National Disability Authority submission to the

Oireachtas Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media

on

Arts and Disability

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# Introduction

1. The National Disability Authority (NDA) thanks the Chair and the members of the Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media for the opportunity to present on the topic of local and community arts, specifically on the subject of **Arts and Disability.**
2. The NDA provides independent and evidence informed advice to the Minister on policy and practice relevant to the lives of disabled people. We have a role through our Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (CEUD) to promote awareness and adoption of Universal Design.

## Universal Design

1. This definition, which appears in Section 52[[1]](#footnote-1) of the Disability Act 2005, explains that Universal Design:
	1. means the design and composition of an environment so that it may be accessed, understood and used—
	2. to the greatest practicable extent,
	3. in the most independent and natural manner possible,
	4. in the widest possible range of situations, and
	5. without the need for adaptation, modification, assistive devices or specialised solutions,
2. by persons of any age or size or having any particular physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual ability or disability,
3. and
4. (b) means, in relation to electronic systems, any electronics-based process of creating products, services or systems so that they may be used by any person.
5. Universal Design has an important role to play in a discussion about disabled artists and access to arts and culture, in general. Throughout this submission we will highlight how a Universal Design approach can improve access to the built environment for everyone. Universal Design can also be employed when trying to make information and communications more accessible to everyone. In addition, Universal Design can shape the products and services used in arts and culture venues to make the whole experience more accessible.

# Disability data

1. The number of disabled people in Ireland based on Census 2016 was 643,131 making up 13.5% of the population. Figures from Census 2022 are due later this year but the number of people with a disability is expected to increase.
2. There isn’t a concrete figure setting out the number of disabled artists in Ireland, however, it is possible to get some idea about their representation in the arts from the Arts Council’s Report on gender, disability and ethnicity in individual awards in 2020[[2]](#footnote-2). The Arts Council found that, overall, applicants and recipients who identified as having a disability were underrepresented when compared to the population of Ireland as recorded in Census 2016. Of the 4,375 awards made, 297 went to people who identified as having a disability.
3. Award applicants who identified as having a disability were half as prominent as applicants who did not identify as having a disability (7% compared to 13.5%). Only 5% of award recipients identified as having a disability. These figures reduced further when excluding applications made to the Arts and Disability Connect Scheme (a specific scheme for disabled artists) and looking only at applications made directly to the Arts Council, where 6% of applicants and only 4% of recipients identified as having a disability.

# UNCRPD

1. Ireland ratified the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (UNCRPD) in March 2018. The UNCRPD provides the framework to promote, protect and ensure the rights of all persons with disabilities and promotes equal rights in all areas of life.
2. Article 30 covers ‘Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport’. The text of the article is set out in Appendix A. Article 30 says: ‘States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life’.[[3]](#footnote-3) Article 30 is complemented by Article 8: Awareness raising and Article 9: Accessibility. Ireland’s first State Party report to the UNCRPD Committee in Geneva was published in 2021[[4]](#footnote-4) and under Article 30 highlighted some disability-related initiatives from local authority Culture and Creativity Teams.

# Policy context

1. Arts and disability were first dealt with comprehensively in the 1996 **Report on of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities: A Strategy for Equality[[5]](#footnote-5)**. The report’s recommendations are listed in Appendix B. While some are dated, some still haven’t been realised. The NDA suggests that some of the recommendations could form the basis of proposals for actions in the next iteration of the National Disability Strategy.

## National Disability Inclusion Strategy

1. The **National Disability Inclusion Strategy** was the Government’s most recent vehicle for applying the provisions of the UNCRPD across all Department’s and public bodies. Action 126 of the **National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-22** (NDIS)pledged support for initiatives to facilitate the participation of people with disabilities in cultural and heritage-related activities and programmes. The main feature at local level has been the Creative Ireland Programme. Overall progress has been slow and the number of actions under this theme could be increased in the successor Strategy that will focus on the implementation of the UNCRPD

## Culture and Heritage Policy

1. The Department’s **Culture 2025: A National Cultural Policy Framework to 2025** contains no references to disability or accessibility. The Arts Council’s **Strategy (2016–2025): Making Great Art Work Leading the Development of the Arts in Ireland** contains no references to disability or accessibility.
2. The Creative Communities strand of the **Creative Ireland Programme 2017-22** helped to fund and organise some arts projects at local authority level for disabled people. In 2018-19, 26 projects (out of a total of 2,658) were targeted at disabled people. Through Creative Communities, in partnership with each of the 31 local authorities, the Programme has supported projects which provide opportunities for disabled people to demonstrate their creative ability, as well as provide greater access and opportunity to engage and participate in creative activities. In 2022, a wide range of projects across a number of genres included creative initiatives for children with complex needs as well as inclusive youth visual arts projects around themes such as biodiversity and climate action.
3. The **Heritage Ireland 2030 A Framework for Heritage[[6]](#footnote-6)** document does contain some commitments around disability. Action 36 commits to increase and improve universal access to heritage for older people, disabled people and children, including through the use of new technologies. Action 65 commits to develop a ‘Heritage and Inclusion’ policy in collaboration with disability organisations, amongst other groups.

# Access to the Arts

1. Various pieces of legislation and statutory codes of practice have been enacted and implemented over the last twenty years that have relevance to disability and the arts (see list Appendix C). It is important that all our arts and culture venues, where practicable, should be accessible in terms of both the built and digital environments and physical access to venues but also in terms of accessible performances.

