

# Artist in the Community Scheme

## Cultural Diversity Strand

**Research Report:**

***Creating a Welcoming Environment, Stimulating Diverse Art***

Evgeny Shtorn, MSc

Cultural Diversity Researcher

2 Curved Street  
Temple Bar  
Dublin 2  
(01) 4736600

[support@create-ireland.ie](mailto:support@create-ireland.ie)  
[www.create-ireland.ie](http://www.create-ireland.ie)

April 2020



**create** national development  
agency for collaborative arts



## Contents

Foreword.....	3
Summary .....	5
Evgeny Shtorn Biography .....	6
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Glossary .....	8
<b>2. Methodology</b> .....	<b>9</b>
Glossary .....	10
<b>3. Analysis of Applications</b> .....	<b>12</b>
Glossary .....	12
<b>4. Evaluating the State of Affairs</b> .....	<b>15</b>
4.1. What has been done.....	15
4.2. Ongoing Challenges for Artists with Minority Ethnic or Migrant Background.....	17
<b>5. Future Solutions</b> .....	<b>21</b>
5.1. Retain a healthy critique of positive action .....	21
Glossary .....	21
5.2. Shifting notions of authorship in Collaborative Art .....	23
5.3. More inclusive decision making processes .....	24
5.4. Support stronger coalitions between different communities of artists .....	26
5.5. Practical suggestions from interviewees .....	27
<b>6. Recommendations</b> .....	<b>31</b>
6.1. Enhancement of learning and mentorship opportunities .....	31
6.2. Creation of common spaces .....	31
6.3. Inclusion into decision-making procedures .....	32
<b>7. Conclusion</b> .....	<b>33</b>

## Foreword

The Artist in the Community Scheme (AIC), managed by Create on behalf of the Arts Council, has an eighteen-year history of supporting the artistic ambition and building the capacity of collaborative practices between artists and communities of interest and place.

Cultural Diversity and the Arts has for a long time been part of Create's development work. In 2009, Create co-ordinated the Arts Council's Cultural Diversity and the Arts Research Project, *Towards the Development of an Arts Council Policy and Action Plan*. The research undertaken by Create informed the Arts Council's *Cultural Diversity and the Arts Policy and Strategy* (2010), followed by *Cultural Diversity and the Arts: Language and Meaning* (2010).

There have been several successful projects realised through the AIC scheme that have had a particular focus on cultural diversity. Recently, there has been an increase in the number of artists working in this context area and working in solidarity with organisations and communities to highlight issues of human rights and social justice throughout Ireland.

In 2017, working with the Arts Participation team at the Arts Council, Create began to develop a programme of work with the intention of increasing capacity to engage with and access the AIC scheme among artists and communities from ethnic and other minorities. Cultural Diversity became a separate strand within the AIC scheme, which recognises the changing demographic of Ireland and responds to the fragile conditions and challenging circumstances of displaced artists.

The aim of the AIC Cultural Diversity Strand is to develop artists' capacity, to enable greater access and meaningful participation and to create space to explore the supports required to build an active network of culturally diverse practitioners.

Since the Arts Council's initial investment in the Cultural Diversity Strand in 2017, we have seen a significant growth in the number of artists from minority ethnic and migrant backgrounds that engage with Create, the AIC Scheme and specifically the Cultural Diversity Strand.

In 2018, we introduced three new opportunities for artists within the Cultural Diversity Strand:

- Research & Development Award, with mentoring - for an artist from a minority ethnic or migrant background
- Artist Residency Award, for an artist from an ethnic minority or migrant background – the first residency was offered in partnership with the Fire Station Artists' Studios
- Summer School on Cultural Diversity and Collaborative Practice - the inaugural event was delivered in partnership with Counterpoints Arts

In 2019, this programme of work continued to offer additional opportunities for artists from an ethnic minority or migrant background.

- In 2019, there was an increase of over 50% in the number of applications for funding to work in a cultural diversity context - up from one application in 2017, to 11 in 2018, and 23 in 2019. Of these proposals, eleven were funded, the highest number on record for this context area. In 2020, the growth in the number of applications continued, with ten applications out of a total of 44 (Round 1 only), of which five were successful.
- The *AIC Summer School on Cultural Diversity and Collaborative Practice* in 2019 recorded a substantial increase in the numbers of applications to participate. We attribute this to Create's ongoing work in developing the Cultural Diversity Strand, expanding networks and partnerships and providing improved visibility with a clear online presence.
- In terms of capacity building, Summer School attendees are going on to make applications for AIC Research & Development Awards. Of six such applications, two have included mentors who themselves attended the Summer School and a further two who were recipients of the AIC Scheme Bursary Award (Collaborative Arts & Cultural Diversity and Art & Activism). Round 1 in 2020 had applications from four Summer School attendees; 2 were joint applications from working relationships that were established at the Summer School.

The Cultural Diversity context area is going from strength to strength; the evidence is that the investment is becoming part of the wider AIC Scheme ecology. A significant leap in application numbers, higher success rates, an evolving network and capacity building among artists all signify the value of the Cultural Diversity Strand.

Ongoing research and network building for artists from minority ethnic and migrant backgrounds is crucial to sustain and extend artistic practice in this context area. This research report, undertaken via in depth interviews with applicants to the AIC scheme - 14 artists with migrant backgrounds - reveals many challenges and barriers for artists from minority ethnic and migrant backgrounds to developing and sustaining collaborative arts practice while navigating new cultural perspectives and landscapes.

Áine Crowley

Programme Manager, Arts and Engagement

Create

## Summary

This study is a result of empirical research into the Arts Council's Artist in the Community Scheme Cultural Diversity Strand to support the artistic ambitions and capacities of artists in underprivileged positions, especially those from minority ethnic or migrant backgrounds. It is undertaken against the backdrop of the Arts Council's Equality, Human Rights and Diversity Policy and Strategy 2019.

The aim of this study is twofold.

1. On the one hand, the study evaluates initiatives through the Artist in the Community Scheme Cultural Diversity (AIC, CD) Strand designed to make sure artists in Ireland enjoy the right to create artwork regardless of their minority ethnic and migrant backgrounds.
2. On the other hand, the study offers further steps in this direction to make the art field of Ireland more inclusive.

Methodologically, the study combines two sets of data. Firstly, it offers quantitative calculations of applications for the Cultural Diversity strand of the Arts Council's Artist in the Community (AIC) Scheme, managed by Create. Secondly, the study generated original data from interviews with artists from minority ethnic groups or with migrant backgrounds who had applied to, or were successful recipients of, the Artist in the Community Scheme.

Three major theoretical concepts inform this analysis. They are anti-essentialism, fluidity, and voice. Thus, the study looks at the applications and interviews without preconceptions or assumptions. It acknowledges the changeability of people's experiences. And it makes the most from hearing people's voices rather than advancing the researcher's agenda.

The study concludes that artists with minority ethnic or migrant backgrounds experience issues common with local artists such as a sense of exclusion from art establishment or specific challenges regarding their material needs. They also have specific problems related to their minority ethnic or migrant background such as poor connectedness to art communities, language limitations and lack of practical knowledge.

These issues can be addressed through proposed actions, such as:

1. Enhancement of learning and mentorship initiatives for collaborative practices;
2. Creation of common spaces for networking, sharing practice etc;
3. Inclusion into decision-making procedures with regard to the distribution of resources such as selection panels.

Constant monitoring of the situation with inclusion and everyday administration of diversity policies can be achieved in arts organisations through the introduction of a diversity and inclusion officer such as the ones already existing in many business corporations and universities. Such an officer can be employed in both State agencies and civil society organisations (in this latter case relevant funding should be sought out from the State).

## Evgeny Shtorn Biography

Evgeny Shtorn is a writer, activist, and researcher from St Petersburg. In 2018, he was forced to leave Russia. In 2019, he was granted international protection in the Republic of Ireland. He currently works as a Cultural Diversity Researcher at Create and co-facilitates a project with people seeking asylum '*Something From There*' in the National Gallery of Ireland.

Evgeny's writing has been published in academic journals, anthologies and new media outlets in Russia, Spain, Germany, and Ireland.

