.

I start by addressing my initial questions to Orlaith McBride. A large part of our inquiry has been about how we best support individual artists and creative practitioners in Scotland. We are very interested in how you do that in Ireland. Perhaps you can tell us a little more about how the Arts Council of Ireland supports artists' living conditions, including fair pay. Can you tell us how that happens throughout an artist's career?

Orlaith McBride (Arts Council of Ireland): Supporting individual artists is one of our strategy's key objectives. We do that in two ways. First, we do it through supporting organisations—no art gallery, theatre or arts centre exists without artists being in some way connected to the creation of work, so artists are included in the funding that we give to organisations.

Secondly, we support individual artists directly. A significant proportion of our funding is specifically earmarked for individual artists. They apply to the Arts Council individually for bursaries, schemes and projects.

In 1981, the Government introduced a national programme for creative artists called Aosdána. Two hundred and fifty artists are members of Aosdána at any one time. All of them can receive the cnuas, which is a stipend or grant from the Arts Council, by virtue of their membership of Aosdána. To be a member of Aosdána, an artist must have a body of work—not just one novel or one book of poetry. Most members of Aosdána are mid-career artists. They receive a stipend of €17,180 per annum. That allows them to take time to pursue their practice without having to teach part time, wait tables or find other work. It recognises that artists need time to pursue their practice, and it allows them that time. They can earn money from their creative output—it is not so easy to earn money as an artist, and that is particularly true for individual artists, but they can earn up to €25,000 on top of their cnuas.

We support artists by giving them a base funding that allows them the comfort to pursue their practice. Of course, as I said, that applies to only 250 artists.

You asked me to talk about the arc of an artist's career. As I said, those 250 members of Aosdána will be mid-career artists and older artists. We also have a lot of support that is specifically for artists at an early stage in their careers. Our next generation scheme is for artists who do not have a huge body of work behind them but who have established themselves and made a firm commitment to pursuing their practice professionally. We fund emerging artists who are at an early stage in their career with up to €20,000 a year.

We support about 600 individual artists a year through the cnuas and a range of other schemes and awards. All the decisions on supporting individual artists are made by peer panels. Decisions are made through peer assessment, not through the Arts Council making decisions about individual artists. People who are from an artist's own art form and who are at the same stage in their careers decide the allocation of funding to individuals.

The Convener: Thank you. Later on, other members will have questions about peer review, because that is also a subject of our inquiry.

On what you say about the schemes for individual artists, I understand the stipends for mid-career, established artists, but are other funding streams decided on a project-by-project basis, so that artists have to justify what the money is spent on?

Orlaith McBride: It depends. If an artist is applying for a bursary, that is about buying time, and we fund the buying of time. The majority of bursaries are about €20,000 per annum. However, an artist—a visual artist, theatre practitioner or dance artist—might have a project or an artistic idea that they want to be funded, so they bring that

to us. They might want to create a piece of work or they might apply for funding for a project. However, if they want time to pursue an idea, they could be eligible for a bursary.

The Convener: How many bursaries do you give out in a year?

Orlaith McBride: We give out about 300 to 400.

The Convener: That is a significant number.

Orlaith McBride: It is significant. As I said, the average is about €20,000 per annum. People can apply for multi-annual bursaries. This year, they might want to pursue an idea and next year, they might want to bring the idea to life.

However, we will never be able to meet the level of demand. That is a conversation that we have all the time with third-level institutions. There needs to be a circularity between the number of younger people who come through third-level institutions and the expectation that they will be able to pursue a career. That is difficult—it is hard to be an artist in Ireland, and I am sure that it is also hard to pursue a career in the arts in Scotland. In 2018, we met only 27 per cent of the applications that we received from individual artists for bursaries and projects.

The Convener: If people get a bursary, is that a one-off, or can they get a bursary over a number of years?

Orlaith McBride: They can keep going—absolutely.

The Convener: They can?

Orlaith McBride: As I said, it is difficult. You asked me about artists' living and working conditions, which continue to be a huge issue. The average artist earns about €7,000 or €8,000 per annum from their artistic output. That is not a lot.

We are signing off a new national policy on the remuneration of artists. All cultural institutions will have to sign up to it, and it will be endorsed at ministerial level. The Arts Council can look after artists when they apply to us. We know that €20,000 is a fair amount of money to give an individual artist for a year, in order for them to pursue their practice. However, we need to ensure that, when we fund a theatre, gallery or publishing press, they pay artists proper fees. Tied into our funding agreements with arts organisations there is now a condition that they have to demonstrate to us the fee structure that they use to pay artists. If we see that organisations that are in receipt of Arts Council funding are delinquent in their responsibility to pay artists properly, we will withhold money or put conditions on their funding accordingly.

The Convener: That is interesting. I will ask one more quick question, because I want to move on to Agnieszka Moody. Do you ensure that you award bursaries across a variety of art forms? How strategic are your awards?

Orlaith McBride: We have art form bursaries. An artist will apply for a visual arts, literature, theatre or dance bursary. We allocate the money across those art forms.

The Convener: Does one art form get more emphasis than another? If theatre or whatever is strong in Ireland, do you focus on that?

Orlaith McBride: It is not so much about focusing on an art form because it is strong in Ireland as it is about recognising that writing and visual art are more individualistic art forms. Collaborative art forms, such as dance or theatre, need a group of people in a room in order to create something. The chances are that writers or visual artists pursue their practice individually. Therefore, more is put into literature or the visual arts, to recognise that there are more individual artists in those art forms, whereas dance and theatre are more collaborative.

The Convener: Thank you.

I turn to a question for Agnieszka Moody. What funding opportunities are available to artists through the Creative Europe programme? Do you also differentiate between artists at different stages of their career?

Agnieszka Moody (Creative Europe Desk UK): First, I will define my role. Creative Europe is the European Union's only funding co-operation programme that is devoted to Europe's cultural, creative and audiovisual sectors. It is a pan-European programme that has a budget of €1.46 billion over a seven-year period. The current edition lasts until the end of 2020.

A feature of the programme is that it has what we call "desks" in every country. Creative Europe desks are information and promotion points for the programme, which is administered centrally from Brussels for all participating countries. At the European Commission, a policy team looks at the delivery of the programme's strategic aims, evaluation and budget. An executive agency is responsible for administering the funding. The agency comes up with the guidelines and application forms, and the application forms are sent back to it. The agency's work is assisted by a vast pool of industry and sector experts. That is similar to what my colleague, Orlaith McBride, said about peer assessments: the approach also applies in Creative Europe, with an international dimension written into it.

The role of the desks is to be a bridge between the sector in a country and the centre in Brussels. For lots of cultural operators, Brussels might be far away. The desks are devoted to looking after the

sector in the country. In the UK, I head the team of Creative Europe Desk UK, which is a partnership between the British Film Institute—where I work—the British Council, Creative Scotland, the Welsh Government and Arts Council England. We are designated by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to deliver promotional information and awareness raising on the programme in the UK. I wanted to make the distinction that although Creative Europe is administered out of Brussels, there is an office, such as the one that I lead, in every country.

You asked about artists and when they are supported in their careers. That can be done at any time that they need to be supported. There is a lot of support for young and emerging talent, but people at different stages of their careers can be supported.

It is important to understand that Creative Europe has a set of clearly defined objectives. Any application that comes to the programme for funding has to satisfy those objectives. Artists and cultural operators might think of a great variety of exciting projects that they want to embark on, but in order to get funding, those projects have to align well with the objectives.

The objectives are smart, because there is an interesting tension between them. Creative Europe's two main objectives almost pull in opposite directions. One objective is to safeguard and promote cultural diversity in Europe, including linguistic diversity and the promotion of cultural heritage. Equally important is the objective of competitiveness. That is a more industrial agenda and is about strengthening the sector, which is already performing rather well. In line with the UK narrative, the creative industries sector is growing faster than other sectors. The sector is worth the investment, because it is future facing and contributes to all the societal issues that we badly need solutions to. All those narratives are well aligned between the UK and the EU.