## Engagement and access of disabled people with the arts

1. In a soon to be published survey on Wellbeing and Social Inclusion, by the NDA, 27% of people with a disability found visiting a cinema, theatre or cultural centre somewhat difficult or very difficult.[[7]](#footnote-7) This compares to 12% of people without a disability. Those with a disability to a greater extent experienced more difficulties at 42%.
2. A report published in 2017 by Arts & Disability Ireland (ADI) [[8]](#footnote-8)examined how people with disabilities engage with culture. This was a quantitative survey administered online with 523 responses. Respondents came from across the disability spectrum.
3. People with disabilities reported good engagement with the arts with only nine respondents saying they had never been to a live performance or exhibition. The majority, 86% had attended at least one arts event (including cinema) in the previous year (79% if cinema is not included). Indeed, these figures were higher than those from a similar survey covering the overall population (64% had attended at least one arts event – including arthouse cinema but not mainstream cinema). Overall, 37% attended a live performance or exhibition in the past month. The proportion was lower among those who were severely limited in everyday activity. The key barriers to going out were access (mentioned by 33% of respondents), lack of support (22%), health (29%), cost (25%) and transport (15%).
4. This report also argued that making arts attendance accessible to disabled people ‘makes good business sense’ – research suggested that the national cultural sector could earn an additional €7 million if half of the disabled people who regularly attended (before Covid-19) did so just one more time per year and brought a friend or family member with them.
5. A small qualitative study on the engagement with arts and culture by people with disabilities, also conducted by Arts and Disability Ireland found that people with disabilities identified arts and culture as an important lifestyle outlet that enhances their quality of life on many levels.[[9]](#footnote-9) The participants felt that disabled people were not given equal access to arts and culture as people without disabilities.
6. **Time to Act[[10]](#footnote-10)** is the first ever transnational study which shows that cultural professionals in the performing arts across Europe lack the knowledge and experience needed to support equal access to the cultural sector for disabled artists, disabled arts professionals and disabled audiences.
7. Based on a large-scale open survey covering 42 countries (including Ireland), a series of in-depth interviews, and an analysis of existing literature, reports and guidance, **Time to Act**, commissioned by the British Council, explores the barriers that prevent cultural professionals from learning about and presenting artistic works by professional disabled artists. It also identifies gaps in their knowledge and confidence, and asks who should be doing more to support equal access. One of its clearest findings is that professionals in the performing arts need better knowledge of work by disabled artists. More than half of survey respondents rated their current knowledge as poor or very poor. Around 1 in 6 had not seen any productions by disabled artists over a two-year period.
8. Lack of knowledge was given as one of their largest obstacles to supporting and programming more work by disabled artists. As things stand, 48% of respondents were not very confident or not at all confident in the accessibility of artistic programmes for disabled artists.
9. The report shows greater engagement around access for disabled audiences, with 39% not very confident or not at all confident in the accessibility of artistic programmes for disabled audiences. However, there are still major gaps in provision – particularly around online access. Only 19% of venues and festivals surveyed had an accessible website, and only 12% an accessible booking process. The research also found that while some mainstream organisations emphasised they were open to everyone – well-connected within the arts sector, and able to identify access needs – disabled artists and companies themselves often felt their specific needs were not well understood.
10. While the study identified a significant, diverse range of toolkits, guides and other materials providing practical guidance for arts organisations around accessibility for disabled artists and audiences, these materials were not thought to be well-known by many organisations in the field. A need for more information for funders was also highlighted.
11. There is a demand for arts funders and national ministries to engage more in this field. When asked who should be doing the most to provide guidance, training and best practice resources, the top two suggestions were arts funders (45%) and national ministries (42%).

## Accessible venues

1. Part M of the Building Regulations sets out minimum provisions for the access and use of buildings. The Technical Guidance Document to Part M (TGD M) sets out guidance on the minimum level of provision that meets the requirements of the regulations. The minimum standard required in the current TGD M for buildings is that new buildings are accessible and useable by people with disabilities. Those venues owned and managed by public bodies (such as local authorities) also come under the remit of Section 25 of the **Disability Act 2005** that deals with access to public buildings. It states that a public body shall ensure that its public buildings are, as far as practicable, accessible to persons with disabilities. It requires the upgrading of older public buildings so that they comply with Part M of the Building Regulations. Under Section 25, public buildings are required to be upgraded to comply with Part M 2010 by 1 January 2022. Under the Disability Act, public building means ‘a building, or that part of a building, to which members of the public generally have access and which is occupied, managed or controlled by a public body.’.
2. Most artistic and cultural venues come under Part M while a number would also come under Section 25. While building regulations are not applied to buildings constructed pre-1992, it should not prevent them from adding accessible features to these buildings.
3. When carrying out works on arts and culture venues, the guidance provided by our Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, in its publication **Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach[[11]](#footnote-11)** should be applied and venues are advised to strive to achieve above the minimum requirements of Part M of the building regulations.
4. **Booklet 7, Building Types** includes guidance on museums, galleries, libraries, entertainment, conference and lecture facilities, and historic buildings and sites.
5. When alterations or refurbishment works are being planned to arts and cultural venues, it is important to be aware of aspects of the existing facility that cause difficulties for the people who use it, including persons with disabilities. An access audit should be carried out prior to alterations or refurbishment works being planned, so that improvements to access to the building can be integrated from the outset. An access audit should establish how well the building performs in terms of access and ease of use by a wide range of potential users, including persons with disabilities, and recommend access improvements**.**  Access audits should be carried out in line with NDA guidance.[[12]](#footnote-12)
6. Cultural venues built more recently should incorporate accessibility features such as level entry and wider doors. There is no centralised system of determining what buildings are or aren’t accessible but some apps have been developed by disabled people to highlight accessible venues, restaurants, etc.[[13]](#footnote-13).
7. Getting to and from the venue is as important as being able to enter the venue. Where local authorities have the opportunity to make the approaches to arts and culture venues accessible they should do so and these accessible approaches should be maintained. Where possible, arts and cultural venues should be located close to accessible public transport hubs for both large public service vehicles (buses, trains, etc.) and small public service vehicles (accessible taxis).

### Code of Practice on Accessible Heritage Sites

1. In many local authority areas there are prominent heritage sites that form a central part of their cultural offering to local people and to visitors. Some arts and culture events may well take place in a heritage site. The statutory **Code of Practice on Accessible Heritage Sites 2011**[[14]](#footnote-14) was developed, by the NDA, to guide public bodies in meeting their statutory obligation under Section 29 of the **Disability Act 2005** by providing practical advice and examples**.** Public bodies that comply with this Code of Practice are considered to be in compliance with Section 29 of the Act. The statutory obligations relating to heritage sites do not apply if it would have a significant adverse effect on the conservation status of a species, habitat or the integrity of a heritage site or if it would compromise the characteristics of the heritage site. No adaptations or modifications of any heritage site can be taken that are contrary to law**. ‘**Access: Improving the accessibility of historic buildings and places’ was developed by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht as part of their Advice Series of booklets. The booklets are designed to guide those responsible for historic buildings on how best to maintain, repair and adapt their properties.

### European Accessibility Act

1. The European Accessibility Act (EEA) is a directive that aims to improve the functioning of the internal market for accessible products and services, by removing barriers created by divergent rules in Member States. It applies to both the public and private sector. For over 10 years, the NDA through its collaboration with the National Standards Authority Ireland has participated in supporting the development of three European standards and related technical requirement publications that focus on underpinning the EAA. From 28 June 2025 products placed on the market must comply with the Directive. The following groups of products that will be covered by the Directive are likely to be used in arts and culture venues:
2. Payment terminals (for example, in shops or restaurants) (Article 2(1)(b)
3. Self-service terminals related to the services covered by the Directive (ATMs, ticketing machines, check-in machines, and interactive self-service terminals providing information, excluding terminals installed as integrated parts of transport vehicles, aircrafts, ships or rolling stock) (Article 2(1)(C)
4. Consumer terminal equipment with interactive computing capability, used for electronic communication services (in other words, Smartphones, tablets capable of calling) (Article 2(1)(D)

## Accessible performances and exhibitions

1. There are a number of ways that performances can be made more accessible.

### Blended or streamed performances

1. With the restrictions on in-person performances during the COVID-19 pandemic, we note the extent to which technology made it possible to provide accessible digital engagement for people who would not normally be able to access an in-person performance. While there has been a return to in-person performances, the possibilities of these media should not be neglected. Phones, tablets and PCs contain accessible features that can be used by disabled people to watch performances and visit exhibitions online and give rise to the possibility of new types of blended performances.

