Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland Programme

Sparking Creativity

Progress Report 2024

Sparking Creativity

Patrick O'Donovan T.D.

Introduction

Creative Ireland is now in the second year of its 5-year programme 2023-2027 and work is well underway on the ambitions and actions of the programme.

Major new policy areas were developed and launched, including a *Roadmap for the Digital Creative Industries*. This is targeting new areas for growth the state wishes to focus on, such as digital games, AR/VR and strategic design.

Significant progress was achieved around arts, creativity and healthcare policy. A new strategic plan involving Creative Ireland, the Department of Health, the HSE and the Arts Council holds the promise of a strategic shift in this area.

The work of the Culture and Creativity teams in local authorities continues to strengthen relationships within local government and across the wider community. Culture and Creativity teams are an invaluable support to the work of this Department. In 2024, we have seen the benefit of a dedicated full time Creative Communities Engagement Officer in each local authority to support the continued implementation of local *Culture and Creativity Strategies 2023-2027*. My Department's support to Creative Ireland at local authority level is very significant and provides a long-term commitment to facilitating participation in cultural and creative activity across the country.

The Creative Youth Nurture Fund supported specific groups of young people in 2024, whose voices are not often platformed.

The Taoiseach committed €6 million from the Shared Island fund for Creative Ireland over three years. The goal is to harness the full potential of the Good Friday Agreement to enhance cooperation, connection and mutual understanding on the island, and engage with all communities and traditions to build consensus around a shared future. I am proud to see the work that Creative Ireland has done to initiate meaningful Shared Island projects across its programme in 2024, and I hope to see more of this in the coming years.

Patrick O'Donovan T.D.

Minister for Arts, Culture, Communications, Media and Sport

Highlights 2024

Highlights

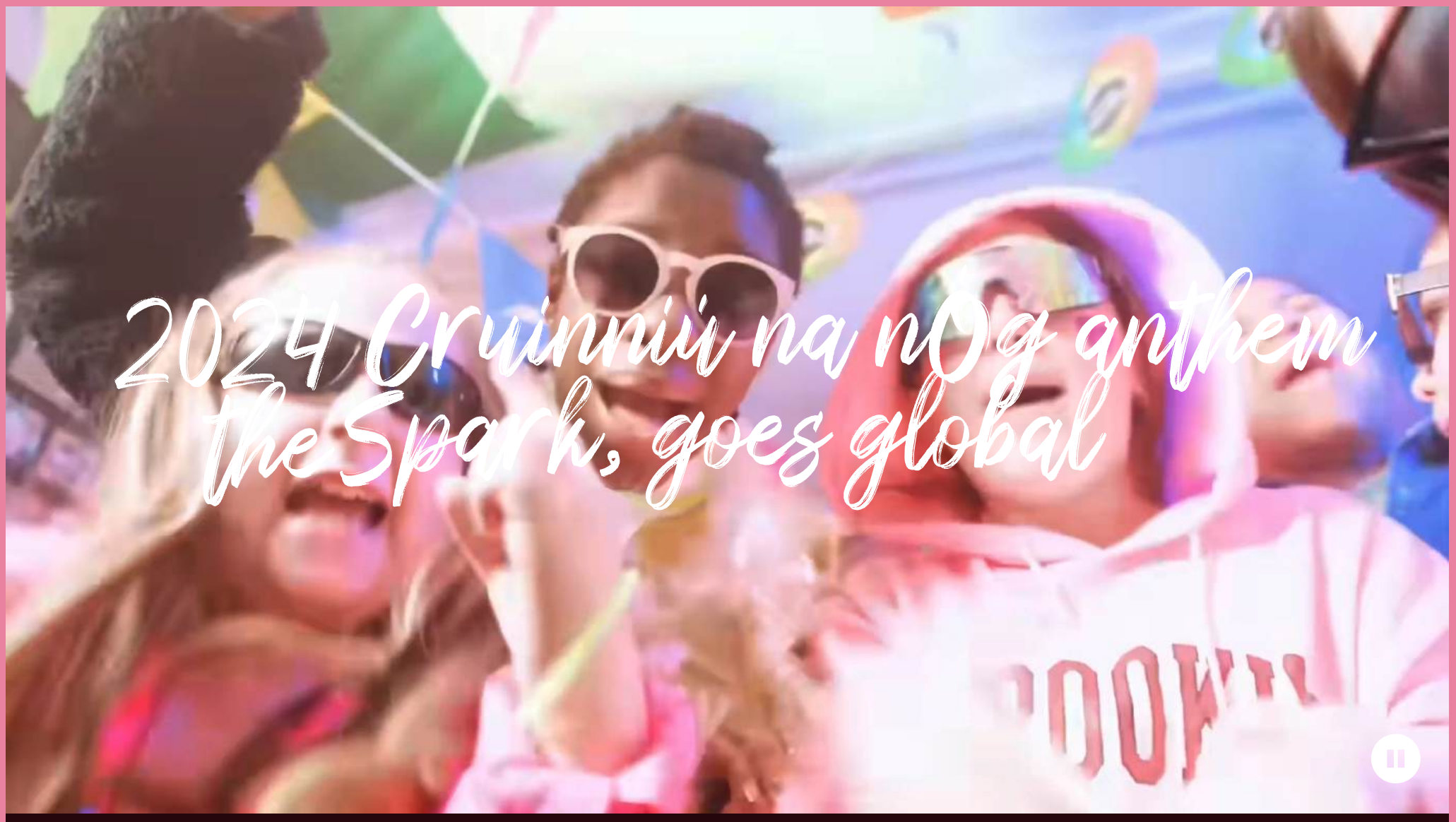
In 2024, Creative Ireland made a significant impact, supporting over 7,300 creatives, delivering 1,100 community projects, and engaging millions globally through digital and cultural initiatives. The Spark campaign reached billions online, while Cruinniú na nÓg expanded its reach. Investments in local authorities, youth, climate action, and shared island projects reinforced creativity as a driver of connection, innovation, and social change.

