

SCREEN
PRODUCERS
IRELAND

REPRESENTING INDEPENDENT FILM, TELEVISION,
ANIMATION AND DIGITAL PRODUCTION COMPANIES

SPI SUBMISSION TO CULTURE 2025

Screen Producers Ireland Submission to Culture 2025

Date: 30th October 2015

Introduction to SPI

Screen Producers Ireland (SPI) is the representative organisation for over 100 independent producers and production companies operating in the film and television industry in Ireland. We welcome the opportunity to respond to the call for consultation by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht on the *Culture 2025* discussion document. We believe that a national cultural policy will be of benefit to all stakeholders and we hope to see independent film and television producers having a central role in the development and rollout of the policy.

Screen Producers Ireland is a membership organisation that promotes growth and sustainability of a working environment conducive to a strong independent production sector. It is our duty to be the most effective voice of independent film, television, animation and digital producers in Ireland. We address the needs of the sector and, using our knowledge and expertise, we aim to deliver a strong and sustainable position for Irish production companies. We are focused on shaping an independent production sector that is comparable to best international standards.

We encourage state organisations charged with developing the industry to put in place development plans and policies for the sector to maximise potential. We outline in this document the development plans and policies we would hope to see in *Culture 2025* in relation to structures, funding and resources, supports which we believe will strengthen the industry and make it sustainable so that screen production can continue to make a valuable economic and social contribution to Ireland's culture.

In fulfilling our remit, we communicate, negotiate and collaborate with industry stakeholders including broadcasters, Bord Scannán na hÉireann / the Irish Film Board, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Government Departments and other relevant Irish and international organisations.

Introduction and Context

The role of cultural policy has come to the forefront of economic development as well as artistic thinking in recent years and is seen as a socio-economic issue, which we welcome. In Ireland, the need to provide the necessary infrastructure to support cultural and creative industries is common to several reports¹. The importance of the sector to the State "*in positioning Ireland in a new way*" (Innovation Ireland) and as "*one of the fastest growing*"... "*key and primary economic contributors*" (Smart Economy) is now understood.

As cultural and creative industries, independent film, television, animation and digital producers add value at a cultural and economic level. Through their productions, a collection of content is created which captures and preserves the identity of Ireland and chronicles what it means to be Irish and to live in Ireland past and present. At an economic level, independent producers and production companies employ several thousand people and make a major contribution to our economy.

¹ including *Innovation Ireland* (2010), *Creative West* (2009) and *Building Ireland's Smart Economy* (2008)

We support the development of a strategy that will provide a much needed vision and strategic direction for cultural activities in Ireland. We believe that the policy should aim to sustain indigenous production which is a creative expression of our national culture and identity and speaks to both national and international audiences. While acknowledging the benefit of an environment of structured supports such as Section 481 tax incentives and other State funding mechanisms, we also believe that the policy needs to be carefully crafted in order to facilitate the creativity and innovation that are core to the production of original content. Of central importance is the need for local, indigenous producers to be supported, alongside the supports provided by the State for foreign investment in film production.

The aspects of culture that SPI believe should be central pillars to the policy are:

- Enabling creative expression;
- Supporting creativity and innovation;
- Providing sustainable supports and structures to enhance and develop cultural and creative industries;
- Facilitating the creation of social capital by enabling meaningful collaborations;
- Harnessing the socio-economic benefits of a vibrant culture for residents and visitors.
- Embracing the potential to engage young people in the expression and dissemination of Irish culture

Our Cultural Identity

Culture provides a point of differentiation and competitive advantage through our sense of “Irishness” in terms of who are and how we communicate. We believe that culture is core to a shared national identity, based on both our cultural heritage and contemporary culture.

We are a nation of storytellers and story makers. Screen production is central to translating the stories of our cultural identity on screen and thereby creating and preserving the cultural assets of Ireland. Access to content depicting the identity of Ireland via television, cinema or handheld screens brings Ireland alive as a place to live, a place to work and a place to visit.

SPI believes that the creation of indigenous content allows Irish producers to shape our culture, avoid homogenous content and ensure that the depiction of what it is to be Irish is portrayed from the perspective of lived experience of “Irishness”, rather than an international interpretation of what it might mean to be Irish.

SPI believes that a key part of Ireland’s cultural reputation is created and developed through our growing reputation as global hub for high-tech digital and creative content. As a core part of our cultural heritage and contemporary cultural assets, the policy should acknowledge and continue to support the role played by screen production in depicting a national cultural identity that evolves to encompass past and present.