### Audio Description

1. Audio Description for live performance is a live verbal commentary providing information on the visual elements of a production as it unfolds, from sets, props and costumes to actors’ facial expressions and movements across the stage. Audio-described performances are available on certain performances throughout the year. At the Abbey Theatre it has been stated at a previous meeting of this Committee that there are only 20 headsets for audio description. If a play runs at the Abbey for a month and only one performance is audio described, only 20 vision impaired people will get to access that performance.

### Irish Sign Language (ISL)

1. Irish Sign Language (ISL) is the sign language used in the Republic of Ireland. The language makes use of space and involves movement of the hands, body, face and head. A sign language interpreter interprets what a person says or signs simultaneously, or immediately afterwards.
2. Under Section 9 of the **Irish Sign Language Act 2017** a scheme to provide access to events, services, and activities through ISL is provided for. In 2021, the Citizens Information Board (CIB) and the Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS) launched a pilot project for the Voucher Scheme for users of Irish Sign Language to access free ISL/English interpreting for social, educational and cultural events and services (including medical) and other activities. The pilot Voucher Scheme ran from 30 June 2021 to 30 September 2021. The Department of Social Protection is still considering the results of the pilot scheme. It would be important that these results are published and plans for a permanent scheme is developed.

### Induction loops

1. Induction loops and infrared systems enable people with hearing aids to receive amplified sounds from within a specific area directly into their hearing device, without interference from background noise being amplified too. Performance spaces can be fitted with a hearing loop system to assist those with hearing impairment.

### Captioning

1. Captioning gives deaf and hard of hearing people access to live performances and screenings. It is similar to television and film subtitling. Captioning converts the spoken word into text, which is displayed on one or more caption units situated on, above or next to the stage or screen.

### Relaxed Performances

1. Relaxed Performances are specifically designed to welcome people who will benefit from a more relaxed performance environment, including people with an Autism, sensory and communication disorders, or a learning disability. They also benefit people with hidden disabilities and people who require a more flexible environment. These are sometimes called autism friendly performances. Taking a universal design approach as discussed earlier can make a venue more suitable for people with sensory issues on a more permanent basis.

### Touch tours and tactile model boxes

1. A Touch Tour is not only for vision impaired patrons but can also be beneficial for those who process information differently. It is a tactile exploration of the geography of an arts and culture venue. A tactile model box is designed to allow a user distinguish different materials. Each material will make the user become more aware of and associate different textures around them. The boxes can help stimulate tactile sensory needs and develop fine motor skills.

## Access to information

1. A long-held pillar of accessibility is access to information. There are a number of important EU and Irish legislative instruments that underpin the provision of accessible information for everyone.

### Web Accessibility Directive

1. Under the EU **Web Accessibility Directive** (WAD) all government departments and public bodies must ensure their websites and mobile apps are accessible to all people, including persons with disabilities. It is already a requirement, under sections 26 & 28(2) of the **Disability Act 2005,** that websites and electronic communications, originating within this jurisdiction, are accessible to persons with disabilities. The WAD, however, sets out specific timeframes and standards for web accessibility that have to be met under the Regulations.
2. The **Web Accessibility Directive** (WAD) was transposed into Irish law via the **European Union (Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications of Public Sector Bodies) Regulations 2020** which came into force on 23 September 2020. Public sector bodies comply with the 2020 Regulations if for all websites and mobile apps they meet the relevant parts of the harmonised European standard EN 301 549 V2.1.2 (2018-08). This is the same as meeting all the Level AA Success Criteria from the international web accessibility guidelines WCAG 2.1.They must also publish and maintain an Accessibility Statement about their websites or mobile apps.
3. The NDA is the Irish national monitoring body for the WAD. The 2020 regulations apply to most public sector bodies but they do not apply to the websites and mobile apps of public service broadcasters or any other body fulfilling a public service broadcasting remit.
4. The NDA advises the importance of a commitment within Departments, public bodies and agencies involved in the arts to make sure their websites are accessible e.g. the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media, Arts Council, to ensure their websites and mobile apps meet the standards set out in the Directive at the earliest opportunity. We did a simplified review of the Arts Council’s website in 2021 and it received an accessibility score of 3.5% out of 100. This puts that website in the 28% of websites that had a score of 10% or less out of approximately 200 websites reviewed[[15]](#footnote-15). The NDA engages with all public bodies that have been monitored to advise them on their score and what mitigating actions are required.

### Universal Design Communications

1. The NDA has produced, in partnership with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, a **Customer Communications Toolkit for the Public Service: A Universal Design Approach[[16]](#footnote-16)**. This document offers guidance on best practice in implementing Universal Design in a public body’s various means of communicating with its customers. Universal Design principles should be a key element in how publically funded, owned and managed arts and culture venues communicate. Lack of accessible information has been identified as a problem for disabled people trying to get involved in the arts and attend venues.
2. All relevant public bodies are also subject to the relevant sections in Part 3 of the **Disability Act 2005** which places an obligation on public bodies to make their services accessible. Under section 26 there is a statutory requirement on public bodies to integrate, where practical and appropriate, their services for disabled people with those for other citizens. Under section 28 public bodies must take steps to make their communications accessible to disabled people. This would be particularly relevant where disabled people are applying for arts grants.
3. The **Code of Practice on Accessibility of Public Services and Information provided by Public Bodies** complements these provisions.[[17]](#footnote-17) This Code of Practice has been updated and a new version is currently awaiting signature from the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. The NDA advises that all public sector officials who are involved in the area of arts and disability should have access to the Toolkit and the Code of Practice.
4. In practice accessible communications means ensuring that funding calls, for example, are published and disseminated in accessible formats and that they effectively reach the targeted groups. Other examples are that, a document would be formatted so that it can be read by screen reader software or a document would be created in Easy-to-Read format if targeting people with an intellectual disability.
5. Employment opportunities in the Arts and Culture sector are very important on promoting the rights of persons with disabilities. Under Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005 the requirement that all public bodies employ a minimum of 3% of persons with disabilities and which is to be raised to a minimum of 6% by 2025.
6. Also part of its remit under the **Disability Act 2005** the NDA has prepared a monitoring report under Part 3. For the purposes of this report, the NDA carried out a desk-based evaluation of conformance of all public bodies against specific statutory requirements relating to the appointment of access officers[[18]](#footnote-18)
7. This report will present the findings of this NDA monitoring exercise and will be presented to the Secretary-General of each Department. The NDA will allow Departments an opportunity to consider the findings and where relevant, to take action to address any gaps identified in the monitoring report. We then propose to review this activity for Departments and public bodies under their aegis to assess whether remedial action has occurred before publishing our findings. The NDA will continue carrying out targeted monitoring exercises regularly following this preliminary exercise.

