National Youth Orchestra of Ireland
Ceolfhoireann Náisiúnta Óige na hÉireann

POLICY & ACTION PLAN ON EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

MAY 2025

Introduction

The Board of the National Youth Orchestra of Ireland (NYOI) has adopted this policy and action plan to promote equality, diversity and inclusion in our work.

NYOI is committed to fostering an equitable, inclusive, and diverse environment where all young people feel valued, respected, and empowered. Our aim is to ensure that every member, regardless of background or identity, has equal opportunity to participate, thrive, and contribute to our musical community. We are committed to promoting fairness and equality of opportunity across all levels of engagement, including employees, course staff, job applicants, orchestra members, and audiences. Through our programmes and artistic delivery, we actively support diversity and strive to create accessible, welcoming experiences for all.

Legal and Ethical Framework

This policy is grounded in Irish equality legislation and youth protection standards, including:

Equal Status Acts 2000–2018: Prohibiting discrimination in the provision of services based on nine protected grounds: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, race, membership of the Traveller community, and disability.

Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015: Prohibiting discrimination in employment and vocational training on the same nine grounds.

Children First Act 2015: Mandating child safeguarding measures, including the development of a Child Safeguarding Statement and adherence to reporting procedures.

National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy and **National Action Plan Against Racism**: Providing frameworks for promoting inclusion and combating discrimination.

Scope

This policy is integral to all areas of the National Youth Orchestra of Ireland's work and applies across the full breadth of its operations, including:

- Orchestra members
- NYOI staff, artists, contractors and volunteers
- Artistic and strategic development
- Design and delivery of activities and courses
- Community Engagement
- Recruitment processes
- Communication and marketing
- Training and development opportunities

Guiding Principles

1. Equality: We ensure all members have equal access to opportunities and resources within the orchestra.
2. Diversity: We embrace and celebrate differences and ensure diverse representation across the orchestra's activities, members, and leadership.
3. Inclusion: We aim to create a culture where every individual feels safe, respected, and empowered to contribute to the group's success.
4. Accessibility: We actively seek to remove barriers to participation and engagement, ensuring that all individuals, whether participants or audience members, have the opportunity to access, engage with, and benefit from our work, regardless of their background, identity, or abilities.
5. Fairness and Respect: We foster an environment of mutual respect and understanding, promoting fairness in all our actions.

Implementation Strategies

To fully integrate Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) into all aspects of our work, the National Youth Orchestra of Ireland will focus on the following key areas:

Inclusive Practices

- **Programme Design**: Prioritise inclusive practices in course design to accommodate a variety of learning needs and abilities, ensuring everyone can participate and grow.
- **Communication**: Use inclusive language in all communications and provide materials in accessible formats, ensuring clarity and understanding for all.
- **Facilities**: Guarantee that venues are physically accessible and equipped with facilities that respect the needs of all participants, including those from LGBTQIA+ communities.

Artistic Delivery

- **Programming:** Continue collaborating with diverse artists in our commissions, programming, and planning to ensure meaningful representation across our work.
- **Accessible Concerts:** Commit to making concerts and performances accessible to all by considering physical accessibility, sensory needs, inclusive communication formats, relaxed performances, and pricing structures that support diverse audiences.

Training and Education

- **NYOI Staff**: Partner with resource organisations to provide regular training on EDI principles, unconscious bias, and cultural competency, ensuring a consistent approach across the team.
- **Orchestra Members**: Foster an environment where young people are empowered to lead and participate in workshops and discussions that explore and celebrate diversity.

Recruitment and Participation

- **Advocacy**: Engage with community groups and organisations that support underrepresented populations to encourage broad and diverse participation, with structured preparation and support.
- **Auditions and Selection**: Implement fair, transparent audition processes with accommodations as necessary, ensuring equitable opportunities for all. This includes accessible spaces, flexible audition formats, and clear guidelines for applicants.
- **Employment:** Continue to build a diverse and inclusive workforce by welcoming individuals from all backgrounds and identities, promoting equity, respect, and opportunity, and with the provision of robust support systems, such as maternity and parental leave, flexible working arrangements, and other accommodations to promote a healthy and inclusive working environment.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- **Data Collection**: Collect anonymised demographic data to evaluate the diversity of our membership and identify areas for improvement.
- **Feedback Mechanisms**: Establish clear, confidential channels for members to provide feedback on EDI matters and report concerns, ensuring continuous improvement and accountability.

Reporting and Accountability

Any individual who believes they have experienced or witnessed discrimination, harassment, or exclusion is encouraged to report the incident to the CEO (or if the complaint is about them, to the Chairperson of the Board). Reports will be taken seriously, handled confidentially, and addressed promptly in accordance with the orchestra's grievance procedures.

The NYOI may take appropriate disciplinary action towards individuals who have violated this policy.