Linkages

While the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has lead responsibility for *Culture 2025*, cultural issues and the issues relevant to SPI and its members cut across multiple Departments including Finance; Communications, Energy and Natural Resources; Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation; Education and Skills; Foreign Affairs; and Transport, Tourism and Sport. We would urge that this policy connects all relevant Departments. The role of state agencies under the aegis of these central Departments is also key. For example, RTÉ and TG4 are commissioners of significant volumes of screen content, and as such are a key part of the ecosystem for indigenous screen production companies. As key external influencers, Departments and State agencies can drive and nourish indigenous creative industries and their role in doing so should be a key element of the policy.

SPI would cite the current Audio Visual Interdepartmental Committee as an example of an effective and co-ordinated approach across government portfolios and would urge that such an approach is continued and replicated.

We believe that cultural policy should be central to the political process rather than marginal and as such the *Culture 2025* policy should be linked across all relevant Departments in a clear and evident way i.e. all relevant Departments should “culture-proof” their economic and social policies and policy debates.

Approach to this Submission

The observations and recommendations in this submission are intended to be constructive and to contribute to a cohesive and coherent cultural policy. The points are not made in any order of importance but are listed in accordance with how they appear in the discussion document.

We suggest that the ambition of the policy should be to create a more collaborative and supportive environment for those with a passion for the development of the cultural and creative sectors in Ireland. The policy should support and sustain the multitude of places and platforms through which Irish culture and “Irishness” are experienced.

We understand that a multidisciplinary approach is required given the depth and breadth of cultural activity, and in this submission we have sought to consider first the overall context of culture in Ireland and then the fit of SPI in contribution to cultural development and enrichment. In answering the questions in the discussion document which follow, we have focused on the specific issues of relevance to SPI.

SPI would welcome further involvement and are happy to assist the Department in any way in future consultation or work to develop and implement the policy.

Q1: Should *Culture 2025* address the institutional architecture which delivers public sector culture services? If so, how should this discussion paper navigate this set of issues?

SPI firmly believes that Government needs to maintain and nurture the organisations which are charged with responsibility for the cultural development of Irish heritage and identity. This will not happen by itself: Government must set workable policies within the context of a coherent strategy which achieves broad consensus across stakeholder organisations, and must then provide adequate resources to enable the strategy to be implemented properly. Whilst *Culture 2025* is a very welcome contribution, it is a starting point for the creation of a fresh national strategy for cultural development. All of this work will require the input from a wide variety of stakeholders in a balanced way, reflecting the contributions to be made by Government Departments, public sector agencies, private companies and representative industry bodies – both in their respective areas of interest and in a collaborative manner.

As the representative body for the screen production industry in Ireland, SPI has a particular interest in fostering healthy and productive working relationships between stakeholders on a cross-sectoral basis. Our members range from large production companies to small independents, and all of their work depends on the maintenance of a balanced economy for Irish screen production – involving Government (for strategy and policy, including tax relief on film and television production), public broadcasters (for commissioning), international partners (for co-production), distributors (for exhibition), and of course productions companies themselves (for delivery of the ideas and the finished product).

We believe that an appropriate infrastructure is needed between commercial input and state intervention. This will be key to the successful implementation of the policy and to ensuring that all parties are custodians of our culture and are respectful of that role and responsibility.

As a principle, we believe that the structures to be put in place to support the policy should create a streamlined and coherent way of working so that processes and structures avoid duplication and create common, centralised mechanisms for communications, reporting and funding and other supports.

Q2: How do we make optimal use of scarce resources?

SPI recognises that resources have been constrained for some years, and indeed our members are well accustomed to working within tight budgets. With regard to Irish screen production, we believe that an effective balance needs to be struck with regard to how resources are shared. This means having resources available to support both big and small productions, local, regional and national productions, for TV, cinema and digital platforms. It also means a balance between genres – drama, animation, documentary, and others. Within this context, we believe that two important points of principle should be borne in mind:

- The allocation of resources should be done fairly and transparently, and should be evidence-based. We would suggest that key stakeholders are included in jointly defining the appropriate evidence base(s), which should include output and outcome measures and “hard” and “soft” measures. These agreed measures should then be used in choosing to allocate resources towards initiatives that can evidence a contribution towards the continuation of Ireland’s cultural vibrancy.

