

ISACS EDI Action Plan 2025

Sphere	Achieved (2021 - 2024)	Next (2025-2026)	Lead	Resources permitting 2026-2029
GOVERNANCE	Increased diversity of board members	Establish small advisory group of people from underrepresented backgrounds with an interest in the development of these artforms to inform our policies & practice, and act as pipeline of board membership	Chair & Director Board EDI subcommittee	Regular recruitment of board members from diverse backgrounds as well as diversity of members putting themselves forward for election which is reflective of the population of Ireland and the growing sector
	Participated fully in core 'Safe to Create' training and signed Code Attended the following training in person Active Bystander Conflict resolution Bullying Harassment Boards and Governance Staff and board members have all received the safe to create certification	Focus on: Empowerment of individual artists to assert their rights and safety. Invest in additional bystander training support for staff, and also for members.	Chair & Director	Embed a culture of best practice among our membership. Potentially introduce new methods to evidence visibly member profiles who uphold these standards - to be discussed and considered by the member structure committee.
	Staff handbook and contracts all professionally reviewed	Pending any new hires in 2025, ensure diversity is considered and prioritised Invest resources during strategic planning process to further solidify commitment on EDI	Chair, Board, Director & Operations Mgr	Continue to update and refresh all policies and processes in line with changing legislation and learnings
DATA	Undertook anonymous annual surveys of	Increase the participation rates of artists from	Director, MEO & Comms Officer	Deliver follow-up survey in 2026 and compare with

	membership for two consecutive years, published report and agreed priorities Supported 4 strategically funded organisations to assess the diversity among their own staff and Boards as part of CBSS funded project	underrepresented artists by 5% in our residences and other programmes: Member engagement officer to lead specific outreach to artists from under represented backgrounds to encourage their participation in ISACS led programme and opportunities Use data to inform and advocate for future policies and resources to support the development of programmes and actions		previous years data. Note trends and changes and develop a set of recommendations for future action. Inform the development and implementation of the new strategic plan 2026 - 2030
PROGRAMMES WITH ARTISTS	Prioritised applications from artists who identified with any of the 9+ grounds in each of our artist mentorship / development programmes Prioritised minoritised artists in our international programming opportunities	Requested access funding to support two artists with a physical disability in the DELVE programme in 2025. Continue to support applicants from diverse communities to take part in ISACS led programmes.	MEO, Comms Officer	Growth in the number of artists coming forward for ISACS programmes with diverse backgrounds and a specific programme for those with diverse abilities in particular and for those from underrepresented backgrounds also
COMMUNICATIONS	Assistance available from Member Engagement Officer with form filling and applications if/as required. Video applications offered as an alternative to text based where possible	Further training for ISACS team to continue to optimise digital accessibility and visual tools, communication skills and plain english across our comms	MEO & Comms Officer	Refresh ISACS website, newsletter and image/brand identity to improve our communication standards Develop and upskill in PR and traditional media to ensure a reach to public not engaged digitally

	Communications & Digital Accessibility Website and social media posts written in clear language and optimised for screen readers using meta description etc Closed captions enabled on all ISACS training Zooms	Amplify diverse voices to stakeholders and public Training on Accessibility Riders to be offered in 2025		
CHALLENGING STIGMA AND INCREASING UNDERSTANDING	Secured funding for a project preserving and celebrating the culture and heritage of the Showmans community through the commissioning of an initial piece of research into the showmans archive materials and memories. Final presentation of report outlining the scale, scope and relevance of preserving these artefacts for future generations learning and understanding.	Source and apply for funding for next step of delivery on the Showman's Archive project, specifically towards recording oral histories as an urgent priority.	Director	Secure a potential host for the archive, gather and acquire the items necessary to create the archive, deliver the presentation and maintenance to ensure their longevity and develop a lecture series around the archives and their relevance in the development of the arts and cultural sector.
SECTORAL LEADERSHIP	Annual ISACS 'Share' event at the National Circus Festival of Ireland focused on EDI in 2024 involving 6 ISACS artists with EDI focussed projects and 3 international programmers who create work with a passion for developing EDI Led a cross sectoral project on EDI enabling discussion,	Ensure all future presentations, panels, discussion groups include diverse voices Adopt and advocate ISACS Manifesto for Belonging	Director & team & board	Research and advocate work highlighting diverse artists from our communities. PR piece, spotlights, etc Inclusion of artists from diverse communities in the key arts led organisations as future leaders. Champion a leadership development programme for same or a placement