As an activist, he has been involved in human rights and LGBT advocacy for almost two decades. He is a co-founder of Queer Diaspora Ireland. In 2020, Shtorn was awarded the GALAs Person of the Year by the National LGBT Federation of Ireland (NXF)

## 1. Introduction

*“By my own example, I want to show to other people that they can also be welcome”  
(Woman, 20-29, Americas)*

This study aims to do two things.

It seeks to highlight successes and pitfalls in current endeavours to ensure greater diversity in Irish artistic communities through the Artist in the Community Scheme (AIC) managed by Create, the National Development Agency for Collaborative Arts.<sup>1</sup>

It also aims to identify actions that will ensure improvement of this work through listening to the voices of those for whom the AIC Cultural Diversity Strand is crafted.

The horizon of inclusive efforts in arts is to make sure that every voice and every culture is included, that everyone in Ireland has an equal opportunity to engage in art, because guaranteeing this opportunity constitutes an observance of human rights.<sup>2</sup> This study is a reflection of the state of affairs in this field, as well as a reminder that more work is to be done.

The study draws from the analytical work already commissioned by the Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon in line with the National Action Plan against Racism (NPAR) and Arts Council Equality, Human Rights and Diversity Policy and Strategy (EHRD):

*“The Arts Council, in everything it does, strives to respect, support and ensure the inclusion of all voices and cultures that make up Ireland today, from all sections of society, from existing and new communities, and from all social backgrounds, ethnicities and traditions.”<sup>3</sup>*

Thus, in proceeding in line with these policy documents, the study encompasses the understanding of diversity as an ultimate value of the Irish society. It also stems from previous work<sup>4</sup> as the study espouses an anti-essentialist approach to identity where the definition of an identity is always open to negotiation and ultimately rests on diversity.<sup>5</sup> This study expands this definition by introducing the ideas of fluidity and strategy and movement

---

<sup>1</sup> See, AIC Programme on Create’s website: <https://www.create-ireland.ie/programme/artist-in-the-community-scheme/>.

<sup>2</sup> Relevant Arts Council policy can be found in 11 different languages on the website: <http://www.artscouncil.ie/equality-human-rights-diversity/>.

<sup>3</sup> Arts Council Equality, Human Rights & Diversity Policy & Strategy, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Heyes, C. ‘Anti-Essentialism in Practice: Carol Gilligan and Feminist Philosophy.’ *Hypatia* 12.3 (1997): 142–163.

<sup>5</sup> See, Cultural Diversity and the Arts: Final Report, retrieved: [http://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/Main\\_Site/Content/Artforms\\_and\\_Practices/Arts\\_Participation\\_pages/CULTURAL\\_DIVERSITY\\_AND\\_THE\\_ARTS\\_RESEARCH\\_REPORT.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/Main_Site/Content/Artforms_and_Practices/Arts_Participation_pages/CULTURAL_DIVERSITY_AND_THE_ARTS_RESEARCH_REPORT.pdf).

into our understandings of identity, society, and diversity.<sup>6</sup> It is – in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s terms<sup>7</sup> – through the voices of artists with migrant background that we learn new insights and challenge predominant narratives.

#### Glossary

*Identity* is a set of traits, beliefs, and expressions that constitute a person or a group.

*Anti-essentialism* is the idea that a person or a group are not supposed to have a specific set of traits, beliefs, or expressions necessary for their identity or identification.

*Fluidity* suggests that identity is not set in stone but changes according to historical, social, political, and cultural circumstances.

*Voice* is a methodological foundation of a study when people’s accounts are given priority in comparison to researchers’ own thoughts.

Hence, another important added value of this study is that it embraces the voices of people who have complex biographies and are currently making art or practising as artists in Ireland. These voices are crucial to hear, because they are themselves witnesses of changes, of inequalities that still remain, and of the positive impact that could be secured for everyone’s benefit. These voices speak from direct experience. The Arts Council’s EHRD policy offers a useful framework to consider these issues as ones of human rights. As an interviewee argues in a truly human rights perspective,

*“There should definitely be more opportunities for migrant artists... Equal opportunities for everyone!” (Woman, 20-29, Eastern Europe).*

Thus, this study is a way to learn from our interviewees about how to facilitate change. It is written together with artists who have contributed by giving an interview articulating current issues in the field and sharing their reflections about the future. The study offers solutions resulting from these conversations, where specific practices to ensure greater inclusion are suggested by the artists with migrant background.

---

<sup>6</sup> Hines, S. (2018). *Is Gender Fluid?* London: Thames and Hudson.

<sup>7</sup> Spivak, G. Ch. (1988). *Can the subaltern speak?* Basingstoke: Macmillan.



## 2. Methodology

This analysis is informed by three major ideas: **anti-essentialism, fluidity, and voice**. All three have been very well developed in academic literature and have gained their momentum in policy debates, as well. Current multifaceted societies require complex methodologies to make sense of developments that are happening right now. The ideas of anti-essentialism, fluidity, and voice fit well to this task.

Create's Cultural Diversity and The Arts 2009 report<sup>8</sup> stressed the importance of an anti-essential understanding of identity when planning policies in relation to cultural diversity and human rights in Ireland. If essentialism sees Irish society as static and homogeneous, anti-essentialism better reflects Irish society by highlighting its multi-composite character. As the authors of the Report stress,

*“‘Irish’ is not presumed to be synonymous with such terms as ‘white’ or ‘Catholic’, but rather potentially inclusive of a plurality of diverse, co-existing identities.”<sup>9</sup>*

The idea of movement and change is crucial in a further exploration of anti-essentialism. While anti-essentialism gives an accurate perspective on the composition of a current society, it does not yet encompass changes that any society is going through. The fact is that societies change – they are fluid, as well as identities. There is no one way of being ‘Irish’ or being ‘migrant,’ because what it means to be one or another is subject to constant redefinition. This is why this study adds the notion of fluidity into the picture to enhance the dynamism of societies and identities.

Fluidity is connected to the experience of migration, too.<sup>10</sup> Migration is characterised by movement. People are understood as migrants when they move from one place to another or when borders are moved to redefine a national community by creating a new state.<sup>11</sup> Movement is, therefore, a crucial characteristic of the experience of migration. Fluidity as a term hints at dynamic changes and includes transformative events of migration. It is about a continuous transformation of the self, one's identity, and communities under social circumstances and the currency of time. These events impact on one's identity by adding new facets through an intersectional life experience.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> See, Cultural Diversity and the Arts: Final Report, retrieved: [http://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/Main\\_Site/Content/Artforms\\_and\\_Practices/Arts\\_Participation\\_page\\_s/CULTURAL\\_DIVERSITY\\_AND\\_THE\\_ARTS\\_RESEARCH\\_REPORT.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/Main_Site/Content/Artforms_and_Practices/Arts_Participation_page_s/CULTURAL_DIVERSITY_AND_THE_ARTS_RESEARCH_REPORT.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Cultural Diversity and the Arts: Final Report, p. 31.

<sup>10</sup> Eng, D. L. (2003). ‘Transnational Adoption and Queer Diasporas’, *Social Text*, 21, 1-37.

<sup>11</sup> Brubaker, R. (2004). *Ethnicity without Groups*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

<sup>12</sup> Collins, P. H. (1990). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. London: Routledge.

## Glossary

*Intersectionality* refers to a situation of overlapping influences of different identities reflected in a single experience.

*Semi-structural interview* is a method of qualitative studies that allows a complex understanding of a situation drawing on people's accounts rather than on quantifiable data that only reflects a static state of affairs.

*Anonymisation* is an ethical requirement in processing qualitative data that removes personal (identifying) characteristics of interviewees.

What ways of learning about such fluid experiences also challenge static essentialist accounts of identities? Does this not all sound too personal and specific? The methodological answer to these questions is the third key element of the approach of this research. It is vital to create conditions for people's voices to be heard, allowing their stories about multiple fluid experiences in order to produce a comprehensive picture of the current situation. Hearing these voices means making sure that what people say is treated as a valuable contribution to an analysis. Therefore, these voices are positioned as equal contributors to this study as are cited theories and previous works in this field. Hearing these voices means listening and building on what is said.