09:45

The programme is trying to achieve on both objectives. If we look at it as a spectrum, some projects will be more industrial in their ambitions and some will be more focused on diversity. However, they will always be somewhere on that line. Any application or project that comes to Creative Europe has to bear in mind the wellbeing of the sector, rather than just the individual project. The application must consider how the project contributes to strengthening the cultural sector in its locality as well as the international dimension.

The Convener: Thank you.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): I have a question for Orlaith McBride. You mentioned that some people can obtain multiple bursaries. Have there been any tensions in that regard? You also mentioned that 27 per cent of applications are accepted. If people are getting multiple bursaries, are some of those who are trying to break into the sector not getting bursaries?

Orlaith McBride: That is a legitimate question. We call them serial applicants. Such issues are difficult for any funding agency. An artist who gets a bursary for one year will not be able sustain a career as an artist for the rest of their life. We recognise that people come back again and again. All we can do is introduce a rule that they cannot get a bursary in two successive years. That is the only way that we can ensure that there is that distribution, so that new entrants come through.

For us, it is about trying to get extra money from Government, so that we can increase the 27 per cent figure. There will always be a competitive edge—when it comes to public funding, there has to be a competitive edge. However, the reality is that we do not have enough money to put in.

There is nothing wrong with an artist making a successful application. If their practice was not good, they would not be successful in the application process. We cannot penalise them for success. It is our job as a public agency to try and increase our resources or the allocation that we give to individual artists, so that we can increase the figure from 27 per cent to 37 or 47 per cent. We should not penalise artists because, as a public agency, we are underfunded. It is a delicate issue and we will never solve it, so all that we can say is that artists cannot apply two years in a row—we can put such eligibility checks in place. However, it is difficult.

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I am interested in the comments that you just made. Has the Arts Council's funding from the Irish Government remained stable in recent years? Has it increased or decreased? What percentage of the Irish Government's overall budget did you get this year?

Orlaith McBride: Our position is no different from that of any other country in recent years. We suffered a significant recession, and our funding dropped from €85 million in 2008 to €55 million in 2013, which was the lowest point. We are now back up to €80 million—the increase happened from 2016 onwards, but in the middle years, we were just trying to keep the doors open and the lights on.

The situation allowed us to radically change the way in which we do business. There was a paradigm shift in how we saw ourselves as an organisation. We went through a major transformation. As the saying goes, a good crisis

can give rise to opportunity, and we completely changed the way in which we do business as a public agency. The increase happened just as we changed course in terms of our direction as a public agency to become much more developmental and evidence-based in our approach.

Organisations apply to the Arts Council for funding to support us in delivering our remit and our strategic objectives, rather than there being passive funding whereby someone says, "I want to do A, B, and C," and we say, "Here's the money, now off you go and do them." There has to be a much more engaged relationship between arts organisations and the Arts Council.

There are many statistics on the percentage of gross domestic product that is allocated to the arts and culture in any country. There are European statistics—we are often at a loss as to how those are calculated. There are also national statistics, but they comprise the entire culture spend; it is not just the spend on the Arts Council but the spend on all museums, galleries and national cultural institutions. It is therefore really difficult for me to say what the percentage is. However, it is about 0.6 per cent.

Claire Baker: So the Government does not set out any percentage or target.

Orlaith McBride: No, because it is really difficult. The metrics that are used at a European level are different from those that are used at a domestic level. Our funding is now back up at €80 million, so we are almost where we were in 2008. I hate it when people say, "Oh, our funding isn't back to what it was." We need to think very differently about funding. When organisations apply to us and ask us to return them to their 2008 levels of funding, we say, "No. We all have to do things differently now—things have changed utterly." However, we are back up at €80 million.

Claire Baker: In a previous answer, you described the situation as being one in which there is more pull on resources than what you currently have and you are underfunded by Government, although I heard your caveats about the overall financial picture. Do you see the Arts Council as an organisation that lobbies the Government and calls for more public funding?

Orlaith McBride: No, we cannot. We are a public agency. We are a Government, state agency. I cannot lobby my minister, because I am, in effect, an employee of the Government—I am a public servant. What we can do, however, is demonstrate the impact of that investment, so that Government can clearly see that more investment in the Arts Council will yield more for the taxpayer and for the Irish public.

We can also demonstrate the argument about the percentages. For example, we can fund only 27 per cent of the artists who apply to us for support, but look at the swathes of artists who are struggling to make a living in Ireland, while we claim to be a country that values, nurtures and supports arts. It is about presenting the arguments in a very clear way with robust analysis. That is all that we can do; we cannot come out publicly and lobby Government.

Claire Baker: That still sounds like quite a lot, and it sounds like you make a robust case for what you are able to deliver and its potential.

I want to move on to your relationship with local authorities. The papers that were provided to us show that you have quite a close working relationship with local authorities. Is any expectation, target or percentage set for local authorities in relation to how much of their budget they should spend on culture, or is there a more open discussion about that?

Orlaith McBride: We would probably see local authorities as our most important strategic partners. Ireland is a very dispersed country, and it has quite a rural population. As such, it is difficult for a national agency in Dublin to reach every community in the country, but we have a responsibility to do so.

Our relationship with local government ensures that we can at least balance our approach to support across the country. Our relationship with local authorities started in 1985, when the Arts Council funded the first arts officer in a local authority. We funded that first post, and now every local authority in the country has an arts officer.

Claire Baker: Do you still fund those posts?

Orlaith McBride: Not any more. It is a 35-year relationship, and we ceased to fund those positions probably only in the past 15 years, because they became mainstreamed in the local authorities.

Claire Baker: Have local authorities retained them?

Orlaith McBride: Yes. During the boom years before the recession, teams with, for example, a youth arts officer, a public arts officer and an arts and health co-ordinator would have been built up in local authorities. Those teams would have been developed but, as the recession hit, local authorities went back to skeletal staff of just an arts officer. In every local authority, at the senior management level, there would be a director of culture. That was to ensure that all the cultural provisions—the arts, heritage, the language and the Gaeltacht—were under one directorate in a local authority.

Claire Baker: Would all local authorities have a director of culture?

Orlaith McBride: Yes. Provision for the arts is not a statutory service in a local authority, but provision to have an arts plan is statutory. That is not in the local government legislation; it is in the Arts Act 2003, which is our legislation. Under that act, every local authority must have an arts plan for its area.

On the funding for that, we have had a strategic partnership since 1985, and we continue to fund with local authorities at a programmatic level. We fund and they fund. We should all fund the same amount, but we lost momentum during the 10 years of recession.

We have framework agreements in place with every local authority. At the national level, there is the County and City Management Association for all local authorities in the country, of which there are 31. We have a memorandum of understanding at the highest level with that management association, and we have a framework agreement with every local authority at an individual level, which is signed by me and the chief executive—not the arts officer—of the local authority. The agreement is very much embedded in the local authority's work. We and they would fund at a programmatic level.

We identify the particular elements of the funding agreement that we and the local authority are interested in co-funding. There will be areas of responsibility that are really important at the local level that the Arts Council, as a national agency, might not be that interested in. There will also be particular programmes—for example, development initiatives such as work with older people or young people, or work in very rural or disadvantaged communities—that we are really interested in, because they align with our strategy, and we would co-fund them.

We fund local authorities on an annual basis. That funding is rising, and their funding is rising. The relationship is really effective, and it is probably the most important relationship that we have.

Claire Baker: So, as an organisation, you provide funding to local authorities and co-funding within that.

Orlaith McBride: Yes. Absolutely.

Claire Baker: Finally, in Scotland, we have the household survey, which gives us a range of data, including information on who participates in the arts. Does Ireland have a similar model? How do you measure who engages?

