

National Disability Authority Presentation to the Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sports & Media 24th May 2023

National Disability Authority Presentation to the Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sports & Media

Dr. Aideen Hartney, Director NDA

Introduction

The National Disability Authority (NDA) thanks the Chair and the members of the Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sports & Media for the opportunity to present on the development of local and community arts, as relevant to disability.

The NDA provides independent and evidence informed advice to Government on policy and practice relevant to the lives of disabled people. We also incorporate a Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (CEUD), promoting the design of physical and digital environments so they can be accessed, understood and used by everyone, regardless of age, size, ability or disability.

Accessing the Arts

Census 2016 figures indicate that disabled people make up 13.5% of the population, with Census 2022 figures likely to show an increase later this year. While we don't have an accurate figure for the number of disabled artists in Ireland, the Arts Council's Report on gender, disability and ethnicity in its awards in 2020¹ indicates that less than 7% of its awards went to artists who declared a

¹

https://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/wwwartscouncilie/Content/About/Equality_Human_Rights_and_Diversity/Diversity%20and%20Arts%20Council%20Awards_March%202021.pdf

**National Disability Authority Presentation to the Joint Committee on
Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sports & Media 24th May 2023**

disability. This is likely an under-representation of the population of disabled artists and should be addressed.

The NDA is aware from its work that some of the key barriers to attending artistic events relate to accessibility. In a 2022 survey we commissioned on Wellbeing and Social Inclusion, 27% of people with a disability found visiting a cinema, theatre or cultural centre somewhat or very difficult.² This compares to 12% of people without a disability.

Part M of the Building Regulations sets out minimum provisions for the access and use of buildings, and requires that new buildings are accessible and useable by people with disabilities.³

We advise therefore, that in order to facilitate participation in artistic and cultural activities, those responsible for venues should work to increase their accessibility and where possible to move beyond minimum compliance. Improvements will benefit not only disabled people, but also older persons and families with young children.

Where local authorities have the opportunity to make the approaches to arts and cultural venues accessible they should do so and where possible, these venues should be located close to accessible public transport hubs.

² [How's it Going National Survey - National Disability Authority \(nda.ie\)](https://nda.ie/nda/How's-it-Going-National-Survey)

³ While building regulations are not applied to buildings constructed pre-1992, it should not prevent the addition of accessible features to these buildings as long as they aren't classed as heritage sites.

National Disability Authority Presentation to the Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sports & Media 24th May 2023

Accessibility encompasses both the physical premises in which an arts-event takes place, but also pre-event information, and the booking processes. Websites for cultural events or venues should be designed to be accessible to all users, and electronic terminals such as those used for ticketing should be designed and procured with accessibility in mind, which will shortly become mandatory on transposition of the European Accessibility Act into Irish legislation.

When considering artistic performances, we advise that there are a number of ways that they can be made more accessible, including: blended or streamed performances, audio description, ISL translation, providing induction loop systems, captioning or relaxed performances for those with sensory difficulties.

Disabled artists

These accessibility measures would also benefit disabled artists. However, we also advise that consideration be given to ways in which disabled people wishing to make a career in the arts can be supported. At present there are barriers in terms of income thresholds which can mean that disabled artists risk losing some or all of their state supports if they earn over a certain amount. Research also shows that having a disability can generate additional costs of living so we advise that the earnings disregard for people on disability allowances is kept under regular review.

UNCRPD Implementation Strategy

During 2023, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) will be leading the development of a UNCRPD Implementation Strategy. This Strategy will set out a series of commitments for **all** government

**National Disability Authority Presentation to the Joint Committee on
Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sports & Media 24th May 2023**

departments to ensure progressive realisation of the goals of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Article 30 of the Convention commits States Parties to taking all appropriate measures to ensure that disabled people enjoy access to cultural materials and activities, and have the opportunity to participate as artists. The NDA advises the importance of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media considering priority areas for attention in its remit, informed by engagement with disabled people and their representative organisations, as well as engaging constructively with other departments and agencies relevant to improving access to the arts at local level, so that clear goals can be committed and delivered under the forthcoming Strategy.

ENDS