### Marrakesh Treaty

1. To enable the implementation of the World Intellectual Property Organisation’s Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled, into EU law, the European Commission adopted a Directive (EU 2017/1564) and a Regulation (EU 2017/1563). The Directive facilitates the use of certain copyright protected works, without the authorisation of the rights holder, for the benefit of persons who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print disabled. The EU Marrakesh Treaty Regulations 2018 were signed into Irish law on 9 October 2018 and came into effect on 11 October 2018.
2. The Oireachtas also enacted the **Copyright and Other Intellectual Property Law Provisions Act 2019**. This legislation expands the existing exception to copyright for persons with a disability as allowed by the EU Information Society Directive. Together, they provide that persons with a disability can gain access to a wider range of copyright material in accessible formats.

# Income from the arts

1. The NDA is aware that being an artist in Ireland is not a well-paying job for most who seek to make a career in the arts. A previous witness to your Committee stated that the average income of all artists in Ireland is around €10,000 per annum. There are grants available for which disabled artists can apply, however, disabled artists face regulatory barriers that other artists do not face, such as having to balance generating enough income from their work against the risk of losing some or all of their state supports if they earn over a certain amount.

## Arts and Disability Connect

1. The Arts Council is the primary provider of grants for the artistic community. It has provided a series of grant programmes for disabled artists over the years. One of the most recent is Arts and Disability Connect, run in conjunction Arts and Disability Ireland (ADI). Maximum grants of €15,000 for new work are available. Smaller grants for research and development, mentoring and training are also available. It was created in line with Arts Council commitments outlined in **Arts and Disability Policy (2012–2016)** and is intended to respond to changing needs within this sector.
2. In 2021 ADI awarded funding to 24 artists. Some 47% of the artists who applied were successful. One of the big issues for ADI is that funding alone is not always enough. There is an issue, for example, if a deaf person who is an ISL user needs to negotiate or find a mentor. They need ISL interpretation support to do that. ADI say that the resources are very limited in terms of making that support available to them. The other issue is within the awards themselves, when an artist is funded, currently most of the access support that is required needs to come within the project funding. ADI have ongoing discussions about this with the Arts Council.
3. The grants are means tested and the NDA notes that this can be challenging for disabled artists. Essentially, once the money arrives in the artist's bank account it is regarded as capital. All sources of income (for example, cash income, employment, capital and maintenance) are assessed by the Department of Social Protection. A new work award from ADI is worth €15,000 of which a very small proportion may go to the artist as fees. ADI has highlighted that most of that money will go to pay other artists and other creatives, for materials and venue costs, and for all the other costs associated with making a project happen but still all of the money is regarded as capital means. This has a different impact depending on what payment a disabled artist is receiving. For example the first €20,000 of capital means for the blind pension isn’t assessed, whereas for Disability Allowance it is €50,000. The most recent complete set of social welfare statistics for 2021[[19]](#footnote-19) show that 1,026 people were in receipt of the blind pension, whereas 155,181 were in receipt of the Disability Allowance. The NDA is currently seeking information on the proportion of these recipients who can be identified as disabled artists, and if the information is available, we will be happy to update the Committee at a later date.

## Basic Income for the Arts

1. In April 2022 the Government launched its Basic Income for the Arts (BIA) pilot scheme to run from 2022-2025. The pilot scheme offers payments of €325 per week to be made to 2,000 eligible artists and creative arts workers. Similar to most other income the payment will be taxable but the amount of taxation paid will depend on an individual’s personal circumstances. Recipients of the BIA are entitled to earn additional income, which would also be reckonable for the purposes of income tax. When the pilot scheme was launched any artist also in receipt of disability allowance or blind pension was entitled to the BIA. However, the BIA income is assessed as self-employed income, which implies that it will be means tested against their Disability Allowance or Blind Pension. Therefore, upon receipt of the BIA, relevant artists may have their disability supports reduced.
2. A person in receipt of the Disability Allowance or the Blind Pension can take up employment or self-employment. The first €140 of weekly income from that employment (after deduction of PRSI, pension contributions and union dues) is disregarded for the purpose of the means test. Half of their weekly earnings between €140 and €350 are then disregarded for the purpose of the means test. Any further earnings, over €350 per week, are fully assessed for the purpose of the means test.

## Cost of Disability

1. In 2021, the Government released its Cost of Disability report stating that the cost of being disabled in Ireland is estimated to be between €9,482 and €11,734 per annum. Obviously, every disability is different, and the cost of each disability varies. However, the report clearly spells out that living with a disability comes at a significant financial cost over and above that experienced by the rest of the population.
2. The report states:
	1. “The Government has committed to using this research into the cost of disability to inform the direction of future policy.”
3. Despite this commitment, the BIA terms and conditions suggest that these findings were not considered by Government when formulating the BIA framework. The NDA advises that it will be important for these findings to be considered as part of the development of schemes such as the BIA.
4. Not only do disabled artists have increased living costs, but many have decreased earning potential. For example, an able-bodied artist may be able to commit full-time to their craft, while a disabled person may only be able to manage a part-time working schedule. Added to this, their ability to work may be episodic, depending on fluctuating levels of illness or pain, and access to the necessary support infrastructures. Some disabled people prefer the option of being self-employed because it allows them greater flexibility. Feedback from witnesses to this Committee has highlighted that disabled artists cannot afford to engage in artist projects at the same level as their able-bodied peers. Many disabled artists are also afraid to receive payment for their work for fear of how this will affect their disability supports, as outlined above. A one-off payment might mean their support will be re-assessed, and this once-off lump sum will be counted as their baseline income rather than a sporadic payment. They also fear losing essential supports such as medical cards and free transport, which are linked to their social welfare payments, and which are additionally essential for disabled people to access and participate in social, economic and community life.
5. The NDA notes that there are many stakeholders who do not consider the Disability Allowance, Blind Pension, or the BIA to be a living wage. Therefore, those in receipt either rely on income from other sources or fall under the poverty threshold based on their weekly income from allowances.

