Standing Up for Irish Culture

Labour’s plan for promoting the Arts, Culture and Heritage
Our commitments

• **Invest €150 million into Irish culture and the arts.** This will include doubling the budgets of the Arts Council and the Irish Film Board.

• **Set up a new Arts Capital Fund.** This will work in a similar fashion to the Sports Capital Fund and will grant funding for the development or upgrading of artistic buildings, venues, galleries or exhibition spaces.

• **Reform and increase supports to artists.** Labour will work towards reforming changing the rules around jobseekers payments to relax activation rules for those involved in ongoing artistic work. We will also enhance our commitment to the artist’s tax exemption and include a biennial review of the cap.

• **Protect and promote our unique heritage** through town revival plans, heritage-led regeneration projects and more applications for World Heritage Site status from UNESCO.

• **Establish a Global Arts Forum for Ireland** to support and showcase our artistic talents on a world stage.

---

"WE BELIEVE THAT PARTICIPATION IN AND ENJOYMENT OF THE ARTS AND OUR CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS SHOULD BE FOR THE MANY, NOT THE FEW. THAT’S WHY WE WILL PUSH FOR GREATER ACCESS AND MORE INNOVATIVE USES OF OUR ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES TO THE BENEFIT OF ALL OUR CITIZENS"
Standing Up for Irish Culture

Ireland is a country with an extraordinarily rich heritage on which to base our cultural identity. Who we are as a people is firmly grounded in an outstanding foundation of artistic and cultural achievement and excellence.

For so many years Irish artists, writers and filmmakers have stood among the very best in the world. Their towering achievements are matched by the everyday work of thousands of Irish artists, engaged in numerous fields, who have built up a thoroughly unique domestic culture in the world of Irish culture. This heritage is being added to every day by people in every part of the country.

A rich artistic and cultural life has for many decades been a core part of Labour’s vision for Irish society. We appreciate the hard work that has gone into maintaining such a high standard of output through the difficult times that followed the economic crash. Now that the country is returning to strong economic growth, the time has undoubtedly come to invest more heavily in our artistic sector.

We must treasure our cultural past, while also finding innovative ways to support the artists of today. We know we can find ways to safeguard our heritage while delivering more security for artists to pursue their projects and add their own thread to the growing tapestry of Ireland’s artistic achievement.

We believe that participation in and enjoyment of the arts and our cultural institutions should be for the many, not the few. That’s why we will push for greater access and more innovative uses of our artistic and cultural resources to the benefit of all our citizens.

More than anything, Labour believes that Government and the artistic community can and should work together to put forward the very best version of ourselves. We are committed to delivering more State funding to artistic endeavours as an essential investment in Ireland: both in our image as a proud, vibrant nation and in the continued evolution of the strong, unique cultural identity that binds all the citizens of our Republic together.

To achieve these goals, Labour in government will establish a Department of Culture to strengthen and consolidate the State’s work in the areas of arts, heritage, the Gaeltacht, and Irish language affairs.

Standing Up for Irish Culture
Investing in arts and culture
Investing in the arts and culture is essential for any national community. We want to ensure that the arts sector is Ireland celebrates and champions diversity and where minority voices can be heard. We have a proud history of supporting the arts in this country. Labour recognises the great work of the artistic community, in particular since the economic downturn. Even operating under reduced budgets, Irish artistic and cultural groups have managed to maintain world-class outputs. As the recovery sets in, we believe the time has come to provide them with more of the funding they deserve as our greatest cultural ambassadors.

Labour has already begun the process of restoring funding to the Arts Council and Culture Ireland. We have also increased the income tax exemption threshold for artists from €40,000 to €50,000. We are also supporting Ireland’s bid to have one its cities become the 2020 European Capital of Culture.

Our plan if returned to Government is simple. We will increase State investment in the arts and culture by €150 million over five years. This will include doubling funding for the Arts Council and the Irish Film Board. This will be done steadily over the lifetime of the next Government.

We remain committed to maintaining and protecting an appropriate arms-length relationship between Government and publically-funded arts bodies to ensure artistic integrity is not undermined. We will therefore re-establish an independent board and director for Culture Ireland and increase transparency for all Department funding, particularly discretionary funds, which will be limited and capped.

We also plan to conduct a full review of the Section 481 Tax Relief to ensure the State appropriately supports the needs of Irish filmmakers. We will ensure a renewed focus on ensuring that high-quality and diverse films can be produced by Irish talent.

Labour will set a new minimum threshold for non-discretionary local authority arts spending, and commit to full and transparent regional engagement, so that our rural communities have full access to a rich artistic life. We are further committed to giving substantial support for Ireland’s participation in European Capital of Culture 2020.

Labour will also make participation in the “Per Cent for Art Scheme” compulsory for all public bodies. This scheme allows for 1% of the cost of any publicly funded capital, infrastructural or building development to be spent on the commissioning of a work of art. We will also abolish the existing €65,000 cap and improve the mechanisms of the scheme.

We will increase state investment in the arts and culture by €150 million over five years. This will include doubling funding for the Arts Council and the Irish Film Board.

If returned to Government, Labour will launch a new national cultural policy. This will set out our vision for culture and creativity as important drivers for personal development, social cohesion, economic growth, innovation and the creation of jobs. We will set out a medium term plan for the resourcing of artists and arts organisations to grow their peer relationships and networks abroad in order to generate greater international collaboration and investment.

Standing Up for Irish Culture
A new arts capital fund
The Labour Party believes that continued investment should be made into the cultural infrastructure of Ireland. This means continued and transparent funding options for new spaces and buildings. All across the country there are community arts centres and innovative gallery and art spaces. There must be funding options open to facilities like these that are separate to the traditional Arts Council route.

The Labour Party will create a new Arts Capital Fund. This will operate in a similar manner to the Sports Capital Fund, and will grant funding for the development of new buildings, venues, galleries or exhibition spaces. It will also support the upgrading or restoration of existing cultural spaces. The fund will operate in a transparent manner, have a strong regional focus and prioritise a balanced geographical spread.

We will also establish a clear online funding manual for the sector to help artists and organisations access the relevant information on sources of funding. Under Labour, arts funding will be used to ensure minority voices are heard and championed.

Stronger supports for Artists
Traditionally, the area of arts and culture has been a poorly paid sector with high profile, well paid artists and performers very much the exception. Often artists rely on social welfare and do not have a secure or stable income from their profession. This stems from a fundamental failure to recognise artistic endeavour as its own form of work.

Labour will explore the potential for making special provision for artists within the social welfare system. The clearest way to achieve this would be to reform the rules around jobseekers payments. Our aim will be to relax activation rules for those involved in ongoing artistic work subject to a maximum period of 18 months continuous claiming.

This will allow artists, in particular those that are starting out, the security to pursue their passion with dignity and provide financial support when it is needed. We will enhance our commitment to the artists’ tax exemption, including a biennial review of the cap, and the calculation of average income over five years.

If returned to Government, Labour will also undertake a full review of the rights of artists in Ireland. This will include a thorough examination of our existing copyright laws and the current Competition Act. If necessary we will amend these laws to ensure that artists benefit by enjoying greater financial security from their work.

Cherishing our unique heritage
Ireland has an incredibly rich cultural heritage in which the Labour Party has enormous pride. It is vital that the Government protects and promotes this heritage to safeguard it for future generations, as well as opening up access and cultivating interest from a young age. In this way every citizen can take an active part in our national cultural life.

Labour in Government ensured that Ireland formally ratified the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. This provides for the recognition of hurling and uilleann piping, among others, as an integral part of our Irish cultural heritage.

We oversaw the first ever Arts in Education Charter, reasserting the importance of the arts within our system of education. We will expand the work already done under this charter and introduce a new Culture and Heritage course for the Junior Cycle to facilitate and promote the learning and exploration of all elements of culture, heritage and arts in Ireland, both historical and contemporary. We will also support the introduction and expansion of translation services in our national cultural institutions in order to enlarge their potential audiences.

Presently, the Republic of Ireland contains two UNESCO World Heritage Sites – Brú na Bóinne and Sceilg Mhíchil. We recognise
the huge economic and cultural benefits of WHS-designation and will pursue a greater number of applications to UNESCO on behalf of more of our world-class heritage sites. We will aim to strengthen partnerships and networks between the Heritage Council and our local authorities to ensure a more joined-up approach to preserving and promoting local heritage sites.

Labour supports the concept of heritage led regeneration in our towns and villages and we recognise the significant benefit cultural events bring to rural and urban areas. We want to build on the great work done in Irish walled towns and further support the preservation and restoration of local heritage sites. Across the country, towns will be asked to submit town revival plans. This will allow towns to devise their own local development plans and directly improve local infrastructure and amenities.

We will also support heritage led regeneration and preservation of farmland, forestry and waterways across rural Ireland. We will support more community- EU LIFE projects led partnerships to create new farm-walks across rural Ireland.

**Arts in health and education**

The Labour Party believes there is a strong role for the arts within every area of Irish life. We are eager to encourage innovative approaches to using arts as a means to promote wellbeing across society.

We recognise that the performance and literary arts must become a greater feature of our health care system. Already, we have seen the great work done in the children’s hospitals in promoting a more relaxed environment conducive to better outcomes. In the area of disability, a vibrant performing arts sector is emerging. We want to further support this. Labour in Government will work roll out an Arts and Health Strategy across acute and children’s hospitals, and across the community health sector.

Labour in government will further systematically address social, geographic and economic barriers to full participation in the artistic and cultural life of the country, particularly for children and young people. This will include a better integration of the arts into education and broadening the focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) into Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths (STEAM); expanding the ambition and resourcing of the Arts & Education Charter; and continuing to work with the Department of Education to further enhance the position of arts subjects within the curriculum at primary and secondary level.

**A global arts forum**

Ireland has a wealth of world-class artists, musicians, writers and designers. Based on the success of the Global Irish Economic Forum, the Labour Party proposes to create a Global Arts Forum for Ireland.

This would be an international event and would provide an unparalleled opportunity to highlight our indigenous talent and map a strong and healthy future for arts and culture at home and abroad. The first forum would be located in a suitable cultural hub within Ireland, with subsequent events potentially taking place in other major global cities where there is a strong Irish cultural link.
## Costings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy measure</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extra State funding for the Arts Council</td>
<td>€60m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra State funding for the Irish Film Board</td>
<td>€14m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish a new Arts Capital Fund</td>
<td>€30m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand translation services in cultural institutions</td>
<td>€2m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolling out an Arts and Health strategy</td>
<td>€2m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing a Global Arts Forum</td>
<td>€2m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage</td>
<td>€30m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Arts Initiatives</td>
<td>€10m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Labour Party,
W:  www.labour.ie,
T:  01-678 4700
/f  /thelabourparty
/twitter  @labour