

Visual Artists Ireland [NI]

Response to consultation for Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-21

Visual Artists Ireland is the Representative Body for Visual Artists in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Our Advocacy, Advice, and Membership services combine with our Professional Development and Art News Centre to be the most comprehensive support and information service available to visual artists in Northern Ireland today.

Please find our response to your open consultation for the Programme for Government 2016-2021.

General comments

We feel there should be a greater explicit presence of the Arts within the programme.

We feel that the arts can contribute towards many of the stated outcomes, but there is only one indicator and measure that addresses culture of any kind. We are also concerned that the programme limits each indicator to one measure and we feel that the arts are not represented by those current measures.

Given this is the case, we are concerned that the Arts will not be a high priority for the new Department of Communities and will not receive adequate funding as it's success cannot be effectively measured by the standards outlined in the draft programme.

Indicators & Measures

Of the 42 indicators, only one (number 27) mentions any form of culture explicitly. This compares to 8 for health, 6 for education, 10 for economy and employment, 6 relating to the destination and the environment.

Cultural Participation

The one Indicator relating directly to the arts is number 27: Improve Cultural Participation. This waters down the commitments to the arts by including it in a general 'culture' grouping. We recommend that this can be significantly improved with dedicated indicators and measures for different types of cultural participation: sport, language, arts etc and so benchmarks are not influenced by ministerial priorities on the type of culture they prefer to support.

Health & Wellbeing

There are a significant number of studies that demonstrate the ability of the arts to have a positive influence on health and wellbeing, and yet none of the measures reflect that. We see wellbeing as a key area that the Arts can play a vital and measurable part in the Programme for Government.

Education

We feel there is a serious hole within the education measures that they solely look for targets relating to school leavers in English and Maths subjects. This fails to take into account the positive educational value of the arts.

Creative Capital: Cultural Health and Wealth.

Research from Princeton¹ on How the Arts Impact Communities is a valuable source of research on the impact of the arts across multiple indicators. To measure the wide ranging benefits of the arts we recommend a new indicator that specifically looks at the benefits of culture and the arts across a range of existing indicators.

Creative capital is the capacity of a person, family or community to imagine and express new possibilities through creative activity. It is the human effort, learning and work behind dance, music, theater, art and creative writing. It is also the insight and experimentation that brings new products to market (think about bio-fuels or nano technologies) and the out-of-the box thinking that addresses challenging social issues (think about wind turbines, charter schools, or the racks of rental bikes that reduce traffic and pollution in cities). As such, creative capital is both a personal and civic asset that can increase the effectiveness of individuals, the strength of families, and the health of communities.

New indicator:

Improve the creative capital of individuals, communities and society.

Way to measure:

A creative capital index (to be developed)

Recommendations

In addition to our general comments we recommend that the follow could also be used to provide an effective way of measuring how the arts contributes to the programme for government outcomes:

Outcome 3 Reduce poverty

New indicators:

Increase the average earnings of creative sector workers / artists

Ways to measure:

Annual survey of artist wages: The Living and Working Conditions of Artists in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

¹ <https://www.princeton.edu/~artspol/workpap/WP20%20-%20Guetzkow.pdf>

Outcomes 10/5 Development of International Reputation

New indicators:

Improve cultural and creative exports

Ways to measure:

International Press Coverage for Northern Ireland artists/ performers using clipping service.

Participation by organisations at Art Fairs, Industry Events, Trade Fairs/ trade delegations

Number of artists performing Internationally each year.

Copyright fees / Royalties paid to NI artists

Outcome 14 Young People / opportunities for creativity

New Indicators:

Increase access to creative education at tertiary levels.

Ways to measure:

Number of FE Colleges places for Creative education to cover music, visual art, performance, film, animation.

Number of University places for Creative education to cover music, visual art, performance, film, animation.

Outcome 12 Create a Place Where people want to live and visit

Current indicators:

30. Improve our attractiveness as a destination.

Ways to measure:

Measure importance of Arts and culture in satisfaction survey for residents, visitors, business thinking of relocating, returnees.

Outcome 5 Foster Innovation

We believe that the creative economy is at the heart of future innovation in Northern Ireland and we would like to see measures that reflect this.

Ways to measure:

Survey of number of Creative Industry / Arts Graduates who are newly employed each year

Number of Creative Industry Jobs each year

Wages levels in Arts / Creative industry