Orlaith McBride: Yes. We have an annual behaviour and attitudes survey.

Claire Baker: What does that show? In Scotland, we find that, if a person lives in a more disadvantaged community, has a long-term health condition or is older, they are less likely to be engaged in the arts. Is there a similar pattern in Ireland?

Orlaith McBride: Yes. Absolutely. We have big challenges in reaching hard-to-reach communities from a demographic, an economic or a geographic perspective. We see that the same people engage with the arts, and those who can afford to will continue to participate. There are harder-to-reach communities, and our role, as a public agency, is to work strategically on the ground with agencies, such as local government, to effect change with those communities. Working with local authorities is a way in which we can do that.

Stuart McMillan: I have a couple of quick questions about the percentage for art scheme, which has been operating in Jersey—obviously, Jersey is not in the EU—for some 14 years. The issue has been raised with the committee by a group in my constituency called RIG Arts. Are you aware of that scheme? Do you think that it is useful? Would you recommend that we introduce it in Scotland?

10:00

Orlaith McBride: We have the per cent for art scheme, which is tied into public infrastructure projects. Is that similar to what you are talking about?

Stuart McMillan: Yes.

Orlaith McBride: Under that scheme, as I am sure that committee members know, a percentage of the overall fee for a public infrastructure project—a school, a road or whatever—is allocated to support some kind of artistic output. In the 1980s, 1990s and the 2000s, that would have resulted in, for example, public art sculptures on the side of a dual carriageway. Thankfully, we have moved away from that model to a more engaged understanding of public art. Now, if a local authority is undertaking a public housing project in a particular community, it will initiate and develop programmes in which artists will work with the community to develop a piece of theatre or undertake a writing project, for example. The practice is much more socially engaged and participatory than was the case heretofore, when there would simply be a piece of sculpture placed on the side of the road or in a schoolyard.

In the past six months, our minister has increased the level of money that is available under the per cent for art scheme. Now, it is not simply a percentage of the overall spend on the infrastructure project; instead, it goes up to almost €100,000. That allows an artist quite a significant

fee to develop an artistic programme that is tied into a public research project.

We have a huge public building programme happening in Ireland at the moment, particularly in relation to schools and hospitals. Project Ireland 2040 is a major public infrastructure programme, and the role of the Arts Council is to ensure that the per cent for art piece is called down, because that has not always happened. Social housing, hospitals, community buildings and so on have been built without the percentage that is there for an arts project or commission being called down. The Government has given us responsibility for ensuring the delivery of the artistic spend that should come from every public building project that happens in Ireland over the next 10 years. In order to do that, we must work across every Government department, because all of them—whether they are concerned with health, education, local government or whatever—are involved in public infrastructure projects. If there is a percentage of building project spend that should be allocated to the arts so that an artist and the community can benefit from that, that is important to us. If we do not ensure that that happens, that is money that is lost to the arts.

When you ask how much money is put into the arts in terms of overall spend, you must bear in mind that there are initiatives such as the per cent for art scheme that are not being exploited to maximum effect. That is why, in the past six months, we have been asked to take a much more proactive role across Government in relation to it.

Stuart McMillan: What problem caused not all of the money to be drawn down? What was the logjam?

Orlaith McBride: I would say that Government departments did not know about the scheme. If a school was being built, the school principal would not have known anything about the scheme. Our role is to ensure that we put together an inventory of all public sector projects that are happening over the next five years and to work with whoever is commissioning the building project to ensure that they call down that money.

Stuart McMillan: Would Agnieszka Moody like to answer my initial question?

Agnieszka Moody: There is not really a direct answer to it. The closest thing that I could compare that scheme with is the creative Europe programme that funds the European capitals of culture programme, which has permanent structural effects on those cities and communities. A limited amount of European funding goes into the infrastructure projects that we are talking about, but the projects have many long-lasting structural benefits that irreversibly change the communities.

A range of co-operation projects form the main currency of the culture sub-programme of the creative Europe programme. Some of them place more emphasis on the social impacts in communities, and they work with local authorities to effect change. For example, the IN SITU project is about creative practice in public spaces. Those spaces may not be traditional venues, because the project is about art going out into communities. The project involves international co-operation between several organisations that share the aim of taking art out into communities.

I hope that that answers your question.

Stuart McMillan: Variations on the Irish Government's per cent for art scheme are run in some EU nations. In France, the first iteration of such a scheme was in 1951, and it was amended in 1972. In public policy terms, have those schemes been successful in encouraging more people to get involved in art, as well as helping local communities?

Agnieszka Moody: I do not know whether we can talk about success yet. From the point of view of the European Union, culture is a newer competence that has only recently caught up with everything else that the EU does.

A new European agenda for culture was launched last May. It has three dimensions, the first of which is the social one, which involves making communities and societies in the union more inclusive. Culture will play a role in getting us to that point and ensuring that we have happier, more inclusive and more tolerant societies. Therefore, there will be an increasing emphasis on how culture can help the EU to solve serious societal issues, and member states will respond to that.

Stuart McMillan: I mentioned RIG Arts earlier. It was involved in a regeneration project in which more than £50 million was spent in a part of Greenock that had had no investment for 30 or 40 years. Your comment about social issues reminded me of the culture element that RIG Arts introduced to that project. The work was undertaken without the existence of a per cent for art scheme. Could such a scheme be rolled out across all the housing associations and housing providers in Scotland, to ensure that the cultural and social element of such projects grows and then strengthens communities?

Orlaith McBride: Undoubtedly. You cite Greenock. I cite Ballymun in Dublin, which was an area of incredible disadvantage. High towers were built in the 1960s and, by the 1990s, there were many problems with antisocial behaviour and drugs. The city council decided to demolish the flats and introduce a new form of housing, and the

per cent for art scheme was included in the regeneration programme.

All of a sudden, artists, town planners and community activists were working together to plot and plan what Ballymun might look like. The sense of active citizen participation was embedded in the planning for the local area from the outset. The local people wanted an arts centre. All of a sudden, they began to articulate what would be important, mostly for their children and the next generation. A new public housing scheme and an embedded arts infrastructure are now in place in the area. Not only are an arts centre and artistic organisations based there; artists are living and working there. They are as embedded in the community as everyone else.

It is too early to say what will happen—we are talking about only a 10 to 12-year timeframe—but the programme has had a transformative effect on the local community. There is a sense of pride and ownership that did not exist in the 1980s and the 1990s.

I genuinely believe in the transformative power of the arts, but that has to be aligned with a democratic process in which the citizens are involved in planning what their communities will look like. That has to happen. It cannot be ordained on a community; it has to come from the community.

Agnieszka Moody: I will add an example. It is not exactly to do with regeneration; it is to do with climate change, which is another very important issue. The creative Europe programme supports an international cultural adaptations project in which Creative Carbon Scotland is a partner. There are four pairings in four countries of cultural organisations and adaptation organisations, which are usually linked to local authorities, and artists have been asked to contribute to the debate on climate change in local communities and to offer new thinking, ideas and perspectives. As that happens across four countries, there are, obviously, things to be learned from one country to another, and an international conference will be held in Scotland in 2020, with support from the Scottish Government, to gather and accumulate all that is learned from the project. That project is also about giving artists a voice in order to find solutions to serious and important societal issues.

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I want to ask about data gathering, which I am sure that you will recognise as a challenge. It is difficult to find accessible data that show the full picture of arts funding nationally and locally. The committee has been told that individual artists and organisations have to demonstrate the impact and outcome of arts funding. How does the Arts Council of Ireland gather and analyse data to inform evidence-based policy making?

Orlaith McBride: I have talked about our changing utterly how we do our business. We wanted to look at the metrics and measurements in that area and to introduce a measurement framework in order to tell the Government the story of the impact of its investment in us and the impact of our investment in artists and organisations.

