

# Culture 2025 - Éire Ildánach

## A Framework Policy to 2025



An Roinn Ealaíon, Oidhreachta,  
Gnóthaí Réigiúnacha, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta

Department of Arts, Heritage,  
Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

Draft Document

Ildánach implies an appreciation of culture and heritage, of being skilled in the arts, of being creative and versatile. It captures an essence that underpins this policy.

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## Message from the Minister

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Ireland's unique and varied culture is a source of immense national pride that gives us a common sense of purpose. Our culture is an all-encompassing, evolving force that helps us to express and celebrate who we are as a diverse, modern nation.

Our poetry, literature, music, dance and theatre, our creative skills in filmmaking and animation, and our contribution to the visual arts all go towards making Ireland's contribution to the cultural sphere unique.

One hundred years on from the cultural revival which combined with the revolutionary movement that led to the 1916 Rising, it is timely that now, during this centenary year, we set out a vision for our cultural future.

The artistic and cultural contribution to the 2016 commemorative events was at the very heart of their success.

Organisations and literary movements like the GAA, Conradh na Gaeilge and the Abbey Theatre, founded over a century ago, continue to enrich our society and inform our cultural consciousness.

Our culture is now much more intricate and varied than ever, reflecting our increasingly diverse society.

The *Programme for a Partnership Government*, published in May 2016, prioritised the publication of *Culture 2025*. This document sets out an overarching vision and framework for the future and outlines the priorities for action over the coming years.

*Culture 2025* adopts the fundamental premise that culture adds value to our lives and to our communities and that everyone has the right to participate in the cultural life of the nation.

This right runs throughout people's lives, irrespective of where they come from, where they live, their religious beliefs or their economic or social backgrounds.

Thank you to everyone who has assisted in the consultation process and to the representatives of the various cultural groups that served on the steering and expert groups in preparing *Culture 2025*.

We will continue to work with all interests as we move to the next phase of our journey in developing our cultural policy together.



**Heather Humphreys, TD**

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs  
July 2016



# A first for the cultural sector

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*Culture 2025* is the first Framework Policy to embrace the whole cultural sector. It is the beginning of a journey rather than a destination – a journey that will bring together all those involved in the arts, film, broadcasting, visual arts, cultural heritage, the Irish language and Gaeltacht with Government departments and State agencies.

The implementation of the priorities in this Framework Policy will be guided by continued engagement with all the sectoral groups to inform future action.

Through this Framework Policy, the Government seeks to nurture creativity, boost citizen participation, help more people to follow a sustainable career in the cultural sector, promote Ireland's cultural wealth and ensure a cultural contribution to wider social and economic goals.

The aim is to put culture at the heart of our lives and develop a more collaborative approach across all sectors.

The Framework Policy sets out values and high-level principles to inform public policy and planning in the decade ahead.

It recognises that everyone has the right to enjoy, create and participate in the culture of their country.

It is underpinned by a commitment to increase resources for arts and heritage, to support Irish culture on the world stage, and to improve funding structures for investment in national and local services.

All relevant public bodies will be required to respond to the challenges and opportunities of greater cultural engagement and collaboration.





# Enrich. Engage. Participate.

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Through *Culture 2025*, the Government aims to:

- Enrich the lives of everyone through engagement in the cultural life of the nation
- Create opportunities for increased citizen participation, especially for those currently excluded
- Encourage ambition, risk, innovation and excellence in the creative and cultural sectors
- Ensure that culture is seen as a core component of the work across Government
- Recognise and support the cultural contribution of the voluntary sector
- Ensure the robustness of system which safeguard and promote Ireland's cultural heritage
- Support a thriving Irish language, with vibrant Gaeltacht communities and other language networks
- Promote Ireland's culture on the international stage
- Finance this vision with well-designed, funding mechanisms

The Government is committed to putting in place the necessary mechanisms to support achievement of these aims. This will require more coordination and collaboration between key institutions and agencies, strengthening the role of local government to deliver cultural services and underlining the central importance of culture and cultural heritage to national sustainability policies. It will also require examination of the existing institutional arrangements to ensure that they can respond to the challenges of priorities set out in this Framework Policy.

## Our key values

The Framework Policy is underpinned by certain key values. They are:

- The intrinsic value of culture
- The value of culture to our lives and our communities
- The right of everyone to participate in the cultural life of the nation
- The importance of the Irish language, our cultural heritage, folklore, games, music and the uniqueness of our Gaeltacht areas
- The value of cultural diversity, informed by the many traditions and social backgrounds now in Ireland
- The value of culture as a means of fostering a more sustainable future for Ireland, including through economic and social policy
- The value of culture in presenting Ireland to the world



# A beginning

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The publication of this Framework Policy is the beginning of a process that will guide Government policy in this area for the next 10 years.

