

# Arts & Disability Ireland



## **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy**

September 2023

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## **1. Introduction**

The purpose of this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy is to express Arts & Disability Ireland's commitment to and ambition for a truly inclusive arts sector which reflects and celebrates the people of Ireland in all their diversity.

Arts & Disability Ireland (ADI) is the national resource and development organisation for arts and disability in Ireland.

ADI uses 'arts and disability' as an umbrella term: it covers all kinds of artistic expression by people with disabilities in all artforms; inclusive experiences for audiences with disabilities; the involvement of arts workers with disabilities; access services; advocacy; and much more.

We seek to create the conditions in which people with disabilities, and the disability community in all its diversity, can participate, practise and access arts and culture in their broadest sense.

## **2. Vision, Mission and Values**

ADI's vision is of an Ireland where people with disabilities can fully experience and contribute to Irish artistic and cultural life on an equal basis with others.

ADI's mission is to use its expertise and leadership role in arts and disability work to bring about full inclusion, access and opportunities for artists and audiences with disabilities in Ireland.

### Values in Action

- ADI knows that full inclusion in arts and culture can't be achieved by our actions or advocacy alone. We believe that it is everybody's responsibility:
- We believe in partnership, collaboration, and everybody playing their part.
- We will play to our strengths and concentrate on the areas of work in which we can be most effective and influential.
- We will act as a connector, linking artists and organisations nationally and internationally.
- We will contribute our ideas and expertise, influencing and engaging with major strategic issues.
- We will use our expertise to give others the knowledge to do their jobs more inclusively.
- We will seek out strategic partners who can assist in achieving our vision.
- Recognising the changing demographics of Ireland, we know that we have expertise to offer as well as things to learn from our partners. Together we can stride towards the vision that will make Irish arts and culture richer, more open, and more inclusive.

### 3. Context

ADI welcomes the opportunity to fulfil its policy commitments under the [Public Sector Duty](#) under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, 2014<sup>1</sup>, which requires all publicly-funded organisations to take positive policy measures to promote equality of opportunity, access and outcomes for all those living in Ireland regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, civil or family status, religion, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller community.

ADI will also be cognisant of other relevant equality and disability related legislation. Additional to Irish legal and regulatory frameworks<sup>2</sup>, ADI will use international human rights instruments including the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities<sup>3</sup> and the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions<sup>4</sup> to extend our policy development beyond the legal framework.

This policy statement should be viewed as the precursor to a comprehensive EDI Strategy which will detail EDI targets, actions and desired outcomes. The Strategy Document will include commitments based on our values and EDI goals, define actions based on priority areas identified through consultation with a broad range of stakeholders and setting out the desired outcomes of these actions to ensure the necessary structures and supports in place to achieve them.

The implementation of the EDI Strategy will be included as a specific objective in ADI's new strategic plan 2024 – 2029.

### 4. Background

Throughout its development, ADI has been committed to the values and principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. The inclusion of artists and audiences with disabilities in the artistic and cultural life in Ireland has been fundamental to all its programmes and activities.

ADI continues to advocate for and aims to ensure that disability inclusion becomes a natural part of the practice of arts organisations and practitioners.

ADI works across all artforms and prioritises key areas for strategic focus.

- ADI works strategically to champion the creativity of artists with disabilities, to promote inclusive experiences for audiences with disabilities and to enhance the disability-related capacity of arts and cultural organisations.
- We use every opportunity to make this happen, in partnership with the arts sector, people with disabilities and the wider communities in which they live and encourage the disability sector to do the same.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2014/act/25/enacted/en/html>

<sup>2</sup> Employment Equality Acts, 1998-2015; Equal Status Acts, 2000-2018; Disability Act, 2005; EU Web Accessibility Directive, 2016; Sign Language Act, 2017; The European Accessibility Act, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.unesco.org/creativity/en/2005-convention>

## **5. Strategic Goals**

ADI's strategic goals demonstrate that working for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is at the very heart of and intrinsic to the organisation.

### **Arts and Cultural Environment**

We will advocate for and aim to ensure that disability inclusion becomes a natural part of the practice of arts organisations and practitioners in Ireland.

### **Artists**

We aim to ensure that Irish artists with disabilities experience no barriers to making art and that their quality work is seen and appreciated within Ireland and in international arenas.