It would be fair to say—I think that we are no different from any other arts council in the world—that organisations hate providing data and information. Arts organisations find doing that a distraction from their core business, which is to make and create art.

Persuading organisations that they must provide data to us and demonstrating how important that data is for us so has been a difficult journey. We changed utterly how organisations apply for money. They have to provide data at the beginning of the process and at the end of it, so that we know their forecast and the actual result. At the end of the process, we ask them to verify the data on how many people attended, how many artists they employed and what the result was. They despise doing that, but we have to tie that into their funding, and they will not get their final tranche of money unless they have provided the data.

10:15

That is not easy for organisations, and there has been a process of transition for them and for us in their getting into the discipline of providing information and such data. Now that we have that information—this is probably the second year in which we can begin to tell the Government the real story of the impact of the investment—we can clearly demonstrate the metrics: how many, where, what and when. Those are the output pieces.

The impact pieces are more difficult. How do we track the impact of investment? It is not just about how many artists were employed or how many people participated; we are most interested in the impact, and finding out about that takes more time.

We use a social impact model, and we have identified a number of projects and areas to look at. On a more longitudinal basis, we look at the impact over time of Arts Council of Ireland investment in an organisation on a particular community or demographic. That is more difficult, and we cannot do that on our own. However, the very accessible data on outputs—the who, the what and the where—is much easier to use, show and demonstrate.

As I have said, getting organisations to provide the data has been hard fought for. People say that there used to be a lighter touch—that they would

simply get the money, go off, do whatever they wanted and then say that the production was or was not wonderful. Now they are being asked how many people came, how many artists were employed and how much the artists were paid. The shouting from the galleries now is that the Arts Council of Ireland is becoming too bureaucratic and too tied into metrics. The approach is really difficult to balance.

Donald Cameron: I ask Agnieszka Moody the same question: how is data gathered and analysed in the creative Europe programme?

Agnieszka Moody: I have a bit of prospective good news for the arts part of the creative Europe programme and even better news for the other parts of it. Creative Europe is really several programmes in one. It is mainly a marriage of two previous independent programmes, one of which was the media programme for the screen sector, and the other of which was the culture programme for the cultural sector. In the media programme, we have had the European Audiovisual Observatory from the 1990s. It is a research and statistics body that has collected useful data for the screen sector for more than 20 years. That is an indispensable tool in helping to inform policy. Apart from several bread-and-butter databases that it runs for major metrics in the screen sector, it turns out insightful reports one after another on topics such as gender parity and the international performance of screen works beyond Europe. The screen sector's work is continuous.

Such a body does not exist for the cultural sector. Before the proposals for the new incarnation of the creative Europe programme were published, that is the point at which I would stop. Now I am pleased to be able to say that it is foreseen that, in the successor to the creative Europe programme, which will commence in 2021, a similar observatory will be set up for the cultural sector. I am sure that it will not be fully operational or have all the data from the start, but at least data will start to be collected in a systematic way using the model of the screen sector observatory.

In addition, a lot of information goes through and is collected from the application process. However, we are very aware that, because of financial resources, that data is not representative of the sector. Not everybody makes applications, and even fewer people are successful. Data from the applications is read in some way, but it is not representative of the European cultural sector.

Another mechanism that looks at the data is a quite sturdy system of mid-term and final evaluations of the creative Europe programme, where there is a reflection on whether the programme is relevant and whether it is delivering. The European Commission produces those hefty reports, which are also based on data. However, as I say, in the culture sector, there is no place to go to. Eurostat or other places might produce more general statistics, but we will have our own data collection mechanism in the future.

Donald Cameron: I take it that the new observatory will look at all the arts across all member states.

Agnieszka Moody: Yes, and at the creative industries.

Donald Cameron: That sounds as if it will be a mammoth task.

Agnieszka Moody: It will look at all participating countries. There are 28 member states, but the participating countries spill beyond the EU28, and that is ambitious.

Claire Baker: Our committee papers explain that Ireland has a cultural observatory. Is that correct? How does it interact with data collection?

Orlaith McBride: Our data is collected purely in relation to funding.

Claire Baker: You have a cultural observatory in Ireland.

Orlaith McBride: Yes, but it is purely about Arts Council funding so that we can demonstrate that, for €80 million of taxpayers' money, X number of people participated in Y number of communities.

Claire Baker: Do you give information to the cultural observatory?

Orlaith McBride: We give information to our department.

The Deputy Convener: And the department feeds into it.

Orlaith McBride: Yes.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): Although it might be quite natural, it is interesting that you are focused on collecting data from the organisations that you fund. You mentioned how that is resented, to some extent, because they are now having to give all those statistics.

Surely there is another impact, because—especially in this day and age—we have to justify Government spending to the general public and the taxpayer. Do you sample or get companies to question representative samples of the public about how arts funding has impacted on them? You have to do it with the organisations that you fund, but have you done any impact assessment on the general public?

Orlaith McBride: We do not do anything other than the annual survey, which samples the general public and asks about their behaviour. The survey is not just about participation; it questions people about their behaviour and attitude towards

the arts as well as their participation. That is why we call the sample a behaviour and attitudes survey, rather than just a participation survey.

Mike Rumbles: Is it part of a national survey?

Orlaith McBride: It is.

Mike Rumbles: But you do not do any specific surveys.

Orlaith McBride: We do not specifically survey members of the public. We have a national survey and, as part of that, we get information on people's behaviour and attitudes towards the arts, as well as on participation levels.

Mike Rumbles: Thank you.

Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): I return to the issue of peer review. You might be aware that the former Scottish Arts Council had a system of peer review but that that does not happen under Creative Scotland. It seems from the evidence sessions that we have had and the written submissions that we have received that there is popular support for some form of peer review. I want to focus on the experiences of the Arts Council of Ireland and the Creative Europe Desk UK.

I understand that, although there is an extensive peer review panel system, the Arts Council of Ireland has a strategic decision-making process for overall funding. How does that work in practice? On the one hand, you have peer reviews, but I think that you retain leadership for more than 100 clients. Is there a tension between the two approaches?

Orlaith McBride: There is no tension. The Arts Council makes the decisions about organisations because we recognise that they do not have an idea one year and pop up and apply to us for funding, then dissolve the next year. We have a long-term relationship with the organisations, which are our partners in supporting delivery of our strategy. An organisation might not have had a great year last year, but that does not mean that we will not fund them this year. We retain our funding to organisations because we see them as strategic partners.

Our funding for individual, one-off projects and individual artists is all done by peer panels because we recognise that it is only about the idea. The panels make decisions and allocate resources based on particular artistic projects or particular artists who want to take time to pursue their practice. That is done in the moment whereas, when we make a decision about an organisation, it is based on the history of the organisation, its strategic importance, how it supports delivery of the particular art form and how it might support work with children and young people or hard-to-reach communities, for example. That process is much more complex, and to give it to a panel would probably destabilise the infrastructure in Ireland, whereas we think that panels making decisions on particular projects and individual artists represents the best fit.

We have about 60 or 70 panels meeting per year, across art forms and for different projects.

Annabelle Ewing: Did you say 60 to 70?

Orlaith McBride: Yes. They might be giving bursaries, and there could be 10 bursaries. There are visual arts bursaries, music bursaries, theatre bursaries, opera bursaries and so on, and the panels operate across all art forms. We have a huge number of panels each year, but we also think that it is a really effective way of ensuring that the sector sees how decisions are made. When people participate in panels, they come away saying that it is a fair, open and transparent process. The approach reinforces the Arts Council's relationship with the sector, because people can see the internal mechanics of decision making and how it actually happens.

Decisions are delegated to panels, and the Arts Council cannot overturn a panel's decision. If we bring people in to make decisions, we have to respect their decisions, and we will never overturn the decision of a peer panel.

