



Submission to Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

Culture 2025

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INTRODUCTION

NAYD welcomes the idea of a new national cultural strategy for Ireland. We would welcome a national cultural strategy that would:

- Provide equality of access to the arts and prioritise the removal of economic, geographical, educational and social barriers to participation
- Prioritise the participation of children and young people
- Provide clarity of arts strategy at a national and local level
- Establish a consistency of provision and policy across the country
- Promote awareness of the arts and culture
- Provide transparency and accountability

NAYD would support a flexible national cultural policy that provided stewardship for the sector and which could respond to the changing dynamics of the decade. NAYD would welcome a policy which was equally led by artists, the artistic and cultural infrastructure, and the people of Ireland (including its children and young people).

NAYD's expertise lies within the youth theatre sector and the active participation of young people in the arts. One-third of Ireland's population is under the age of 25 years, with young people aged between 10 and 24 years representing 18.3% of the total population.¹ Children and young people have a right to be represented at the heart of this cultural policy and not as a minority group. NAYD's submission specifically addresses the inclusion of young people within Culture 2025.

1 YOUNG AND OLD AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

NAYD is delighted to see a commitment to the cultural participation of children and young people within the Culture 2025 discussion document:

“Our children and young people in particular should have access to culture as part of their education and development.”²

“The value of promoting culture for children and young people in and out of school is well recognised.”³

The Arts in Education Charter (if implemented in full by the two Departments) will help to increase the existing level of access to arts and culture for young people in formal education. The Charter also mentions the importance of young people participating in the arts 'outside of school', however, it does not contain any solid actions to support or develop participation in the arts within this sector. The primary and secondary school curriculum can often become the default policy lever used to nurture young people's engagement in the arts. It is vital that Culture 2025 promotes young people's engagement and participation in the arts outside of the formal education environment.

Youth Arts

Youth arts practice covers the active and voluntary participation of young people aged 12-25 in all art forms within the non-formal education sector. Youth arts practice can include the work of specialist youth arts organisations such as youth theatres or youth orchestras; it can include youth arts activities within youth services, arts centres, arts companies etc.; it can also include youth-led arts activities / ensembles. The youth theatre sector alone welcomes the participation of 2,700 young people across the country every week.⁴

¹ Central Statistics Office (2014) Population and Migration Estimates.

² Culture 2025 Discussion Document, P9

³ Culture 2025 Discussion Document, P15

⁴ NAYD Affiliated Youth Theatres' Membership numbers

Young people's engagement with the arts is not simply about 'education'. Arts education within the formal and non-formal education sectors should foster an exploration and appreciation of the rich variety of art-forms practiced in Ireland. Arts education activities can also be highly effective in terms of developing future audiences for the arts in Ireland. However, we need to move away from viewing young people in the context of future artists or audiences and acknowledge young people as young artists who are active participants in the artistic life of our country.

Through youth theatre, young people can question, debate, play and re-imagine the world we live in. Youth theatre can provide an artistic and public voice for young people on stories and ideas that are relevant to their lives. Youth theatre performances can provide a positive celebration of young people's artistic and social contribution to their own communities. Youth theatre members are 'participants'. Their active participation implies agency and empowerment within our cultural sector. Ireland should value the artistic voice, the participation and the creative output of its youth.

What is youth theatre?

A youth theatre is a drama group for young people that offers a year-round programme of activities including drama workshops and performance experiences. The young people are 'members' of the youth theatre and collaborate with the leaders to develop work that is uniquely relevant to the experience and character of the group. Youth theatre is about the development and empowerment of its membership both as theatre makers and as people.

A youth theatre:

- Is an independent youth arts organisation or is run by a parent organisation (a theatre company, youth service, arts centre, local authority arts office etc.) and draws its adult leaders from the voluntary and/or professional sectors.
- Takes place outside of school. Young people choose to take part.
- Is open to all young people aged 12 to 25 (the majority focus on 12 to 18 year olds) regardless of their gender, background, race, sexuality, religion, ability or economic situation.
- Develops theatre skills while at the same time advancing the personal and social development of young people;
- Aspires to high artistic standards
- Involves young people as active participants in their youth theatre
- Is a safe and supportive space. The welfare and protection of young people is a priority for youth theatres.
- Is not-for-profit. Participation in youth theatre is not determined by financial contributions from the young people.

