

# The Arts, Cultural Inclusion and Social Cohesion

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## Introduction

The National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) is a social partnership organisation which advises the Government on policies to achieve greater equality and social inclusion. This leaflet summarises its 35th report, *The Arts, Cultural Inclusion and Social Cohesion*, which looks at ways to encourage greater access to and participation in the arts by everybody.

## Why focus on the arts and inclusion?

The arts has many benefits for both individuals and society.

- The arts provide us with inspiring ideas and new meanings.
- They symbolise aspects of the world, and can express meanings for communities and groups, through for example pictures or plays about important events.
- Through the arts, children can develop a range of skills, self-confidence, and ways to work better with others.
- Arts events bring people together.

However, taking part in the arts in Ireland varies depending on your level of education, socio-economic status, the area in which you live, and your age, as some of the figures opposite show.

There are variations also in the type of arts event which people attend. Those on higher incomes are three times more likely to go to classical concerts, and twice as likely to go to plays, and art exhibitions.

Fewer people still participate in making art – such as playing a musical instrument, singing, painting or drawing – than attend arts events. 85% of people went to an arts event in the last year, while only 19% had made or created art. Again this varies for different groups.

## Percentage of people attending any arts event<sup>2</sup>, 2006

### By occupational class<sup>3</sup>

— DE	71
— C2	84
— ABC1	93

### By income

— Under €30,000	70
— Over €30,000	92

### By educational level

— Primary	50
— Attended secondary	68
— Completed secondary	89
— Third level	96

## Percentage of people creating/doing art, 2006, by occupational class

	DE	C2	ABC1
Created/ actively participated in the arts	15	17	21

2. This includes plays, classical concerts, art exhibitions, ballet, trad/folk music, rock/pop music, mainstream and art-house film, street theatre, musicals, variety shows, stand-up comedy, circus, contemporary dance, other dance, jazz/blues, country & western music, world music, other live music, readings and 'other' arts events.

3. ABC1 includes the upper middle class, middle class and lower middle class; C2 is made up of the skilled working class; and DE of the semi-skilled and unskilled working classes.

Barriers which prevent people accessing the arts include:

- lack of time
- family commitments
- economic costs
- poor transport
- lack of literacy
- social and psychological barriers.

So this NESF report examined the supports, financial and otherwise, for more people to take part in the arts and ensure that the benefits are more fairly shared by everybody in our society.

## Findings – Legal and policy support for greater inclusion in the arts

Some legislation and policy documents encourage greater participation.

- Since 2003 legislation requires local authorities to support both social inclusion and the arts.
- However, key policy documents such as the *Strategy Statement of the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism*, and the *National Action Plan Against Poverty and Social Exclusion*, do not have a clear policy to broaden participation by all in the arts. Although this is referred to in these documents, follow-through in terms of concrete actions and targets is lacking.
- But the action plans for a number of arts organisations contain more activities to encourage greater inclusion in the arts. These plans include *Branching Out* for the library services and *Partnership for the Arts* by the Arts Council.

## Findings – Financial support for greater inclusion in the arts

State funding is provided for greater inclusion in several ways.

- 1) **Mainstream arts organisations**, such as the Arts Council and the national cultural institutions, provide funding for outreach programmes in schools and the community, for example.

However, there are not many specific budgets for this, and where these exist, they are often small. And in fact none of the mainstream arts organisations are required by any national policy or legislation to fund programmes to promote greater inclusion in the arts.

- 2) State funding to support more participation in the arts is also provided through the **local authority services**, in particular the library and arts office services.

- Since the early 1990s, many new libraries and arts centres have been built throughout the country.
- A number of pilot programmes have also been set up to encourage greater participation in library services and arts events by groups who have not done so in the past.
- Increased numbers of arts officers have also been employed.

However there is little funding and few staff specifically for this work. In the arts offices, there is also little strategic co-ordination of the work carried out, and little data on who uses their services.

- 3) Other State funding supports social inclusion in the arts through the **Department of Education and Science**.

- A new curriculum on the arts is being implemented in primary schools.
- There is funding for school libraries, with extra support for those in disadvantaged schools.
- Youth work programmes support the arts outside school, particularly for disadvantaged youth.
- Some vocational training for adults, who are unemployed or have left school early, is in the arts.

However, there are concerns about the expertise available in schools to adequately implement the new arts curriculum. More links between artists, arts organisations and schools are needed to do so. At present, no extra funding is available for disadvantaged schools specifically for the cost of art materials.

- 4) The State indirectly supports inclusion in the **arts in communities** through a number of programmes.
- Several community development programmes use the arts as a tool in community development.
  - The Per Cent for Art Scheme<sup>4</sup> engages many people in communities with the arts.
  - FÁS also funds Community Employment schemes, a number of which include arts projects.
  - Business sponsorship and voluntary arts groups also play a role in expanding the arts in communities.

However (with the exception of the Per Cent for Art scheme), there is little strategic focus and support to ensure that this work continues, or specific funding for it. This may leave these programmes in a vulnerable position.

## Report recommendations

Recommendations are made in six key areas to develop the contribution of the arts to a more inclusive and cohesive society. The policy issues to be tackled under each of these six areas are listed opposite.

Two related recommendations are also proposed, which are:

- Funding – examine other sources of funding for greater participation in the arts, such as trusts, tax relief;
- Space – develop a policy on how local groups can access and pay for the use of publicly-funded arts centres; coordinate public spaces being built which can be used for the arts and social inclusion.

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4. This allows Government departments and agencies to commission a piece of art as part of a construction project.

## Report recommendations

### Better Policy Coordination

- At national level
- In local authorities
- Between local arts groups
- Between national and local arts organisations
- Among arts offices

### Management and Certainty of Funding

- Multi-annual funding
- Fund running costs and staff
- Mainstream successful pilot projects
- Provide specific funding for inclusion

### Targeted Measures for Specific Groups

- Outreach programmes
- Public awareness campaigns
- Access for specific groups
- Staff training

### Improved Data and Evaluation

- More data on who is, and is not, participating in the arts
- Statistics to measure the social impacts of the arts

### Supports for Children

- Provision for young people
- Links between schools and artists
- Specific funding for disadvantaged schools
- Supports for adult education in the arts

### Implementation Mechanisms

- National Strategy Committee
- Arts Partnership Fora at County level

**National Economic and Social Forum**  
An Fóram Náisiúnta  
Eacnamaíoch agus Sóisialach

**16 Parnell Square, Dublin 1, Ireland**  
**T** 353.1.814 63 61 **F** 353.1.814 63 01  
**LOCALL** 1890.203 006 **E** [info@nesf.ie](mailto:info@nesf.ie) **W** [www.nesf.ie](http://www.nesf.ie)