As such, it is a living document, subject to on-going review and additional public consultation where appropriate. It will evolve in line with new developments in the cultural sector.

The collaborative approach in developing this first framework document has been a very positive experience. It is proposed to continue to use the structures set up for this purpose. They will be renewed and refreshed as appropriate.

## What needs to be done

The Framework has identified seven pillars. We need to:

- 1 // **Put culture at the heart of our lives**
- 2 // **Foster creativity**
- 3 // **Celebrate our cultural heritage and traditions**
- 4 // **Recognise the importance of culture to a vibrant society**
- 5 // **See collaboration as the new norm**
- 6 // **Emphasise the international dimension**
- 7 // **Respond to the digital age**





This Framework Policy has been informed by the impact of the economic crisis on arts, culture and heritage and the questions it raised about wider societal values, such as how an improving economy can support culture to develop increased personal well-being and better social outcomes.

It recognises the need to set out our core values and vision, to review existing strategies and structures and to ensure more sustainable outcomes.

## How will the priorities be tackled?

This Policy Framework sets out the basis for deeper engagement between Government, the citizen and relevant cultural stakeholders.

The Department has identified a number of priority measures. These will be implemented by Government and public bodies. A cross-sectoral plan underlining who needs to do what – and when – will be developed around the seven identified pillars.

## 1// Putting culture at the heart of our lives

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Every citizen should have the opportunity to live a rich and creative life, participate in the cultural life of the community and enjoy our cultural heritage.

A well-resourced cultural sector that supports excellence will, in turn, encourage cultural activity.

A healthy cultural life is important for both the individual and society. It helps the individual achieve a more meaningful and happy life. Culture also has an important role to play in promoting tolerance, inclusivity and social cohesion in our increasingly diverse society.

It should be accessible to everyone, irrespective of origin, place of residence, religious beliefs, or economic or social background.

Culture also has an important role in social integration. It must reflect Ireland's shift to a multicultural society and recognise the value of diverse cultural influences. Interaction, equality of opportunity, understanding, respect and integration all contribute to the enrichment of our culture.

Public enjoyment of cultural activities is closely linked to education policy. The education system has a major role to play in nurturing, sustaining and reinvigorating our culture – both modern and traditional.





### Priorities:

- Map all the key institutions in the cultural area (including the arts, cultural institutions, film, music, Irish language, heritage and other public bodies which provide cultural services)
- Examine these roles and consider whether institutional or legislative or administrative functions should be reviewed
- Carry out a critical analysis of direct and indirect supports that are funding arts and cultural activity
- Improve funding structures through multi-annual funding, investment in capital infrastructure, cross-streamed funding and investment in regional and local services
- Examine mechanisms to further promote private investment in the cultural sector



Louis Lovett in *The Girl who Forgot to Sing Badly*  
(Theatre Lovett, The Ark). Photo: Pat Redmond

## 2// Foster creativity

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Supporting creativity in all its forms is essential to ensure that future generations can build on and add to the contribution of past and present generations.



Boundaries are breaking down between different art forms and between the creative, technological and digital industries. It is important that links are acknowledged and fostered and that creativity is seen as essential to the future economic, social and cultural well-being of the country.

Various public bodies and organisations already provide significant direct and indirect supports to our artists and other creators. Many artists and creative workers, however, still struggle to make a living.

Fostering creativity in our young people is also vital if we want to equip them to meet the challenges of a fast-changing world and to maximise Ireland's attractiveness as a place of quality employment.



### Priorities:

- **Examine existing systems and supports with a view to helping more people pursue sustainable careers in the cultural and heritage sectors**
- **Ensure education and economic policies foster creativity**
- **Support and promote ambition, risk, innovation and excellence for those creating cultural content and those working in the areas of culture and heritage**
- **Enhance support for those in the creative sector in Ireland while they work and interact with a globalised world**

*Song of the Sea*, © Cartoon Saloon, Melusine Production, The Big Farm, Superprod, Norlum Studios

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## 3// Celebrating our cultural heritage and traditions

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Culture and heritage continue to shape us as a people. Ireland's cultural heritage is inextricably linked to a strong sense of place and the vibrancy of our communities.

### Traditional culture

Traditional culture, especially music, dance, sport and the Irish language, is fundamental to Irish identity and to our place in the world.