7,334 creatives were offered opportunities under Creative Communities and Cruinniú na nÓg

1,100 projects were delivered through Creative Communities

31 Creative Community Engagement Officers are in place in all local authorities

1,300 events were delivered for Cruinniú na nÓg



Featured

Featured on US CBS show 'After Midnight'. Profiled on global online media including The New York Times, The Guardian, TIME Magazine, BBC, Rolling Stone, MSN, The Journal and DJ Mag among hundreds others.

1.9 billion views on Tiktok, used in over **100,000 videos** on TikTok

156 million likes, **12.8 million** shares and over **1 million** comments on TikTok

Number 1 on Irish iTunes charts, charted in the official UK Top 40 singles chart

23 million likes and over **133,000** comments on Instagram

567 million views on Instagram, used in over **171,000** Reels

61 million streams on Spotify, charted in streaming charts in over 15 countries across the world. **76 million** overall streams across all platforms.

The video received **15 million** views on YouTube

The video received over **10 million** views on X

Winner of RTÉ Choice Music Prize **Song of The Year** 2024


Creative Communities

Creative Communities

In 2024, with the support of the County and City Management Association and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, a Creative Communities Engagement Officer was recruited by each local authority. This resource has proved to be extremely significant in creating connections with communities, bringing visibility to the Creative Ireland Programme at local level, and harnessing local creative potential. The Department continues to invest significantly in local authorities to support the strategic objectives within local *5-year Culture and Creativity Strategies*.

In 2024, in partnership with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, a record €5.8 million was invested in local authority culture and creativity teams. Through collaboration local authorities have successfully deployed creativity, innovatively and collaboratively, as a strategy for wellbeing, social cohesion, and economic development.

€5.8 million

Invested in local authority culture and creativity teams

Cruinniú Late Silent Disco, Cork

Cruinniú na nÓg launch

Cruinniú na nÓg

In 2024 Cruinniú na nÓg took place on Saturday 15th June and featured 1300 free creative activities for children and young people throughout the island.

For the first time, the programme included a series of late night events for young people. *Cruinniú Late* included a play created and performed within 24 hours, in the crypt of the Waterford Museum, a Rocky Horror Picture Show screening and dance-off in Limerick, silent discos in Dún Laoghaire and Offaly, and an open mic night at the comedy club in South Dublin.

In 2024, Cruinniú na nÓg incorporated a Shared Island dimension, fostering cross border collaboration and creative engagement among young people from across the island of Ireland. Events were delivered by three strategic partners; Irish Street Arts Circus and Spectacle Network with their project *Circus Explored*, GMC Beats with *Rhyme Island*, and RTÉ Kids with *This is Art!* Other events included a *Deep Dive Game Jam* where young people from Wexford and Belfast joined together to explore the shared environmental issues, *Convergence*, which explored the importance of cultural connection, diversity and pride of place in Derry and Tallaght, celebrated through a twinning event with a youth centre in Belfast.


