

# The learn. the galway arts festival takes place

[Art & Culture](#), [Artists](#)



The Key Cultural event of 2017 that I have chosen to write about is the Galway International Arts Festival.

I have Chosen this Cultural event because it is something that I have heard about in passing yet don't really know what it involves, so I used this opportunity to properly learn. The Galway Arts Festival takes place in Galway, Ireland, which is a city in Ireland that has an extremely rich culture varying from theatre to music, and hence the festival covers a range of different art forms. In 2017, over the course of two weeks, 200 events took place in 33 venues with an attendance of 210, 000. The festival has been running for 40 years and this year (2018) it will be celebrating their 41st year. The first ever Galway arts festival was held between the sixth and twelfth of April, and was described by the Galway Advertiser as; 'Galway's Art Society; week of craic.' According to the Galway Arts Festival's website previous festival highlights include Brian Wilson, Joni Mitchell, Bill Viola, The National, Grizzly Bear, Bon Iver, St. Vincent, John Grant, The Gloaming, Elvis Costello, John Gerrard, Hughie O'Donoghue, Sophie Calle, Louise Bourgeois, Marina Abramovic, Steppenwolf, Royal Court, New York Theatre Workshop and Circa.

The festival is unique in the sense that it showcases various performers and productions that are only new and upcoming but also well-known and widely loved. GIAF also works regularly with leading Irish companies including Druid, an Irish Theatre company which was set up in Galway itself and has now gone on to achieve international and national success." With regard to Theatre, Galway International Arts Festival also produces its own theatre, touring both nationally and internationally. The organisation has produced or <https://assignbuster.com/the-learn-the-galway-arts-festival-takes-place/>

co-produced 15 productions in the last five years and, with its co-producing partners, has toured to London, Paris, New York, Edinburgh, Chicago, Adelaide, Sydney, Hong Kong and Washington”.

In 2017, similar to all previous years there was a wide array of events to attend of all different categories, one of the reasons why this festival is so particularly unique; as unlike other big festivals held in Ireland, such as for example: forbidden Fruit, St. Patrick's day Festival, Dublin Film Festival, it offers attendees a wide range of types of events to attend rather than just one main one for example music, then with different acts. The Galway Arts Festival offers; comedy, talks, spectacle, Theatre & Opera, Music and Visual Art. The Organisation for the GIAF, by creating this festival has significantly put Galway on the map. Not only as a key hub for the arts and culture but also this festival has made Galway's a prime spot for tourists to be immersed with all things culture, on top of the beautiful scenes from the wild Atlantic way which was already a popular choice for tourists. In 2017, the Galway Arts Festival produced a variety of artists such as The Coronas, Saint Sister and The Power of Words to name a few. GIAF's Chief Executive is John Crumlish and its Artistic Director is Paul Fahy.

With regards to funding, the Galway art festival is a non-profit organisation and a registered charity and hence all of the money generated from each year goes towards the production for the next year's festival. This money would go towards the likes of bulbs for a set, costumes and also flights for artists flying over internationally for example, however in saying this, it is also to be noticed that over 25% of the festival's programme is free. As the

aim of this festival is for there not to be any restrictions for those who want to enjoy or get involved with the arts. It now looks forward to playing a central role in the European Capital of Culture initiative as Galway was the destination for Europe's Cultural Capital in 2020. The funders and partners of GIAF are; NUI Galway, Ulster Bank, Failte Ireland, Wild Atlantic Way, The Arts Council and Galway 2020. From the 16-29 July 2018 the 41st year of the Galway International Arts Festival will take place, where it was announced that Irish Alternative rock band Walking on Cars will play at Live at the big top, while more acts are going to be announced in late December or early January. With regards to policy I will be focusing on Culture Ireland's strategy for the years of 2017 leading up to 2020 in relation to the Galway Arts Festival I will then talk about the European Culture Capital Initiative of 2020 in relation to Galway also. The mission statement of the idea, in its most basic form is to promote Irish art, to increase career opportunities for Irish artists and to also cement and strengthen Ireland's global profile and reputation through the arts.

There are seven actions in this policy. The first action is to provide resources such as funding, expert advice and promotional supports to the different Irish Art and cultural events nationally. This action would ensure for example that funding would be delivered to whichever platform necessary in the event taking place. It would also make sure of maintenance and upkeep of social media sites. With regards to the Galway, as some platforms of the event could be in more need of funding than others as well this would be helpful as the more promotion the festival receives the wider of an audience it will have. The second action is to showcase uniquely curated Irish art, Irish artists

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and to provide networking opportunities at key events, festivals, in Ireland and to programmers and providers. This act not only ensures effective promotion but it also means the ability to track and evaluate the outcomes of performances.

The Galway Arts festival is one of the many examples of this second act in Ireland, as it showcases some of Ireland's most unique and rich talent and talented Irish Artists. Similarly this act makes it available for organisers to see what did well maybe in other years and what didn't so in future years, the festival will be able to produce what the target audience really like. The third act is to work with research organisations and to deliver key cultural objectives by working closely with Ireland's cultural hubs on an annual funding basis. This act enable the working with resource bodies such as Irish theatre institute, dance Ireland and music networks, all organisations which have global reach and will further opportunities for Irish artists abroad. The fourth action is to strengthen Ireland's International profile through government and state promotion. This act also means the engagement with government supported cultural centres abroad and with Irish foundations and associations.