In line with this approach, fourteen artists with migrant backgrounds who currently work in Ireland were interviewed: semi-structural interviews with them were conducted in respect to their experience of practicing art. As one of the interviewees said it was more than just an interview, it was a real, collaborative process:

*"We are having a conversation now – more than an interview, which is really important to kind of exchange ideas and I can really learn from you. You can maybe learn from me, we can learn from each other and that's how we progress – if that's the right word – as artists or as witnesses or as human beings" (Man, 40-49, Eastern Europe).*

The group of interviewees was diverse. It included eight people who identified as women, four as men, and two as non-binary persons. In terms of age, the group represented three cohorts: 20-29 years old (two persons), 30-39 (five), and 40-49 (seven). Finally, they came to Ireland from various places: countries of Eastern Europe (five), Western Europe (three), MENA (one), South-East Asia (two), the Americas (two), and Oceania (one). In order to ensure anonymity, these characteristics are used to identify interviewees when they are quoted.

This group partly reflects the demographic of applicants for the AIC Scheme Cultural Diversity strand in the period of 2019. Therefore, the following brief analysis of these applications serves as the background of this study. For this analysis, 51 applications were examined. The study makes use of a qualitative analysis of these applications in the sections below treating them as additional contribution to the study along with the interviews. Here,

however, I want to highlight the multiplicity and diversity of these applications and demonstrate that during the past two years the AIC CD strand awards attracted the attention of a very diverse community of artists. This analysis of applications is the case in point in the next section.

### 3. Analysis of Applications

Artist In the Community CD Scheme awards are targeted at artists who are disadvantaged in their current position because of (a) migration or (b) belonging to other communities that still do not enjoy full inclusion in the Irish society (for example, the Traveller community). Graph 1 shows the countries of origin of those who applied for the AIC Cultural Diversity Strand awards. The majority of applications come from artists whose country of origin is outside Ireland, 68% to be exact. Among these, countries from all over the world are represented, Nigeria and Pakistan being the top two (8 and 12 % respectively). Applicants had spent different lengths of time in Ireland at the moment of application – ranging from 29 years to 1 year. Therefore, both recent immigrants and full Irish citizens see the AIC Scheme awards as relevant for them.

#### Glossary

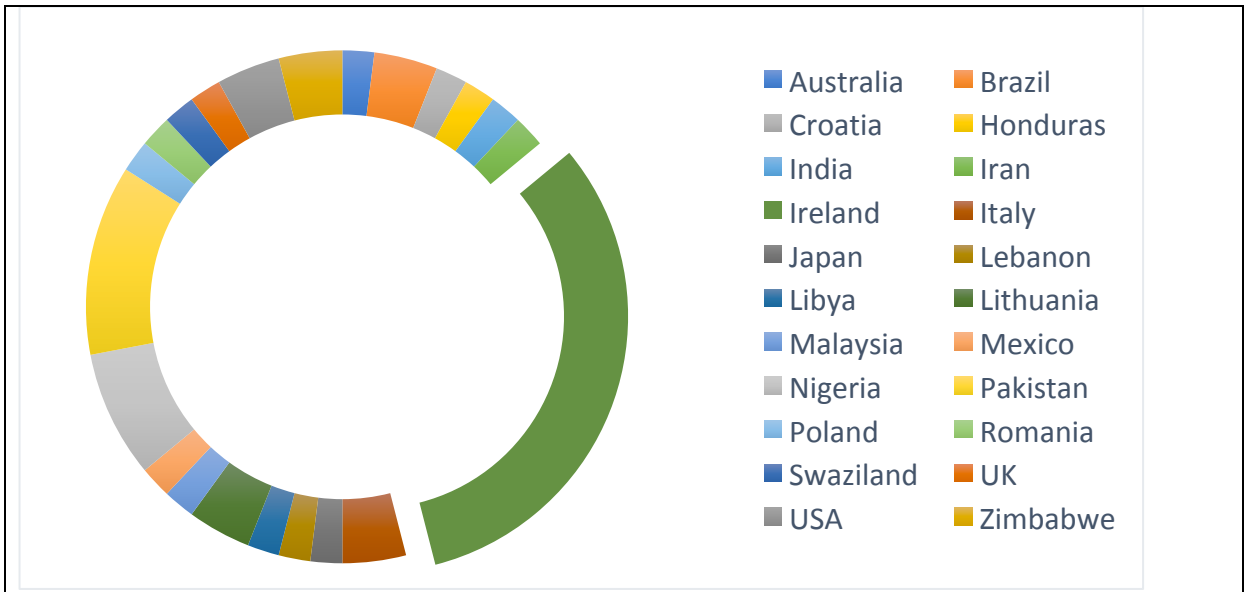
*Privilege* is a societal positionality that characterises one's access to greater resources due to unequal redistribution of advantages in a given society.

*Inclusion* is a policy mechanism that supports full integration of unprivileged populations into a given society.

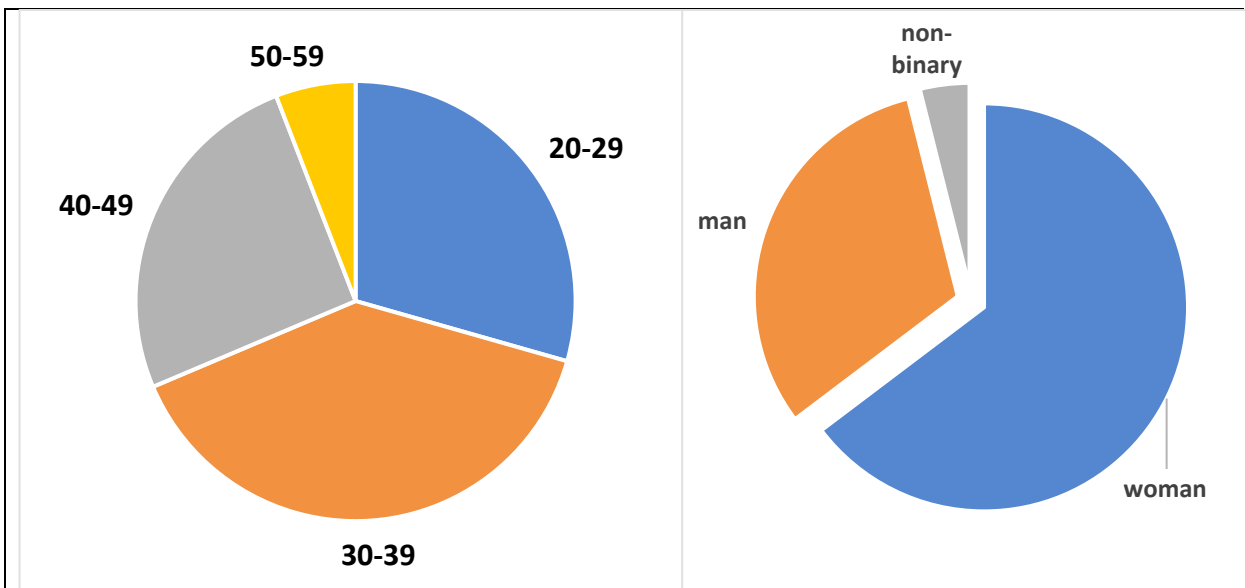
*Migrant background* is experience of moving from one place to another and subsequent loss of advantages as a result of this move.

In terms of age and gender (Graph 2), the applicants are also very diverse. The majority of applications come from people in 30-39 cohort and from women, but there are many applications from younger and older generations of artists and there are a few from people who identify as non-binary. As for community of place, the artists engage in work in many different counties around Ireland (Graph 3). Certainly, Dublin and Cork are among the most frequent in this regard, but they also are the most populous. Finally, the study gives a sense of what kind of art forms being offered by applicants (Graph 4). Leaders here are visual arts, dance, and film.