## Capacity Building

1. To be in a position to earn an income potential disabled artists may need to have access to appropriate education and training.
2. Fostering Inclusion is one of the three core pillars around which the **Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2020-2024** is built. SOLAS, Education and Training Boards Ireland, and the 16 ETBs across the country have progressed a series of actions to support the goal of Fostering Inclusion through the development and roll-out of a series of good practice guidelines to promote inclusion throughout FET, including for learners with a disability.
3. A snapshot of the Further Education and Training Course Hub[[20]](#footnote-20) on the Solas website, shows a current number of 380 courses listed when using the search term “art”. The Committee may wish to consult further with SOLAS on the accessibility of these course for disabled people, whether that be the physical accessibility of the locations or the cost. Those disabled people who wish to pursue a Further Education and Training course in art do not lose out on their secondary benefits (e.g. medical card) and will either be paid an allowance equivalent to the current payment (Disability Allowance or Blind Pension) or allowed to keep their current payment as long as they get an exemption from DSP (Invalidity Pension or Illness Benefit).
4. The Higher Education Authority has recently allocated funding to projects that will support universally designed higher education environments as well as supporting autistic students and students with an intellectual disability to be fully included in higher education. It is a step on the road to improve the existing but limited provision for these students in higher education. Part of the Universal Design in Education framework is Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which aims to reduce obstacles to teaching and learning by taking into account the needs of learners of diverse backgrounds and abilities.
5. It is important that built and ICT/digital environments professionals are being upskilled in the Universal Design approach to the built environment. Our CEUD has worked closely with third-level institutions and professional bodies to develop Universal Design modules that are being taught as part of the relevant courses. Outside of formal course work there are also opportunities to improve skills and awareness. One example is the recently launched NDA Learning Hub[[21]](#footnote-21) where someone can register for free and where they can follow a self-paced eLearning module aimed at professionals involved in the design and procurement of buildings, but which is open to anyone interested in Universal Design in the built environment. The module highlights Universal Design at the Central Bank of Ireland – a winner of the RIAI Universal Design Award[[22]](#footnote-22).

# Participation in decision making

1. In 2022 the NDA has published **Participation Matters: Guidelines on implementing the obligation to meaningfully engage with disabled people in public decision making[[23]](#footnote-23)**
2. These guidelines are a practical resource to support public officials at national and local level to meaningfully consult with and actively involve disabled people and their representative organisations in policy development and other decision making processes to meet obligations set out under the UNCRPD. These guidelines support officials to take a Universal Design approach to all public consultation and participation processes so that disabled people can participate on an equal basis with others. We believe they could prove very useful to officials working in the fields of art and culture. Most venues, programmes, etc. are led by non-disabled people who have no living experience of what it means to be disabled and what would make a programme or venue accessible. In line with the ‘nothing about us without us’ principle, it is essential to engage and consult with disabled people in the design and implementation of programmes and projects relevant to them. Under the UNCRPD it is a requirement to seek the views of disabled people through their representative organisations or Disabled Persons’ Organisations (DPOs) which are run by, and on behalf of, disabled people, when developing policies or plans that affect disabled people. The current list of DPOs that the NDA is aware of is in Appendix E. We would advise this Committee to ensure they prioritise engagement with DPOs when considering matters that affect disabled people.

# Attitudes

1. Under Article 8 of the UNCRPD (Awareness raising) ratifying States are asked to adopt immediate, appropriate and effective measures with a view:
	1. To combat stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices relating to persons with disabilities, including those based on sex and age, in all areas of life.
2. Ratifying States are also asked to adopt immediate, appropriate and effective measures with a view to:
	1. Encouraging all organs of the media to portray persons with disabilities in a manner consistent with the purpose of the present Convention.
3. The concept of “gatekeeping” in arts and cultural organisations is seen as a barrier to developing disabled artists and allowing the public to see work by disabled artists and work that reflects the many facets of disability. It is not necessarily a question of negative attitudes. It is more likely that “Gatekeepers” do not have an awareness of the barriers that may impede a disabled artist from engaging. In parallel with this they may have never encountered a disabled artist or programmed any content that relates to disability. Staff in artistic and cultural organisations would benefit from disability awareness training and engagement with Disabled Person’s Organisations.

## Representation and Portrayal

1. In 2009, the NDA and the former Broadcasting Commission of Ireland published a substantial report on the **Representation and Portrayal of Persons with Disabilities in Irish Broadcasting[[24]](#footnote-24)**. The report found that in the past, there was very little, usually negative, portrayal of disabled people in broadcasting. There was very limited awareness of disability as a concern for broadcasters or as an issue that broadcasters should address. The report also found that this situation was changing as part of an increased awareness of the basic rights of individuals generally, and a realisation of the role and importance of broadcasting in representing diversity and minority viewpoints, ethno-cultural and race issues, with disability emerging as a specific focus. The NDA has worked with the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) since then to try and develop a set of commitments and resources for broadcasters that will allow them to provide more opportunities for persons with disabilities to be seen and heard on screen and on the radio.
2. In the intervening years the NDA and BAI have met and discussed options with stake holders representing all types of broadcasters and disabled people. Various proposals emerged from these engagements. Although most have not been advanced they are summarised below:
3. Guidelines for the independent producers on how to speak about and describe various disabilities and mental health difficulties.
4. Develop a process for supporting the industry to become more disability competent
5. Hold a seminar for relevant disability stakeholders in the broadcasting industry, in partnership with Irish Actors’ Equity
6. We would suggest that the Committee consider these suggestions as a way of increasing access to the broadcast media. It is important that disabled artists have opportunities to appear on TV, radio and film to tell the stories they want us to see and hear, as well as having the opportunities to work behind the camera in writing, casting, and other roles.
7. The development of positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities is important in assisting Ireland to deliver on its commitments under Article 8 of the UNCRPD. Promoting positive attitudes to disability in the community at all levels and for all ages, is key to achieving inclusion and ensuring people with disabilities can reach their full potential.

## Public Sector Duty

1. The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (the Public Sector Duty) is set out in Section 42 of the **Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014**. It is a statutory obligation on public bodies, in the performance of their functions, to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect human rights of staff and service users. It requires public bodies to assess, address and report on progress in relation to equality and human rights, in a manner that is accessible to the public.
2. Based on statements given to previous meetings of this Committee the Department, and by extension the Arts Council, is now encouraging arts organisations to comply with their public sector duty. It has resulted in many arts organisations taking on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in a meaningful way. For example, venues such as the Project Arts Centre has developed its new EDI policy[[25]](#footnote-25) where the four prioritised areas are: Sexuality and Gender Diversity; Disability; Socio-Economic Background; and Cultural Diversity. It is important that in complying with the public sector duty that organisations are aware of the intersectionality of disability with gender and cultural background.