Annabelle Ewing: I will move on to some questions about the mechanics of the arrangements, which are of interest because we are interested in finding out whether the arrangements would be the best thing for Scotland and how we would go about introducing them.

When you said that there are 60 to 70 panels, the first thing that I thought was, "How on earth is a decision ever made timeously?" How does it work if a panel meets to decide on a particular application and there are 60 to 70 panels per annum? I presume that a lot of sifting has to be done and that there is a lot of activity. When an artist applies to a panel, how long—

Orlaith McBride: From the date of application to the person being informed, it takes 16 weeks.

Annabelle Ewing: Does that all work swimmingly?

Orlaith McBride: It all works because it is a machine. Three or four panels might meet on one day to decide on bursaries and so on. The process takes 16 weeks.

Annabelle Ewing: In our evidence sessions, we took evidence from a jazz musician. We mention him quite a lot. He said that the system is pretty poor as far as he is concerned, because people who have not one iota of knowledge of the jazz world or anything to do with it make decisions about what he seeks to do, and he feels that that

approach is just not working. You said that, in Ireland, each art form has its own panel.

Orlaith McBride: Yes.

Annabelle Ewing: How does panel membership work in practice? Do you invite people on to the panels? What is the average size of a panel?

10:30

Orlaith McBride: We put out a call and people apply to be members of our panels. Let us take music as an example. We might have 60 or 70 people self-nominate to be members of our panels. We will clear them so that we know that they have sufficient expertise. They will come from across the genres, so we might have people who come from classical music, jazz, new music and traditional music.

We then put out a funding call, and we might receive 100 applications for funding for music projects. Our internal staff will shortlist them, and the 100 applications might be reduced to 70. Of those, five might be for classical music, eight for jazz and seven for new or contemporary music. Having looked at the profile of the applications that have been shortlisted, we will assemble a panel, ensuring that there is expertise across all the genres. We cannot have five people on a panel all of whom come from a classical perspective if there are applications from people with a contemporary music or jazz background. The profile of the shortlisted applications will determine the make-up of the panel.

The number of applications will determine the number of people on the panel. If there are fewer than 20 applications, the panel will have three members. If there are more than 20 but fewer than 40 applications, there will be four members of the panel. If there are more than 40 applications, there will be five members. That ensures that any conflicts of interest that are picked up can be dealt with and that there is still sufficient expertise round the table, because people have to absent themselves if they are in any way conflicted.

I will not go into too much detail, but when the panel members are selected, they get a list of the applications—not the actual applications, but a list of them—and they will be able to see whether they are conflicted. We have a ratio for that, and people with too many conflicts will be asked to withdraw from the panel. If someone has only one conflict and there are 50 applications, we can manage that within the process, and the member will absent themselves. The members then get access to an online portal that allows them to read through the applications and the supporting material. They come in on the day, and each panel is chaired by a member or former member of the Arts Council.

Annabelle Ewing: It is fascinating to hear that that significant degree of machinery is working well in practice. It seems to me from what you have said that, in a broad-brush way, there is a lot of buy-in to that approach. You seem to have a pool of interested and willing members who want to be involved.

Orlaith McBride: Yes.

Annabelle Ewing: I presume that, at the other end, there is support for that approach among the applicants.

Orlaith McBride: There is, and that might be one reason why we have so many applications. People know that the system is fair and robust. It is not perfect and we constantly review it. About four years ago, we did a huge piece of work on managing conflicts and the ratio that I mentioned. However, the system has worked, and it works, whereas other arts councils have had such systems but have ceased to use them for a range of strategic reasons. There have been moments when we have considered whether to continue with peer panels, but we have continued with them. They have existed for so long that the machinery is there.

Annabelle Ewing: I have a final question on the panels before I move on to a new subject. Does membership of the panels automatically include high-level, successful artists as well as ordinary people who want to participate in the arts?

Orlaith McBride: Yes—absolutely. There could be a Colm Tóibín sitting on a panel, for instance. For two years now, Edna O'Brien has applied for—and received—a literature bursary for her most recent book, which is on Boko Haram. The system works well, but there is a huge operations team that are entirely focused on ensuring that the panels operate and work. Anyone who sits on a panel receives a fee for that work, and they receive a fee for the preparation work and reviewing the applications in advance. Most of the panel members are individual artists.

Annabelle Ewing: That leads me on to a question on budgetary issues. What percentage of your budget is spent on that machinery? If we sought to introduce such machinery, we would need to have an idea of whether the benefits would be worth the cost. What is your perspective on that?

Orlaith McBride: We do not see the fee piece as being that huge. We see it as another way in which we can support individuals and artists. There is a team of four whole-time equivalent staff who service the committees, but we see that as money well spent with regard to our relationship with the sector in the long term.

Annabelle Ewing: That is fascinating. Agnieszka, how does peer review play a role in your organisation?

Agnieszka Moody: First, I express a caveat. I cannot speak about peer review as confidently as Orlaith McBride has spoken, because it is not within the desk's competence to be directly involved in it. However, we are informed about how it works in Brussels, and the system is pretty much the same except that it is for 41 countries.

At the outset of an edition of the programme, which usually has a seven-year span, a database is opened in which people can self-nominate as experts, which results in a huge pool of people with expertise in different areas of the cultural sector. They are assessed on their expertise and selected by people who process applications at the agency, and then those experts can be used.

There is an effort—this is all anecdotal; we just get to hear about it—to use rota systems for experts so that a greater variety of voices is heard. Each application is considered by at least two experts. The ambition is that one will be from the same country as the application and the other will be from elsewhere so that the expert can bring an external optic, ensuring that projects that are meant to be international really respond and resonate in that way. Experts are paid modest fees, which are part of the programme's overheads bill. The principle is similar to that of the Irish system: there is a peer quality to the system, and we all look at one another's projects and help one another to select the best.

The system is transparent, starting from the published guidelines for the different types of support. There is a unified system whereby projects can score up to 100 points. They are divvied up across several priorities and objectives against which the projects have to score. It is not so much about the experts' tastes or personal views, as they are bound to the objectives and priorities of the programme, and they have neatly designed guides to follow. They literally have to tick boxes to say whether an application responds to priorities and to what extent, and in the end applications score a number of points. The system has its enthusiasts and its critics, but that is how it works. At the end of the assessment process, every application has a number attached to it.

We suffer—in a good sense—from the creative Europe culture programme being much in demand. It has limited resources, and success rates are quite low because we receive lots of applications.

Beyond the individual assessment that happens all over the continent, a big job is done to co-ordinate which projects should be selected. The points system helps a great deal, because a lot of applications go to one side, but there is still an exciting area where projects could go one way or the other. They get the attention of a panel, which looks not only at individual applications but at the mix. We have to look after many different areas of the cultural sector and we do not want to end up with all our projects in any one year being, say, heritage projects or performing arts projects. The added value of the panel lies in finding a good split between cultural areas.

Annabelle Ewing: May I ask a final question, convener?

The Convener: I would like questions and answers to be as succinct as possible.

Annabelle Ewing: It is just a brief follow-up question. To what extent does the final panel, which looks at the various applications and the points that they have scored, consider the geographic spread across the EU?

Agnieszka Moody: With the co-operation projects, there will always be a geographical mix in each project. It is less of a worry that some parts of Europe will not be involved, because the projects are already beautifully diverse inside.

Annabelle Ewing: It happens at the first stage. Thank you—that is very interesting.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): I want to go back to the issue of how the Arts Council interacts with other areas, which Orlaith McBride touched on in the context of how arts funding relates to housing regeneration infrastructure. I am interested in education, and the Arts Council's level of interaction with primary and secondary education in particular. At what level, primarily, does that interaction take place? Would you be able to provide some detail on where the integration happens?

