



Royal Irish
Academy of Music

Submission to the National Planning Framework (Ireland 2040)

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Context

The Royal Irish Academy of Music welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the National Planning Framework (NPF) as it sets a strategic, high level framework for the co-ordination of national, regional and local authority policies and activities, planning and investment.

The “Ireland 2040” consultation document outlines a number of challenges for our country, and in particular we wish to engage with the following:

1. The prospect of ‘a national population increase of around 1 million people’ over this period
2. ‘More than one-fifth of Ireland’s total population being over 65’ by 2040
3. ‘Rebuilding community and commercial life in the hearts of our cities and towns and protecting the many qualities of our rural communities’

About the RIAM

The Royal Irish Academy of Music was founded in 1848 and is Ireland’s leading music conservatoire, specialising in classical music performance and composition. 1500 students are taught onsite each year and these include school age students and those studying music at bachelor, master and doctorate level. The RIAM also examines over 40,000 students in 1,700 locations across the island of Ireland through the Local Centre Examination System. Over one million people have connected with the RIAM as part of their musical education. Located on Westland Row, the RIAM is an associate college of Trinity College, Dublin.

Relevant Government Policies and other reports about culture

It is important to note two important cultural policy documents, the [Culture 2025](#) document launched by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, and the [Creative Ireland Programme](#) which is an implementation strategy related to the first document mentioned. We believe that these policies should be reviewed and, where appropriate, adopted by the NPF as a crucial part of its strategy to 2040.

In addition, the recently published report, [Let’s Celebrate: the Cultural and Economic Contribution of Live Entertainment Events in Ireland](#) claims that for every euro spent, the live entertainment industry creates

over €6 is generated in the economy. This is a powerful economic argument for investment in the arts and culture.

We urge that all policy discussions in the NPF include consideration of the arts and culture.

1. “A national population increase of around 1 million people”

The Creative Ireland programme Pillar 1 commits the Irish Government to giving all young people in Ireland access to music tuition, drama, art and coding by 2022. In the expectation that this commitment is a long term one for future governments, then the NPF should plan for a scenario where increasing numbers of teachers are needed in the creative areas, in order to teach the children of Ireland, who will be growing in numbers.

2. “More than one fifth of the Irish population being over 65”

As we live longer, [research shows](#) that music and the arts improve mental and physical health, and quality of life especially in the third age. Having a strong social infrastructure for an aging population will be an important target, to help keep people in their own homes and healthier for longer. Hand in hand with this is the imperative to create and sustain outlets for creativity and social interaction, the most accessible involving music performance – as a listener or participant.

In addition, those members of the public who cannot stay at home will need a holistic support in health care settings, to give them the best quality of life possible.

The RIAM is planning the development of a Masters in Music Therapy degree with Trinity College Dublin which specifically offers training in working with older people who may have cognitive or physical challenges. Such initiatives in the field of education should be supported and nurtured, especially those initiatives which seek to address the challenge of bringing positive quality of life experiences to an aging population.

3. “Rebuilding community and commercial life in the hearts of our cities and towns and protecting the many qualities of our rural communities”

The decline in rural towns and villages over recent years is a trend that must be reversed. It can only be reversed if towns and villages are resourced with services and infrastructure to make them an enjoyable place to live.

It has been identified that ‘place-making’ is part of Ireland enterprise policy. People need leisure activities to balance their working lives, and rural communities deserve access to music/cultural education and performances close to home.

As a national institution which offers continuing professional development to about 7,000 private music teachers, RIAM recommends that supports are put in place to expand this vital network. These teachers work in remote and rural regions very often, in communities that would not likely sustain a large music school. Such teachers can be sole traders, isolated and in a sense not fully professionalised.

In fact, the private music teaching profession is currently unregulated, which presents challenges in terms of quality of provision. Are the teachers in the rural communities sufficiently skilled to serve their students, and is there a mechanism to encourage them to develop such skills?

The RIAM currently runs the RIAM Teaching and Learning Network, an online hub for teachers which is supported by live workshops. We plan to support the teaching profession into the future by offering and indeed extending such continuing professional development activities. As a national examining body for music performance, the RIAM additionally proposes to regulate this market with professional accreditation.

Into the future, the NPF must consider developing a plan which helps small cultural enterprises in local communities, (such as music schools) to thrive. This can be achieved by working with knowledgeable education institutions (such as RIAM in music) to offer practical guidance to emerging music and other arts practitioners on how to make a sustainable career in their local area.

The current work of the ETBs and local authorities in this area is effective in terms of business development, but the training is generalist. There is much scope to combine this current training framework with specialist partners to develop fit-for-purpose skills in the creative arts sector.

The RIAM would be delighted to offer any assistance in pursuing initiatives in this, or other related areas, at any time.

ENDS