

An Bille Ealaíon (Aitheantas don Ghreann) (Leasú) 2024

Arts (Recognition of Comedy) (Amendment) Bill 2024

Meabhrán Míniúcháin

Explanatory Memorandum

Background

This Bill is no joke.

As a result of not being mentioned explicitly in the Arts Act 2003, the art of comedy, and the comedians who write and perform, are in effect being excluded from opportunities for arts funding, resources, and development by An Chomhairle Ealaíon (the Arts Council).

While the 2003 Act states that the arts consist of “any creative or interpretative expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form”, and despite the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media stating that it “could be interpreted that standup, improv and sketch comedy fall under the genres of theatre”, An Chomhairle Ealaíon has chosen a more narrow interpretation, and since June 2023 has explicitly excluded proposals to develop “stand-up comedy” from eligibility for its Theatre Bursary Award, providing no other funding pathway for comedy.

Should An Chomhairle Ealaíon could choose to revise this definition, there would be no need for legislation, but by amending the 2003 Act to explicitly recognise comedy as an art form, we can ensure that, in future, the arts cannot be interpreted so as to not include comedy. Arts Councils in other countries already fund comedy, including Creative Scotland and Creative New Zealand.

Given the international renown of Irish comedians around the world, it is important that comedians are valued at home, not least because of the joy they inspire, the reflection they provoke, and the jobs and venues they sustain which help facilitate other art forms and community engagement with the arts, none of which are a laughing matter.

Purpose of Bill

The purpose of this Bill is to amend the Arts Act 2003 to explicitly recognise the art of comedy as an artform within the arts.

Provisions of Bill

Section 1 is the standard provision clarifying that the Act being amended is the Arts Act 2003.

Section 2 amends section 2 the Arts Act 2003 to include “comedy” explicitly as one of the art forms mentioned in particular in the definition of “arts” for the purposes of the Act, alongside the existing specified forms of “visual arts, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, film, circus and architecture”.

Section 3 is the standard provision dealing with the short title, collective citation and commencement.



Aengus Ó Snodaigh TD