Orlaith McBride: We have a programme called creative schools, which is a partnership between the Arts Council and the departments of education and culture. It runs across all schools, including primary and secondary schools, youthreach centres, special schools and, in the Gaeltacht, Irish-language schools. It is probably the most public manifestation of our relationship with the department of education.

The programme is rolled out nationally, although it is not implemented in every school, because it is quite costly. We assign a creative associate to each school, who will work with the school community—teachers, young people and the community in which the school operates—to develop a creative plan for the school that speaks to the local colour. If there is an arts centre or a theatre nearby, or if there are artists who are particularly interested in music living in the local

community, the plan will speak to those elements in order to harness the local heat, in effect.

The creative schools programme is probably the most significant of our initiatives in working with schools. We also have the writers in schools and artists in schools programmes, which are devolved to other organisations. Poetry Ireland, which is a national organisation that works in the north and the south, operates our writers in schools programme. We have between 80 and 100 writers in schools working on an annual basis, and the same applies to artists in schools. Those are examples; individual organisations will also run particular programmes in schools, and local authorities have developed programmes to engage with schools in their area that we would support through direct funding to those authorities.

Ross Greer: Thank you—that was useful. The creative schools programme sounds really interesting. Can you give us some detail on who the creative associates are? You said that the programme would not be rolled out in every school because of the cost. Can you explain in which schools it is rolled out and why? Is that to do with the local authorities that you work with, or are there other criteria?

Orlaith McBride: The creative associates are a mixture of teachers and artists. They apply to the Arts Council to be associates. We like to have a mix of teachers who identify as artists and artists who, while they might not identify as teachers, are interested in the pedagogical piece. That works really well, with artists and teacher-artists going into schools.

With regard to how we select schools for the national programme, it is about demand versus supply. Schools make applications, and there is quite a complex method of selection whereby each county must have schools that are part of the programme. There is a mixture of primary and secondary schools, and a mixture of schools in more disadvantaged communities and in rural communities. We use a complex matrix to select the schools. It is not a case of saying, "They're the best school, so we'll select them." It has to be done in a more spatial way. It is complex. It is a question of ensuring that every county, every profile and every type of school is part of the programme.

10:45

Ross Greer: How long has the creative schools programme been running for?

Orlaith McBride: This is its third year, so it is young enough.

Ross Greer: In that case, I am interested in how that came about. Our experience here is that, when we try to get that level of integration, cultural projects are sometimes bolted on to the education stream—in other words, it is not a genuine collaboration between the relevant folk from education and culture. It involves the folk in education delivering education, with the cultural aspect being bolted on to the side. Did you or the culture department have to approach the department of education about the programme or was it collaborative?

Orlaith McBride: What you describe is familiar to us all when it comes to trying to work with education departments, which see education as something that they do. Their view is, "If you want to do something, we can graft it on, but you will not in any way interrupt or change what we do." That has always been the way with us in the Republic of Ireland.

In 2016, we had a huge commemoration programme to mark 100 years since the Easter rising. One of the biggest legacies that came out of that was how schools became involved. Young people told stories about 1916 and the revolution, but they did it in interesting ways, with artists, in their local communities and schools. The whole country was transfixed by young people owning a story that was 100 years old and retelling it in exciting ways.

As part of that, the Government decided that something special happened in Ireland in 2016 and that we needed to capitalise on it. Because that happened in the world of culture, the arts and that creative space, the Government established creative Ireland, which is a policy across Government that puts the arts and culture at the centre of what we do as a state. That means that not just the culture department, but every department, whether the health department or the education department, must look at policy making through the lens of culture. That gave us a permission slip to approach the department of education in a different way to ask, "Is there a way in which we can embed cultural creativity in education?" The people in that department have always been defensive; they say, "Leave the curriculum—that's ours." It is a question of realising that if we embed creativity in how we teach and how young people learn, the next generation will be a different type of young Irish people.

We needed to think about how we could embed that way of thinking, teaching and learning in the system. Teachers will be in classrooms for 40-odd years. Therefore, the big thing for us was training teachers differently from the beginning, so that when they go into a classroom, they will have 40 years of teaching generations of young people differently.

The other part was the creative schools programme. The Government policy had already been set, so that was an open door. It was easy for us to sit down and plot out with the department of education how we might embed creative thinking and the arts in schools in a different way. As you said, rather than attaching a programme to what is already happening in schools, it is a case of getting into the foundations and changing the way in which business is done in schools.

Ross Greer: Thank you. That was very useful.

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Earlier, you mentioned that local authorities must have a cultural plan; they will also have a director of culture and arts officers. Have many of the local authorities made use of the arm's-length external organisations model, as has happened in Scotland, whereby the cultural facilities within local authorities, such as theatres, concert halls and museums, are looked after by such organisations? If that is the case, how do local authorities ensure that the posts and the plans work together to capture cultural identities?

Orlaith McBride: In every local authority area, there is an arts centre. In some areas, there might be two, but one will be run and supported by the local authority. That is separate from the work of the officer or the director of culture, which is about ensuring that there is infrastructure provision by the local authority so that people in local communities can access the arts.

Local authorities use different models. In some, all the staff who work in an arts centre are local authority employees. In others, they set up special purpose vehicles or companies limited by guarantee, but the centres are, in effect, run by local authorities. They have independent staff and so on, but the lion's share of the funding to run them comes from the local authority, with significant investment from ourselves.

All local authorities have responsibility for a venue in their area that is separate from but augments the work of the director of culture and the arts officer. That is really important for us, and we co-fund them.

Alexander Stewart: That gives you the opportunity to ensure that there will be a programme across all locations, which is important. Organisations are funded by councils, or by streams within them, while also tapping into the outside world, in which other sponsorship or partnership work is going on. In that way, they can collaborate with you and invest in and support the plan over a number of years while the local authority goes through its short and medium-term planning, which is vital. It is great to hear that that happens.

How do you ensure that there is equity across all the local authorities? When we have looked at how that has been done here, it seems to have been one of the hardest things for us to achieve. I am interested in whether, in Ireland, you have had a similar issue or whether you have managed to make that approach work better than we have.

Orlaith McBride: It is very difficult. In 2018-19, we began a review of what we then called venues, but which we now call arts centres. Earlier, I mentioned the umbrella organisation for local authorities in Ireland. Together, we commissioned a joint review to look at arts centres around the country, local infrastructure provision, the different models and the ways in which the centres were funded and staffed. It is the first time that we have ever done such a review. It has to be done in partnership and very gently, because there cannot be any sense of our trying to force local authorities' hands. We are a national agency, but they are statutory local agencies, so it is a very delicate dance.

By co-commissioning that report, we are now in a position to begin to look at how we will change the model with regard to the funding piece that you mentioned over the next few years. As an arts council, the first thing that we had to do this year was commit to significantly increasing our funding for arts centres next year. We could not sit across the table from local authorities and have a conversation about increased spend if, from their perspective, we were not doing the same. That commitment will allow us to start having bigger, more strategic conversations next year, when at least we will have in front of us the co-commissioned report that gives us the analysis and the evidence. We cannot have such conversations without that—especially with partners that are statutory partners, as local authorities are.

That is how we have approached the process, but it is not done yet. We have just commissioned the report and we are at the point at which we have had to show willing by increasing our investment.

Alexander Stewart: Agnieszka Moody, what is the bidding process within your organisation? How does it work for locations that might have had lower uptake in the past? Do you look at locations that are not getting funding, or in which there has not been uptake, and support them to ensure that that happens?

Agnieszka Moody: This is where the value of our partners comes into play, because the Creative Europe Desk UK is quite mixed. There are five key public organisations in the cultural sphere around the table. With Scotland, we are in a happy place, because the activity and engagement in creative Europe is by no means

limited to the central belt: there are organisations in the Outer Hebrides that get creative Europe money.