- In relation to film, resources must be protected for nurturing talent and for developing the Irish screen industry in the medium to long term, so as to maximise its contribution to the economy.

Q3: Are current structures and funding models, both at national and local level, adequate to meet the future requirements of the sector?

SPI believes that improvements are needed in relation to funding models. Whilst the changes to the Section 481 tax regime for film production in late 2014 were extremely welcome, consideration of further changes may be needed to improve efficiencies of the scheme for production companies. On a broader level, SPI also believes that a more unified approach to the commissioning of films needs to be considered, with a number of State agencies currently involved – both the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland and the Irish Film Board are involved in funding screen productions, whilst the two public service broadcasters, RTÉ and TG4, commission screen productions.

In that context, we note that Ireland is somewhat different from most other EU countries in that there is no legislative or regulatory requirement for our national broadcasters to invest in indigenous film production. By contrast, many other European territories have seen a significant strengthening of their screen production sector as a result of having a minimum spend on local film stipulated by legislation or regulation. We recognise that film can be a costly medium when compared with other programme genres, and we believe that RTÉ in particular often selects lower cost programming when the screening of indigenous film would represent a viable scheduling option. As a result, SPI believes that the Irish film and television industry is at a competitive disadvantage, and we call on the Government to consider a change to the 2009 Broadcasting Act to provide for a minimum spend by RTÉ on Irish feature films and feature documentaries, representing 1.5% of RTE revenue allocated to its television Integrated Business Division, or a minimum of €2.5 million per annum. This would foster more indigenous Irish film production playing an important role in Ireland’s cultural identity.

We also note the Government’s proposal to replace the television license fee with a broadcasting charge, and we would encourage reform of this important aspect of funding in order that resources can be better targeted towards high-quality screen content produced in Ireland.

In overall terms, we also believe that a more streamlined approach to the provision of public funding for film and television production should be considered, with greater transparency in relation to how financial resources are distributed across the various State bodies involved in film and television, and the benefits accruing from those allocations.

Q4: Are there alternative funding or support models which should be pursued? If so, how?

SPI recognises that benefits may be obtained from alternative – and indeed innovative – funding models for Irish screen production, including the likes of crowd funding and peer-to-peer funding. Ultimately, however, these models should be regarded as complementing, rather than replacing, any State funding to Irish film and television – particularly given that they are as yet unproven in Ireland.

In this context, we note that capital funding for the Irish Film Board has been subject to annual reductions since 2008, and has fallen by over 40% in that period. In 2015, the IFB is due to spend

€11.2 million on film production, which compares very unfavourably with the annual spend on production by Northern Ireland Screen of €16.3 million. SPI believes that the reduction in funding to the IFB has had a significant negative impact on the film and television production sector in this State, particularly for indigenous filmmakers who provide much-needed work and opportunities for Irish creative talent. We therefore call on the Government to reinstate the Oireachtas grant to the IFB to a minimum of €20 million per annum.

Also of great importance is the question of support to Irish screen production, i.e. not just financial support but the development and maintenance of a strong Irish film and television industry. Government has a vital role to play in supporting the enhancement of skills across the industry, through the higher education system, in-service training and other approaches.

In relation to support models, we believe that international networks should be explored further with a view to supporting skills transfer and also project collaborations with international partners resulting in capacity and capability building. Collaboration with international counterparts and improving the ability to break into international markets are areas where funding and supports would be beneficial. Through international networking and partnerships, the experience of and understanding of Irish culture could be enhanced overseas, as well as exposing the production industry internationally to the skills and experience available within Irish screen production.

Q5: How should demands for public investment be prioritised, or what should be prioritised?

SPI recognises that there is a significant demand for investment in capital infrastructure associated with arts and culture in Ireland, and we support the Government's ongoing and planned investments at the National Gallery, the National Concert Hall, the National Archives and other locations. We also note that business cases have been made for other large-scale infrastructural projects at the National Museum of Ireland, the National Library, and elsewhere. Clearly, not every project can be afforded, and competing priorities will need to be assessed by the Government; many of these are likely to be "flagship" projects involving iconic institutions within the cultural life of Ireland, and will be likely to cost many tens of millions. SPI believes that film and television production in Ireland deserves its fair share of public investment, given the significant impact which the sector has on jobs within the Irish economy and on the portrayal of Ireland internationally through film, television and animation, and we would ask that the Government bears these issues in mind when making the necessary investment decisions in the coming months and years. It should be noted that producers have the ability to leverage local funding, from other sources including international co-producers, broadcasters and studios. Leveraging funding for screen content is standard practice in the business and represents a good opportunity to combine national and international, public and private contributions to this vital area of our economy.

Q6: Should the focus shift from construction of new facilities to maintenance and reinvestment in existing infrastructure?

SPI believes that a balance should be struck between maintenance of existing facilities and investment in new infrastructure and between developing enhanced capacity and capability. With specific regard to screen production, investment is needed both in production and post production facilities. Ireland currently lacks sufficient studio facilities to support a growing number of indigenous productions and foreign investments, and it is noteworthy that Northern Ireland – which has invested heavily in new studios – is better positioned to attract major international productions

such as Game of Thrones. The planned development of new studios in Limerick is welcome, but must be undertaken in parallel with continued investment in our existing studio infrastructure in Ardmore, Ashford and elsewhere, including State support.

In addition, the State should continue to support training and skills development within the Irish screen industry, and in that context the current initiative to develop a new strategy for skills development in this sector, being led by the Irish Film Board and the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, is very welcome.

Q7: How should the financial cost be shared between public and private sources?

SPI believes that the balance of investment in Irish screen production should be shared between public and private sources, as is the case at present. The split should be balanced and proportionate, and should include a minimum threshold of investment in film by RTÉ of at least €2.5 million per annum, alongside other financial support made available through the Irish Film Board, through the Sound and Vision fund administered by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, and through the s481 taxation incentive scheme.

Q8: Are existing measures appropriate and adequate to support artists and other creative workers?

Q9: If not, what new measures, or refocusing of existing measures, might be taken to support artists and creative workers and the production of cultural content in Ireland?

[Combined response for Q8 and Q9:]

With regard to the screen industry, SPI believes that existing measures to support producers, filmmakers and other creative personnel need to be strengthened. This needs to be at two levels. Firstly, production companies, which create and maintain screen industry jobs in Ireland, need to avail of a range of production opportunities and funding sources which will enhance their viability as businesses into the medium and long-term. For example adequate resources are required for all support agencies for screen content. The Section 481 taxation scheme for film production needs to be kept under ongoing review in order to ensure competitiveness. Given the long lead time for production, extensions of the scheme need to take place well in advance of the current scheme's life span.

Secondly, we support the establishment of a strategy for screen industry skills development, which is currently being taken forward by the IFB and the BAI, and we trust that this will represent the foundation of a proactive programme of work for the long-term benefit of the industry. In relation to skills development, it is important to note that some very specific skills are required, which vary across genres e.g. animation skills are clearly very different from live action film skills etc. In addition, skills requirements change regularly, particularly in the era of convergence, and this is a dynamic area that needs a responsive approach.

Q10: Can we do more to maximise the contribution of culture to both our economy and Ireland's image abroad?

SPI believes that Irish films, and quality television programmes currently play a very significant part in contributing to both the national economy and the image of Ireland internationally. Screen production in Ireland creates and maintains thousands of jobs through both foreign direct investment by major international studios and broadcasters (for example, the filming of *Vikings* in Co. Wicklow) and indigenous local production/coproduction. It is likely that further opportunities will arise to increase this economic contribution, particularly as result of changes to the Section 481 tax incentive scheme in late 2014 and the most recent changes announced in Budget 2016.

The achievements in terms of Oscar nominations for creative led Irish companies such as Cartoon Saloon not only increase awareness of the continued world class creativity that exists in Ireland but also bring the people and place of Ireland to life on screen for international audiences. The success of the film *Room*, which won the Toronto International Film Festival's People's Choice Award 2015, is a strong indication of potential for another Oscar nomination. The film *The Lobster* winning the Jury Prize at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival is another world class achievement. *Brooklyn*, starring Saoirse Ronan and Domhnall Gleeson, based on the book by Colm Tóibín and directed by John Crowley, is another example of Irish film-making resonating with audiences around the world. Despite being a young industry, it performs exceptionally well on the world stage and in doing so creates a contemporary sense of the ongoing strength of storytelling and creativity as part of the essence of Irishness and Irish culture.

It is imperative, therefore, that adequate support for Ireland's indigenous production sector is provided. An increase in IFB funding would be a significant step in the right direction. In terms of the enhancement of Ireland's image, film has perhaps a unique opportunity to present positive views and images of what it means to be Irish to a global audience, given the accessibility of film not just in terms of cinema and television but through internet-based media.