	learning and policy advancement by 4 strategically funded organisations Encouraged participation and sign up of membership in Safe to Create and Speak Up (Europe)			programme
PROGRAMMES WITH PARTICIPANTS and PIPELINE OF MORE DIVERSE ARTISTS FOR THE FUTURE	Secured significant all island project using social circus methodology to engage young people from diverse backgrounds and cross border communities to engage with social circus as a tool for changes	Secure 3 yr funding through Creative Ireland to continue this project and initiate year one	Operations Manager, Comms Officer, Project manager & Director	Deliver a three year cross border programme with 6 lead social circus member orgs North & South and specifically with outreach work engaging diverse communities and audiences
SYSTEMS CHANGE	Advocacy work of artists pay, extension of basic income for artists and safe working conditions	Highlight the research project on Artists Pay to the wider public and stakeholders Advocate for increased funding for resource organisations to lead out on delivering systems and cultural changes	Staff & board	Write, speak and lead out as a sector around systemic change, how it's done ? and place artists who place communities, accessibility and social change first out front and centre. Build the public profile & knowledge of CSAS as natural leaders in this work

APPENDIX

ISACS Network Current Actions with an EDI focus:

Brief notes

- National Circus Festival of Ireland 2024
 - Share Open Forum - focus on artists with EDI projects
 - Inviting artists from under-represented communities specifically to share their projects/work/ideas
 - Inviting international festival programmers to share their EDI initiatives/ practices
 - Invite Johnny & Tilly integrated artists to share their approach to creating work across abilities
 - Present ISACS EDI project
 - Invite Arts Council Ireland to join together with NCFI who are also presenting their policy
- DELVE
 - Prioritise under-represented artists to participate - ethnic minorities, disabilities, socio-economically disadvantaged etc
 - Prioritise new first time applicants
 - Requested Access Funding to support two artists with disabilities to participate in 2025 Strategic Funding application
- Residencies & Bursaries - Aras Eanna, LIFT, IRIS, Spasa
 - Prioritise under-represented artists to participate - ethnic minorities, disabilities, socio-economically disadvantaged etc
 - Share callouts with communities we want to reach e.g. ADI, and if required, offer a year's ISACS introductory membership
- Pitch
 - Seek to represent artists from diverse backgrounds/circumstances to pitch to internationals and Irish programmers at this event each year
- Callouts
 - Assistance available from Member Engagement Officer (Brendan) with form filling and applications if/as required
 - Video applications offered as an alternative to text based where possible
- Communications & Digital Accessibility
 - Website and social media posts written in clear language and optimised for screen readers using meta description etc
 - Further training for ISACS team to continue to optimise digital accessibility

- Professional Training Webinars
 - Closed captions enabled on all ISACS training Zooms
 - Training on Accessibility Riders to be offered in 2025
- Traditional Circus Archive
 - Highlighting this specific community, culture and way of life of showpeople as a distinct ethnic minority
 - Building their status, profile and identity as a crucial part of the Irish performance arts world
- Circus Explored
 - Developing future generations of young people all across Ireland North and south irrespective of background/religion/geographic location using the tools of social circus to form connections and grow in confidence and learn new skills with a view to some possibly turning into artists of the future
 - Extending the reach of who can train in circus skills by widening the net to include young people from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds such as Down syndrome, refugee status, geographically wide communities (remote locations), deaf communities, cross border communities, deprived inner city communities, irish language communities, autism centres & more
 - Ensuring that there are no financial barriers to engagement in this programme.
 - Direct partner and local authority engagement with targeted communities as listed above towards building long term relations
 - Education and engagement with stakeholders towards the benefits socially and inclusively of working with circus as a tool
 - Supporting and upskilling trainers through train the trainer programmers towards working across underrepresented communities
- Board & Staff
 - Leading by example with best practice in governance
 - Ensuring diversity of our board and staff makeup through regular board and staff audits, and actively recruiting diverse board members
- Leading in best practice in the sector
 - EDI Project to try to instil EDI practices and goals as core values across our sector and our members
 - Disseminating and encouraging member and sectoral participation in Safe to Create, Minding Creative Minds, Speak UP and other resources and training