We looked at the situation in England. The desk ran a project, in collaboration with Arts Council England, that involved actively going out to areas in England that were less switched on to the opportunity that creative Europe presented. The project achieved some success—or, at least, the reasons for the lower level of engagement and the barriers were more clearly identified, and those learnings could be shared with the Arts Council.

What is important about the creative Europe programme is that it is not meant to be a replacement for any public funding that is available at local, national or regional level; it is meant to add value. It is meant to be an enhancement that provides an international dimension. Therefore, it was very useful to share those learnings with the national agency and then see how that potential could be unlocked.

The Convener: Does the Arts Council of Ireland have a physical presence outside Dublin?

Orlaith McBride: No—we cannot afford it.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): This has been a fascinating discussion over a whole range of areas this morning. Agnieszka, we have a very detailed report looking at all the different ways in which the arts are delivered across Europe. It is incredible to see how it has evolved so divergently over the years. It is also interesting to see the different priority that is given to culture in different countries, not just in Europe but in places such as Quebec and New Zealand that are covered in the report.

The inquiry is grappling with how we ensure more effective delivery of arts funding in Scotland. We all appreciate that one of the biggest and most important things that we can do for the arts is to deliver more money for distribution but, with your wide knowledge of European arts funding, do you think that there is any model that could be adapted for Scotland or designed specifically for Scotland that would deliver most effectively for the arts? Orlaith McBride is sitting next to you, so you might want to give a nod to Ireland, but maybe not. What country has got it right, if I can put it diplomatically in that way?

Agnieszka Moody: From my point of view, the purpose of the money is to connect people. That is crucial, because the investment through Creative Europe is to collapse borders and to make people be more mobile, work with one another, inspire one another, find new audiences and unlock new markets. It is when you open opportunities beyond any one particular country that you can expect some investment to be repaid. Thanks to Creative Europe and its very limited resources, we have an extra layer. The sector is extremely vibrant in every country, and beautifully diverse, in all sorts of languages, historical backgrounds and all that—east, west, south and north. There is an added layer where we all meet and open up and can work with each other. That is in itself a model that complements whatever provision there is on a national level. For example, in Creative Scotland's 10-year strategic plan, the international is one of five priorities—there are another four priorities, and the international is not the only aspect that you need to look after—whereas Creative Europe is that added element that can be used to incentivise this type of activity.

11:00

For smaller countries especially, that is very important. We categorise countries in Europe: there are the big five, but every other country is a smaller country that will have its own barriers and obstacles to overcome in order to open up and benefit from an audience of 500 million people for anything creative that it churns out. Everybody is struggling in their little corners, but if we come together and learn from one another, we are much stronger.

Kenneth Gibson: I think that everyone would agree with that, without a shadow of a doubt. If you look at a specific area and see something that is innovative and inspirational, how can it be shared across other countries in Europe? How does Creative Europe connect with other countries to say, "This is what is happening in country X—why not look at doing something similar?" You cannot impose things on people, but you can certainly encourage them to do that. I am thinking about how we can get a model that is more effective at delivering a better experience for the people in all our societies and at helping artists to develop and sustain themselves.

Agnieszka Moody: Absolutely. At Creative Europe, we use the word "dissemination". It is about enabling the learning and values from the few projects that we manage to find—we do not cover the whole sector—to be spread more widely across the sector. One example is the let's dance project, which is an international project that works in partnership with a Scottish organisation called YDance. It is an international project that includes young dancers of all abilities, with disability and dance at its core.

There is a very well-presented website that contains all the shared learnings from the project. The project has run workshops and developed methodologies to promote greater inclusivity in dance. Those methodologies have been published for everyone to see. I know—because I have been reading about it—that some dance companies in the United States have looked at them carefully

and are learning about how, at a European level, we have managed to make some gains and achieve something in that area.

A lot of that sharing is already happening. It is true that, with technology, we could share even more and learn from one another. There are physical gatherings such as events, forums and conferences where cultural operators come together to swap their thoughts and experiences. I am not quite sure how we can do more of that, but it is already happening.

Kenneth Gibson: Orlaith McBride talked earlier about the fact that, in Ireland, arts funding went down from €85 million pre-recession to €55 million; it has gone up again to €80 million in the past three years as things have moved forward a wee bit. That must have been quite a shock to the system, and it obviously had an adverse impact on the arts community. How have you been able to adapt to those pressures and continue to deliver the services that you want to provide to encourage more people to come forward and have a life in the arts, so to speak?

My original question was whether you would look to anywhere in Europe or further afield as somewhere that you could emulate, although you may not have been able to do so yet.

Orlaith McBride: In response to your first question about how we managed to adapt, we were in crisis management mode in the first year or two. Our funding had collapsed completely—we lost about a third of it. In the first few years, we just kept the show on the road. Everybody continued to get funding, but everybody got a bit less.

We realised quite quickly that—as I mentioned earlier—a fundamental shift was needed. We could cut everybody's funding a little bit every year, but that would mean that, although an arts centre could literally keep the lights on, it would not be able to put anything on the stage or on the walls, or programme any events. That is not an effective use of public moneys. We are an Arts Council—we have to be able to fund the making and the creating of work. Therefore, we fundamentally shifted who and what we funded. We ceased to fund many organisations, but we funded other organisations more so that they could do more. There were many organisations that existed in Ireland 10 years ago that do not exist in 2019. That is the reality of the recession, and it has been a fundamental shift for us in what we do and how we do it.

As part of that shift, our new strategy emerged, and it clearly laid out our priorities for artists and public engagement. If an organisation was not able to lock itself into the priorities of the Arts Council, we would cease to fund it. We had to move away from passive funding. People would come to us and say that they wanted to do X, Y and Z, and we would say, "Well, here's the money to do X and Y, but we can't give you enough to do Z." There would be no calls on that.

That brings us back to measurement and metrics: how could we demonstrate the impact of the investment if it was not in some way aligned to our strategy? That was the fundamental shift that happened, and not every organisation was match fit to work with us and change its behaviours to become more strategic in what it was doing and how it did it.

Turning to other organisations and how they do things, I would say that the Arts Council of Wales is very similar to us in its budget, whereas we can never look at England, because it is just too huge and too everything. There are aspects of Creative Scotland that we have always found interesting, but it has other functions in relation to the creative industries that change the nature of what it does and how it does it. The Arts Council of Wales would be the most similar organisation to us. The other one that we look to is not European, but what it does is very similar to what we do and how we do it, and we have learned a huge amount from it—Creative New Zealand. The size of the country is very similar, and Creative New Zealand is very good at what it does.

Kenneth Gibson: That is fascinating. Orlaith McBride talked earlier about embedding creativity in education. I take it that the Irish Government is expecting not only that you will be able to help create more artistic creativity but that that will have a spin-off of creativity in other areas such as mathematics or technology or whatever it happens to be.

Orlaith McBride: It is about innovative or creative thinking, or thinking outside the box. It is not about creating more artists; it is about embedding how creativity helps us to think in a very different way. That is the generational shift that we want to happen, rather than focusing on creating more artists.

Many years ago, I used to work with children and young people in theatre. I remember working with a linguistic anthropologist, who said that the thing about using drama with young people is that they begin to think, "What if?" or "What if we did this in this way?" It is about trying to insert the "What if?" into young people's mindsets, so that they will achieve in ways that we cannot even anticipate now, in 2019.

Kenneth Gibson: That is a nice, positive ending—thanks very much.

The Convener: We have gone slightly over time, but I know that Claire Baker wants to ask another question, and I have a couple of things to

mop up. Do you have another five minutes, Orlaith?

Orlaith McBride: Yes.

Claire Baker: Our inquiry is about sustainable funding. So far, we have talked a lot about government funding and public funding. Does Ireland have any tradition of corporate sponsorship or private sector involvement in the arts?

Agnieszka, is there a European angle to that, and do you do any work with businesses and the private sector?