### **Audiences**

We will provide arts centres, theatres, festivals, and galleries with the knowledge to enable audience members with disabilities to engage with and enjoy all artforms on an equal basis with all other audience members.

### **Organisation**

ADI will use the existing trustee and staff resource where it is most effective to achieve our aims whilst also seeking to recruit a more diverse skill set at trustee level and recruit at staff level to make the organisation fit for the future.

## **6. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Priority Areas**

Cognisant of their current organisational capacity and where they can be most impactful, ADI has identified a number of priority EDI areas for exploration which will be expanded and defined through the EDI Strategy consultation process.

### **(i) Share Expertise to Influence: Ensure the Access in Inclusion**

ADI has a wealth of knowledge, history and skills given its position as a leading voice in the sector. While acknowledging significant progress has been made, the importance of improving access remains central to ADI's work.

- ADI would like further engagement with the sector to ensure that efforts and actions around inclusion adequately reflect the importance of **access** in all its forms.

### **(ii) Socio-Economic Status: Practical Support for Artists**

All of ADI's efforts are grounded in the realities of the lived experience of artists with disabilities while being cognisant of current legal and regulatory frameworks.

- Implementation of a new auspicing agreement, with advice from The Arts Council, to support artists with disabilities to better navigate the disability related benefit systems by nominating organisations to hold funding to be spend out on their behalf.
- ADI will continue to provide accountancy advice to artists appealing social welfare decisions.

### **(iii) Identifying Research: Gender, Race & Membership of the Traveller Community:**

In line with the Arts Council's monitoring of all its externally managed funding schemes and the National Traveller & Roma Inclusion Strategy<sup>5</sup>, ADI has collected Arts and Disability Connect applicant data since 2020. Pavee Point continue to campaign for the inclusion of ethnic identifier in routine administrative data systems as a tool to inform service planning, challenge discrimination and promote inclusion.

ADI believes that research is now required across the Arts Council's funding schemes to analyse and interrogate the data collected to date. ADI will conduct its own research to:

- provide accurate baseline information about recent applicants
- understand the current reach of the funding schemes to marginalised communities
- provide opportunities for comparisons across funding schemes
- allow measurement of any future progress
- take a comparative approach to wider relevant data and research to guide our actions.

### **(iv) Partnerships for Enhanced Engagement: Age & Opportunity**

Harnessing the power to partnerships to widen the sphere of influence to improve access to the arts for older people with disabilities nationally.

Continue partnership with Age & Opportunity to deliver Disability Equality & Older People Training designed to support and advise partner organisations and venues to engage older people with disabilities.

### **(v) Organisational Capacity: Board Representation**

Representation on ADI's Board by artists with disabilities remains a challenge, as it excludes them from availing of funding and other opportunities offered by ADI. ADI will complete a skills audit and recruitment of new Board members, whilst introducing a more effective governance programme. As part of its Strategic Plan 2024 - 29, ADI are committed to exploring alternative approaches that will allow people with disabilities to participate in and influence the organisation without being denied opportunities.

ADI will continue to review best practices for hybrid working for staff so as to attract and retain a broad pool of talent and skills.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/primarycare/socialinclusion/about-social-inclusion/researchreports/national-traveller-and-roma-inclusion-strategy-2017-2021.pdf>

**Definitions** from Project Arts Centre Towards EDI Policy 2021 <sup>6</sup>

We see **Equality** as an outcome, towards which we are working – a world where people have the same access to opportunities and resources regardless of their identity or background. However, we also see clearly that the world is not equal, and resources cannot always be shared in equal measure if we want a fair outcome. We understand **Equity** to be integral to the process of being fair.

We understand **Diversity** to be a recognition of the wide range of perspectives, approaches, practices and lived experience that co-exist in society. In the context of our work, we see Diversity as an enrichment of everything we do. We see homogeneity as the enemy of creativity.

We understand **Inclusion** to be the practice of welcoming Diversity in all we do. When we talk about an inclusive organisation, we are talking of a structure and a culture that is - flexible, responsive and increasingly reflective of the many different identities and perspectives in the world around us.

**Implementation**

This Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy is due for review in September 2025, or as soon as possible following any material change to the policy.

Signatories to this policy:

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<sup>6</sup> <https://projectartscentre.ie/towards-equality-diversity-inclusion/>