Developing a Youth Arts Strategy

Ireland's youth arts sector needs greater strategic leadership which could be provided by the development of a national youth arts strategy. Such a strategy has been developed in Scotland by Creative Scotland. *Time to Shine: Scotland's Youth Arts Strategy for ages 0 – 25* (<http://www.creativescotland.com/resources/our-publications/plans-and-strategy-documents/national-youth-arts-strategy>) presents a vision to "Support all Scotland's children and young people to flourish and achieve in and through the arts and creativity." Significantly the Scottish strategy is focused on the youth arts sector as the primary actors in meeting that vision. Schools and Higher Education are presented as key to developing an "arts habit" and "deepening and extending...skills" respectively, but formal education is complimentary rather than core to the strategy.

Like Scotland, Ireland needs a strategy that works to unlock demand from young people, ensure equal access for all and provide for the professional development of youth arts practitioners to

ensure quality provision. There is a profound need to properly resource the existing provision in communities across the country and to provide investment to support the systematic development of youth arts where they are currently unavailable. The national youth arts organisations and programmes are key collaborators in this.

Other Relevant Policy Initiatives

The Arts in Education Charter is not the only recent policy initiative in the area of children and young people that should be considered in the development of Culture 2025. Other national strategies exist which provide a framework for the development of arts participation for young people.

National Youth Strategy

The aim of the National Youth Strategy is to enable all young people aged 10-24 years to realise their maximum potential with regard to the five national outcomes outlined in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures. This strategy was developed by the National Youth Strategy Project Team, convened by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. This strategy identifies youth arts as a key contributor to cultural provision for young people and establishes the development of the youth arts sector as a priority action.

National Youth Strategy

Outcome 1: Active and healthy, physical and mental well-being

Objective 2: Young people benefit from involvement in recreational and cultural opportunities including youth work, arts, and sports.

[Listed among the National Youth Strategy Priority Actions over the period 2015 – 2017 to address the needs of young people aged 10 – 24 years are to:]

1.2 Continue to support and build on existing youth arts provision nationally and locally, and promote opportunities for young people to contribute ideas to their communities in the form of art or other media of their choice.

1.3 Identify ways in which arts, culture, sports and youth organisations can cooperate at a local level to enhance quality and developmental opportunities for young people ⁵

Government Departments, State Agencies and other stakeholders are indicated as stakeholders in the implementation of this strategy. The Department for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht is listed in the strategy as the department responsible for the national outcome area of the arts.

Making Great Art Work (Arts Council Strategy 2016 – 2025)

This Arts Council Strategy establishes the points of reference by which the Arts Council will lead the development of the arts in the decade 2016–2025, the same period covered by Culture 2025. The Strategy explicitly mentions youth arts and the provision of excellent arts experiences for young people in the public domain as part of the Arts Council’s objective to plan and provide for children and young people.

⁵ Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2015) National Youth Strategy 2015–2020 Dublin: Government Publications.

Making Great Art Work

Priority policy area: Public Engagement

Objective 8 Plan and provide for children and young people

- We will advocate for the centrality of the arts in formal education at all levels and for the provision of quality vocational training in the arts.
- We will work with the Departments of Arts and of Education to achieve full implementation of the Arts in Education Charter.
- We will invest in artists, arts organisations and key programmes dedicated to developing high quality work in arts-in-education and youth arts, and we will support the provision of excellent arts experiences for young people in the public domain.
- We will make provision for children and young people a key focus of our relationship with local government.
- We will incorporate our commitment to young people into the mainstream of our decision-making and, where appropriate, into our funding agreements with arts organisations.⁶

National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015 - 2020

The goal of the first National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making is to ensure that children and young people will have a voice in their individual and collective everyday lives.

(<http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/playandrec/20150617NatStratParticipationReport.pdf>)

Children and young people should be invited to participate in the consultation process for Culture 2025 and should be invited to review the policy during its lifetime.

National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015-2020

Objective 7

- Mainstreaming the participation of children and young people in the development of policy, legislation and research.⁷

The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht is listed as a government department with commitments in the Action Plan for National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making, 2015-2020.

