**The National Disability Authority’s Annual Conference focuses on improving the widespread participation of disabled people in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport in Ireland**

October 24, 2024

Over 150 attendees will gather today for the National Disability Authority’s annual conference to discuss solutions and best practices in tackling the challenges faced by people with disabilities when accessing and participating in the arts, culture, media, recreation and sport in Ireland. The theme of the conference is framed by Ireland’s commitments under Article 30 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which focuses on the participation of people with disabilities in cultural life, recreation, leisure, and sport. The event aims to share both national and international good practice related to the theme as well as learning from the experiences of disabled people.

Some of the solutions which will likely be highlighted include (a) the enhancement of supports for disabled artists, (b) more accessible booking and ticketing systems for sporting events and concerts, (c) the provision of additional inclusive and autism-friendly performances in theatres, cinemas and other cultural venues, and (d) improvements in the design and accessibility of playgrounds, sport and leisure facilities right across the country.

Kathryn O’Donoghue, Chairperson of the National Disability Authority (NDA) commented “Sports and the arts play a critical role in Irish society and culture, bringing communities together. Despite barriers, people with disabilities make a rich contribution in these areas. Whilst we are seeing progress in increasing accessibility and inclusion, our message today is that work must continue to remove every barrier to participation that disabled people face.”

Anne Rabbitte T.D., Minister of State with responsibility for Disability who will open the event, has said “My Department and wider Government have taken a range of steps to improve the participation of people with disabilities in social, cultural and community life. And more must be done. The new Autism Innovation Strategy and the forthcoming National Disability Strategy will provide us with the framework to build on progress to date and meet our commitments under the UN Convention.”

This conference is especially timely following the recent sporting achievements of Ireland’s Paralympians in Paris and the success of September’s Culture Night, where increased accessibility and inclusion measures were exhibited. Speakers at the event include Jason Smyth, six-time Paralympic gold medallist, who has said “Sport gave me confidence and belief in myself. People of all abilities should be supported to participate and realise their full potential in sport, whether that is at a local sports club or on the international stage as a high-performance athlete.”

In addition to several panel discussions, attendees at the conference will enjoy musical and spoken word performances, poetry recitals and an exhibition from artists with an intellectual disability. Attendees will include policy makers, public sector and local authority officials, academics, Disabled Persons Organisations and other disability organisations, as well as individuals with disabilities and their families.

**ENDS**

**Editor’s note:** The National Disability Authority (NDA) is the independent statutory body that provides information and advice to Government on policy and practice relevant to the lives of persons with disabilities. We assist the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in the co-ordination of disability policy. We also promote Universal Design through our Centre for Excellence in Universal Design.

The NDA also published its new Strategic Plan 2025-2027 today, setting out the organisation’s high-level objectives and goals for the next three years.One of the strategic priorities outlined in the Plan is to advise on and support implementation of the UNCRPD and national strategies through provision of robust, objective and evidence-informed advice and guidance. The new Strategic Plan can be accessed [on our website](https://nda.ie/publications/nda-strategic-plans).