The filming of parts of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* on Sceilig Mhichíl provides the opportunity to maximise the promotional opportunity that exists around film when big budget production takes place in Ireland.

It is crucial for Ireland's ability to attract big budget production that the environment for indigenous production is cultivated simultaneously. The health of one cannot be maintained without the other.

Increasing the output both in terms of local production and an increase in TV exports, through the variety of measures suggested in this submission and other SPI policy documents will all help maximise and grow the contribution of culture to Ireland's economy and our image abroad.

Q11: Are the current mechanisms that exist for using culture to promote Ireland's image abroad adequate or do they need to be updated?

With specific regard to film, limited State resources are available for promotional purposes – the Irish Film Board previously maintained an office in Los Angeles to provide a local link with the main Hollywood studios, but this was closed during the recession. We acknowledge that the IFB continues to work hard to promote Ireland as a destination for international filmmakers, and this work needs to be continued and resourced adequately. More fundamentally, however, Ireland needs to have better infrastructure for filmmaking, particularly in terms of studio space, and needs to have a ready availability of all of the technical and technological skills and expertise required to facilitate screen production within this State.

Q12: What are the opportunities for the cultural sector in the delivery of cultural services in the digital age?

Only a decade ago, virtually all screen content was available to watch only in the cinema or on television (including DVDs and videocassettes sold for home consumption). At the start of 2005, YouTube did not exist and there were a few possibilities for watching content online. A decade on, the situation has changed unrecognisably, and both cinematic exhibition of films and traditional linear broadcasting on television are in decline in most of the developed world. The possibilities for the Irish screen industry in this digital era are very substantial, both in terms of generating income and jobs through online sales (e.g. subscription or pay-per-view services such as Netflix, YouTube, Amazon and others), and in terms of the film-based promotion through the Internet of Irish culture and Irishness to a worldwide audience. We would encourage Government to develop a clear strategy in relation to how best we, as a nation, can respond to these opportunities in a very fast-moving environment, serving the needs of both the Irish population and global audiences.

Q13: What are the challenges facing the cultural sector in this digital age?

The opportunity outlined above is also the biggest challenge. The convergence agenda is as challenging as it is exciting. We urgently need to “future-proof” the production industry and we suggest that a convergence strategy should be considered. The dynamics of environment are rapidly evolving and the new platforms, new business models, new working relationships, new audiences and new technologies and related new/adapted skillsets need to be considered and can play a key role in spreading the message of Ireland’s culture to immensely larger audiences. However, this will not be possible without significant investment of time and resources of all stakeholders so that we can all legislate and plan for a future that will be very different from today.

Q14: What approach should Ireland take to copyright and intellectual property issues – noting the EU context of much of the discussion in this area?

SPI supports the protection of copyright as an economic tool, and as a means by which Irish producers can generate the revenue required to develop and sustain their businesses. However, Section 103 of the Irish Copyright and Related Rights Act 2000 permits cable operators based in Ireland to retransmit works (including audio-visual works) protected by copyright that are broadcast in the State without obtaining permission from the copyright holders or paying retransmission fees. This puts Irish producers and broadcasters at a competitive disadvantage to their European counterparts.

SPI believes that it inhibits the development of our screen industry, and that Section 103 should be changed so that copyright is preserved in these works when they are transmitted by a cable company based in Ireland. It will also serve to generate a new source of revenue for Irish copyright holders (broadcasters and producers) to re-invest in the creative industries.

Q15: How can we improve access to culture in areas of social exclusion or disadvantage?

Q16: How can culture be used to break down barriers of exclusion or disadvantage?

[Combined response for Q15 and Q16:]

SPI believes that film and television represent a medium that can be enjoyed by everyone at all levels of digital literacy.

With the advancement in digital technology, the cost of equipment for filmmaking, animation and television production has been greatly reduced. Cost and access to equipment has traditionally been a significant 'barrier to entry' to filmmaking. This is no longer the case. There are many examples of low-budget productions made by novice / emerging filmmakers which achieve creative success and breakthrough to mainstream distribution across the multiple of platforms.

Digital screen culture is now the medium which can enfranchise all members of society, particularly those who have experienced marginalisation, to find their own route to self-expression and lift the barriers which have traditionally restricted the means of creation, access and distribution.