2 FUNDING AND RESOURCES

Ireland needs to invest in the arts at a national and local authority level if it wishes to develop the cultural sector. Ireland's pride in its cultural life is not matched by the level of economic support it

⁶ The Arts Council (2015), Making Great Art Work, Leading the Development of the Arts in Ireland, Arts Council Strategy 2016 – 2025, P26

⁷ Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2015), National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015-2020

offers the sector:

“Public funding for the arts and culture in this country represents just 0.11% of GDP, putting Ireland at the bottom of the European league table, compared with an average of 0.6%.”⁸

Yes, the arts community can potentially nurture relationships with fledgling partners such as the philanthropic and corporate sectors, or develop resource-sharing approaches on a local level. However, this does not relieve the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht from the responsibility of ensuring that a strong funding strategy is in place to support the aspirations of Culture 2025, Ireland’s first National Cultural Policy. It is not the responsibility of the philanthropic or corporate sectors to match their own personal agendas to Irish cultural policy and it is disheartening to be asked to “aim high and chart out a vision for the future”⁹ based on scarce resources.

State funding places value on the artistic activities of our country and its young people. If the engagement of young people with the arts is valued through policy statements, this should be reflected in the state funding available on a national and local level.

3 SOCIAL INTEGRATION

The Culture 2025 discussion document refers to the Arts Council reports, ‘*Public and the Arts*’ (2006) and ‘*The Arts in Irish Life*’ (2014) as well as the NESF Report 35 (2007) ‘*The Arts, Cultural Inclusion and Social Cohesion*’ and underlines the accepted significance of income, education, area, age and socio-economic status in determining levels of engagement with the arts.

Irish cultural policy should work to remove these barriers through national strategy so that everyone has an equal opportunity to get involved at a local level. Culture 2025 should propose the implementation of an action plan which would guarantee each child growing up in Ireland equality of access to the arts and would tackle economic, geographical and social barriers to participation (e.g., where children and young people live, their family environment, cost, transport, and the availability of local cultural infrastructure etc.). Targeting the cultural inclusion of young people during this developmental phase of life would have a significant impact on their continued participation in later life. These developmental years provide a unique opportunity for culture to become part of an emerging identity.

Youth theatres are actively inclusive, both in their recruitment policies and in the ensemble nature of its drama practice. Youth theatres are not-for-profit and participation in youth theatre is not determined by financial contributions. NAYD’s *CentreStage+10* research (2009) indicates that 43.5% of youth theatre members are the first in their family to show an active interest in the arts.¹⁰ Youth theatre can therefore be seen as a highly effective way of engaging young people in the arts for the first time and also their families through their participation as audience members at youth theatre performances.

There are many excellent examples of youth arts practice and arts education projects breaking down barriers of exclusion or disadvantage. The youth arts sector knows what works. (<http://www.nayd.ie/content/files/merged.pdf> and <http://www.youtharts.ie/content/research>).

The challenge is to make these examples of best practice in youth arts accessible to all young people. The youth arts sector needs to be resourced so that it can address social inclusion in a consistent manner on a national level.

4 IMPLEMENTATION

⁸ National Campaign for the Arts, www.ncfa.ie, 17/09/2015

⁹ Culture 2025 Discussion Document, P3

¹⁰ NAYD (2009), *Centre Stage+10*, P 128/129

The implementation of the final Culture 2025 policy document is key and will require cross-departmental support. It is vital that political will and resources combine to allow the full implementation of Ireland's first national cultural strategy.

The National Youth Strategy provides a good example of how government departments can work with the expertise of a specific sector to draw up a strategy and agree implementation. The Colloquium of Cultural Stakeholders could be re-formed to create a Strategy Task Group and Advisory Group which could involve a broader representative group from the cultural sector. This Group could inform and oversee both the development of the policy and, importantly, its implementation.



About NAYD

The National Association for Youth Drama (NAYD) was established in 1980 to support the development of youth theatre in Ireland.

Since then, NAYD has been supporting youth drama in practice and policy by advocating the benefits of young people's participation, promoting quality youth theatre practice and providing leadership for the sector. Now representing a membership of 60 affiliated youth theatres, the organisation has seen thousands of young lives enhanced and transformed by the experience of youth drama. Today, NAYD continues to work towards the sustained development of youth theatres in partnership with local authorities, youth services, theatres, arts centres, organisations and individuals. A commitment to young people and theatre is at the core of the work of NAYD. The value we place on this unique relationship will continue to shape the work of the organisation into the future.

NAYD promotes

- Drama as a medium for learning and as a means of expression for young people
- The advancement of the artistic, personal and social development of young people through drama and performance related skills
- Youth theatre as a medium to extend and enhance young people's understanding of theatre as an art form
- The emergence and development of youth theatres in Ireland

For more information see www.nayd.ie