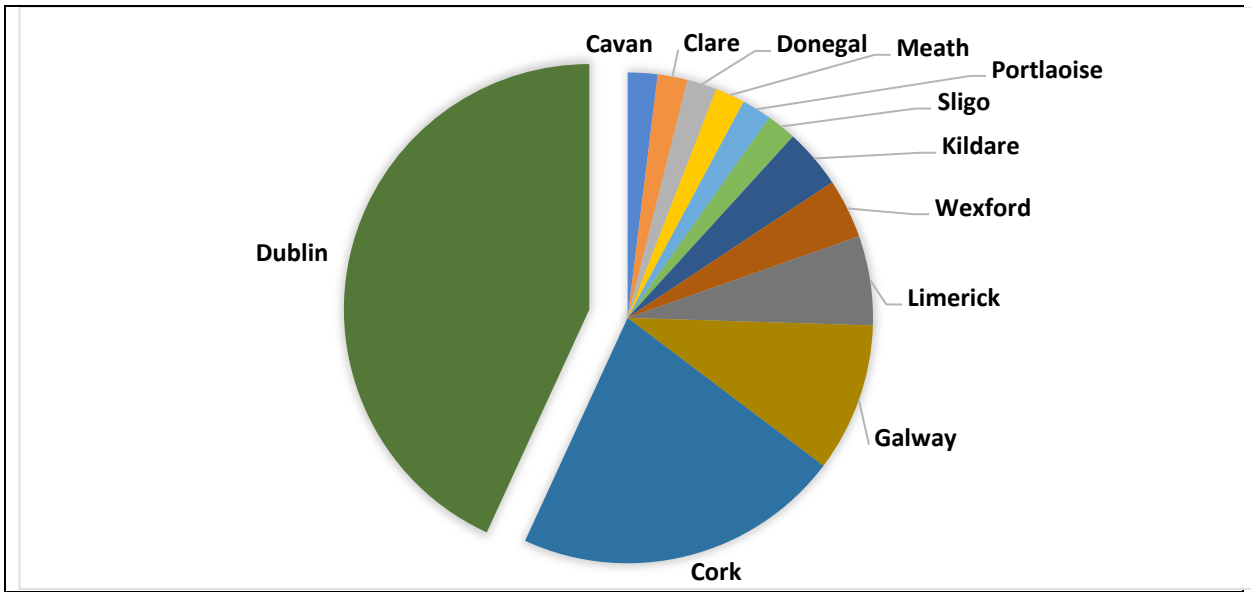
This brief quantitative analysis of applications demonstrates how diversity currently manifests. It manifests in a form of inclusion of artists from many different parts of the world, of different ages and genders. It also means that the programmes successfully cover almost the entire territory of Ireland, including hard to reach communities. Furthermore, it shows how various forms of artistic creativity are included when artists who deal with different genres and styles apply. What this analysis does not show is the substance of inclusion. Qualitative analysis of applications and the interviews are addressed in the following chapter.



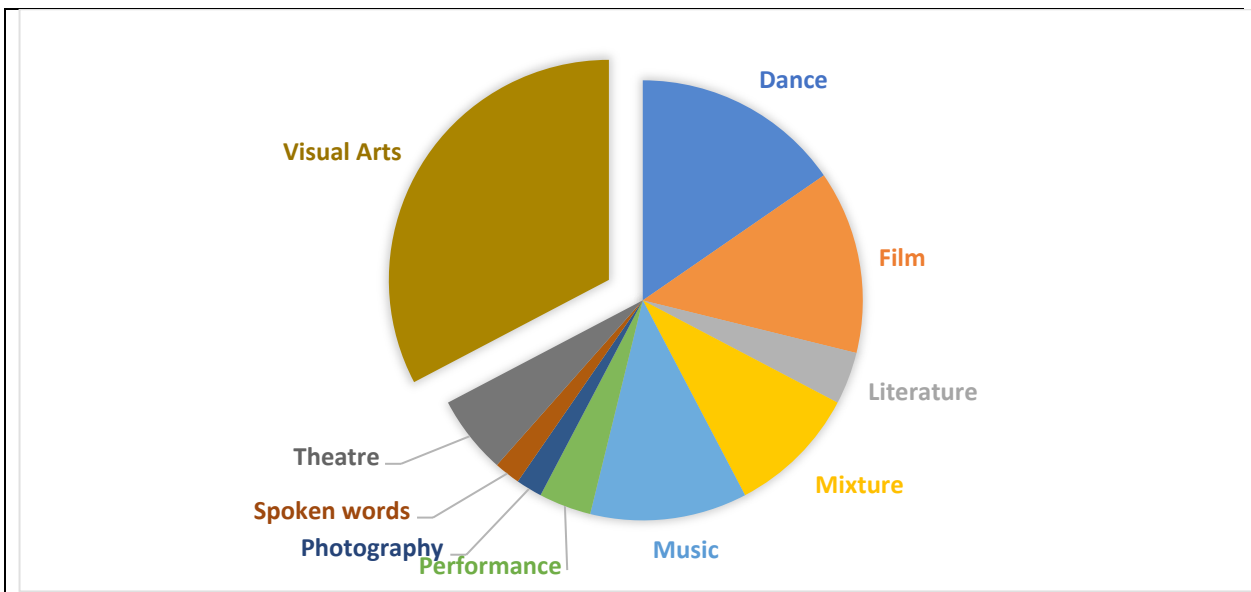
**Graph 1 - Distribution of applicants according to their countries of origin**



**Graph 2 - Distribution of applicants according to their age and gender**



Graph 3 - Distribution of applicants according to community of place



Graph 4. Distribution of applicants according to art forms they create

## 4. Evaluating the State of Affairs

### 4.1. What has been done

In the first part of the analysis of interviews, this study builds upon the accounts of interviewees about the work of AIC Scheme and Create as well as other art agencies in the field of cultural diversity in Ireland. A number of relevant policies and specific programmes such as AIC Cultural Diversity Strand have worked to promote cultural diversity in art. Some of them have appeared recently, the others have been there for longer than a decade. Do they have an impact on artists' experience? One answer to this question is definitely 'yes':

*"The Arts Council has a policy of support to migrant artists and that was very visible in the last two years with Create awards for the artists with the migrant background" (Man, 40-49, Eastern Europe).*

Let us, however, look at the details. Firstly, it is important to stress that just a little bit of support may make a serious difference. Consider this account by a person who is in need of international protection in Ireland and wants to continue his artistic practice at the same time, which is very challenging in such circumstances:

*"The main inspiration is coming from the society, from the environment. I suppose now I am a little bit happy, I have the right to work, I'm working, I'm also working on the projects funded by Create and I got my status. So comparatively, I am happy. So now my art is... I feel personally that a little bit of fun is just penetrating in my writing" (Man, 40-49, South-East Asia).*

As this artist emphasises, even small improvements make a difference. Importantly, the AIC Cultural Diversity Strand is understood as unique in terms of inclusion of people with various backgrounds; there is a perception that there are very few opportunities outside of the AIC Scheme:

*"I found Create very supportive in terms of Artist in the Community Scheme. But other spaces, I haven't felt that there was a lot of support in terms of professional development. Even, it just feels very closed off, especially because I'm not... if I had been younger and maybe a student when I came here..." (Woman, 40-49, Americas).*

What is valued is not simply the money distributed through the AIC Cultural Diversity Strand to support artist practices. What interviewees value is the feeling of community that they get. This sense of community is in such shortage under complicated conditions of societal exclusions and inclusions. One interviewee even emphasised this through the metaphor of family:

*"Create from the very first day it gave me a feeling of a family: it's small, the people I dealt with were very supportive, they went out of their ways [did their best] to be supportive" (Man, 40-49, South-East Asia).*

This feeling of belonging provides for inspiration and as this inspiration is enhanced, artists may finally start doing what artists do, make art:

*“I’d just been working with commercial photographers the last year-and-a-half and then I got the AIC Scheme award and that was pretty cool” (Non-binary, 30-39, Americas).*

The AIC Scheme

*“...gives us the resources that we need to be able to say ‘this is what we can do’” (Woman, 20-29, Western Europe).*

It is important here to emphasise that the availability of various programmes of support alone is not enough: what is vital is accessibility to those programmes created by sensitive approach to and ongoing support work with applicants:

*“I have recommended Create because I found it... I found people really helpful, like, completely honest and helpful in navigation. Because a lot of other organisations just assume that you already know all the things, because they know all the things, right?... I was really upset when I first moved here because I felt like there wasn’t hardly any engagement between arts communities and migrant artists but actually I have seen over the past maybe two years there is a bit of slowly shifting and I actually appreciate that. Obviously more needs to be done but, yeah, there is a marked difference between eleven years ago, and even five years ago and now” (Woman, 40-49, Americas).*

This narrative points to two ideas. Firstly, AIC Scheme recipients value Create’s work. Secondly, the art field in Ireland is changing from closed and exclusive to more open and inclusive. In many other interviews, this latter idea was highlighted – changes are on the way and probably some more time is needed to evaluate final outcomes, but things are changing:

*“I think the Arts Council is developing towards helping more people who are from different cultures, for example, you know, or different backgrounds. So I think that’s all very, very positive. We’ll see in five years’ time what’s going to happen. I think we have to take five years from the beginning of that kind of scheme that Create established to see what are the outcomes. So I think that’s what you’re conducting today, Evgeny, is very important, because we will reflect on that and say what we have achieved, what we haven’t achieved, say what are the strengths, what are the pitfalls” (Man, 40-49, Eastern Europe).*

Not surprisingly, therefore, programmes designed to support artists in need of that support are highly appreciated and valued. In the words of one of our interviewees, this is ‘mind-blowing’:



*“I thought Create was really amazing! When I first like found out about them or when I first saw and read what they were doing, I was like ‘wow this is kind of mind-blowing,’ because I’ve never seen anything alike... no like seriously” (Non-binary, 30-39, Americas).*

AIC Scheme awards, however, are not supposed to resolve all existing problems of artists with migrant background. Even though they provide important relief and support, there are many social issues that require more general changes and the concerted efforts of many actors. In the following section, the study considers these broader issues and then turns to possible contributions in the hand of the Arts Council to address those problems.

