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## Northern Ireland artists take centre stage in Brussels

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A selection of Northern Ireland's finest established and emerging artists are embarking this week on a unique opportunity which will take them to Brussels, where they will launch a new international initiative, **The Brussels Platform**.

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**Pictured (L-R) are:** Ulster-Scots performers, Randall Stephen Hall, Barry Tipping and Rohan Young from The Moon Shed band, who will provide an entertaining show on 26th September in the Northern Ireland Executive Office in Brussels.



The Brussels Platform is the result of a collaboration between the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Executive Office in Brussels. Starting on 23rd September and running until June 2012, musicians, writers, dancers, theatre practitioners and visual artists will have the opportunity to showcase their talents at a series of ten monthly events at the prestigious headquarters of the NI Executive.

There they will perform to an international audience, including MEPs and the opinion formers amongst EU representatives in Brussels.

Ulster-Scots artist Randall Stephen Hall, Irish Traditional Music Band Craobh Rua and a Contemporary Art Exhibition containing works from the Arts Council's collection kick off the programme on 23rd September.

The Arts Council has invested £10,000 in funding artists from Northern Ireland to travel to participate in The Brussels Platform.

Roisín McDonough, Chief Executive of the Arts Council, commented:

"This is a great opportunity for our artists to travel to Brussels and showcase their talents to a European audience. The Arts Council has been working closely with the Northern Ireland Executive Office in Brussels to support our artists as they set about forging international careers. We want the rest of world to see that Northern Ireland's arts can shine on the world stage and are capable of standing shoulder to shoulder with the best."

Gerry Mulligan, Head of Office, Northern Ireland Executive Office in Brussels, said,

"The Northern Ireland Executive office in Brussels provides the ideal base to showcase Northern Ireland's Art and Culture on an international stage. The cultural programme which we have developed in collaboration with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, gives us the opportunity to promote, to an international audience, the wealth of creativity and culture which Northern Ireland has to offer. The programme also allows us to build up a strong network of EU contacts with whom we can work with to further our regional interests through EU engagement."

On European Language Day, 26th September, Ulster-Scots singer, writer and poet, Randall Stephen Hall and his band, The Moon Shed, will provide an entertaining show including music from his new CD, *The Wee Wee Man* and a mixture of Irish folk, Ulster Scots, musical poems.

Craobh Rua, a four-piece Belfast based Irish Traditional Music band, will perform a selection of their hits as part of a wider programme for Culture Night. This performance has been organised by the Leuven Institute for Ireland in Europe.

From 23rd- 27th September, an exhibition, entitled, *Contemporary Artists from Northern Ireland*, will showcase works from some of our most established visual artists, including, Barbara Freeman, Gemma Anderson, Kenny McKendry and Andrew Butler.