



ISACS

Irish Street Arts, Circus
and Spectacle Network

ISACS MEMBER PAY REVIEW 2025

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Part 1: Introduction

In our 2025 annual survey, we asked our members a number of questions about the rates they charge for different kinds of work. We invited text responses to help us capture the variety, complexity, and sensitivity of pay conditions across diverse artforms, disciplines, and ways of working. We received answers from 57 individual members, and we're hugely thankful to these members for trusting us with this information. We've compiled the following report based on our analysis of the data they provided, divided into five categories: corporate work, commercial work, funded work, teaching work, and community work. We hope this will be useful to our members in guiding their pricing practices in future.

This document is a tool to help you understand:

- What other people are charging for similar work
- Whether your prices are below average
- Whether your prices are above average
- What kind of factors you should consider when pricing your work
- How the most common prices relate to the Irish minimum wage annual income, and the Irish national average income

This document is NOT telling you what to charge for your work.

It is based on responses from only 57 people. This is enough data to inform, to guide, and to identify some trends and patterns. It is not nearly enough data to claim to speak for everyone or for all scenarios.

This document should not be considered a list of recommendations. It is a snapshot of a moment in time; what our members **did** charge in the past, and what factors they used to make these decisions. It should not be used to dictate what you **should** charge in the future, or the factors that should be important to you.

Part 2: The Data

Analysis, Methodology & Complexity

By inviting textual, explanatory answers rather than simple numbers, we were able to gather detail and context, giving us a much broader and more complex picture than we otherwise could've achieved, which highlighted the diversity and variety of the ways in which our members work.

The downside is that unstructured data must be interpreted in order to be analysed. The complexity and diversity would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to capture in simple questions and pure numbers. Any attempt to distil the data down into a single easy-to-digest view would be, by definition, reductive and over-simplistic (or else absolutely incomprehensible and unreadable). For this reason we've chosen the following approach:

1. We've divided the data into five categories, the same five types of work we asked about in the survey: corporate work, commercial work, funded project work, teaching work, and community work.
2. We've extracted all the numbers our members reported as price points for each category, and graphed how often each number was reported.
3. Each category's data is presented separately.
4. We've accompanied each chart with brief notes on analysis and key highlights.
5. Each chart is also accompanied by notes on the relevant factors that inform our members' pricing decisions.

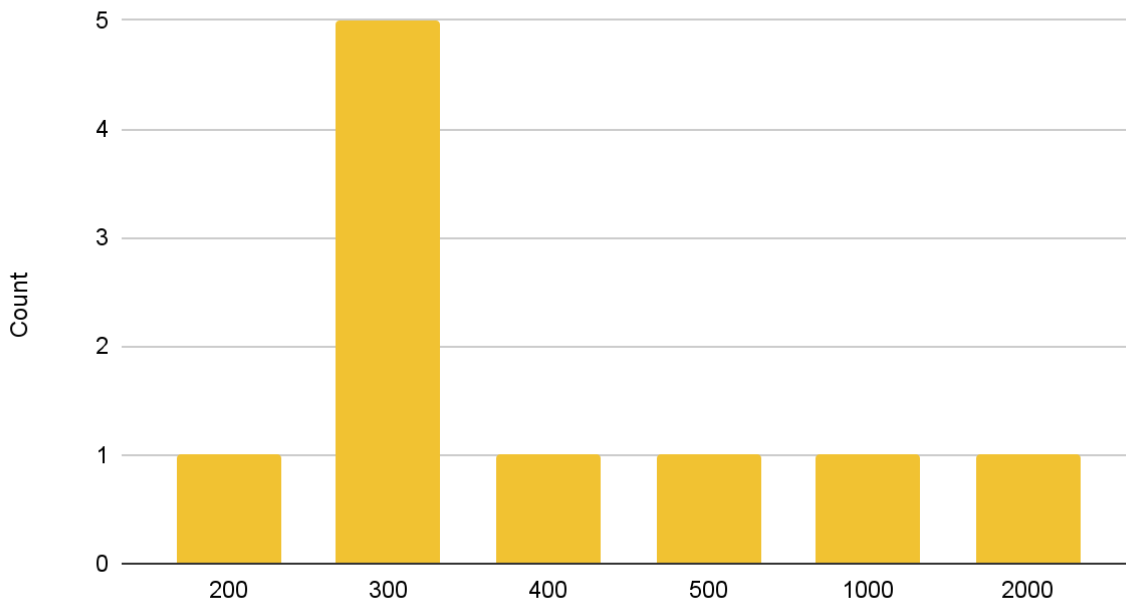
Limitations

There are some limitations to this approach, which are important to understand. Consider the following (fictional) example answers to the question, "What is your daily rate for corporate bookings?":

1. *"300"*
2. *"300 to 400"*
3. *"300 starting rate up to 500"*
4. *"300 to 2000"*
5. *"Could be anywhere from 200 to 1000"*
6. *"300 for first hour and 100 for each extra hour. No one ever books for only one hour."*

We extract the numbers from each answer, count how often each one occurs, and the resulting chart looks like this:

Made-up example



At first glance, this chart looks like it says €300 is by far the most common price. Look again at the data behind it: 4 out of 6 answers used €300 as the **lower** end of a price range. That doesn't mean €300 is actually a common price. In practice, most bookings likely fall somewhere between the upper and lower ends of these ranges. One entry specifically says that no one ever books at the €300 price point. And yet, €300 stands high above all other numbers in the chart, due to the method of interpretation of the data. The one response that goes *below* €300, ("Could be anywhere from €200 to €1000"), is still *mostly above*, and yet we don't know the distribution of actual booking prices across that range. They may have been mostly concentrated around the €200 and €300 price mark, or similarly clustered around €800, €900, and €1000. They may have been both - a high concentration of bookings at either end of the scale, and very little in the middle. This seems unlikely, in practice, but the point is we cannot assume we know how an artist's real-world bookings are spread between the upper and lower limits they mention, without skewing the data we're aiming to analyse.

This tells us a few important things:

1. Our charts do not easily represent price ranges.
2. The charts are better at showing the common **ends of price ranges** than they are at showing common **single prices**.
3. The most commonly-cited number in our data does not mean the most common price in practice.

Potential for Human Error

Manual interpretation means human decision-making. There were points of ambiguity and lack of clarity in the data. A respondent might discuss one category of work while answering another (for example, giving details on community work in an answer about corporate work), or it might be unclear whether they were talking about daily rates, hourly rates, or weekly rates. There were cases of suspected typos. The annual survey was anonymous, so there was no way to contact respondents for clarification.

We've done our best to interpret the data as we believe it was intended to be read. We've endeavoured to make clear in this report where such interpretations or assumptions had to be made.

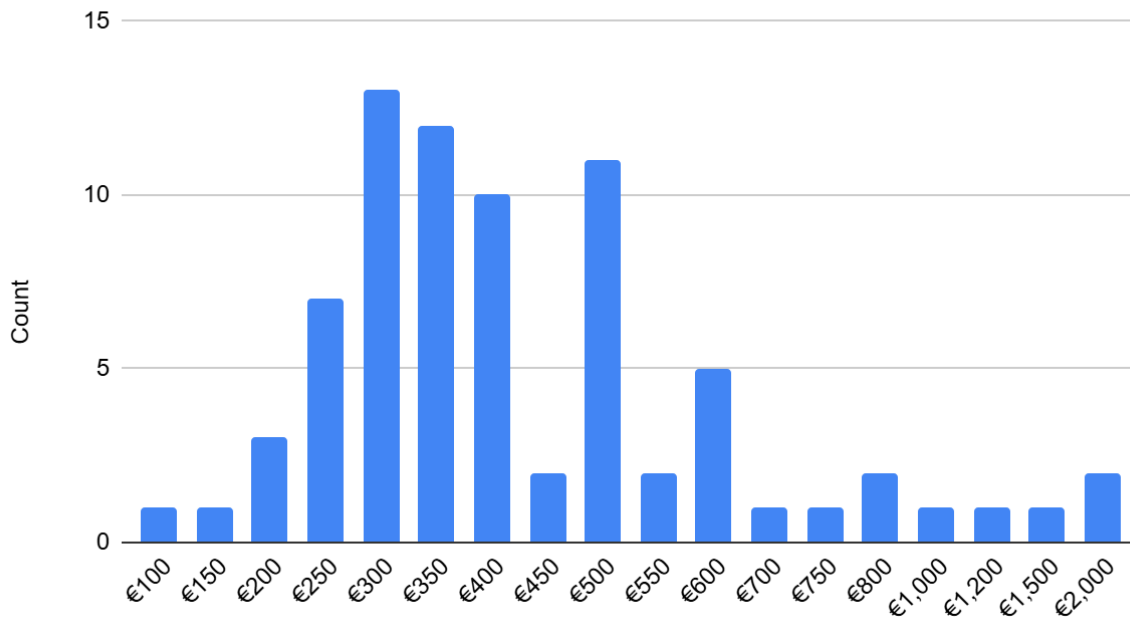
Our interpretation may not always be correct. Our analysis may not always be correct. All fault for this lies with us.

1. Corporate Work

What's your daily rate for corporate gigs? (If you charge hourly, please specify the amount in the comment box)

This refers to once-off or short-running entertainment work for large non-arts-based companies - e.g. Google, Meta, Dell, etc, likely as entertainment or as team-building facilitators.

Corporate Daily Rates



Analysis

- 82% of responses were between €250 and €600.
- 63% of responses were between €300 and €500.
- There were several responses of €1000 and above. All of these were for aerial performance.
- The median was €400.
- The mode (ie, most common response), was €300.

Relevant Factors

Our members reported a variety of different factors they consider when charging for corporate work. These included:

- **Fire** – performing with fire means a higher price.
- **LED** – performing with LED equipment means a higher price, usually higher than the fire price.
- **Staged performances vs walkabout** – staged performances or shows cost more than walkabout performance.

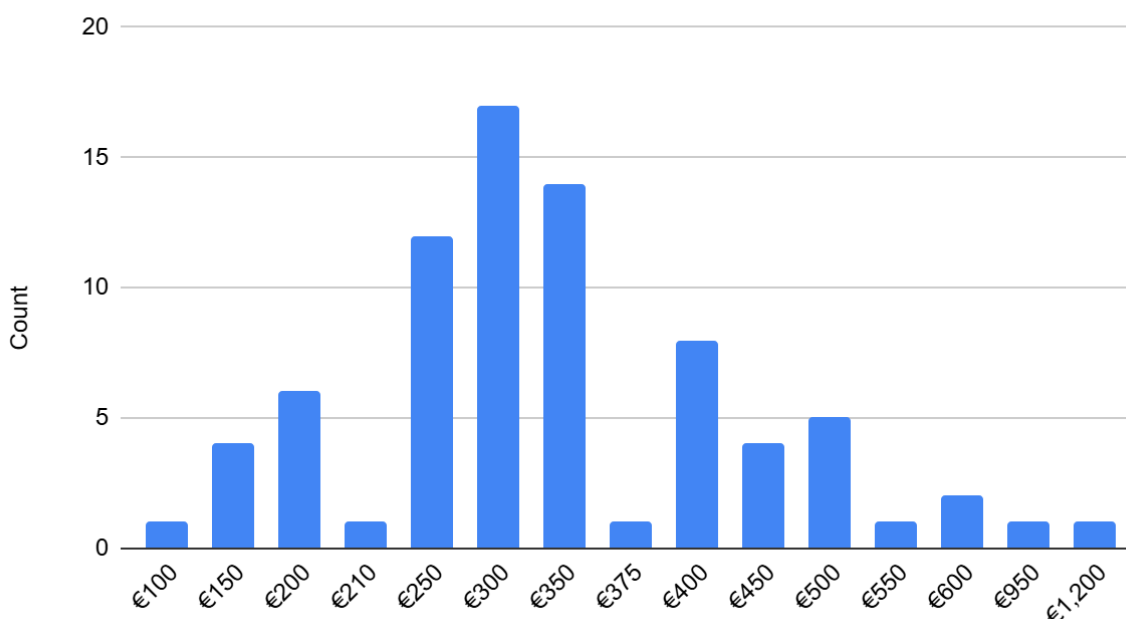
- **Single act vs full show** – a full show costs more than a shorter act as part of a bigger show.
- **Duration** – charge based on the duration of the work.
- **Starting rate plus additional charges** – some members charge a “basic” rate for the first hour (or performance), and charge an additional smaller rate on top for each additional hour (or performance)
- **Extra charges for equipment rental** – some members, such as our makers of puppets and other large-scale equipment, charge a fee for performance and an additional fee for rental of this equipment.
- **Plus travel** – charge additional fees to cover travel costs.
- **Plus per diems** – charge an additional fee for per diems.

2. Commercial Work

What's your daily rate for commercial work?

(This refers to once-off or short-running work, where you are booked to perform (or teach) at contexts such as local/regional festivals, or as entertainment at a larger event - such as schools, libraries, social groups, weddings, nightclubs, seasonal events like Halloween, Christmas, or New Year's)

Commercial Daily Rates



Analysis

- 87% of responses were between €200 and €500.
- 66% of responses were between €250 and €400.
- The median and mode response were €300.

Relevant Factors

The factors that contribute to pricing decisions for commercial work were similar to those of corporate work (fire, LED, staged vs walkabout, single act vs full show, etc). In addition, members also reported:

- **Aerial vs ground-based circus** – for performers who perform both aerial and ground-based circus, they charge more for aerial.
- **Aerial rigging responsibilities** – if an aerial performer has to take on rigging responsibilities for a performance, they charge more.
- **Seasonal events** – members charge more for seasonal events such as Halloween, Christmas, New Year's celebrations.
- **Big productions** – members charge more for work at larger productions due to the increased admin time handling paperwork such as insurance documents, risk assessments, contracts, tax documents, and bespoke supplier forms for payment.

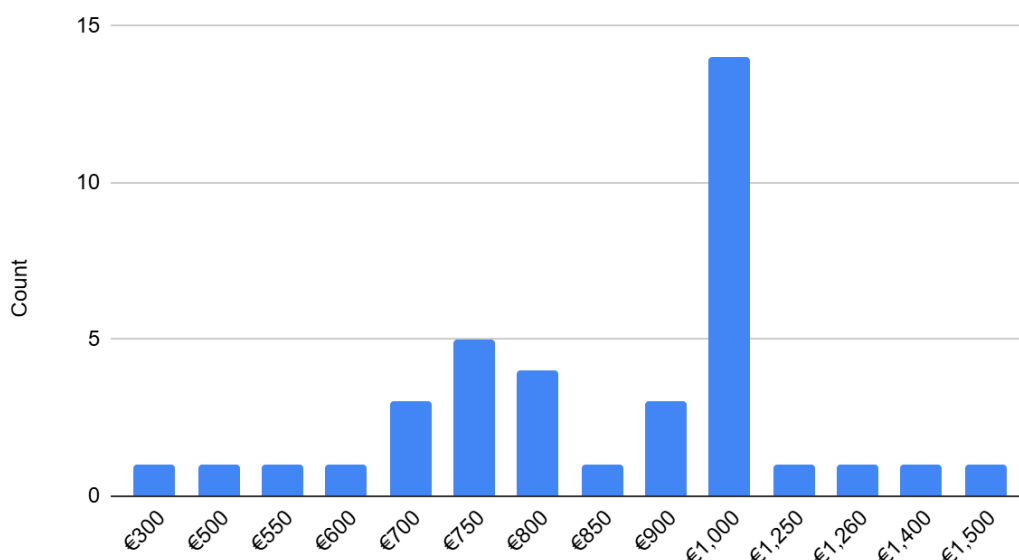
3. Funded Project Work

What's your weekly rate for publicly funded projects (The Arts Council, Creative Ireland, etc.)?

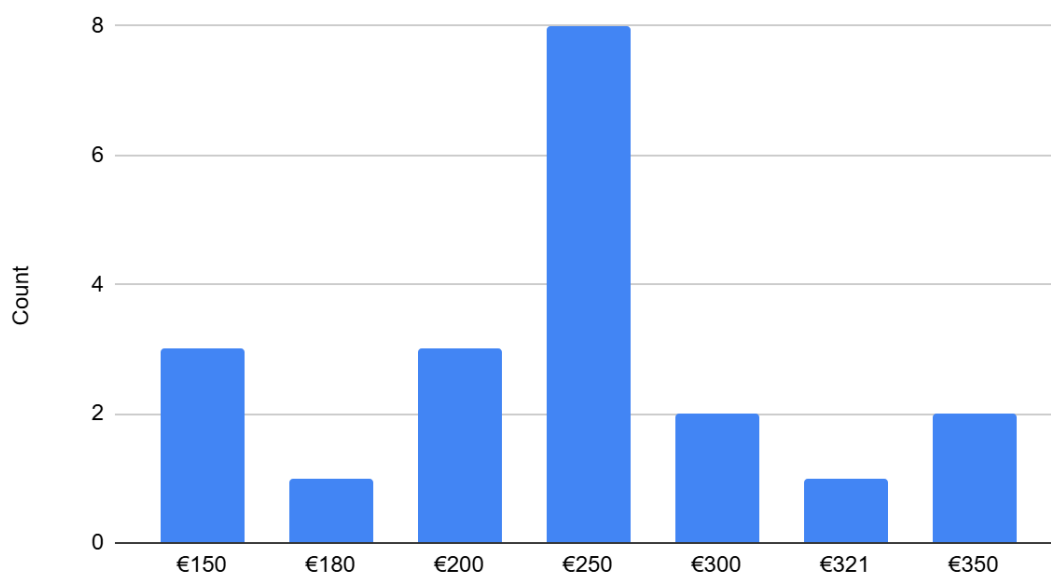
(This relates to working on an artistic project with a team of creatives, likely funded by an Arts Council Project Award or Arts Grant Funding, for presentation in an arts festival context/venue. This project may involve a number of weeks of work, including creation, rehearsal, tech, and performance.)

We've divided these responses into **weekly** and **daily** rates.*

Funded Projects WEEKLY Rate



Funded Projects DAILY Rate



(* We asked for a **weekly** rate, but many of our members responded with a **daily** figure. Some responses did not qualify whether they were daily or weekly, and we've had to make

assumptions based on the number provided. All previous questions asked for a daily rate, so the change to weekly may have been easily missed. We'll bear this in mind when structuring questions in future.)

Analysis

- 79% of weekly rates were between €700 and €1000.
- 37% of weekly rates were specifically €1000.
- The median weekly rate was €900.
- 65% of daily rates were between €200 and €300.
- 40% of daily rates were specifically €250.
- The median weekly rate was €250.

Note that the most common daily rate, €250, adds up to €1250 for a 5-day week, but by far the most common weekly rate was €1000. This suggests that artists charge a lower rate per day when expecting to be booked for a larger number of days (ie, a week, or multiple weeks)

Relevant Factors.

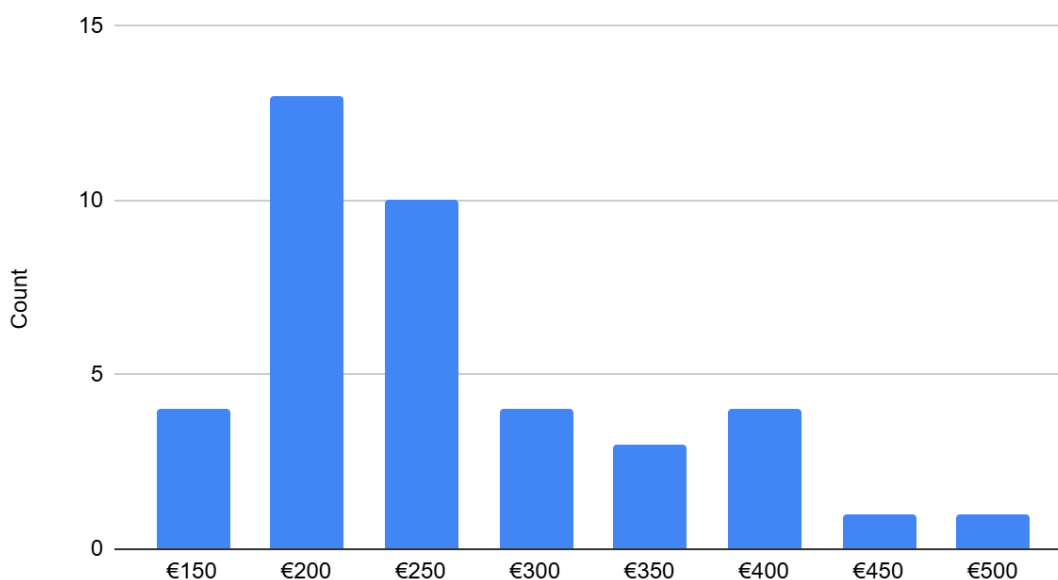
- **Types of work** – Days of creation, days of rehearsal, days of tech, and days of performance may all be charged at different rates.
- **Performance days** – Performance days are generally more expensive. If there are multiple shows per day, the rate goes up again.
- **Role** – Different roles in a project may charge different rates. For example, the lead artist or concept developer may have the highest fee. Mentors too may have a higher fee.

4. Teaching Work

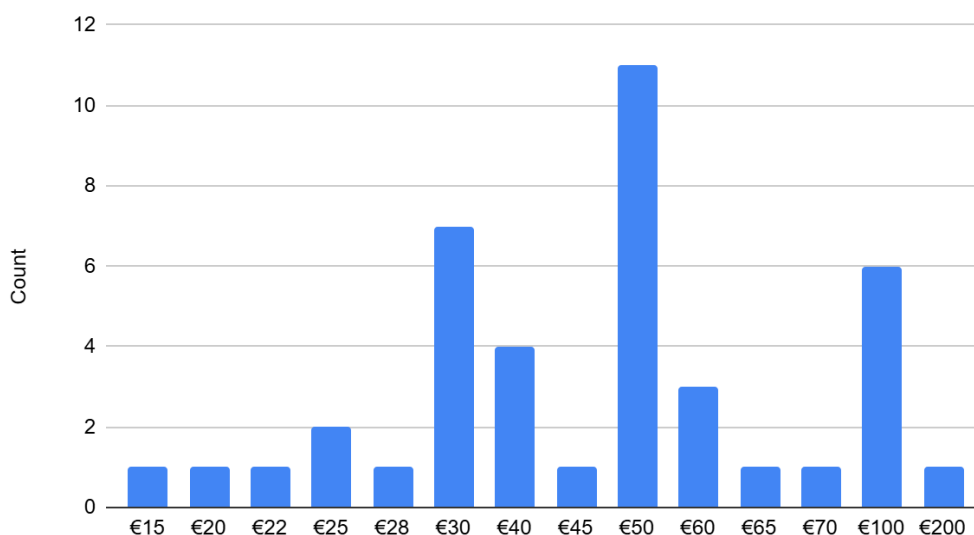
What's your daily rate for teaching? (If you teach hourly, please specify the amount in the comment box, please also include your discipline)

We've divided these responses into **daily** and **hourly** rates. See below for notes on two alternate methods of charging: **per-person**, and **private one-on-one lessons**.

Teaching DAILY Rates



Teaching HOURLY Rates



Analysis

- 85% of **daily** responses were between €200 and €400.

- 57.5% of **daily** responses were either €200 or €250.
- The median **daily** response was €250, but the mode (most common single response) was €200.
- 70% of **hourly** responses were between €25 and €60.
- 56% of **hourly** responses were between €30 and €50.
- The lowest **hourly** rates were consistently reported by teachers of **aerial**.
- Multiple **aerial** teachers reported that the rates are steadily **decreasing** over time.
- Multiple teachers, who identified themselves as working in a youth circus organisation, specified a contracted rate of €30 per hour with the organisation, but a freelance rate of €50 per hour for other “side job” classes.
- The highest figures, €100 and €200 per hour, were in reference to specialised workshops and masterclasses delivered to other Circus, Street Arts & Spectacle professionals.

Per-Person Rates and Private Classes

A small number of members mentioned charging per person, with 100% of them in agreement on €25 per person per class.

A small number of members mentioned private one-on-one classes, which are charged at either €50 per hour, or €20 per half hour.

Relevant Factors

Teaching is perhaps the most diverse category of work that our members do, as teaching exists in all art forms and disciplines, and in diverse settings from private one-on-one classes to large-scale once-off workshops, from regular classes by youth circus organisations to commissioned professional masterclasses by virtuoso practitioners. The range of factors affecting pricing decisions is correspondingly varied.

- **Duration** – consider the duration of workshops (half hour, one hour, 90 minutes, etc) and whether you are charging by time or by workshop.
- **Size of group** – some members reported charging per person, and others reported charging in thresholds (e.g. 1-3 students, 4-6, 7+, etc) with increasing price as the class increases in size
- **Regular vs once-off** – a regular series of classes might pay less per class than a once-off class does.
- **Freelance vs contracted/company** – teachers may earn less per hour when contracted with an organisation, compared to their charge per hour operating in a freelance basis, but the organisation is likely contracting them for a larger number of hours, making this a more profitable venture overall.
- **Preparation & planning time** – some members charge for tasks and time that occur before the teaching/workshop begins.
- **Purchase of materials** – some members charge for materials that must be purchased in order to be used in workshops. For example, fabrics to be used in costume or puppet-making.
- **Weekends more expensive** – some members charge a higher rate for teaching on a weekend than on a weekday. This may be due to the opportunity cost of not being able to take a more lucrative performance booking on that date.

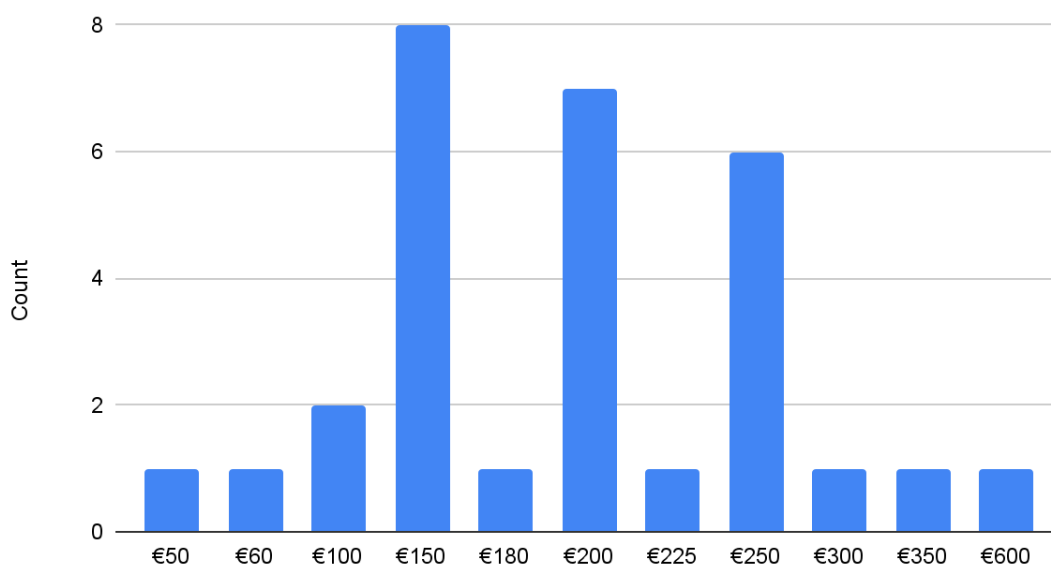
5. Community Work

Some artists charge a different rate for community-based or socially-engaged projects, for example in their local area, or when working with groups that have smaller budgets/fewer resources. If you have a community rate, please specify it here. If you do not have a community rate, please skip to the next question.

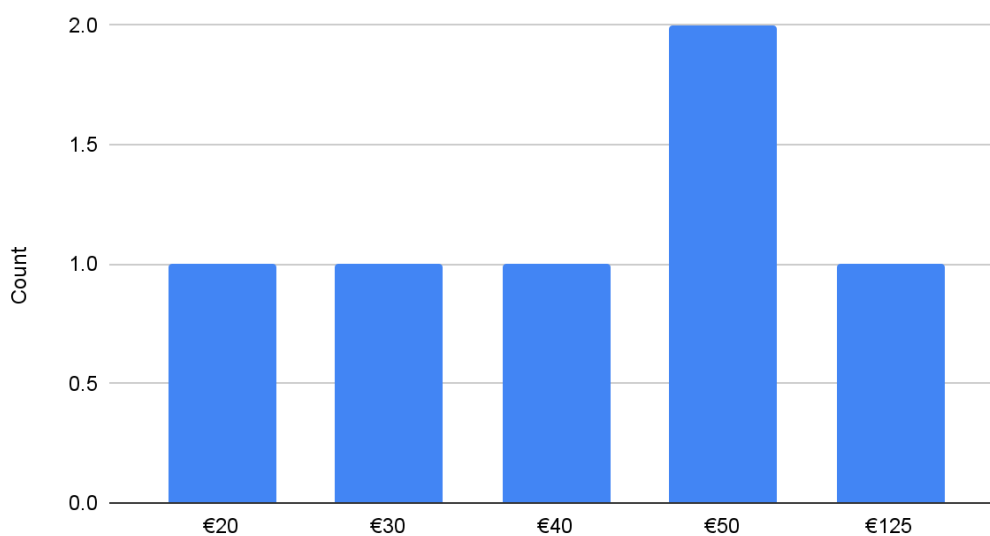
- You should specify if the rate is hourly, daily or weekly.

Fewer members answered the community work question compared to the others. Most of the answers referred to daily rates, with a few also giving hourly rates, so we've separated the results into two charts:

Community DAILY Rates



Community HOURLY Rates



Analysis

- 77% of **daily** rates were between €150 and €250.
- The median daily rate was **€200**. This is significantly lower than any of the other four categories of work.
- There were fewer overall respondents to the community work question. Only a handful of people responded in hourly figures.

Generosity & Community Engagement

Our members make **significant** accommodations for community work. Prices charged are lower for this category than for any other kind of work surveyed, and multiple members were explicit in their support for community projects. See the following quotes:

- *“I will work for free for some events which are relevant to my passions”*
- *“Just covering transport sometimes is enough”*
- *“Community work is pro bono”*
- *“Depends. Might be voluntary!”*

One member also discussed offering extra value (by offering additional performances, workshops, and so on) rather than reducing their daily rate, to contribute as much as possible to community clients while also maintaining their own financial requirements.

Part 3: Rates, Days per Year, & Annual Income

73% of survey respondents earn less than €28,000 per year. For context, a full-time minimum wage worker will earn roughly €27,378 in 2025. In 2026, with the adoption of the [national living wage](#), a full-time living wage worker will earn just under €30,000.

100% of Professional survey respondents earn less than the Irish national average income: €44,000 per year.

Annual income is determined by two factors:

- Rate earned per day
- Days paid per year

To put it another way:

$$(rate\ earned\ per\ day) \times (days\ paid\ per\ year) = annual\ income$$

Playing with this equation can help us work out what we need to charge, or how often we need to work, if we want to reach a particular earnings goal.

For example, the most commonly cited number for both corporate and commercial work was €300. The minimum wage income for last year was €27,378. If we insert these two values, we get:

$$€300 \times (days\ paid\ per\ year) = €27,738$$

Or:

$$(days\ paid\ per\ year) = €27,738 / €300$$

Which gives us:

$$€27,7328 / €300 = \mathbf{92\ days}$$

This tells us we would need to work 92 days at €300 per day to earn the minimum wage annual income. If we change the target to the national median income instead (€44,000), it tells us we would have to work 147 days:

$$€44,000 / €300 = \mathbf{147\ days}$$

We can experiment with different prices:

$$€44,000 / €400 = \mathbf{110\ days}$$

$$€44,000 / €500 = \mathbf{88\ days}$$

$$€44,000 / €600 = \mathbf{74\ days}$$

Similarly, if know our annual target (eg, €44,000), and we can forecast how many days we expect to work (eg, once a week, or 52 days in the year), we can work out what rate we need to charge to meet that target:

$$€44,000 / 52 \text{ days} = \text{€847 per day}$$

The tables below apply this principle to the different factors of the equation to demonstrate various income targets, daily rates, and days per year.

Days of paid work needed at various price points to reach national thresholds of income:

	€27,738 (minimum wage)	€44,000 (national median income)
€300 per day	92 days	147 days
€400 per day	70 days	110 days
€500 per day	55 days	88 days
€600 per day	47 days	74 days

Annual earnings at various price points and days worked per year:

	30 days	50 days	80 days
€300 per day	€9,000	€15,000	€24,000
€400 per day	€12,000	€20,000	€32,000
€500 per day	€15,000	€25,000	€40,000
€600 per day	€18,000	€30,000	€48,000

Rates needed to reach national thresholds of income at various counts of paid days per year:

	€27,738 (minimum wage)	€44,000 (national median income)
30 days	€925	€1,467
50 days	€555	€880
80 days	€347	€550
100 days	€278	€440

Realistic Goals

The tables above are not intended to suggest targets of price per day or number of days worked per year. They're there to illustrate how difficult it is to make a reasonable living as an artist, in particular if you're not charging enough. They're to encourage you to reconsider what "charging enough" means.

Getting 147 paid days in a year is, for most artists, simply not a realistic goal. 147 days is 3 days a week, every week, almost all year long. A full-time worker on a standard Monday-to-Friday schedule works approximately 230 days in a year.

Many artists (performing artists in particular) do a lot of their paid work on weekends. For many artists, a lot of their paid work is seasonal. A performer working every Saturday and Sunday from the start of May until the end of September might be considered to be busy and successful - but this only means 44 paid days. At €300 per day, that's €13,200 - less than half of the annual minimum wage income. At €500 per day, it's €22,000 - half of the national median income.

How many paid working days a year do artists tend to get? We didn't capture this data in our 2025 annual survey. It may be a candidate for a question in next year's survey.

Increasing Annual Income

Ultimately, there are only two ways to increase annual income:

1. Charge more.
2. Work more.

Neither of these are easy to do, nor are they entirely in the control of the artist. They may even negatively affect each other. An artist who raises their prices may get fewer bookings. In order to get more bookings, an artist may have to drop prices. It's impossible to know in advance how much the two factors will influence each other (if at all), so any change to daily price presents a risk to annual earnings.

Rate Stagnation

This risk discourages artists from raising their rates, leading to rate stagnation over time. Some members have reported that the going rate for commercial gigs is the same as it was ten years ago, or even twenty years ago. Some artists have reported that rates have actually gone **down** in the last ten years.

Work Opportunities

For the vast majority of artists, paid work doesn't come along every day. Most artists are freelancers, and are likely to accept almost all offers of work that they can. Work declined is likely to be either:

- a) Poorly paid
- b) Unsuitable to their artistic practice
- c) Conflicting dates with existing work

To find more paid work without compromising on the above, an artist needs to find or develop suitable new opportunities from external sources. While many artists do this to varying degrees already, it's important to note that this is **speculative, unpaid time**.

Emails, proposals, letters of support, and all kinds of other administration tasks are necessary to secure and develop opportunities of work. But in many cases the work ultimately doesn't go ahead, and the artist is left with no opportunity for remuneration. Even in the successful case, it is almost impossible to be repaid for time already invested before the booking was confirmed.

Working Does Not Mean Being Paid

There is a significant difference between days **being paid** and days **working**. A client who books an artist sees only the hours/days that the artist is "on" (ie, performing, teaching - whatever they're been hired to do). However, every one of these hours/days comes with some overhead of administrative tasks, preparation, planning, travel, and so on. The time cost of working on funding applications is enormous, and usually goes unremunerated. For most artists, art is a full-time job. They are working, whether or not they're "on", and whether or not they're being paid.

Part 4: Funded Projects: Working for Less

“This is what I’d like to charge, but I often work for a lot less.”

Multiple members mentioned a difference between what they’d like to charge, and what they tend to charge in reality. They cited the following reasons:

- **Supporting the project.** They want the project to go ahead and to succeed, because they believe in the work. If they charge their normal rate, the project cannot afford to go ahead.
- **They want the work.** If they don’t work for a reduced rate, they don’t work at all, because the projects either do not go ahead or they book cheaper artists instead.
- **Supporting their friends.** They drop their rate as a favour to a friend, to help make the work happen.