Orlaith McBride: Yes. We have Business to Arts, and I think that most countries have similar organisations that function as a bridge between the business sector and the arts community. It is funded directly both by business and by our Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Over the past few years, the Arts Council of Ireland has had a programme called RAISE. It is a private investment scheme, which we operate with our own organisations. Except for some of the bigger organisations such as the Irish National Opera or the National Theatre of Ireland, arts organisations tend to be less experienced in the whole area of private investment, whether that involves sponsorship or philanthropic moneys. In Ireland, the whole arts sector seems to be less advanced in that area. Schools and charities are much more expert than the arts sector.

We run a programme that supports organisations. It has three bands. In the first band, we fund fundraisers to go into arts organisations over a 24-month period. There are eight of them and they are not the big blue-chip organisations such as the National Opera; they are mid-scale organisations. We fund fundraisers for 24 months to support those organisations to develop fundraising strategies and fundraising muscle and to increase investment. We have already seen the impact of putting a fundraiser into those organisations to work with them and to become a member of staff.

Claire Baker: Did you say that they go into the organisation for 24 months?

Orlaith McBride: Yes, but it is anticipated that the roles will continue beyond 24 months. Part of it is that they fundraise their own salary first, and then everything on top of that. They are really beginning to do it.

There are two other strands or tiers that are getting support. We now have a fundraising team working in the Arts Council supporting us to deliver training and supporting organisations to build their muscle in this area. However, it is slow and the big thing for us is that it cannot be focused on the corporates; it has to be focused more locally on high-net-worth individuals in the community. There are only so many Googles, LinkedIns and Diageos in a country the size of Ireland, so it has to be scale appropriate and focused on sponsorship at a different level, but we are really beginning to tap into private investment.

Claire Baker: Agnieszka, do you have anything to add to that?

Agnieszka Moody: Yes. The answer to the sustainability question is that a lot of it rests on the shoulders of the applicants. There is a quid pro quo—we ask them to tell us how their project will contribute to making the arts sector more sustainable through the activity that they are proposing and we will give them the investment that will enable it. The expectation is that, at the end of the project, the organisation is stronger and is contributing to a stronger sector. Very crudely speaking, that is the whole premise. Any applicant to Creative Europe needs to have that reflection of themselves, their place in the sector and their ambition to strive to make themselves more sustainable.

Members may have heard of a very new international mobility scheme for artists, which is a new feature of the programme called i-Portunus. Until now, all the money has been given to co-operation projects, platforms or networks that are led by organisations rather than artists themselves. There have been no grants for individuals through Creative Europe. When you delve into the projects, artists are at the core of them, but they are managed by cultural organisations that are working towards achieving the goals of strengthening the sector and making the arts more sustainable. That answers the first question.

The second question was about partnership with the private sector. Again, it is pretty much on the shoulders of the applicants. There is always a requirement for match funding, and a lot of that comes from public sources, but the private sector is very welcome to co-finance any of those projects. Organisations go out to private companies as well for sponsorship deals or other sorts of support, with the premise that they have the prospect of getting European funding. I think that it makes them stronger that they come with that proposition to operators in the private sector.

The Convener: I will wrap up quickly. Agnieszka Moody described Scotland as “a happy place” in talking about how creative Europe’s funding is rolled out geographically. What will be the impact of Brexit on Scottish arts? I presume that it will mean the end of your funding, or is it possible for a country that is not a member state to tap into creative Europe?

11:15

Agnieszka Moody: I have to be careful to be strictly factual here, because we are in the pre-election period.

I have already touched on the fact that the main value of the programme involves connecting Scotland better to the world, and to Europe in particular, and that is likely to suffer if the investment in it diminishes.

In the event of the UK having left the EU, what matters a lot is whether it has left with a deal or without a deal. That is what we have been considering for a long time. There is a guidance page on our website that is addressed at current beneficiaries and potential applicants and which explains all the consequences of leaving one way or the other. If we leave with a deal, we will enter the implementation phase, which means that our participation in the programme can be continued until the end of that edition of the programme, at the end of 2020, which coincides with the end of the implementation phase.

If we leave without a deal, our status as a country changes overnight and, the day after the no-deal exit, the EU considers us to be a third country. That means a sudden loss of access to the creative Europe programme. The rules of the programme are written into its legal base, which you can see in another document that is published on our website. There are strictly defined rules about which countries can participate in creative Europe, with regard to the current programme and to the next edition, which is quite advanced in its preparation, because it is supposed to be launched in 13 months' time.

The rules stipulate that participation in the programme is not limited to European member states—that is an important point. Currently, 41 countries take part in the culture sub-programme of creative Europe. It is theoretically possible for countries that are not EU members to negotiate their way into the programme. That happens on the basis of bilateral negotiations, in which the Government of a country reaches out to the European Union and negotiates that access. As the programme is funded by the EU budget, countries that do not contribute to the EU budget have to contribute directly to the programme. That means that, post-exit, the UK would be expected to make a financial contribution to the programme.

The UK could possibly be a participating country if it negotiated that participation. However, if it did not, there is another way in which it could still be involved and engaged, because the programme allows for the participation of third countries, in a limited way, as associated partners. In budgetary terms, only roughly 30 per cent of a project could be with a partner from such a country, such as Thailand or Canada.

The Convener: Thank you for that factual summation of the situation.

Our inquiry was kicked off by a bit of a crisis in Scotland, when a number of organisations were not re-funded at the beginning of the new funding cycle, which our funding organisation runs on a regular three-year basis. There was a bit of a stushie, as we say in Scots, around that. One of the consequences of that event was that we began a discussion about how we fund our arts and cultural structure. Some organisations that did not get funding argued that they were very much part of the arts infrastructure and that, if the funding is taken away or if there is unstable funding that can change every three years, that undermines the infrastructure of the arts across the country.

Clearly, that sort of thing happens under all funding programmes. Do you experience such events? What do you do to avoid them?

Orlaith McBride: It is difficult. Also, people in the arts tend to be very vocal.

We have annual funding from Government, which means that we do not make many three-year commitments. Some of our national institutions have three-year commitments but, of the 90 organisations that we fund on an annual basis—the ones that form the ecology of the sector, in terms of infrastructure—only around 20 to 25 receive funding on a three-year basis.

We used to provide funding for around 300 organisations, but we are now down to under 100. You can see where the shifts and changes have happened in the years when we did not have enough.

The situation that you describe is difficult to handle. We have strategic funding, and the funding scheme is not an open one. People can apply to it, but they must demonstrate that the organisation is core to the infrastructure. It is hard to become core to the infrastructure one year when you were not core to the infrastructure the previous year, so that funding tends to go to the long-standing organisations that we have funded over many years. Everybody else applies for what we call arts grants funding. That is more activity-based rather than being to do with an organisation's core costs.

When a funding body's strategic priorities and those of an organisation do not continue to align, the decisions that are made can be difficult, and people can become vocal. We have experienced that in Ireland, and have seen big campaigns against us. However, if you are clear that the decision is aligned to strategy, clear about the

rationale and clear that the council and the executive clearly followed process, and if you are, therefore, confident about the decision making, you can say, “That’s the decision.” The difficult bit is being true to the decision, of course.

Again, all of that is symptomatic of being underfunded. We would love to be able to fund everybody that is of quality who comes to the Arts Council’s door, but we cannot.

Agnieszka Moody: It is the same with creative Europe. Some projects that are of really high quality do not get through, purely because of a lack of funding.

The Convener: Thank you both for what has been a fascinating evidence session and for giving up your time—I know that you are both busy people. We have appreciated you sharing your expertise with us on these matters.

We now move into private session.

11:22

Meeting continued in private until 11:33.

Published in Edinburgh by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

All documents are available on
the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.parliament.scot

Information on non-endorsed print suppliers
is available here:

www.parliament.scot/documents

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000
Textphone: 0800 092 7100
Email: sp.info@parliament.scot

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba