

2020 – Department supports areas among hardest hit by COVID-19

From [Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#)

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Minister Martin reflects on six months of measures to tackle challenges as pandemic devastated arts, cultural, tourism and sports sectors

- **Funding to support work of musicians and artists**
- **Support to ensure survival of major sporting events**
- **Programmes to keep tourist sector alive in time of crisis**
- **Additional funding to cherish our Gaeltacht traditions**

The Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Catherine Martin TD, is looking forward to 2021 with renewed hope, with supports in place for affected sectors under her Department’s remit to support their work.

Acutely recognising that areas such as Tourism and Culture are a “fundamental expression of who we are as a nation”, the Minister – who took office in June – has put key supports in place for these essential industries during her first six months in office. Measures include:

[July Jobs Stimulus](#) The wide-ranging suite of measures, agreed at Cabinet level, unveiled grants and supports for the sectors. Notable announcements included: the Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme; an additional €300m for the ReStart Grant Scheme for tourism businesses; the announcement of a Stay and Spend programme to encourage tourist spending; and funding for the audiovisual sector and the Culture Fund.

[October Budget](#)

Minister Martin and the Minister of State for Sport and An Ghaeltacht, Jack Chambers TD, announced a strong package of supports as part of an unprecedented total 1.08bn Budget for 2021. For the first time, the government provided support for live entertainment in the amount of €50m. The enlarged Department’s two new areas – sport and tourism – received strong boosts, notably a new €55m support fund for strategic tourism businesses and a reduction in VAT in the sector to 9%. A new COVID Restrictions Support Scheme (CRSS) offered rebates of up to €5,000 a week to hospitality, accommodation and arts businesses impacted by the pandemic.

Other measures:

- €130m for the Arts Council – a record level
- Over €78m funding allocation for Gaeltacht and Irish language sector – up €14.8m on initial 2020 allocation
- Funding for TG4 up to €40.733m
- Sport Ireland allocated €104.5m – up €36m

Arts and Culture have been hard hit by COVID-19, a fact recognised by the Minister with a series of funding supports throughout the year. [Arts and Culture](#) . Combined with funding from the July Jobs Stimulus package, this additional funding announcement brought to €56m the overall support for arts and culture in the early autumn.

[Night-Time Economy Taskforce](#) Announced in July, the Taskforce sees a range of Departments, Agencies and groups working together to promote and develop a vibrant and sustainable night-time culture and economy.

[€6m Live Performance Support Scheme](#) Allocation of €5m under the “Live Performance Support Scheme” to assist commercial venues, producers and promoters of live performances and provide employment to workers in the creative industries, plus a €1m Music Stimulus Package. Some 184 musicians/bands were initially awarded a total of €896,000 to assist them to record singles, EPs and albums. The overall Music Industry Stimulus Package was then increased to €1.7m due to an exceptional number of applications from musicians and the funds also covered 79song writing camps and 56 new album releases

Separately, [59 organisations](#) benefited from the Live Performance Support scheme. Recipients included small to large venues, producers and promoters, with grants ranging from €10,000 to €400,000.

The Department has also played its part in backing creativity to light up the darkness. It has supported the Hot Press Y&E Series, which saw 40 Young and Emerging Series artists perform online to fans in Ireland and around the world in a series of concerts.

Support for the Other Voices programme of concerts and events emphasises the Department’s commitment to helping wellbeing through a range of initiatives including cultural content.

Culture Ireland’s Ireland Performs, in association with Facebook Ireland, showcased the best of Irish artistry through virtual events and music sessions, again supporting wellbeing, while Creative Ireland’s Cruinniú na nÓg saw one of our most cherished resources – our young – showcase their creativity in a summer’s day of imagination and talent.

The [Arts and Culture Recovery Taskforce](#) has kept the Minister briefed on the situation in the sector, after the announcement of the formation of the cross-industry body, chaired by Clare Duignan.

Despite the importance of tackling the conditions created by COVID-19, the Minister has continued to emphasise that better days lie ahead. The appointment of Cultural Officers in London and New York, under the [Government’s Global Ireland 2025 strategy](#) , was a key

statement of intent. The officers will play a vital role in widening and deepening Ireland's global cultural presence and engagement in the months and years ahead.

Also looking to the future, Minister Martin has held high-level talks with EU Ministers for Culture and proposed [Europe-wide concerts](#) to mark the reopening of live performances.

Participation is a key pillar of the vision for areas such as culture and sport. The Minister announced a €500,000 investment in the Creative Ireland Programme's new [Creativity in Older Age Programme](#) to emphasise that the arts is for all of us.

Despite COVID-19, all areas have been working resolutely to ensure that the show goes on – virtually. Funding for [Galway 2020's](#) revised online programme saw 28 projects and over 350 artists supported.

In Tourism, the Tourism Recovery Taskforce submitted a [Recovery Plan](#) to the Minister detailing a number of [recommendations](#) to help the sector survive and recover from the pandemic. These recommendations were an important input into the Minister's deliberations for the Budget. Minister Martin subsequently appointed a Recovery Oversight Group to oversee the implementation of agreed recommendations of the Taskforce and monitor the sector's recovery from COVID-19.

One of the key Budgetary measures to support tourism was the [Stay and Spend Scheme](#), launched by An Taoiseach, Micheál Martin TD, the Minister for Finance, Paschal Donohoe TD, and Minister Martin.

Minister Martin addressed European Tourism Ministers in September, where she discussed developing more sustainable tourism policies, the safe return of international travel and allowing the maximum flexibility possible in State Aids rules, to enable Member States provide timely and appropriate supports for tourism.

A cut in the VAT rate for the sector to 9% was also secured by Minister Martin in the Budget after a recommendation for such from the Taskforce.

Sport is crucial to our wellbeing, both physically and mentally. As with other areas under the Department, participation and equality are key. This year's All Ireland games have brought joy to many. The success of Sam Bennett in the Tour de France, and the dedication of teams such as the Irish Women's soccer squad, have proved inspirational in a time of uncertainty.

The Government, and the Department, have supported our sporting bodies. In November, the Ministers announced an [unprecedented funding package](#) of €85 million to support the sport sector (IRFU, GAA, FAI, National Governing Bodies of Sport, clubs and communities). The Return to Sport Expert Group has been liaising with health authorities throughout, to ensure that this key component of Ireland's social fabric returns and reopens on a safe and sustainable footing.

The [Sports Capital and Equipment Programme](#) has helped clubs and associations, big and small, over the years. The 2020 programme has funding of €40m to help clubs in their vital work.

Participation received a boost, too, in September, with the announcement of an investment package of €7.3m in [Dormant Accounts Funding](#) for a wide range of sport and physical activity measures countrywide. The investment focuses on people with disabilities, people who are educationally disadvantaged and from disadvantaged communities.

In a further support for the sector, both Ministers announced a €2.5 million funding package for [swimming pool operators](#) across the country.

As with arts and culture, both Ministers are looking to the future of sport while dealing with the pressures of the present. Minister Chambers addressed European Sports Ministers in December, where he discussed the safe return of spectators to sport as well as the prevailing [Covid challenges to the sector](#) .

A key mission of the Department is to support the Irish language and to strengthen its use as the principal community language of the Gaeltacht. The Budget agreed a €78m-plus funding allocation for the Gaeltacht and Irish language sector – an increase of €14.8m on the initial 2020 allocation.

It also announced total funding of €31.8m for Údarás na Gaeltachta to help protect client companies from full impacts of Brexit and COVID-19.

There was also a first programme funding increase since 2016 for An Foras Teanga.

Recognising the importance of storytellers, musicians and other artists, €280,000 was awarded to [57 Gaeltacht artists](#).

In December, Minister Chambers also announced the approval of a language plan for an tEachréidh, Co. Galway, under the language planning process. An annual allowance of up to €100,000 will be allocated, allowing the Eachréidh Language Plan Committee to employ a Language Planning Officer to help implement the language plan in the area.

Day-to-day commerce is crucial for the language, with Minister Martin and Minister of State Chambers collaborating with Minister of State Malcolm Noonan to announce additional supports for Irish language restoration works on [traditional shopfronts](#).

In their commitment to community, Ministers Martin and Chambers also announced total funding of €660,000 for [capital projects](#) in Gaeltacht areas, funding which will be used by clubs and associations to support their endeavours.

The development of the language in the digital age was recognised in a Government report revealing progress of [2018-2022 Action Plan](#) to promote the Irish language. Both Ministers noted the “significant progress” in supporting the language which was reflected in the report.

The Ireland of a century ago saw some of its darkest days. The Ireland of today is working to combat some of its most difficult times since then. Despite these considerable challenges, there is time – and motivation – to reflect. Minister Martin announced funding of €1.75 million for local authorities in 2021 to support their leading role in developing community-led commemorative activities for the final phase of the [Decade of Centenaries Programme](#).

The move followed increased funding in the Budget to allow for the appropriate commemoration of the centenary of events leading to the foundation of the State.

Under its new Media functions, the Department now holds responsibility for the development of the legislative and regulatory framework for broadcasting and for certain media in Ireland. It is also responsible for policy in relation to the funding of the public service broadcasters, RTÉ and TG4, and the development of the broadcasting sector in general.

- Supplementary funding of €1.9m was provided to TG4 in 2020 related to the additional COVID-19 programming costs, not least Cúla4 ar Scoil.
- Additional funding of €3.5m was secured in the budget for TG4 to bring its total exchequer funding to €40.733m in 2021 which will ensure that it continues to provide high quality and innovative Irish language and programming and better implement the strategy to attract and retain younger audiences across all platforms.
- €2m was provided under the July Stimulus for the BAI Sound and Vision Scheme to support broadcasters and independent producers.
- A further €4.9m was provided to BAI in December to support [local radio and audiovisual production](#) that supports the live music sector.

Recognising that "it is important that national events which are of great importance to Ireland be shown free to air for us all to enjoy", Minister Martin has opened a public consultation on the [designation of sporting](#) and other events as being of major importance to society.

The Minister also presented additions to the new law proposed for [online safety and media regulation](#) .

These will further help avoid the spread of harmful content by allowing for substantial fines against companies or platforms and by ensuring senior management are held responsible.

Furthermore, the legislation will implement an EU directive to ensure standards for video on-demand content is brought into line with TV broadcasting regulations.

The sector's future is also the subject of [The Future of Media Commission](#) , which will chart a pathway for public service broadcasting and independent media.

Reflecting on her first six months as Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Catherine Martin said: "The past six months have been difficult for the nation, with much of that pressure felt in areas overseen by my Department. It's been a challenging time, but a challenge I've willingly accepted.

"Supports in place have enabled those in the artistic and Gaeltacht communities and tourism sector to survive. Our sports, though devoid of spectators, have managed to bring much-needed joy to the nation through our media. "There is a sense of hope. And the recent call to action from Tourism Ireland signals the message that our country will go back to hosting the world and also entertaining it through our rich heritage, artists and ambassadors.

“The Decade of Centenaries reminds us of the key and historic events of 100 years ago – events that would later gave birth to a strong, proud nation. Just like we overcame that chequered past, I have no doubt that history will repeat itself and we will have greater days ahead.

“I am committed to doing my best to ensure sectors overseen by my Department are centre stage in the recovery. And I know the agencies under my remit - in this time of crisis - will rise to the challenge of reaffirming what is best about us as people in the year ahead.”

The Minister of State for Sport and An Ghaeltacht, Jack Chambers, said: “The Gaeltacht and sports worlds have faced huge tests this year, and I commend them for their resilience in the face of such adversity. Such resilience has required support in tandem, and I am happy to have been part of that mission to put their issues front and centre.

“Earlier this year, my Department implemented a COVID-19 support package worth €4.7m aimed at ensuring the maintenance of the Irish summer colleges sector. In July we announced an additional €8m for Údarás Na Gaeltachta, bringing the total capital allocation to €18m. This extra funding is supporting a range of capital investments which will enhance an tÚdarás’ capacity to support local enterprises and is creating 40-50 new construction jobs. It is expected that the investment will support the creation of 320 new longer-term jobs.

“This year has seen also increased funding for the language planning process and the Gaeltacht Community and Language Supports Programme. In addition to this, further funding of €250,000 has been provided to Ealaín na Gaeltachta to provide a significant number of bursaries for Gaeltacht-based artists.

“Likewise, sport is part of what we are as a nation. I am delighted that the All Ireland Championships – for men and women – have continued to delight us as we wear our respective colours and cheer on our heroes from afar. But supporting sport wasn’t just about investment in the main bodies of the GAA, the FAI and the IRFU, it was also ensuring that everyone has a chance to shine at whatever level they choose.

“The Sports Capital and Equipment Programme is open to all clubs, big and small, while the dormant accounts funding is particularly focusing on areas of disadvantage. I’d like to thank our partners in Sport Ireland for their work in promoting health, whether it be walking or everyday activities for everyday people. I wish every sports body a brighter new year and commend you on your efforts.”