



Cultural Diversity and the Arts

Policy and Strategy

2010

Cultural Diversity and the Arts

The Arts Council has developed this policy and strategy for cultural diversity in the arts in order to inform its work over the coming years and to support the wider arts sector in developing its thinking and practice.

The policy and strategy are underpinned by the research report *Cultural Diversity and the Arts* (2009), which was commissioned by the Arts Council in partnership with the Office of the Minister for Integration/ National Action Plan against Racism (NPAR) and co-ordinated by Create the national development agency for collaborative arts.

The Arts Council has already begun to implement the policy by undertaking the following actions in 2010:

- The publication of a pamphlet entitled *Cultural Diversity and the Arts – Language and Meanings*. This is intended as a resource for the arts sector and other relevant parties, and as a means of informing and enriching public discourse about culturally diverse interaction, collaboration and experimentation in the arts, based on shared understandings of relevant terms.
- The introduction of a specific cultural diversity strand to the Local Partnership Scheme in order to foster intercultural capacity at local and national level through strategic collaboration among local authorities and with arts and non-arts organisations.
- The piloting of a cultural diversity audit on selected Arts Council schemes including the Artist in the Community Scheme; Deis Scheme; Small Festivals Scheme; Young Ensembles Scheme and the Local Partnership Scheme.

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1. Background

In *Partnership for the Arts – Arts Council Goals (2006 – 2010)* the Arts Council named 'diversity' as a core value that would shape its work over the lifetime of the strategy. In this context, the term included diversity of arts practice; the range of ways in which artists make work; the range of ways in which people experience the arts; and the increasing cultural diversity of our society.

In 2007, the Arts Council and the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform / National Action Plan against Racism (NPAR) entered into partnership to carry out a significant research project *Cultural Diversity and the Arts*. The purpose was to inform the development of a policy and action plan through which the Arts Council would support culturally diverse practice into the future. The Arts Council engaged Create - the national development agency for collaborative arts - to manage the extensive research and consultation phases which combined national and international desk research, consultation, analysis, and delivery of a report and recommendations. The research process took place throughout 2008 and the final report was submitted to the Arts Council in 2009.

2. Findings

1.1. *Demographics:*

The report outlined a picture of positive net migration to Ireland between 2005 and 2009, a striking contrast to a long history of emigration. Statistics available at the time suggested that approximately 10% of those ordinarily resident in Ireland were nationals of other countries, with approximately 6% of these being non-white and non-anglophone. Apart from UK citizens, the largest groups were from Poland and Lithuania but other significant population groups included those from China, Germany, Nigeria, Latvia and the U.S. Although 188 different nationalities were identified, many were represented by small population groups – often less than ten individuals. According to the census in 2006, a further 0.5% identified themselves as Irish Travellers although Pavee Point and the Irish Traveller Movement would argue that the real number is considerably higher.

1.2. *A culturally diverse society*

Despite the increase in diversity in Irish society in recent years, the research pointed out that the country has always been culturally, ethnically, and religiously diverse with pluralities existing within and between individuals in Irish society as well as within and between different societies. The research rejected the notion that any population group could be seen as being fixed and stable with biologically determined ethnic or racial characteristics.

1.3. *Barriers to cultural diversity and the arts in Ireland*

Alongside the wider socio-economic, educational and health factors that shape the Irish experience of making, interpreting, or participating in the arts, there is a range of barriers specific to the area of cultural diversity. Such barriers limit the capacity of the arts sector to engage with diverse artists, artforms and arts practices, and can preclude or hinder members of minority ethnic or cultural communities in participating fully in the arts. They include:

- 2.3.1. *Lack of knowledge and capacity among those charged with arts provision at both local and national level* – Arts providers find it difficult to access data on local populations and to devise effective ways to reach, communicate and support diverse individuals and groups. Consequently, there is a paucity of effective communication taking place between arts providers and individuals from minority ethnic and cultural communities. Little is available in the way of policies and guidelines for promoting intercultural arts practices or for reviewing existing provision with an intercultural lens. In addition, many arts providers acknowledge a lack of knowledge, exposure and critical engagement with culturally diverse arts practices beyond Western Europe and North America.
- 2.3.2. *Lack of clarity about the arts agenda vis-à-vis the cultural diversity agenda* – some arts providers are wary of getting overly involved in work with a cultural diversity agenda for fear that the arts element will be lost, or effectively subsumed in the larger issues of integration, anti-racism or social inclusion. There is a wariness of collaboration with groups or organisations that might want to use the arts as a tool for social change without regard for: the quality of the artists or arts practices involved; the propensity for intercultural arts work to be complex and challenging; and the limited resources available to the arts sector.
- 2.3.3. *Lack of funding and support for intercultural arts practices* – there is a lack of creative spaces to develop innovative intercultural arts practices and a lack of training, mentoring and continuing professional development for minority ethnic practitioners. Translation and interpretation services are rare in the arts and there is a lack of funding for work produced in languages other than English or Irish
- 2.3.4. *Overdependence on short term projects and ‘celebratory’ approaches* – there are very few examples of long-term sustainable approaches to building relationships and capacity for intercultural

interaction, enquiry and practice within the arts in Ireland. Instead, there has been an over-dependence on short term projects and 'celebratory' approaches.