Many aspects of traditional cultural heritage are organised and supported on a voluntary basis by national organisations with active local and international branches.

The work of these organisations will continue to be supported and, where appropriate, UNESCO recognition will be sought for unique Irish cultural traditions.

### Irish language

The Irish language has been central to Ireland's identity. Over the last 100 years, there has been a flowering of literature and other art forms through the medium of Irish and it continues to play its part as a modern European language.

The Government also recognises the uniqueness and importance of our Gaeltacht areas as the heartland of the Irish language.

### Natural habitats

Our natural and built heritages are key components in framing our cultural identity and experience.

Our national parks and nature reserves, for example, contain unique habitats, flora and fauna, as well as dramatically different landscapes, offering the visitor a rare and different experience.

Over thousands of years, our farming culture has shaped our landscapes. By protecting traditional agricultural practices and areas of high nature value, we can manage our land and grow our food in sustainable ways.



Source: Department of Arts, Heritage,  
Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

## Built heritage and architecture

Our built heritage is one of the most tangible components of Ireland's cultural heritage. Archaeological monuments, historic buildings, industrial heritage and designed landscapes are among the features that help to define a sense of place. The traditional craft skills and artistic achievement they embody act as a focal point for creative inspiration.

The historic built environment attracts creative people and makes an important contribution to the economic and social activity of towns, cities and villages. Recognition of the importance of our built heritage has grown significantly over recent decades with strong legal protections and policies now in place.

Making new places where people want to live and work is equally important and is underpinned by appropriate planning and architectural policy.

Local heritage, traditions and histories are celebrated and sometimes rediscovered by enthusiastic groups up and down the country, with the support of the Heritage Council.

### Priorities:

- Continue implementation of *An Stráitéis Fiche Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010-2030* and increase investment in the Irish language
- Publish the new National Biodiversity Action Plan
- Continue to refine and enhance policies and supports that protect built heritage
- Encourage the use and reuse of buildings in urban and rural areas, and ensure that the creation of new places for living and working is sustainable
- Boost existing initiatives with new town and village renewal schemes and an expanded Historic Towns Initiative
- Put in place appropriate incentives to invest in protected structures
- Update the National Heritage Plan to identify priority actions in the heritage area





## 4// Culture and a vibrant society

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Valuing our culture and facilitating cultural participation is vital if we want to create a vibrant, tolerant and open society.

### Education

The education system has a key role in transmitting our cultural values and ensuring knowledge and awareness of the literature, music, Irish language, history and heritage. Deepening cultural engagement and promoting more creativity in schools can broaden the minds of pupils and help them develop their talents for future challenges.

These roles are fulfilled through the formal curriculum supplemented by a wide range of cultural initiatives which work with schools or young people such as *Music Generation*, *An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta*, the *Heritage in Schools* Programme, the *Writers in School* scheme and other supports. The *Arts in Education Charter* is designed to increase engagement with the arts in our schools. Progress has already been made in bringing artists into the classroom and in developing a new Arts in Education portal. These initiatives work to broaden the education experience and provide our young people with a rich cultural experience from an early age.

### A sense of place

Cultural participation and engagement can significantly enhance the well-being of local communities and increase the attractiveness of both urban and rural areas.

In urban areas, the development of vibrant cultural locations can reverse physical neglect and address social deprivation. Investment in culture can bring significant dividends and reconnect those who feel disenfranchised in areas of social deprivation.

In rural areas, vibrant cultural locations can boost pride in the local community and create areas that are attractive for both tourism and investment.

Investment in our natural heritage sites has the dual benefit of preserving our natural environment while also improving health, well-being and the local and national economy.

The conservation and presentation of our built heritage, including our UNESCO World Heritage Sites, act as an important stimulus for tourism and other economic activity.





## Investment

A vibrant cultural offering is increasingly recognised as of considerable importance in attracting foreign direct investment.

Local authorities have identified cultural vibrancy as a key instrument in making their areas attractive for inward investment.

Likewise, companies investing in Ireland are now looking for workers who demonstrate both technical and creative skills.

Companies will invest in locations where young, well-educated and mobile workers want to live.

## Gaeltacht

Gaeltacht areas are steeped in a deep and rich cultural and linguistic heritage. The protection, conservation and revitalisation of these areas has employment and economic benefits, including the development of language-based cultural tourism.