#### 4.2. Ongoing Challenges for Artists with Minority Ethnic or Migrant Background

Our interviewees cited multiple instances of experiencing exclusion. These exclusions constitute an important set of circumstances that should be understood. Certainly, the life conditions of many artists are far from perfect:

*“There are some points where, as an artist, I feel myself in chains” (Man, 40-49, South-East Asia).*

The intersectional nature of a range of life pressures make the specific position of an artist with a minority ethnic or migrant background much more precarious, than those of other artists living and working in Ireland. Thus, all troubles mentioned by the interviewees can be divided in two parts: those that are specific to artists with minority ethnic or migrant background and those that are common to artists in general.

Let’s start from taking a closer look at specific problems. The position of an artist with migrant background, for example, is very well described by a notion suggested by one of the interviewees, “outsiderness”:

*“I think my art is outside sort of that, you know, mainstream Irish art, kind of scene, but also I think it reflects on themes of outsiderness, like being an outsider, and, you know, identity, home, and all the things that kind of migrant artists focus on” (Woman, 40-49, Americas).*

This notion of “outsiderness” encompasses many experiences of exclusion. In the texts of applications for AIC Scheme awards, this idea was formulated as the feeling of “isolation” and “being lost.” In the interviews, a migrant background often presupposed marked signs of linguistic exclusions – such as foreign accents, local accents, or poor mastery of the official language:

*“...people wanted to take part in it but they couldn’t because of the language barrier” (Woman, 20-29, Eastern Europe).*

Just like the interviewees, applicants also stressed that mastery of English as the native language or acquaintance with “jargons” significantly influences applicants’ abilities to explain and justify their projects. However, all felt what should matter when deciding on an application is not mastery of language, but the kind of artwork an artist is able to do. Many expressed the view that the language of art sometimes speaks louder than words. Interviewees suggested that whereas current art institutions are focused on spoken languages when they consider funding support, it is felt they should prioritise languages of performance, dance, or visual expression. It was also one of the conclusions of the analysis of applications that artists who can create powerful art are not always capable of writing a comprehensive grant application. One of our interviewees connects the linguistic limitations to the next exclusion that I have identified, exclusion from local professional artistic communities:

*“If the situation continues as it is – so you’re new here, you’re not trusted maybe by the Arts Council, you’re new here, you struggle with the language, you’re new here, you have no contacts because you haven’t studied in NCAD, you don’t have your mates that did... of course you, it’s natural for people to trust someone that they’re familiar with and they know [rather than you]” (Woman, 30-39, Western Europe).*

This narrative describes the situation when someone’s experience has no prior history in a location. The repeated phrase “you are new here” is a good indication of an obvious problem – the situation of migration as a rupture. To give a better sense of this issue, consider another quote:

*“...it took me a while to get off the ground here. When I came here, I was doing a lot of anything and everything. I was basically like starting over” (Non-binary, 30-39, Americas).*

In other words, one’s experience prior to migration is somewhat erased and in order to prove oneself as an artist, one has to start all over again. This means that those who do not have an experience of migration are better off (advantaged and privileged), because, to use the metaphor of racing, it’s clear that those who are not new to the country have a head start:

*“When you come into a country where you haven’t grown up here, your families aren’t connected to certain politicians or decision makers, you come in without that whole network being linked up and I think this is one of the big challenges to being a migrant or a foreign artist. You’re not the daughter or son of someone, you’re not related to someone who’s already in that cultural kind of community and artistic community” (Woman, 30-39, Oceania).*

The lack of connections was also articulated in many applications that were analysed for this study. Applicants do highlight how much they lost after migration and how many efforts need to be applied to restore social capital in a new place. It is not only the absence of one’s

personal history in the society that might affect the chances of an artist with migrant background. It is also the absence or erasure of a collective history of diversity. In this situation, the society is perceived as always already homogenous and whoever does not confirm to this image is perceived as an outsider. In simple words, someone who is not considered Irish is considered an outsider:

*“...it is very hard for people of colour, people who are not white, people who came from different parts of the world to establish themselves as artists in the Irish visual discourse... I think it’s very hard, I think it’s very white, I think it’s very prestige, I think it’s very... almost impossible to reach those white spaces, okay. It took me almost ten years of continuous practice...” (Man, 40-49, Eastern Europe).*

This is why ensuring equal opportunity for everyone means supporting those who are starting from a position of disadvantage. This idea fits well with current human rights guidelines where guarantees of equality mean giving everyone equal chances to participate in creative work regardless of ethnic or other minority background. Comprehensive actions in this regard include targeted policies in relation to marginalised or otherwise unprivileged communities.<sup>13</sup>

The next set of issues relates to experiences common to all artists, not only those with ethnic or migrant background. For many people art is a vocation that does not yield a steady income and therefore it does not provide for a good quality of life. Thus, for many people – with or without migrant background alike – making art is not a fulltime professional occupation: they have to have a separate non arts related job to maintain a livelihood and practice their art in their spare time:

*“...because there is no basic income, I find it hard to find time to produce enough artwork. I can’t be a full-time artist, that’s a problem” (Man, 40-49, South-East Asia).*

In a sense, it brings all artists into one group of precarious workers, as interviewees constantly mention:

*“I guess where we get closer – we, migrant artists, and kind of local artists who do not live with their parents – it’s just basic human things you cannot afford yourself: like, decent housing or food or whatever... It shapes the culture I guess... everyone needs to survive” (Non-binary, 30-39, Eastern Europe).*

Art practice does not mean only actually creating a piece. Art is a job that requires a lot of time to be spent on administrative duties or completing many relevant tasks not directly

---

<sup>13</sup> Cultural Diversity and the Arts: Final Report, p. 36.

connected to the creation of an art piece. For many artists with migrant background, it means applying additional efforts in order to combat the exclusion and lack of support due to the experience of migration. This can be called class positionality as artists occupy this position of precarious workers in societies nowadays. The class positionality comes down to the very material limitations artists face:

*“I think, like, ‘oh, I definitely need to apply to that,’ I know I need to apply but this other thing has to get done or work is asking me to come in early. It’s just like, to be honest, I don’t know how working artists work and, like, work and pay the bills and everything else. I find that really really hard, especially in Dublin with the rent the way it is. I don’t know how any artists are living in Dublin because I’m barely able for it” (Woman, 40-49, Americas).*

Overall, artists with migrant background face specific and more general issues in their practice. These issues relate to their positionality outside of any presumed societal composition, that manifest themselves in terms of language, race, or ethnicity. The problems also arise from the very fact of changing places of residence where one's previous history can be ignored or worst still erased in the new environment. Finally, important limitations occur as a result of the poor economic sustainability of the artistic profession. Many of these issues fall beyond the scope of policies that Create may implement and require interventions by many other state and non-state agencies. However, while working with artists, Create has to take into account all these problems as contextual circumstances. In light of this, what possible solutions, stemming from these interviews are relevant for the work of Create? The next chapter addresses this question directly.