An example of government and state promotion is when Michael D. Higgins the president of Ireland, wrote a personal letter to The Galway Arts Festival which was featured on their website. In this letter he gave nothing but praise towards the festival, how they had gone from strength to strength and how it has "...sought to give witness to the power of creative exploration". Through this letter (and the power of governmental promotion) anyone would be more

willing to go to the festival, more so tourists. The fifth action is to advise and assist the minister for arts, heritage, regional, rural and Gaeltacht affairs in working with Creative Ireland but to also to maximise the government investment in the wider interests throughout the country. Action 5 ensures close working with the Arts Council (one of GIAF's funding partners) with regards to grant funding and international promotion of the arts.

The sixth action is to maximise and help promote international cultural relationships and research in new global opportunities. This act would include attending a broad range of cultural industry events to evaluate trends, and to also measure and analyse audience attendance to inform for future funding. In relation to the Galway Arts festival, many relationships internationally have been formed, as the Galway Arts fest is not solely a festival celebrating national arts but one like many festivals which inhabits talent from all over. Examples of acts coming over include the New York Theatre, blah, blah. Similarly some of the production successes have led to theatre productions from the festival touring internationally to places such as Sydney, Edinburgh. By touring internationally this will help raise awareness of not only the success of the festival but also making other countries aware of what we have to offer here in Ireland. The final and seventh action is to make a global footprint through Creative Ireland and creating a digital presence for target markets. The Galway Arts festival has achieved this in the sense that they have a main website which ranges in information such as the history of the festival to the programme of the next festival.

It is also referenced on many Irish tourist websites such as the Galway tourism website, discover Ireland as well as triavgo. It also has an email which will send frequent newsletters while also having an Instagram, Facebook and twitter page which are all easily accessible and means that one could keep up with all notifications and proceedings of the festival. This last action is extremely important as now that we are in a digital era, most people are using their phones and other devices to keep updated.

As mentioned earlier on Galway has been awarded the home of the European Capital of Culture for 2020 along with Rijeka (Croatia). The European Capital of Culture Initiative was developed in 1985 and has since been awarded to over fifty cities who are members of the European Union. The Initiative's aims are to highlight the diversity and richness of culture across Europe, celebrate the common features shared in culture across Europe, and increase the sense of belonging for European citizens to a common cultural area and to foster the contribution of culture to the development of cities. This is also an amazing opportunity as it raises the international profile of cities, boosts tourism, breathes a new life into cities and enhances the city in the eyes of its own citizens.

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity and it is most rewarding that Galway has been chosen to represent Ireland to showcase the world its creative and cultural aspects. With regards to thoughts on being the awardees for this initiative, the GIAF, shares on their website that Galway is "...a place where people come for a week and stay for good, a place where artists are inspired and people find their place." With regards to theory then, realistically the

basis of policy is on theory. So fundamentally in this circumstance the theory is with regards to funding, promotion, international profile and government involvement in the cultural spectre. The way I understand theory is as a sort of cycle with regards to policy, as without theory there is nothing for policy to rely on. I have focused this way of thinking in relation to my key event as I focused on my key event in relation to policy. The Galway Arts Festival is unique in the sense that it has many diverse art forms which are both inclusive and exclusive as well as creating an impressive cultural profile for Ireland. But what is the theory behind this? Are we naïve enough to think that the theories of funding and promoting of the arts is solely for the purpose of having a more diverse culture and to enhance Ireland's Cultural profile? The theory which seems most evident to me with regards to this and many other Irish cultural events is financial aid.

The theory that this is the funding that is given towards the likes of the Galway arts festival will eventually pay off when tourism in that set location boosts with a 50% increase for example as because at the end of the day by creating networking, and high end promotions and also having Ireland's international profile as a place with a 'deeply rich and unique culture', you are turning Ireland's culture into a commodity, a sales pitch for tourists who will then visit Ireland, boost the economy and hence the cycle will repeat again. It is clear that really the theory of it all is on the basis and the stability of the Irish Economy. One of the readings, which I think further this theory was from the reading list; Whither Cultural Policy in Post Celtic Tiger Ireland. It talks about how when the economy was flourishing during the Celtic tiger, the arts council and the government were able to fund the arts a



lot more heavily than in contrast to when the economy flopped and the levels of funding severally dropped.

The Celtic tiger was from 1994-2008 - " Between 1994 and 2008, Arts Council funding rose by 40%" (slabey), which was fantastic that the arts were being so heavily funded but then in contrast, as soon as things went south "...it was announced that the overall cultural expenditure would be reduced by just under 10%, the Arts Council's grant by 12% and the budget of the national cultural institutions by 20%". From this reading it sounds as though, because the funding was reduced, it gives of the idea, that the government or whomever it was who decided to make these cuts only saw the arts and culture as a leisure. Like in the sense I would only buy myself coffee if I had the money to spend but not if I was broke. So therefore it is my opinion that the theory behind these cultural events is unfortunately to benefit the economy.