By encouraging such creativity we believe that Irish screen production as a whole provides the opportunity for all voices to be heard, and for a diverse range of cultural heritage and current realities to be represented.

Q17: How should *Culture 2025* address the opportunities and challenges presented by this new cultural diversity within Ireland?

We support diversity during all phases of production from script to screen, in-front of and behind the camera, in terms of content, acting roles and access to screen production as a medium that should transcend age, ethnicity, gender and other facets of our society. Further work should be done to ensure that an increased amount of content is produced to reflect diversity in the Ireland of today.

Q18: Having regard to the recent policy initiatives in this area [young and old people with disabilities], how should *Culture 2025* address these issues?

The aspiration of all involved in the disability sector is to ensure that a holistic approach is taken to meeting the rights of people with disabilities. These rights extend across the personal, social, economic and cultural spectrum.

Arts and culture have an important role to play in ensuring a holistic approach to meeting the needs of people with disabilities across all areas of disability and provide an excellent opportunity to ensure social inclusion and community integration. In fact, the move from the medical model of disability to the social model has been greatly facilitated by the acknowledgement of the role that arts, culture, sports, employment etc. can have in empowering people with disabilities and also in facilitating the significant contribution people with disabilities make to arts and culture.

The vision and ambition for *Culture 2025* should recognise the importance of people with disabilities participating in the arts as contributors and audiences. In relation to the development of arts and disability, the Arts Council's *Arts and Disability* (2012-2016) strategy highlights the needs to build capacity within the arts and disability communities through the establishment of supports for artists and audiences, professional development, networks and collaboration/strategic alliances. The Department's own *Arts in Education Charter* (2013) commits

to access and infrastructure measure that reach into the education system and through engagement with arts in the public domain. We believe that these principles should inform the development of a comprehensive, coherent and sustainable policy for the enhancement of the experience of the arts for people with disabilities in Ireland.

For all people, life skills are learned though the arts and creative expression is enjoyed, whether as a participant or an observer. Access to the arts should be maximised for people with disabilities and through a dynamic policy will have the capacity to have a profound impact on the lives of people with disabilities.

Q19: How should *Culture 2025* address issues of tradition and language?

SPI believes that continued support should be provided to ensure that we maintain a vibrant film and television industry which can portray themes of Irish culture, tradition and language to both indigenous and global audiences. Through the work of the Irish screen industry, a collection of content is created which captures and preserves the identity of Ireland and chronicles what it means to be Irish and to live in Ireland past and present.

TG4 has been the key pillar in the development of Irish language production, reflecting our heritage and opening a window to contemporary expression in the Irish language.

The work of Irish language producers, directors, actors, writers, designers and production crew creating a range of creative screen content in the Irish language must also be recognised, as this provides an outstanding and unique contribution to Irishness through film and television. The financial support provided to Irish language film and documentary making, through the Irish Film Board, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, and TG4 in particular, must be preserved and increased.

Q20: How can we better support and promote the music sector, particularly emerging musicians?

This topic is outside the scope of SPI's remit.

Q21: How should *Culture 2025* best respond to the issues raised in the Decade of Centenaries?

This topic is outside the scope of SPI's remit.

Q22: How can *Culture 2025* help to re-imagine Ireland as part of the Ireland 2016 year of commemoration?

SPI believes that film and television will have a major part to play in the year of commemoration in 2016, and many screen projects are under way to support this initiative. We fully endorse this work and look forward to the opportunities which Irish film and television productions will have to help showcase what is great about our country.

Q23: What more can be done to strengthen North/South ties in the cultural area?

SPI believes that opportunities exist to expand on the North/South relationship of the film, animation and television production sector. This will help to leverage the creative capacity and economic incentives in both jurisdictions.

Several Irish producers have established roots in both jurisdictions. There has been significant growth in the coproduction of animation projects between North/South in recent years.

SPI believes that significant opportunities exist for cross-border projects to be supported, such as large US productions which might require the level of infrastructure and resources which neither jurisdiction would have the capacity to provide individually.

With specific regard to Irish language content, we note that both the Sound and Vision Fund (administered by the BAI) and the Irish Language Broadcast Fund (administered by Northern Ireland Screen) provide much-needed funding support for this medium. We believe that opportunities may exist for greater cross-border collaboration in this area, and would encourage the respective Departments to examine the potential for strengthening Irish language film and television production.

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