## 5. Future Solutions

### 5.1. Retain a healthy critique of positive action

One of the solutions offered by interviewees is positive action. A policy of positive action relies on an anti-essential understanding of Irish society. As social inequalities and exclusions persist, policy actions should be there to make sure that members of Irish society are treated equally and have equal chances to enjoy being part of the society. In the section that dealt with interviewees' opinions about the AIC Cultural Diversity Strand, it was demonstrated that actions inspired by policies of positive action actually work. Let me now consider the limitations of positive action that were discussed during the interviews. First of all, the identities that are being emphasised as deserving support may sometimes be understood in essentialist terms. This means that anti-essentialism should be the framework to grasp not only Irish identity, but also the identities of applicants. The danger here explained by one of the interviewees:

*“The whole idea of, like, we want a sad asylum seeker to speak about your sad experience... Not, like, we want an asylum seeker who has agency and a political analysis to talk about the politics of Direct Provision... No, that’s exactly it, literally people have been told, like, can you look sadder, when you take a picture, when people take a picture... The stories of people with political agency is not that interesting... You’re not sad enough” (Woman, 40-49, Americas).*

This interviewee suggests that there should be no assumptions made about what the experience of being an asylum seeker is. Rather, the job is to listen to asylum seekers and hear them express *their* views of themselves, including in the political domain. Hearing the voices of others is what agency really means. It means tuning support to actual needs. This very same idea stems from analysis of the AIC applications, too. As one of the artists suggests it is important to approach voices in the way they can be heard and not simply ‘give a voice’ or a space to articulate something without anyone listening. Agency is manifested when voices are heard rather than simply uttered. Hearing and listening are both political actions, giving real voice and agency. Certainly, it is beneficial for every artist to be aware of this, but it is especially important for collaborative and socially engaged practitioners.

#### Glossary

*Agency* is having personal choices and the ability to act independently in given social circumstances.

In this sense, the idea of intersectionality helps to attune policies and thinking. Just one identity never describes a person. Among our interviewees, there were people who related to either Irish identity, or migrant identity in Ireland. Yet, they could also simultaneously refer to both identities and also add a more complex intersectional dimension into this picture. As previously noted, class identity (taken here to mean the positionality of precarious arts workers) was of a great importance for many. For some interviewees questions of gender are to the fore. For another, the identity of being a mother was of

crucial importance. Even though most policies may only target one identity category, when considering an individual case, it is important to see applicants from this more intersectional perspective. If a fuller picture is not taken into account, policies may miss their targets:

*“...it’s very, like, ‘oh, well we want to put you in this box,’ and I’m, like, not in that box” (Non-binary, 30-39, Americas).*

Secondly, emphasising certain identity, such as minority ethnic or migrant is crucial for programmes such as the AIC Scheme, because that identity is something, which gives an artist direct access to their community. Furthermore, identity supports artists’ claims for doing collaborative practice with various communities and it also supports the work of an artist from such communities. At the same time, as the following narrative highlights, it is vital to develop the practices of support further so that not just one artist could “professionalise” and be the sole representative of the said community:

*“When I’m there representing myself or my community, sometimes I’m the only one in the room. Sometimes I’m the only Traveller there. And sometimes I must explain and justify different things about my community. And, the word ‘tokenism’ often comes to mind and I have both a positive and negative notion about that. So, when I’m there and I feel like I’m the only one, I’m annoyed because there’s plenty of others that could be there presenting themselves or could be there participating. And I question, why am I the only one? But then I also see it as I can’t fully blame the event-holders or the organisers if I’m the only one that they’re aware of or I’m the only one that they know. And then I think, if I’m the person that gets to open the door for somebody else in my community then so be it. So on the back of that I want to try and create more spaces, more connections, more partnerships where I can get people from my community involved, participating, and showcasing what it is that they do. In both my artistic and educational roles I’m creating and developing new projects where I will be able to create these partnerships, facilitate different workshops and projects that other Travellers will be able to get involved in” (Woman, 20-29, Western Europe).*

This narrative shows that the issue of “tokenism” has both positive and negative effects. On the one hand, highlighting an identity gives a chance to represent an underprivileged group within spaces that usually lack diversity. On the other hand, this very same process may make someone “a professional representative” of that said community. Consider this problem in another words:

*“I think within the policy itself of the Arts Council it needs to be more diversity – not always the same artist. It seems to be that once you get established, they support you all the time and there’s hundreds of artist that are not getting to be supported that way and there’s not enough diversity in who they support” (Woman, 40-49, Western Europe).*

A possible solution to such a problem could be taking a pro-active approach: in this case, it is imperative that organisations supporting and developing artists' professional capacities ensure that they pay ongoing attention to emerging artists, artists of ethnic minority backgrounds and diverse artists so that the field is continually renewed and not only the same artists get resourced. In the analysis of applications, some artists were also representing their entire community and presented themselves as the only interlocutor of that community which is problematic. At other times the artists was clearly positioned as a true collaborator. In yet other instances, an artist was an outsider approaching a community with a more paternalistic attitude. Hence, there are various ways in which artists (re)present their communities and work with them.

Analysis of applications showed this situation clearly when applicants use claims to a particular identity as a simple way of justifying their applications. Critical reflections by the artist on their positionality in relation to the community they intend to work on is usually absent in such applications. Instead what is more common is a sort utilitarian approach to identity politics. Claiming certain identities as the *only* reason to get funding because that particular marginalised group is something that is funded, is one of major problems in this field. It also relates to "ticking boxes" mentioned above when a 'formalist' approach is taken to the understanding of identity without substantial consideration of people's actual experiences. Therefore, constant research of current developments in the field should be carried out by funding agencies to be able to proceed with due caution. What other alternatives to positive action do our interviewees suggest?

## 5.2. Shifting notions of authorship in Collaborative Art

As mentioned previously, art itself is capable of creating the conditions for change, as Jeanne van Heeswijk would put it.<sup>14</sup> Our interviewees especially emphasised the value of more engaged forms of art that Create supports such as collaborative art practices. What are their understandings of collaborative art and how does it lead to vital changes? One understanding offered, rests on an account of searching for commonalities rather than differences in people's experiences:

*"There's no wrong or right way to do things... I'm more interested in the common patterns because I think the common patterns are what bring us together. It's interesting to see the differences in cultural backgrounds but for me it's the common patterns [that are of interest], I don't go into the difference... I like to see what we have in common" (Woman, 20-29, Eastern Europe).*

The very practice of collaborative art is understood as valuable in itself.

---

<sup>14</sup> Stanhope, Z. (2015). 'Questions for Engaging Publics: An Interview with Jeanne van Heeswijk.' In: *Engaging Publics, Public Engagement (Artmatter 1)*. Auckland: Auckland Art Gallery, pp. 11-19.

Analysis of applications also raises the question of authorship. Art is mostly thought of as an individual practice with authorship being claimed by one person. Yet, collaborative art challenges this understanding:

*“You have to leave your authorship to an external and you have to compromise on your aesthetics to an external” (Man, 40-49, South-East Asia).*

To whom does a piece of art created in a community belong? If art is based on someone else’s life stories, do those people who have contributed their story get to claim their authorship of this art? As our interviewees reflected collaborative art is not only about artists collaborating with the communities or with each other, in many instances, it is also about other people getting to be artists:

*“I think if you want to instil the qualities of art into the layman in the street you have to get them involved in the process of making it. And that’s what I think collaborative art is all about, you know. Then they become conscious” (Man, 40-49, South-East Asia).*

In this sense, collaborative art is primarily art for and with the community. This understanding challenges the assumption already described in the previous section when an identity (and the community that is based on it) is assumed as static or unchangeable. On the contrary, collaborative art in this definition of being for and with presupposes absence of any prior knowledge about a given community. Therefore, what is important is to keep one’s mind open and study experiences that may be eventually united under the rubric of ‘a community’. Such an approach is relevant not only for artistic practices, but also for policy in the art field: it includes working together and listening to voices of others, maintaining fluid definition of identities, and paying constant attention to changing realities. As one of our interviewees, reflecting on a project, put it such a collaborative practice encompasses the entire process:

*“...this project is becoming a more collective voice and ultimately – it hasn’t happened yet – but I’d like it to go more in the direction where more people have their own voice seeing in the programme and they have more decision-making in the future” (Woman, 30-39, Western Europe).*

### 5.3. More inclusive decision making processes

The idea of incorporating the voices of artists and people with migrant background in decision-making processes about funding was another important lesson from the interviews. In a more general sense, this idea means a more bottom-up approach as opposed to a paternalistic approach:

*“There needs to be a change at that level where you act in a very practical manner at the decision-making level and also at the support of migrant artists level” (Woman, 30-39, Western Europe).*



As we have seen previously, it is something that Create is already valued for. Nonetheless, details of this idea are worth exploring for further improvements. In terms of the technicalities of implementing more inclusive policies, questioning the ways things are done in the field of art policy – for example, in the allocation of funding was a crucial question for most of the interviewees.