# Conclusion and Recommendations

1. A recurring theme in this submission is lack of disability awareness and lack of disability competence among those running arts and cultural venues. While awareness is improving and disabled audience members and disabled artist do have more access there is still a lot more to do. Disabled people do not feel they have full access and with 13.5% of people in Ireland having a disability that is a large share of a potential audience.
2. For Ireland to be in compliance with its obligations under the UNCRPD it is important that there is full access and inclusion of disabled people in the arts and that disabled artists are more visible, supported and celebrated. Legislation and regulation that supports access and inclusion exists and needs to be fully complied with and strengthened where necessary. However, changing practices requires building awareness and developing disability competence to improve access to venues, exhibitions and performances,
3. With the ending of the National Disability Inclusion Strategy, during 2023 the Department of Children, Equality, Disability and Youth will be consulting on the development of a successor strategy focused on progressive realisation of the UNCRPD. This will be an opportunity to include comprehensive measures that will improve the environment for the arts and disability.
4. We agree with the Committee when it recommends that the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media engage with Cabinet colleagues and with disabled workers in the arts sector to resolve all issues arising from the interaction between arts funding and social protection supports insofar as this affects disabled arts workers. This should be done in the context of the cost of disability report findings.
5. We would welcome publication of the findings of the 2021 pilot scheme administered by the Department of Social Protection on vouchers for ISL translation. It would be important that these results are published and plans for a permanent scheme are developed as it would show a commitment to operationalising recommendations in the Cost of Disability Report and would increase access to artistic and cultural events and performances
6. The new focus on EDI in arts organisations and venues is to be welcomed. As part of this we advise that they become more disability aware and competent. A key part of this will be to consult with disabled people and DPOs. This will provide more insight into barriers to participation of disabled people as audiences and artists. The NDA is available to assist the Committee with any further information it may need
7. Arts venues should make all efforts to comply with existing guidelines to make their buildings physically accessible. Attention also needs to be given to making performances accessible and removing barriers for disabled people to participate in and be employed in the arts.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Article 30 – Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport

1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities:

a) Enjoy access to cultural materials in accessible formats;

b) Enjoy access to television programmes, films, theatre and other cultural activities, in accessible formats;

c) Enjoy access to places for cultural performances or services, such as theatres, museums, cinemas, libraries and tourism services, and, as far as possible, enjoy access to monuments and sites of national cultural importance.

2. States Parties shall take appropriate measures to enable persons with disabilities to have the opportunity to develop and utilize their creative, artistic and intellectual potential, not only for their own benefit, but also for the enrichment of society.

3. States Parties shall take all appropriate steps, in accordance with international law, to ensure that laws protecting intellectual property rights do not constitute an unreasonable or discriminatory barrier to access by persons with disabilities to cultural materials.

4. Persons with disabilities shall be entitled, on an equal basis with others, to recognition and support of their specific cultural and linguistic identity, including sign languages and deaf culture.

5. With a view to enabling persons with disabilities to participate on an equal basis with others in recreational, leisure and sporting activities, States Parties shall take appropriate measures:

a) To encourage and promote the participation, to the fullest extent possible, of persons with disabilities in mainstream sporting activities at all levels;

b) To ensure that persons with disabilities have an opportunity to organize, develop and participate in disability-specific sporting and recreational activities and, to this end, encourage the provision, on an equal basis with others, of appropriate instruction, training and resources;

c) To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to sporting, recreational and tourism venues;

d) To ensure that children with disabilities have equal access with other children to participation in play, recreation and leisure and sporting activities, including those activities in the school system;

(e) To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to services from those involved in the organization of recreational, tourism, leisure and sporting activities.

## Appendix B: Arts and Culture recommendations from the Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities

The Government set up the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities in November 1993. The role of the Commission was to find out what life was like for people with disabilities in Ireland and to propose ways of making things better.

The 1996 Report of the Commission, entitled, **A Strategy for Equality** was a milestone.[[26]](#footnote-26) It was the outcome of a major consultative process involving people with disabilities. Among other results, the Commission's report led to the Government policy, announced in 2000, and given legal effect in the 2005 Disability Act, to oblige mainstream public services to include people with disabilities.

Chapter 20 of the report covered arts and culture. The report contained a number of recommendations on how to improve access to arts and culture for disabled people and these are listed in Appendix B. The report recognised that not everyone participates equally, least of all disabled people. This was mainly because of lack of access to venues and to transport, inadequate information, and low economic status

323. The recommended review of the Building Regulations 1991, should include all arts venues and aim to make them as accessible as possible to as many people as possible. Among the facilities that should be available in all theatres, cinemas, auditoriums and concert halls are transfer places (which allow wheelchair users to sit in a seat) and wheelchair spaces (where the user can stay in their wheelchair). Induction loop systems, which amplify sound for hearing aid users, should be installed in all auditoriums, especially those in receipt of grant-aid, while infra-red systems are preferable in music venues. Stages may also require loop systems to facilitate deaf performers. (20.8)

324. Box-office desks should be located at heights accessible to both wheelchair-users and ambulant people and should incorporate a counter loop system and a minicom or other text telephone system. Audio description systems - through which people with visual impairments can hear during pauses in dialogue descriptions of action taking place on stage or screen via a headset - should be installed in all cinemas and buildings where performances take place. The same equipment can be used for such services as simultaneous translation. (20.9)

325. Super-titling equipment should be available for use in the Abbey Theatre, Siamsa Tire, the Municipal Theatre, Galway, Wexford Theatre Royal; Waterford Theatre Royal, Cork Opera House and any commercial theatre with more than 800 seats. (20.10)

326. The Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht should draw up a code of practice for all the national cultural institutions and the heritage services to provide facilities and information at their institutions, sites and visitor centres for people with disabilities. (20.11)

327. Strategies should be developed by the Arts Council, the Heritage Council and the National Monuments and Historic Properties Service to find ways of making accessible those arts and heritage activities which take place in existing buildings, including listed buildings. Operating in a building which cannot easily be made wheelchair-accessible should not prevent arts organisations from providing access features for people with sensory or other disabilities. (20.12)

328. The Arts Council should disability proof the Arts Plan 1995-1997. (20.13)

329. The joint action research project by the Arts Council and the National Rehabilitation Board, mooted in the plan, should be expanded to include the Council for the Status of People with Disabilities as a third partner. Meanwhile, organisations in the field of disability should develop and implement arts policies in order to encourage and support access and opportunity in the arts for people with disabilities. (20.15)