3. Principles underpinning the Arts Council's approach to cultural diversity and the arts

In considering the research, the Arts Council identified and extrapolated a small number of core principles, which will underpin its approach to supporting cultural diversity and the arts. These principles may also help inform the development of good practice in the arts sector.

3.1. Cultural diversity as an enrichment of the arts

The Arts Council recognises the potential enrichment of the arts sector in Ireland through intercultural interaction, equality of opportunity, understanding, respect and integration (as opposed to assimilation). This is not to gloss over the potential for disagreement and debate, or the existence of individual and institutional racism but rather, to embrace the potential for re-invigorating arts practices and artform development.

3.2. An intercultural¹ approach

The Arts Council recognises the value of adopting an intercultural approach towards arts provision in Ireland, promoting inclusion and interaction between individuals and groups from different cultures and recognising the need for two-way negotiation and change. This is in keeping with the approach taken by the Office of the Minister for Integration.

3.3. Plurality

The Arts Council recognises that Irish society is made up of different strands and identities, which are constantly changing. Diversity of ideas, practices and experiences will enhance the Council's ability to support the development of the arts in Ireland more effectively but strategies for inclusion need to be nuanced so as, in particular, to avoid tokenism e.g. individual artists or audience members should not be expected to act as representatives for their ethnicity or culture.

3.4. Cultural diversity as an adaptive process

The Arts Council recognises that the process of interaction between cultures involves change for all involved, not just for those from new or minority communities. In the arts, this may involve the reconfiguring of what is known or

¹ The term 'intercultural' is used in accordance with the meaning outlined in the Arts Council pamphlet *Cultural Diversity – Language and Meanings* (2010)

assumed about artforms or arts practices, the people who make art and the ways in which they are supported.

4. A five year strategy

The Arts Council has developed a five year strategy, which aims to enhance its own capacity and the capacity of the arts sector in the area of Cultural Diversity. It involves actions and commitments in three overlapping areas including:

- Structures and Operations
- Resources and Supports
- Partnerships

4.1 Structures and Operations

Between 2010 and 2014, the Arts Council will establish a cross-departmental working group to:

- Implement and evaluate the Arts Council's cultural diversity policy, across all areas of the Arts Council's work
- Initiate a rolling advisory panel to ensure the inclusion of minority organisations and practitioners in the implementation and evaluation process
- Organise and oversee the delivery of cultural diversity training to all staff at all levels
- Oversee the introduction of more comprehensive recruitment and selection policies and procedures in line with legislation and best practice, in order to facilitate the gradual diversification of staff members, advisers and assessment panels

4.2 Resources and Supports

In 2010 - 2011, the Arts Council will:

- Publish the final research report, *Cultural Diversity and the Arts* on its website alongside the subsequent policy and strategy document
- Publish and launch a pamphlet entitled *Cultural Diversity and the Arts – Language and Meanings*, as a resource for the arts sector and diverse publics, and to inform and enrich public discourse about culturally diverse interaction, collaboration and experimentation, based on shared understandings of relevant terms
- Begin a two-year pilot programme, which audits specific elements of cultural diversity in selected Arts Council schemes as a means of informing good practice across all grants and awards in the future

- Introduce a two-year cultural diversity strand to the Local Partnership Scheme in order to foster intercultural capacity at local and national level through strategic collaboration among local authorities and with arts and non-arts organisations

In 2012 - 2014, the Arts Council will:

- Initiate a review of all grants and awards as a follow-up to the cultural diversity audit of selected schemes in 2010-2011
- Organise a national conference or forum on *Cultural Diversity and the Arts* in order to review developments, disseminate learning, promote good practice, and showcase work
- Support the development of guidelines, case studies, advice and resources for the arts sector particularly in the area of self-auditing, strategic planning and intercultural exchange and experimentation in the arts

4.3 Partnerships

During the period 2010 – 2014, the Arts Council will identify and pursue opportunities to work in partnership with specific local authority arts officers, client organisations and other key organisations and agencies (such as Culture Ireland and the Council for National Cultural Institutions) in order to:

- share research, information, guidelines and case-studies in the area of cultural diversity
- devise supports for effective communications as a means of enhancing access and participation of minority cultural and ethnic communities in all aspects of the arts
- promote the diverse character of the arts in Ireland and complicate the simple, celebratory image of this diversity
- explore existing mechanisms such as magazines, festival programmes, and other critical forums for diversifying and enriching critical discourse around the arts in Ireland
- extend existing training opportunities, placements, networking and mentoring programmes to assist arts managers and practitioners from minority ethnic communities to access professional opportunities and peer critique, and identify additional capacity building initiatives required
- extend networks of cultural co-operation and exchange that will raise awareness and understanding of contemporary professional arts practices from Africa, Asia, Latin America, Middle East and Eastern Europe