Creative Industries

Immerse Workshops

Creative Industries

On 16th January 2024, the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media Catherine Martin T.D., Minister for Enterprise, Trade & Employment, Simon Coveney T.D., and Minister of State for Digital Transformation, Dara Calleary T.D. launched the *Digital Creative Industries Roadmap 2024-26*.

Developed by the Creative Ireland Programme and the Department of Enterprise, the Roadmap seeks to leverage the clear potential of these sectors for sustainable and resilient employment, export growth and regional development.

The Roadmap focuses on 3 specific digital creative industry sectors:

- Commercial design sectors (including industrial design, product design, visual communications, Ui/Ux , interaction design, service design and strategic design)
- Digital Games
- Content creation (including advertising and branding, commercial social media content, multimedia content for mobile applications and content for emerging immersive technologies AR and VR)

On the April 18, the inaugural meeting of the joint government industry working group took place and throughout the remainder of 2024, three more meetings were held. The representative bodies of the industries included in the Roadmap are an integral part of the forum and have proactively driven the agenda of the forum.

Creative Ireland provided financial support to two representative bodies – The Institute of Designers in Ireland, and Eirmersive (who represent the AR/VR), to engage with the work of the Roadmap. These two representative bodies are supported to grow their capacity to be the voice of their industries.

Photo credit BirdWatch Ireland

Creative Climate Action

2024 saw the continuation of 42 projects under the second *Creative Climate Action Fund*. This initiative is unique. It pairs creative minds with experts in climate science, sustainability and biodiversity, and seeks behavioural change amongst communities of place or practice.

The Fund supported 23 Spark projects (receiving up to €50,000) and 16 Ignite projects (receiving up to €250,000), in collaboration with the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications. A further three Ignite projects were supported through the Shared Island initiative, in collaboration with the Department of the Taoiseach. This brings the Department's total investment to *Creative Climate Action* projects to €7.8 million, supporting 57 diverse *Creative Climate Action* projects since 2021.

The programme provided development support to its projects, enabling the culture and creative sectors to build capacity in and understanding of climate action. An immersive four-day training programme was delivered to project teams, covering topics such as the government's *Climate Action Plan*, creative facilitation, project evaluation and design-thinking. This also enabled cross-sectoral networking and input from colleagues in the Department of Environment, Climate, Communications and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Community Art Practice
In April 2024, a one-day training event at IMMA was provided to embedded artists on the project teams, allowing them to build a community of practice and explore insights from their previous work in climate action.

Shared learning
In October 2024, a one-day conference took place at the Aviva Stadium to showcase a selection of projects and share learnings amongst fellow grantees and Department officials.

Throughout 2024, the Creative Ireland Programme continued to work with researchers at UCC MaREI (SFI Research Centre for Energy, Climate and Marine) on the initiative. Their research aims to capture the impact of using arts, creative and cultural sectors to engage with the climate crisis. The Report, Creative C-Change: Analysing the Impact of the Creative Climate Action Initiative on Climate Change Awareness, Engagement and Action in Ireland was published in 2023 as well as *15 detailed project reports* on those funded under Creative Climate Action I. The second iteration of this research is ongoing until 2025, with a preliminary report available in May 2025 and a final report to be published in early 2026.

Project activities were underway across the country in 2024, with all 23 Spark projects concluding by year-end, and the remaining Ignite projects continuing in to 2025. They included:

Dance Limerick
Dance Limerick's project, which promotes climate literacy through easy-to-access creative media.

We Built this City
Breakdown Productions embarked on a tour of Ireland, showcasing *'We Built this City on Rock and Coal'*, which used improvised theatre and scientists to make space for affective and emotional responses to the climate crisis.

Tern the Tide
Tern the Tide collaborated with Irish Rail and BirdWatch Ireland to build a sculpture around the Little Tern Colony conservation work by the National Parks and Wildlife Service at Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow.

Cascade
Cascade in Ballina, a continuation of Creative Climate Action Fund I project *Ripple*, have been working with residents at co-designing workshops to share their ideas for reimagining the town's laneways and water systems.

Field Exchange
Field Exchange 2024/2025 has brought together 11 Farming Ambassadors to complete a two-year programme, facilitated by artists, to share knowledge and devise solutions for the challenges confronting farmers and rural communities.