*“Who is judging those awards? What kind of systems are judging those awards? What kind of people? Are the people judging the awards reflecting the participants? Generally, the answer is no. So, until that changes...”*  
(Woman, 20-29, Western Europe).

This sentiment is not simply about the distribution of funds. It has a more profound dimension: as the quote above shows, decision-making groups should represent (“reflect”) the people about whom they are making their decisions. In other words, nothing about us without us, as the famous slogan reads. Consider this statement as an expansion of this idea:

*“The question is, who is making the decisions about the funding, what gets funded or what art is or whether this is going to appeal to an audience? At the moment, the majority is definitely white Irish probably male dominant class people so how can... I mean, this is the question, too, that we need to think about. Who’s making those decisions? What are they looking for?”*  
(Woman, 30-39, Oceania).

Importantly, this quote incorporates intersectional thinking into the problem of democratic representation in the art field as the interviewee emphasises not only citizenship, but also the gender and class of decision-makers. It is further explained by another interviewee:

*“Art is art and people deal with art, people understand what art is and they support this what they feel that needs the support. But, it’s not always as simple, yes. Because, people who work in the offices they come from different cultures. They are... I don’t know how the system works. I know some people from the offices but I don’t know enough about how diverse personalities work in those offices, how much they understand about other cultures and the art that is perceived as art in the places of the origin of the artist that is applying sometimes. Because if there were artists from Far East, I guess, the approach would be very different from European artists”*  
(Man, 40-49, Eastern Europe).

This perspective above questions not only the selection of certain artists as deserving of support, but also the very definition of what counts as art. It is in fact important to have a broader more diverse notion of art when considering specific applications. However, it is only possible to do so if there is a member of a decision-making team who can reflect this and start a conversation about various ways of seeing art from their own or a different cultural perspective. Is this not what cultural diversity actually means?

#### 5.4. Support stronger coalitions between different communities of artists

This report emphasises throughout, that identities are changeable, and that people embrace multiple identities. What difference does this make to the art field? According to our interviewees, this multiplicity is beneficial because it allows artists with migrant background to make bridges to various communities:

*“What you need as an artist is you need connections. It’s not only migrants connecting with migrants. It’s everybody connecting with each other but you need an Irish person to go to these things the same way you need a migrant to go to the Irish things. So and maybe that’s why I don’t feel like I’m Irish but I also don’t feel like I’m a migrant, I’m in an in-between space because I don’t feel like I’m new here anymore because I can be heard and I can be treated like an Irish person for most of the things that I do”  
(Woman, 30-39, Western Europe).*

This quote points to the need for an understanding of fluid identity or changeable sense of self. The identity changes as this person integrates deeper in the Irish art scene. The other idea is this call for ‘melting pot’ spaces where artists with various backgrounds (migrant and not) can form productive collegiate relationships. According to the following interviewee, such connectedness to one another could even form a political coalition between artists with migrant background and local artists in order to fight for common goals:

*“I would say we should come together as artists, whether migrant or native or international or local, and maybe fight for the rights of artists maybe on an annual basic income or something like that to survive and you can do whatever you’re doing full-time. And that will apply to everybody – if an annual basic income is coming, an Irish artist and a migrant artist will get it. And both of us can work” (Man, 40-49, South-East Asia).*

Among the interviewees, there was a demand for greater connectivity between artists. This could come in a form of mentorship at the individual level or in the form of specifically encouraged coalitions. Our interviewees believe that such coalitions may even be created from scratch and come to valuable fruition:

*“The Arts Council should, if I would been given an opportunity to pass some recommendations to the Arts Council in this relation, I would say, make teams. Like, we do in the university classes. So, the group of three, three, three. One migrant artist, one Irish artist, one maybe European and so... make teams... We should not build the walls, we should make the teams. This is the wall, the migrant artist, and the Irish artist. No wall. We all are one team” (Man, 40-49, South-East Asia).*

This suggestion for collaborative coalitions may be taken literally or, as we shall see at a later point, it may be understood as a call to create common spaces where various people who

make art get to hang out together. Such spaces may achieve a variety of goals: from making necessary connections between artists with migrant background, minority ethnic and other artists to providing them with an opportunity to work in a common area. Since many art spaces are understood as exclusive, there is a demand for common space that will be open:

*“It’s very easy to make friends and build as a commune. Things like Create and any Arts Council programmes, which can bring and empower those minority artists – I’m not saying migrant artists, minority artists from every field – bring them together, give them a platform and let them feel like they belong somewhere and can inspire new work and make them very productive. Especially when they go back to their small community, they don’t know what’s happening in the liberal big space of Dublin. And most of the migrant artists are working, very few of them are fulltime artists. They can easily get lost in their daily work and their life and forget about art, unless you just pick them up and pull them into the circle and make them aware: you are an artist” (Man, 40-49, South-East Asia).*

Thus, common spaces are offered as a resolution for many significant difficulties, including offering psychological relief, through collegiate networks and combating isolation. After all, it is not only the professional development of artistic practice that requires support, simple human connection can sometimes make a big difference. These accounts of a wider – coalitional – understanding of identity require us to think more broadly in terms of connections and relationships that may inspire creativity and help integration into local art scenes.

### 5.5. Practical suggestions from interviewees

When our interviewees emphasised the importance of the voices of people with migrant background being heard, they are also suggesting that persons with migrant background should be involved in decision-making processes within the field. The idea of voice is abstract. The idea of representation of the voice in decision-making processes is practical. Now, in this final section, the study focuses on these very practical ideas that the interviewees suggested. Many of these ideas may be very useful in further work and policy changes.

Firstly, the interviewees stressed the importance of learning in order to acquire relevant skills that can help them and other artists new to the country to navigate the Irish art landscape. For many artists coming to Ireland from elsewhere, it is not obvious how one can continue making art because of the very different arts environments they have come from. Learning concerns basic things: how to write a grant application, what opportunities there are, who to talk to:

*“If it was a workshop... that it would be about perhaps tools they might need to... practical things: how to run through applications and how do you do applications? What different programmes or funding opportunities there are? How do you network, where do you go? How do you get yourself out there in Ireland? You have to network*

*with people, engage with organisations. Perhaps make them aware of the different organisations” (Woman, 40-49, Western Europe).*

This kind of learning can be achieved through special introductory courses and also through mentorship programmes. The use of mentorship in art integration programmes is not new, there are good examples of it in other countries.<sup>15</sup> Interviewees pointed out that mentorship brings good results

*“I can say I was very old-school. I never learnt any of these. A few months ago I contacted someone that was offering mentorship and he started telling me all about these residencies and, like, I didn’t know how to do it. I didn’t know they existed, maybe it’s my fault as well. He helped me a lot to understand it. I can say the achievements I had in the last three months are massive, because if you know about them [various opportunities], then you are fine. But I didn’t know how to do that, I didn’t know am I good enough to do that but now I know that I can” (Woman, 30-39, MENA).*

Essentially, explaining how things work in Ireland, is very important and introducing relevant vocabulary for potential applicants is also something very useful in writing grant applications:

*“...writing an application is a skill; maybe I’m very good at creating my work but...” (Woman, 30-39, MENA).*

A different type of solution in this respect would be to come up with an application process that would not put such an emphasis on the quality of the linguistic descriptions, but would in fact tilt the balance towards the other forms of expression, most importantly artistic expressions, the examples of work. Perhaps, as interviewees suggest, application forms could focus less on explaining artistic ideas in English and more on presenting artistic works already done, suggesting a continuation of a particular line of creativity. The language of applications, of grant writing does currently represent one of the major difficulties:

*“They’re not easy application forms. They need a particular type of language. It’s not academic language, it’s not even art language. But it’s a difficult type of language that you need to implement to be able to get a grant. So, the more workshops Create would provide or Arts Council would provide, I think the better, you know. And also very important, not to give the same grant to same artists over and over and over but to give a place for maybe new people... To make it more approachable to people, yeah. I think, dissolving that or diluting a bit of that kind of language or making an application simpler or more kind of friendly-user, user-friendly, would be a*

---

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, New York Foundation for the Arts programme: [https://www.nyfa.org/Content/Show/Immigrant-Artist-Program-\(IAP\)](https://www.nyfa.org/Content/Show/Immigrant-Artist-Program-(IAP)); Mentorship programme for writers in Ireland: <https://irishwriterscentre.ie/products/one-to-one-mentoring>.