330. In order to increase access to, and participation in, the arts for people with disabilities, relevant state agencies should devise systems of incentives for them, both financial and otherwise. Along with local authorities, the Arts Council should provide adequate and clearly ring-fenced funding as a temporary strategic tool to increase access and opportunity in the arts for people with disabilities through grants to:

* encourage the development of both disability arts and arts and disability practices, including integrated provision;
* ensure that venues become accessible to audiences and practitioners with disabilities. (20.16)

331. The Arts Council should develop a concessionary card system, through which people with disabilities in receipt of state benefits could obtain admission to arts venues and courses at concessionary rates. Priority seating in certain parts of auditoria (e.g. with level access for wheelchair-users, aisle seats for physically disabled people, near the stage for visually impaired people, in good view of sign interpreters or super-titling for deaf people) should be offered to people with disabilities who need it, at the cheapest rate on offer. This is an access requirement which should be fulfilled at all times and should not be subject to the same conditions as financial concessions. (20.17)

332. The Arts Council, local authorities, arts and disability organisations should introduce a system of bursaries for people with disabilities, with the aim of increasing their representation in all art forms and methods of cultural expression. (20.18)

333. All children with disabilities should be given the opportunity to participate in a range of arts activities as part of their general education, including at pre-school level. (20.19)

334. People with disabilities who have missed out on arts education should be offered compensatory education through adult education programmes run or funded by the VECs. Providers of adult, second-chance and continuing education should ensure that arts education is made widely available to students with disabilities. (20.20)

335. The training, including in-service training, of primary school teachers and secondary school art and music teachers should have an arts dimension. (20.21)

336. All arts organisations should institute disability equality training for their staff, members and volunteers. Disability equality training is particularly vital for front-of-house and box office staff, whose offers of assistance, pro-activity, information-giving skills and knowledge are of paramount importance in dealing with customers with disabilities. (20.22)

337. Arts awareness courses should be run in disability organisations, including for access experts. This is intended to ensure that disability organisations develop awareness of the arts and encourage their membership and client groups to seek involvement in the arts at all levels. (20.23)

338. The Council for the Status of People with Disabilities should develop models and mechanisms for the identification of talent, leading to professional training in areas of disability arts or arts and disability practice where few role models exist and/or where the appropriate language and aesthetic are only in the process of development. The training itself should take place in mainstream settings. (20.24)

339. Training in music, art and theatre for people with disabilities should be open in its entry policies, modular in structure, and lead to clearly-specified, national qualifications. (20.25)

340. Artist-in-residence schemes should be organised to ensure that:

* artists with disabilities work as artists-in-residence in both inclusive and disability-specific settings;
* artists in residence working with people with disabilities are of the same standard of excellence as those who work with other people. (20.26)

341. The Irish Writers' Centre should develop training and standards for live and recorded audio description. (20.27)

342. Theatre-in-education companies and others involved in outreach work in schools should ensure that their performances and workshops can be accessed by all children with disabilities in any class or school they work with. (20.28)

343. Arts and cultural organisations should strive to make information on their facilities, services, events, or performances available in a wide range of formats (e.g. large print, tape, Braille, computer disk, signing). The Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht and the Arts Council should lead by example in providing information. (20.29)

344. Information on arts and cultural facilities, events and performances should state clearly their arrangements for people with disabilities. This should include access information, pricing policy and any special features (such as the use of a strobe light or glitter ball which can have adverse effects on some people with epilepsy). Events and courses should be publicised by the widest possible range of media including Aertel, local radio, teletext, magazines for deaf people, specialist TV and radio programmes aimed at people with disabilities, the disability press and newsletters, and via disability organisations such as Deaf Clubs to ensure that the maximum number of people with disabilities have access to the information. (20.30)

345. Arts and cultural organisations should provide scripts, précis, introductory talks, taped programmes, audio and sign language interpreted tours, touch tables, thermoforms and other means of ensuring maximum access for people with disabilities to venues, performances, exhibitions and events. (20.31)

346. The Council for the Status of People with Disabilities should appoint an arts officer. This would ensure that arts and cultural matters assume a central position within the Council's work from the beginning. The Arts Council should nominate a professional member of staff to act as a link between art form officers and people with disabilities and their organisations. (20.32)

347. The Council for the Status of People with Disabilities should set up a talent bank of interested and suitably qualified people with disabilities to be recommended to the Minister for Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht for consideration as nominees to state boards. The Arts Council should also have access to this talent bank and should ensure that people with disabilities are included as nominees to boards of management of arts organisations. (20.33)

348. The Arts Council should commission the production of resource packs for arts organisations to assist them to implement ways of involving people with disabilities as audiences, participants or employees. (20.34)

349. CAFE (Creative Activity for Everyone) should be developed as a central independent source of expert advice on arts and disability issues. CAFE and APIC (Awareness Publishing Information Communications) should co-operate more closely in order to facilitate such developments as the disability access coding of CAFE's extensive database. CAFE should also consider the establishment of a system of arts animators to facilitate the interface between arts and disability organisations. (20.35)

350. County arts officers should conduct an immediate disability audit/inventory of all venues and arts organisations in their areas, reporting to the Arts Council, relevant city/county managers and regional authorities. This process should be repeated and updated in 1999 as part of a review of progress. (20.36)

351. Application forms issued by the Arts Council, the Ireland Funds and other funding bodies for arts organisations should include a section requesting information about facilities for people with disabilities and arrangements made to ensure their full participation in the applicant organisation. As well as tracking progress made, this mechanism should also enable the Arts Council and other funding bodies to make disability-specific grants from time to time in respect of staffing and recruitment and numbers and types of exhibitions. (20.37)

352. A touring "hothouse" roadshow should be developed by Very Special Arts to provide opportunities for people with disabilities, including those who live in institutions, to sample arts approaches in workshops and developmental projects. (20.38)

353. The Arts Council should revise its handbooks for exhibition organisers to include sections on display, particularly as it affects people with disabilities. Exhibitions should be mounted in such a way that exhibits can be clearly appreciated by both wheelchair-users and ambulant people, with cord barriers, if used, at heights which do not present a trip hazard. All exhibition rooms and galleries should include seating to enable ambulant people with disabilities to rest. (20.39)

354. The Minister for Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht should propose an amendment to the Arts Act, 1951, Section 1, recognising "creative communication in sign language" as a specific art form. This would ensure the recognition of deaf arts and culture at the most formal level, alongside drama, literature and music. The drama officer of the Arts Council should provide a list of all sign interpreters qualified to work in theatre to all theatres and theatre companies. (20.40)