### Priorities:

- Ensure public policy embeds culture, and recognises the importance of our cultural heritage, in achieving wider social and economic goals
- Review and refresh the *Arts in Education Charter* to take account of progress made to date
- Encourage greater collaboration and understanding across national and local State bodies and agencies on the social and economic benefits of investing in culture

## 5// Collaboration as the new norm

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*The Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme serves as a model and inspiration for future collaboration across the cultural sector.*

The 1916 Centenary commemorations were a triumph of culture and creativity; a burst of artistic expression and a collective and honest exploration of our history, language and heritage.

The key to that success was collaboration between Government departments, local authorities, the Defence Forces, Gardaí, cultural and educational institutions, voluntary and community organisations, media outlets, many other partners and, of course, the individual artist, historian and citizen. They came together to deliver a successful, uplifting commemorative and cultural programme.

### Cultural services

Many different organisations and bodies play a role in delivering cultural services. They include Government departments, State bodies, cultural institutions, the media, local authorities, commercial bodies, the voluntary sector and various other national, regional and local bodies.

The Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs is responsible for the promotion and protection of Ireland's heritage, language, culture and the music and film industries. It has a particular role in fostering increased communication between all the cultural stakeholders in Ireland.

Greater collaboration between the work of different agencies, institutions and services within the cultural sector would benefit everyone.

This would also include collaboration between tourism bodies, public broadcasting, education and local government. Rural access to cultural services remains a challenge for many local authorities despite a significant investment in capital projects.

Local authorities have an important role in providing access to cultural services at local level. They provide a key link in the relationship between national policies and the cultural experience of people in their everyday lives.

Voluntary organisations also have an important role in promoting cultural activity throughout the country.



*Body Duet* with Philip Connaughton  
and Michelle Boulé.  
John Scott Dance. Photo: Chris Nash

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### Priorities:

- Develop a more collaborative approach to culture across Government, drawing on the lessons of this centenary year
- Re-examine the provision of cultural services at local level, building on existing connections between local authorities, the Arts and Heritage Councils, Foras na Gaeilge and Údarás na Gaeltachta
- Examine the role of voluntary organisations and develop policies to provide increased support



## 6// The international dimension

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It is vital for Ireland that its artists, architects, musicians, authors, filmmakers, photographers and other creative talent have the opportunity to work and collaborate on an international basis.

They must be given the support to develop and build long-term relationships with their international counterparts.

Opportunities to work globally are essential for many artists and creative professionals in order to sustain their careers.

Supporting Irish culture internationally plays a key role in connecting Ireland with our estimated 70 million-strong Irish diaspora.

The Government is committed to engaging positively at international level and to delivering initiatives with international institutions including the EU, the Council of Europe and UNESCO.

Our culture also helps to generate tourism and creates wider business benefits for Ireland.

Culture will continue to play an important role in fostering an all-island dialogue, and dialogue between Ireland and Britain, particularly during this Decade of Commemorations, and also now in the context of the UK's decision to leave the EU..

Cultural activities can create a safe space in which to identify and explore historical narratives and to build better understanding, as well as celebrating the diverse culture that exists within the State.





### Priorities:

- Build on the resources available to support Irish culture on the world stage
- Emphasise tourism policies that continue to highlight Ireland's cultural richness as a basis for a sustainable tourism industry in Ireland
- Ensure cultural expression continues to be at the heart of the commemorations programme
- Consider how cultural exchange and understanding can help build and maintain strong connections on this island, north and south, and between Britain and Ireland



## 7// Responding to the digital age

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Rapid developments in technology, new methods of communication and the internet have changed the way people create, access and participate in culture. This is particularly true for young people.

Digital technologies have revolutionised the production and delivery of content for audiences. On-going developments, such as the increased importance of mobile technology, multimedia and social media, mean this is set to continue. This explosion in the range of available content and delivery platforms presents opportunities for Irish producers, but it also changes how we attract and retain relevant audiences.

Digital technology creates new business models, particularly in the cultural space where crowd-funding is increasingly popular.

Education can be enhanced through interactive multimedia cultural content. Advances in technology and broadband allow teachers and students to access high-quality cultural material and innovative learning experiences.

Digitisation is a powerful means of presenting information about the activities and collections of cultural institutions to huge and diverse audiences across the world.

It is also a means of ensuring that the widest number of people have the opportunity to develop their personal engagement with culture and the arts.

Significant progress has already been made in this area, but it is clear that there is an increasing appetite for free and fee-based digital cultural information.

In the longer term, it is important that key cultural institutions have a shared vision and approach to digitisation and the preservation of digital cultural content.