*good start... It's very good to dream, sometimes it's all we have!" (Man, 40-49, Eastern Europe).*

Another practical solution that stems from the observations above is making sure all necessary information for artists is available. Interviewees suggested that there should be an online catalogue with all relevant calls for applications presented in an accessible manner, including for mobile devices. They mentioned V-A-I Bulletin in relation to this, so they obviously use it, but at the same time they still feel a need for something else, more accessible, more designed for them or perhaps by them? Such an informational resource could also give a sense of "who is who" here by offering a database of artists. In fact, many artists interviewed as it was demonstrated above, talked about the connections that an artist has to have in order to start integrating into a new artistic environment. But how would one know where the people who can be inspiring are? Consider this excerpt as an example:

*"I would love to break into the international creative arts scene. But I, one, don't know how. Two, obviously, I know it's connections but... where would I start? You know what I mean? And that was my initial research would have been Googling open calls and all that but then I don't know how safe they are, I don't know if I'm just being taken for a ride..." (Woman, 20-29, Western Europe).*

Therefore, a resource with trusted information is definitely needed. It may come in a form of a website or in the form of a community of trusted people, such as the AIC Cultural Diversity Strand recipients:

*"One thing that might change is, it might be interesting to have some kind of interaction with other people who were the recipients of the award [AIC Scheme]. I didn't know what anyone else was doing. I only found out later when I read who got the awards or whatever" (Woman, 40-49, Americas).*

Yet, this kind of informational resource should not be only virtual (a web-site or an alumni emailing list). It can also be a physical space where people could come together to do common work: a reading group, a continuous series of events, or a club of alumni with recurring meetings. In relation to creating informational exchange and getting to know people, this idea surfaced again and again:

*"Let's say, it's a migrant artist space, where people from all over the world who are migrants, who come to Dublin, can meet up at a place or meet up on a virtual platform. Because I know my feeling is that in this community migrant artists do not have art education here, will have very little connection to the art background in Dublin. And to connect, all we have at the moment is just go to these events. And even at those events, you know, one-day events, you don't really connect enough to exchange phone number or things, not so much other than if you are a professional artist and you are looking for a collaborator, then okay, it might work. But other*

*than that, if there is a mutual platform where you can share your work and know that you can just scroll down and find something interesting you can add other than this one-day event. So I would say a place where you can record these people and put them together somewhere rather than scattered events all over the place which most of these people won't be able to go to because they are full-time working, probably have family and all. So mutual space, I would say, if they are really looking for connections, is a good place to get connected and share work" (Man, 40-49, South-East Asia).*

A space such as this described above was projected in different forms by different interviewees: some thought of a shared studio or co-working space; some suggested a space for artists with migrant background, whereas others offered a more open solution to everyone. The general feeling was that there should be a place to come to and meet people at any time; a place where one can work and hang out, exhibit art pieces, or just have a cup of coffee and chat.

Finally, the third practical idea suggested by the interviewees again refers to representation. Since Ireland is increasingly a diverse society this diversity should be reflected in the distribution of public resources for art, our interviewees argue. Some ways of doing so are discussed above in relation to hearing marginalised and unprivileged voices in decision-making processes and constantly monitoring current developments in social diversity and art. Another approach is to allocate "quotas" when deciding on the distribution of resources so that no one was left behind:

*"If you're an artist you're an artist, it doesn't matter where you come from. All you need is access to the opportunities, training, learning. I think ideally what is best is to mainstream that effort. If there is a programme, make sure that migrants are aware of it and that a percentage of the opportunities is given to migrants, that it represents the country and making sure they are represented in the art scene and the art opportunities... I think there has to be a percentage... So if the funding for bursary for artists, make sure that fifteen per cent of the artists are migrants and there's a good variety of representation" (Woman, 40-49, Western Europe).*

These suggestions may serve as a basis for further developments of comprehensive diversity policies in arts and for the implementation of such policies. There is no one solution to any problem. There is no solution that works best in every circumstance. Thus, attentive listening and hearing of the voices of those who are targeted by the said policies is a right way to proceed. It is also vitally important to constantly monitor implementation of the policies and to make changes sensitive to current realities.

## 6. Recommendations

This study presented an analysis of applications to the AIC Cultural Diversity Strand and original interviews with artists who were awarded under the AIC Scheme. I learnt from these interviews about the achievements of the programmes and about problems that they still face.

The analysis points to three different areas where the work being done can be enhanced:

### 6.1. Enhancement of learning and mentorship opportunities

Policies that target diversity in art are based on identity categories, but to make them work they should also advance collaborative art practices and anti-essentialist understanding of these identities. Collaboration is understood as work with communities and sharing of authorship.

Disadvantaged and underprivileged artists who are from an ethnic minority or migrant background require additional attention and support in order to be fully integrated into the local art scene in Ireland. This means that special courses or workshops should be available for them to orient themselves in what is an unfamiliar scene of local art practices.

Learning about how things operate in the Irish art scene also means being guided by people who are already knowledgeable in it. This guidance may take a form of mentorship to transfer practical knowledge from more experienced artists to newcomers.

### 6.2. Creation of common spaces

The lack of common spaces where artists may engage in meaningful networking is an issue to be addressed through policy actions. Artists with migrant background, as well as local artists may benefit from greater exchange of ideas in common spaces.

One way to create common spaces is to use technologies that facilitate the accumulation of relevant information on a website. Such a website would host a database of calls for applications, names of artists and art works. A virtual space could unite recipients of the AIC Cultural Diversity Strand to facilitate exchange of information, collaboration and mutual peer-support.

Another possibility is to have a physical space for continuous gatherings. Such a space could be used to create a reading group, co-working, or alumni club depending on available resources. Its major feature is to be re-occurring rather than occasional.

### 6.3. Inclusion into decision-making procedures

Decisions made about artists with minority ethnic or migrant background should incorporate their own views and voices.

Inclusion of artists with minority ethnic or migrant background into decision-making bodies may come in various forms. For example, they can be consulted or they can get a permanent position in a relevant committee. There might also be quotas to make sure disadvantaged artists get some support by default.

Another way to make sure relevant voices are listened to is to continue monitoring and engaging in research on diversity in the art field in Ireland. Studies, surveys and other analytical work should be done frequently to ensure that policy and its implementation is appropriate to the situation on the ground.

Overall, the report reflects a positive picture, but also gives a sense of the work that needs to be done. Another recommendation would be to create the position of a diversity and inclusion officer who would administer implementation of relevant policies in this field in the Arts Council or relevant agencies.



## 7. Conclusion

Artists with minority ethnic or migrant backgrounds are supported through relevant policies of the Arts Council and funding streams. However, they also still experience many exclusions because of their underprivileged and isolated position in a new society. Therefore, the continuation of the AIC Cultural Diversity Strand is crucial to ensure that these artists enjoy the same access to the art field in Ireland as their Irish peers.

The major objective of the diversity policies for the arts is to show artists that they are welcome and that they can participate fully in the Irish arts and cultural landscape. These policies fight isolation, outsidership, lack of community and connections, exclusion, and other negative experiences that stem from occupying an underprivileged position in a society. Instead, these programmes empower, represent, give voice and create the conditions for voices to be listened to, provide opportunities, and in many other ways ensure that the underprivileged positionality will not affect artist's ability to make art. Programmes such as the AIC Scheme and Cultural Diversity Strand in particular are not there to solve all problems in life. However, they are effective solutions to many troubles that artists with minority ethnic and migrant background have.

The study is made up of many voices of applicants to the AIC Cultural Diversity Strand and – most importantly – of the voices heard in the interviewees with artists from ethnic minority and / or migrant background, who all have been supported through the AIC in the past. People are different and we all have different views on given issues. This study combines multiple voices in unison to demonstrate that a lot of good things have already been done but that many more problems still require our attention.