355. Moltar don Roinn Comhionannais agus Athchóirithe Dlí, i gcomhar le hÚdaras na Gaeltachta, staitisticí maidir leis an líon iomlán de dhaoine le mí-chumais sa nGaeltacht a chur le chéile, agus claráracha a fhorbairt chun cuidiú le daoine le mí-chumais bheith páirteach i saol cultúrtha agus soisialta na Gaeltachta tríd is tríd. (20.41)

356. The Department of Enterprise and Employment should ensure that the legislation currently in the course of preparation by its Copyright Unit exempts from liability for copyright infringements any reproduction in formats other than print of copyright works, which are made for the use in education, or otherwise for the personal use, of people with visual impairments. Where the extent of such reproduction might conflict with a normal exploitation of the work, or risk prejudicing the legitimate interests of the author, the legislation should provide for the payment of equitable remuneration to a body representative of the rights holders affected. (20.42)

## Appendix C: Relevant legislation

### Ireland

* Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015
* Equal Status Acts 2000-2018
* Disability Act 2005
* Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014
* Irish Sign Language Act 2017
* Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) (Amendment) Act 2022

### Europe

* Regulation (EU) 2017/1563 and Directive (EU) 2017/1564 transposed into Irish law by the EU Marrakesh Treaty Regulations 2018 and the Copyright and Other Intellectual Property Law Provisions Act 2019, respectively
* EU Web Accessibility Directive (Directive (EU) 2016/2102) transposed into Irish law by the European Union (Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications of Public Sector Bodies) Regulations 2020

## Appendix D: List of Disabled Persons’ Organisations in Ireland

This is a list of national DPOs in Ireland that the NDA are aware of and may not constitute a full listing.

* As I Am
* Independent Living Movement Ireland
* Irish Deaf Society
* National Platform of Self Advocates
* Disabled Women Ireland
* Voice of Vision Impairment
* Physical Impairment Ireland
* Disability Power Ireland
1. https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2005/act/14/section/52/enacted/en/html#sec52 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [https://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/wwwartscouncilie/Content/About/Equality,\_Human\_Rights\_and\_Diversity/Diversity%20and%20Arts%20Council%20Awards\_March%202021.pdf](https://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/wwwartscouncilie/Content/About/Equality%2C_Human_Rights_and_Diversity/Diversity%20and%20Arts%20Council%20Awards_March%202021.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The UNCRPD includes economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. States Parties that ratify the Convention commit themselves to immediate delivery of civil and political rights to people with disabilities, and to progressive realisation of social, economic and cultural rights. Article 30 is primarily a civil and political right, which needs to be delivered as soon as practicable. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/75e45-irelands-first-report-to-the-united-nations-committee-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://nda.ie/publications/summary-of-the-report-of-the-commission-on-the-status-of-people-with-disabilities> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/02a15-heritage-ireland-2030-sets-out-strategy-for-the-protection-of-irish-heritage-with-joined-up-approach-across-government-stakeholders-and-communities/#:~:text=The%20Government%20has%20today%20approved,the%20next%20decade%20and%20beyond. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. National Disability Authority (2023) How’s it Going. Wellbeing and Social Inclusion in Ireland. Forthcoming. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Disability and Arts Ireland (2017) Audiences-in-waiting? How do people with disabilities engage with culture? <https://adiarts.ie/word/audiences-in-waiting-survey-report/> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Disability and Arts Ireland (2015) Qualitative research on the engagement with arts and culture by people with disabilities in the Dún Laoghaire Rathdown (dlr) area. https://adiarts.ie/word/qualitative-research-on-the-engagement-with-arts-and-culture-by-people-with-disabilities-in-the-dun-laoghaire-rathdown-dlr-area/ [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. https://www.disabilityartsinternational.org/resources/time-to-act-final-results/ [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. <https://universaldesign.ie/built-environment/building-for-everyone/> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Building for Everyone, Booklet 8, Building Management, Section 8.4.1, relating to Access Audits and the NDA Guidelines for Access Auditing of the Built Environment. The Guidelines for Access Auditing of the Built Environmentwere published in 2005. While references in the document may be out of date, the general principles and guidance on the process and contents of an access audit should be followed. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Wheelmap. Maps accessible places (restaurants, cafés, boutiques…) all over the world but it’s supplied by users. Disabled people collect all the data necessary and transmit it to Wheelmap: they can upload images and leave comments. Thus sharing their experience with others who go through the same obstacles, they are in control of their environment. Wheelmap even gathers a community and organizes events for fellow users to join. Plus, the app can be set in 32 languages. Available on both Android and iOS

AccessNow: A similar app to Wheelmap, AccessNow maps and locates several types of accessible places all around the world: restaurants, hotels, shops… The users can add information that can be rated by all. Available on both Android and iOS

WheelMate

Focusing on locating only parking spots and restrooms, WheelMate also depends on information given by its users whether by adding new places or by rating them. More than 35 000 locations are mapped across 45 countries. Available on iOS [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. https://nda.ie/publications/code-of-practice-on-accessible-heritage-sites-nda-report [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. <https://nda.ie/publications/monitoring-report-eu-wad-ireland-2021-nda-report> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. <http://universaldesign.ie/Products-Services/Customer-Communications-Toolkit-for-the-Public-Service-A-Universal-Design-Approach/> [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. <http://nda.ie/good-practice/codes-of-practice/code-of-practice-on-accessibility-of-public-services-and-information-provided-by-public-bodies-/> [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Section 26 (2) Access Officer: As set out under Section 26 of the Disability Act 2005, public bodies have a statutory requirement to appoint an Access Officer in the organisation. Each head of a public body shall authorise at least one of his or her officers (referred to in this Act as “access officers”) to provide or arrange for and co-ordinate the provision of assistance and guidance to persons with disabilities in accessing its services [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/0f390-social-protection-statistics/> [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. <https://www.fetchcourses.ie/course/finder?search=1&view=0> [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. <https://ndalearninghub.learnupon.com/users/sign_in?next=%2Fdashboard> [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. The Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (RIAI) has a section in its annual awards for Cultural/Public Buildings. A list of previous winners shows that, at the very minimum, they are modern buildings (or refurbished buildings) that are accessible. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. <https://nda.ie/publications/participation-matters-guidelines-on-implementing-the-obligation-to-meaningfully-engage-with-disabled-people-in-public-decision-making> [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. <https://nda.ie/publications/attitudes/bci-nda-report-representation-and-portrayal-of-people-with-disabilities-in-irish-broadcasting/> [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. https://projectartscentre.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Small\_Project-Arts\_Tedi-Report\_AW.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. [Summary of the report of the commission on the status of people with disabilities - National Disability Authority (nda.ie)](https://nda.ie/publications/summary-of-the-report-of-the-commission-on-the-status-of-people-with-disabilities) [↑](#footnote-ref-26)