- Advocacy
 - Advocating for Basic Income, affordable housing, support for carers, recognition of our artform and speaking up on behalf of our artists for a decent standard of living
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FROM RECENT ARTS COUNCIL APPLICATION FORM

In 2025 we will deliver Circus Explored in partnership with Creative Ireland celebrating the benefits of Social Circus across the whole island.

GROW

Professional Dev

We will continue to deliver a prof dev training prog for members which aims to enhance skills such as EDI, environmental, H&S, artists pay, governance etc. We will continue to lead out on the implementation of Safe to Create, Pay the artist, EDI and best governance across the sector. We will continue to deliver core resources as an info point, library, resource & mentoring service.

Artistic Dev

We will continue to build on our artistic development prog which includes: DELVE, Aras Eanna Res, NEST, JumpStart! & LIFT. These programmes aim to widen artistic visions, broaden potential & grow ambition.

International Dev

We will lead on international dev & leverage opportunities through our relations with Circostrada, OAUk, SURGE, Articulture Wales & more. We will present an Irish showcase in Fira Tarrega in 25 supported by Culture Ireland. We wish to build on our relations in Balearic Islands & aim to apply for IRIS again in future

ADVOCATE

Research & Data

ISACS will continue to act as an advocate for the sector & intend to enhance our data gathering, sharing research & publications. These all contribute to our work in areas such as insurance reform, public space & investment.

National Archive

We are developing a mapping project with the Irish Showmans Guild to advocate for a National Archive for Circus & Fairgrounds supported by the Heritage Council.

SUSTAIN

Staff & Board Dev

We will invest in staff & board training across key areas such as: EDI, leadership, governance, evaluation, comms, strategy, wellbeing, H&S

The street arts, circus & spectacle sector are deeply democratic artforms. These artforms embody the essence of EDI, whose very ethos & purpose is about making arts accessible to all.

ISACS have worked on 4 things to grow our skill sets on this point:

- 1) Conducted a review of ISACS current EDI position with N. Hartigan in 22 & 23. This will be published on Oct 24 together with comparatives on the most recent census figures & an action plan going forward.
- 2) Developed an EDI policy which highlights practical steps we will take to ensure that EDI is a priority.
- 3) Delivered an in depth upskilling EDI programme with lead CSAS Strategic partners in '24
- 4) Diversified our board membership, which now represents diverse genders, ages, skills, socio-economic status, LGBTQI+ identities, religions, nationalities, abilities & ethnicities.

In our recent EDI survey over 45% of respondents identify as earning less than €20,000 & being from a socio economically disadvantaged background. It was also identified that 38% identify as having a disability with many of these appearing as neuro diverse conditions from dyslexia to dyspraxia, autism & more. 18% identify as carers which when compared to the 6% on the national census is a stark contrast. Please see attached report for more detail.

In addition the Trad Circus community may be considered a distinct ethnic minority with its own culture, language & heritage in its own right. This community will be a strong part of our work in 25 as we work towards establishing a national archive reflecting their contribution to society.

In 2025 we also will::

Continue to support members who experience difficulty with apps & emails owing to neurodiversity/other needs
Ensure socio-economic status/finance is not a barrier to participation in ISACS
Encourage & seek inclusion of those from ethnic minorities/disability/underrepresented backgrounds in our work
Embed EDI actions across all our work as part of the Strategic Plan 26-29.

Approved by ISACS Board on 25/06/2025

Proposed Brian Rafferty Seconded Rami Alramahi