

Chamber Choir Ireland and Irish Chamber Orchestra

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy

Background to Chamber Choir Ireland (CCI) and Irish Chamber Orchestra (ICO)

Joint Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy

Chamber Choir Ireland and Irish Chamber Orchestra recognise that, as two key organisations operating in the Irish classical music community, they can play an important role in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion through their artform.

Equality, diversity and inclusion are topics of substantial discussion and priority within the classical music sector, given well-established issues relating to representation, participation and access. Recent research¹ undertaken by Arts Council England outlines a number of challenges in relation to promoting equity within the artform, in particular, the issue of diversity within the classical music talent pipeline.

In addition, and akin to other artforms, challenging bias, sectoral “norms” and establishing new ways of working must also be a critical consideration in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion. In coming together to develop their joint EDI Policy, Chamber Choir Ireland (CCI) and Irish Chamber Orchestra (ICO) have sought to address a number of barriers identified, as well as opportunities for growth, from an equality, diversity and inclusion perspective.

CCI and ICO’s EDI Policy responds to the commitments outlined in the Arts Council’s Equality, Human Rights and Diversity (EHRD) Policy², as well as existing equality legislation, including the Employment Equality and Equal Status Acts³, specifically in relation to promoting equity of opportunity, across the nine grounds of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race, membership of the Traveller community, and including the tenth ground of socio-economic status. Fundamentally, however, CCI and ICO believes that diversity enriches and enhances the classical music artform, and contributes to its vibrancy and uniqueness.

For more information about both Chamber Choir Ireland and the Irish Chamber Orchestra, please visit their websites at:

<https://www.chamberchoirireland.com/>

<https://www.irishchamberorchestra.com/>

¹ Arts Council England - Creating a Fair and More Inclusive Classical Music Sector | <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/diversity/fair-and-more-inclusive-classical-music-sector#:~:text=We're%20developing%20a%20new,in%20the%20classical%20music%20sector>

² Arts Council - Equality, Human Rights and Diversity Policy | <https://www.artscouncil.ie/equality-human-rights-diversity/>

³ Employment Equality and Equal Status Acts | https://www.workplacerelations.ie/en/what_you_should_know/equal-status-and-employment-equality/employment%20equality%20and%20equal%20status/

Scope of EDI Policy

CCI and ICO's joint EDI Policy applies to:

- Their staff, contractors and Board;
- The volunteers they engage;
- The musicians, singers, conductors, and all other artists they engage with;
- Their audience members and participants in their programmes, including outreach programmes;
- The partners and collaborators they work with.

Development of EDI Policy

In pursuing the development of their joint EDI Policy, CCI and ICO brought together an organisational working group comprised of staff members (and the CEOs) of both organisations, in order to workshop and reflect on pertinent issues relating to EDI for both organisations. This process provided a platform for open discussion, as well as ideas and suggestions.

Following the internal reflection process, an internal and external stakeholder engagement exercise was conducted, including a series of interviews, as well as two public surveys (one for the music community, including those with experience of working with both organisations, and those that had not, as well as a second survey for audience, parents and guardians of students and other publics). Both processes provided a broad overview of key concerns and areas for development in relation to EDI; and the insights garnered underpin the actions included in the sections that follow.

Alignment of EDI Policy to CCI's and ICO's Organisational Values

Accessibility and inclusivity are values outlined in both CCI and ICO's current strategic plans⁴. For both organisations, the necessity to proactively promote inclusion in everything they do, is of central importance. This EDI Policy articulates in the section below, how it will address barriers to inclusion, as well as promoting diversity, equality and access across both organisations.

Key Focus Areas of CCI and ICO's EDI Policy

Through the research and reflection process undertaken in the development of this EDI Policy, a number of key areas of focus have been highlighted as priority, in pursuing meaningful change. CCI and ICO recognise that there are considerable barriers to engagement with classical music, both as an artform, and as a career pathway. For many, the lack of access to music education, alongside the cost of tutor fees (and musical instruments), creates early-stage barriers to entry.

CCI and ICO also recognise that in order for such barriers to be overcome, there must be a number of avenues pursued; from early-stage interaction with the artform to broaden participation and open up learning opportunities, to actively seeking to promote diversity within both organisations.

⁴ Values:

CCI: Accessibility ~ for diverse audiences through cost, venues, locations, and in all aspects of employment and artistic engagement.

ICO: Inclusivity ~ we promote inclusivity, equality and diversity across our organisation and with our audiences.

The approach outlined in this EDI Policy sets out actions that could be considered to be short-term or simple, while other actions will be ongoing and longer-term in their impact.

It is with this in mind, that CCI and ICO's joint EDI Policy deals with three broad thematic areas, and they are: accessibility, perception (visibility) and representation. These themes cross-cut both organisations' operational and strategic focus, and build on existing approaches to promoting equality (including well-established schools, outreach and access programmes) while mainstreaming EDI across all other areas of the organisations' activities. CCI and ICO have created individual *EDI Policy Action Plans* to deliver on the key focus areas outlined below.

Key Focus Areas	Outcome
Continue to mainstream equality, diversity and inclusion in Schools, Outreach and other Community and Education programming.	<i>Active promotion of engagement with classical music, particularly for young people from marginalised or minoritised communities.</i>
Ensure opportunities to work with CCI and ICO (in all areas - across employment and artistic engagements) are transparently communicated and open to all qualified individuals to apply.	<i>Clear communication of opportunities to the widest possible talent pool within classical music.</i>
Build diversity into Board succession planning.	<i>Diversity is a core consideration in Board succession planning.</i>
Integrate inclusion and diversity into all elements of artistic planning, including programming and commissioning.	<i>Inclusion and diversity are mainstreamed into artistic planning processes.</i>
Ensure accessibility and inclusion are an ongoing consideration in audience engagement and development.	<i>Barriers to engagement with the classical music artform are challenged through proactive initiatives.</i>
Integrate inclusion and diversity into communications and public-facing materials.	<i>Visibility and representation are key considerations in public-facing materials.</i>
Work with organisational collaborators and partners to identify opportunities to mainstream equality, diversity and inclusion.	<i>Equality, diversity and inclusion become part of ongoing engagement with existing and new partners.</i>
Build equality, diversity and inclusion training into annual staff training and development planning.	<i>Both organisations continue to develop capacity, awareness and understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion.</i>

Monitoring and Ongoing Evaluation of EDI Policy

CCI and ICO's joint EDI Policy and individual action plans will be delivered by their respective Executive teams, and reported on a bi-monthly basis to their Board. The policy will be championed at Board level by an appointed member (on both Boards), whose role will be to actively promote, support and appraise the policy's implementation.