Action Plan

In order to better understand and support diversity and inclusion across its community, activities and organisation, the NYOI commits to the following actions:

ACTION PLAN	IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE
Members & Courses	
Audit residential and performance venues to assess physical accessibility and ensure they are equipped with necessary facilities, such as step-free entrances, accessible seating, gender-neutral restrooms, and areas for private reflection. This includes providing accommodations that respect the needs of all participants, including those from LGBTQIA+ communities, ensuring safe and inclusive environments for everyone.	**1 - 6 months**
Ensure our communications and processes are fully accessible for all orchestra members, from auditions to course delivery. This includes offering diverse audition formats, maintaining an accessible and user-friendly website, providing clear and inclusive language across platforms, and offering alternative formats or support where needed to accommodate different needs and abilities.	**1 - 6 months**

Ensure residential staff receive annual training on EDI matters to support members, guests, and collaborators effectively, and engage qualified staff with expertise in EDI & Gender Policy to offer comprehensive support.	**1 - 6 months**
Develop targeted projects in partnership with national organisations to reach young musicians from diverse communities, offering tailored support to enable their participation in NYOI.	**1 - 6 months**
Work with community groups to broaden youth engagement and encourage a wider range of young musicians to access NYOI opportunities, including workshops and side-by-side experiences that welcome participants of all backgrounds and abilities.	**6-9 months**
Continue to support financial and geographical access for all NYOI members through bursaries, all-island auditions, and instrument provision, ensuring no talented young musician is excluded due to financial or logistical barriers.	**Ongoing**
Hold regular discussions with orchestra members on key aspects of our EDI policy, seeking their feedback on diversity, inclusion, LGBTQIA+ issues, and integration strategies, while inviting representatives to contribute to broader Board discussions.	**Ongoing**
Continue to consult and partner with professionals from organisations to audit all aspects of our auditions and activities, ensuring that we implement more inclusive practices and remove any barriers to participation for individuals with diverse needs.	**Ongoing**
Artistic Delivery & Programming	
Deliver accessible performances in collaboration with key organisations, such as Autism Friendly Waterford, including Relaxed and sensory-friendly concerts, to create inclusive and welcoming experiences for diverse audiences.	**1 - 6 months**
Annually survey our programming, including past, current, and upcoming performances, to assess and promote diversity and inclusivity in our artistic choices.	**6-12 months**

Continue to advocate for diversity in artistic planning by collaborating with artists from underrepresented and historically excluded groups, including female, queer, and culturally diverse conductors, composers, and performers, ensuring our programming reflects a wide range of voices and perspectives.	**Ongoing**
Organisation	
Use inclusive language in all communications, avoiding biased terms and ensuring gender-neutral language. Materials will be available in accessible formats, including large print, audio, or digital formats compatible with screen readers, as well as easy-read versions, and video content with captions or sign language interpretation when needed.	**1 - 6 months**
Provide annual training for the Board and NYOI staff, facilitated by specialist consultants, on diversity and disability inclusion to strengthen these practices across all core activities.	**6-12 months**
Form an expert Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Board Sub-Committee to provide regular guidance and advice on EDI matters, ensuring that these principles are consistently integrated into the organisation's practices and policies.	**12 + months**
Promote fair and accessible recruitment based on merit, ensuring equal opportunities for all, including those with disabilities. This will include accessible application formats, interview support, and tailored processes when needed. Additionally, we will use inclusive language in all recruitment materials to actively encourage applications from diverse backgrounds and identities, as outlined in our policy.	**Ongoing**
Ensure working conditions comply with legal requirements across all areas of activity, including providing accessible workspaces, accommodations for disabilities (e.g., assistive technology or flexible work arrangements), and support for family obligations such as maternity and paternity leave, caregiving responsibilities, and flexible scheduling.	**Ongoing**

Consider EDI when reviewing the board skills for succession planning. This includes evaluating the diversity of skills, experiences, and perspectives represented, ensuring that the board reflects a range of backgrounds, including but not limited to gender, race, age, disability, and LGBTQIA+ identities.	**Ongoing**
Monitoring & Evaluation	
Establish effective, GDPR-compliant data collection methods for NYOI members and collaborators, conducting diversity surveys covering race, gender, age, disability (visible and non-visible), ethnicity, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, and socio-economic background. These insights will be analysed and shared internally to enhance awareness and inform our approach to diversity, equality, and inclusion.	**6 -12 months**
Monitor policies, best practices, and workplace culture across all NYOI activities, ensuring they are clearly outlined in the NYOI Code of Conduct and shared annually with members and collaborators.	**6 -12 months**
Draft annual EDI Progress Reports to summarise key achievements, identify challenges and gaps, and recommend specific policy or practice changes, which will be shared with the Board, staff, and members.	**12 + months**
Contribute to public awareness by regularly sharing updates and communications on NYOI's equality, diversity, and inclusion activities across our platforms.	**Ongoing**

Review

This policy and action plan, along with its implementation, will be reviewed every two years from the date of approval, or sooner if needed, to ensure it reflects changes in legislation, organisational practices, or community needs.