### Priorities:

- Consider the development of a National Digital Preservation Policy
- Balance greater access with the protection of creative rights
- Harness cultural education opportunities through digital platforms



Fidget Feet's *Catch Me*  
Lee Clayden & Chantal McCormick. Photo: Jy Daly

## The role of Government

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Culture is a constantly evolving concept that is shaped by many influences. Public policy can play a major role in its development by devising and implementing strategies and legislation for the cultural sector and through direct funding at national and local level.

Public policy also supports culture through education, public broadcasting, local government and the voluntary sector.

A central role is played by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in shaping, articulating and coordinating Government policy in the field of culture.

This includes responsibility for policy in relation to the arts, culture, film and music, built and natural heritage, the Irish language, the Gaeltacht and the islands.

The wider responsibility of the Department for rural and regional affairs sits well with the Government's commitment to strengthen the role of arts and heritage at local level.

The Department oversees and provides funding to the Arts Council, the Heritage Council, the Irish Film Board, An Foras Teanga/the Language Body and various other bodies and organisations involved in the cultural sector.

The Department also liaises with other Government departments and organisations indirectly involved in the cultural sector. These include the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.







Source: Department of Arts, Heritage, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs





## Resources

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There has been a significant reduction in the level of funding available for cultural activities since the onset of the economic crisis, from public funding to market funding and private support.

The recently published *Programme for a Partnership Government* commits to progressively increase funding to the arts and the cultural sector as the economy improves.

This, on its own, will not be sufficient to achieve maximum participation. Public funding must be prioritised and used in the most efficient and effective way possible. Ways of improving funding structures are to be considered. These will include multi-annual

funding, investment in capital infrastructure, cross-stream funding and investment in regional and local services.

Diverse income streams must be further developed to supplement the public funding. Options might include such areas as philanthropy, corporate partnerships and commercial income.

The *Programme for a Partnership Government* commits to encouraging strong mutually beneficial links between business and the arts community. As part of this commitment, the Government will examine ways to further promote private investment across the cultural sector.

The Department will work to support the development, enhancement and dissemination of culture and cultural activity.

It will encourage the continued vitality, development and viability of the Irish cultural sector over the coming years.

### Priorities:

- **Prioritise public funding and use it efficiently**
- **Consider ways to improve funding structures**
- **Develop diverse income streams**
- **Examine ways to promote private investment**

## What next?

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Publication of the Policy will be followed up with the development of a cross sectoral plan, which will be guided by the priorities set out in this document.

As a first step, all relevant bodies will be asked to respond to the challenges of meeting the aims of this Policy Framework, and to set out how they will respond within their area to the opportunities presented by greater engagement with our culture and cultural heritage. This will involve Government departments, State agencies (in the areas of arts, film, broadcasting, heritage, Irish language and Gaeltacht etc), the cultural institutions and the local government sector.

Workshops will be held as required to assist in the preparation of the proposed action plan.

This next phase will also be informed by continued engagement with the public, stakeholders and the Oireachtas, building on the process that has led to the formulation of this document.

Development of this plan will be informed by legacy/re-imagine phase of the *Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme*. This will build on the success of the Centenary Programme in demonstrating the importance of cultural expression in our commemorations on the basis of engagement and partnership.

A draft of this cross sectoral plan will then be informed by discussions with the sector, including a major cultural forum and through discussion in the Oireachtas. It is aimed to complete this plan within 6 months of the Framework Policy being approved by Government.



# Appendix 1

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## Some words on the process

At its meeting on 20 June 2014, the then Government approved the drafting of a National Cultural Policy - *Culture 2025*. It was designed to set out the high-level aims and policies of the Government in this area in the period up until 2025.

Cultural stakeholders met in the Royal Irish Academy on 25 May 2015 to consider a draft discussion paper, which was prepared by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The final discussion paper was launched by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in August 2015 and was followed by a series of workshops to enable people across the country to have their views heard regarding cultural policy.

Meetings took place in Cavan, Cork, Galway, Limerick, Kilkenny and Dublin. The Dublin event followed the participative World Café model and was held under the Open Public Debates programme. A call for written submissions was also made. The closing date for written submissions was 31 October 2015. Over 600 people attended the consultation events and 217 written submissions were received.

The submissions were then examined and the common themes submitted to a broad expert group for consideration. A focused steering group then assisted in the drafting of this framework policy document, which reflects the many useful contributions and suggestions made during the public consultation process.

This document does not reflect the views of any one individual who took part or who advised the department throughout this process. However, the process has very much shaped this document.

More details on the process, on the outcomes and on the membership of the steering and expert groups will be found on the department's website at [www.ahg.gov.ie](http://www.ahg.gov.ie)