These are admirable and understandable reasons to compromise on pay rates. However, none of these are the real reason. They are just symptoms of the actual problem: **there is not enough funding.**

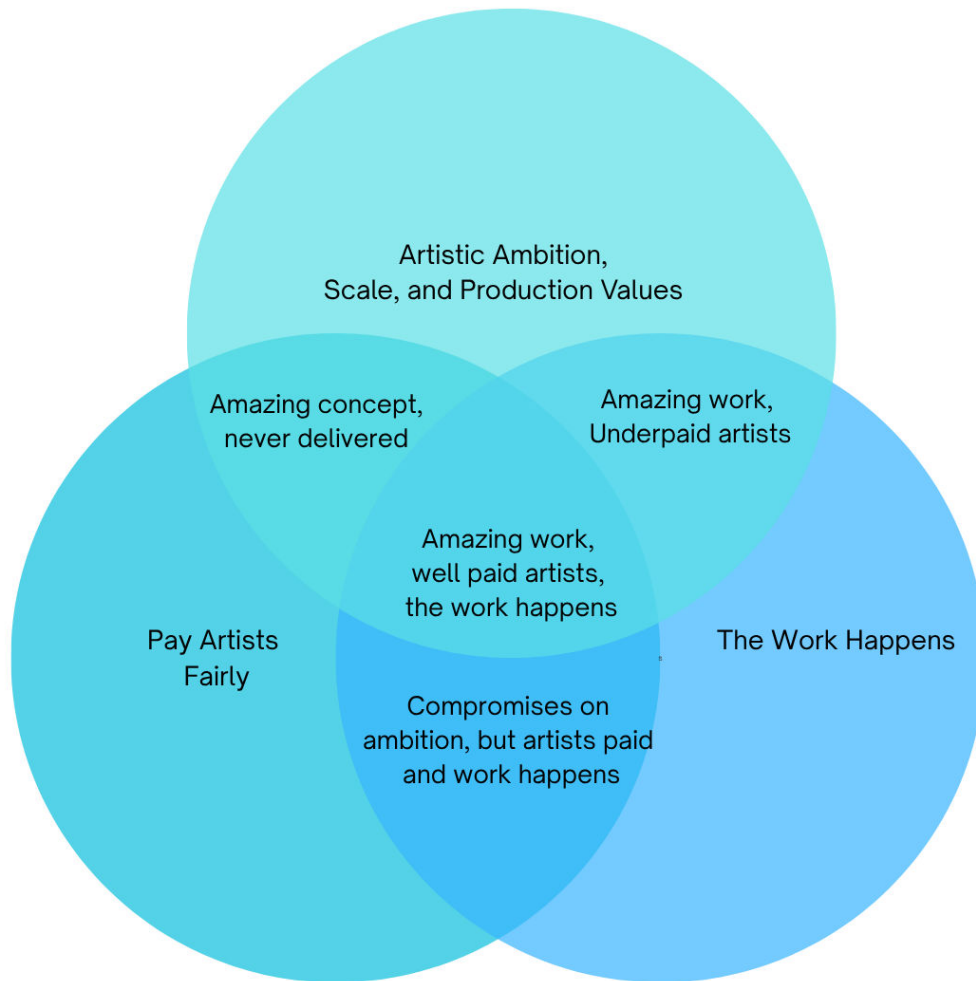
In particular, the upper limits of individual funding awards are not sufficient to allow artists to achieve all of the following:

1. The project maintains high standards of artistic ambition, scale, and production values.
2. Artists and crew are paid fairly.
3. The work actually happens.

Similar to the triangle of “good, fast, and cheap” (also known as the triple constraint, the iron triangle, or the [project management triangle](#)), the artist is forced to choose two goals to prioritise, and compromise on the third.

A project can maintain artistic integrity, and pay its team fairly, but never see the light of day.
Or a project can maintain ambitions, and make it to full production, but underpay its artists.
Or a project can pay its team fairly, and make it to full production, but underdeliver artistically.

This is illustrated in the following Venn Diagram:



The central utopian position is currently very difficult, or even impossible, to achieve under current available funding for Circus, Street and Spectacle arts.

Appendix A – Notes on calculations & national figures

As of 1st January 2025, minimum wage in Ireland is €13.50 (see [Citizens Information: Minimum Wage](#)).

The average number of hours worked per week is 39.

There are 52 weeks in a year.

Therefore a year's income for a full-time job on minimum wage is roughly $€13.50 * 39 * 52$, which is €27,378.

The national living wage (see [Citizens Information: Living Wage](#)) will be €14.75, and is intended to represent 60% of the median income. A year's income on a full-time job on the living wage is $€14.75 * 39 * 52$, which is €29,913.

The Irish national median annual income in 2023 was €43,221 (<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-eaads/earningsanalysisusingadministrative datasources2023/annualearnings/>). Numbers for 2024 are not yet available. If we assume an increase of even 2% from 2023 (the increase from 2022 to 2023 was significantly higher than this: 3.3%), we forecast a figure of at least €44,000 for 2024.

Appendix B - Related Links

- [Review of Pay and Conditions in the Performing Arts Sector in Ireland in 2022](#) - Performing Arts Forum (previously known as Theatre Forum)
- [The Freelancer's Guide](#)



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