Irish Refugee Council / Elevate Youth Arts Symposium

Merlin Woods Art Collective

Creative Youth

The *Creative Youth Plan 2023-2027* aims to embed creativity into the heart of children and young peoples' lives. The plan is implemented in partnership with the Department of Education, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, and the Arts Council.

Through collaboration across government and the arts, cultural, creative and youth sectors, the plan invests in young peoples' creativity across education, communities, youth work and within the home. The extensive reach of the Creative Youth Plan can be viewed here.

Creative Youth on a Shared Island

The *Creative Youth on a Shared Island* funding scheme was launched with a budget of €1million. Six projects were selected to bring young people together from across the island of Ireland to collaborate creatively. Projects include mythical story exchanges, creation of original parades, residential musical hothousing projects, story-telling, and interactive theatre performances.

Nurture Funds

Nine *Nurture Fund* projects continued to enable the creation of podcasts, theatre, music sessions and dance with diverse groups of young people.

Local Creative Youth Partnerships

Seven *Local Creative Youth Partnerships* reached young people in the heart of their communities to provide creative experiences and skills such as the *Call and Response Festival* across Limerick and Clare. Programmes such as *Creative Schools and Creative Clusters* ensure creativity is embedded in students' learning environments. The pilot *Arts in Early Learning and Childcare* scheme continued into 2025, partnering artists with early learning and school age childcare settings.

Creative Schools

183 Schools commenced the 2024 round of Creative Schools, along with 138 (42 Clusters) for Creative Clusters and 425 for BLAST. Latest reports, including Fighting Words Story Seeds Evaluation, Kinia Creative Youth Report and the *Big Idea* report are available here.

> "I used to think creativity was just making something. But now I think it's also very mental and involves thinking outside the box."
>
> The Big Idea participant

Creative Health and Wellbeing

Creative Health and Wellbeing

In early 2024 Creative Ireland issued a grant call to its partners in the local authorities for creative health and wellbeing projects involving diverse cohorts across the country. For the first time we sought projects involving partners in Northern Ireland, on a Shared Island basis.

The aim was to support projects from the culture and creativity teams in Local Authorities, in partnership with their *Healthy Ireland* colleagues to leverage the power of creativity to improve people's health and wellbeing. Fifteen projects involving 22 Local Authoritiesare being supported in 2024 and 2025, 11 of which are in the south and 4 on a Shared Island Basis. Project themes range from Creative Cafés to address social isolation, to creative outlets for people dealing with grief, and also outdoor activities for young people. Full details of the projects can be found on our website here and through the project blogs here.

Live musical performances in healthcare settings

Creative Ireland and the Department of Health supported live musical performances in healthcare settings across the country, continuing the successful programme in nursing homes initiated during the pandemic. In 2024, live music performances took place in 60 nursing homes across the country facilitated by the Health and Wellbeing teams in 11 Local Authorities.

Locations covered a large geographical area from Buncrana in Co. Donegal to Gurranbraher in Co. Cork, and Achill in Co. Mayo to New Ross in Co. Wexford. A comprehensive evaluation of the programme was completed in 2024 and the positive impacts have informed the decision to continue this initiative into 2025. The report can be found on our website here.

€1.37M
Funding allocated

28
Local Authorities Engaged

30
Musical Collaborations

61
Music Programmes

30,000
People Engaged with Performers

Traveller Wellbeing through Creativity

Traveller Wellbeing through Creativity

Creative Ireland, in partnership with the Department of Health, the HSE and the Arts Council, supported a conference in November to showcase the outcomes of the *Traveller Wellbeing through Creativity* pilot. The purpose of this innovative programme was to support creative projects which had a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of the Traveller community. An evaluation of the pilot highlighted the positive impacts, and also drew attention to areas where improvements were needed should the pilot be mainstreamed. The HSE and the Arts Council are working together to design the future of the programme which will launch in 2025.

Arts and Health Working Group

A revamped Arts and Health Working Group, in partnership with the Department of Health, the HSE and the Arts Council launched at the end of 2024. A joint policy statement for creative arts and health in Ireland has been agreed.

Our vision for this arts and health policy partnership is that: People living in Ireland have access to creative and cultural activity as part of a holistic health journey throughout the life course, supporting better health and wellbeing outcomes and enriching the creative and artistic landscape.

Shared Island
Initiative

Artists Farm Walk Fermanagh

Shared Island Initiative

Creative Ireland and Shared Island

The Shared Island / Creative Ireland initiative currently supports 23 initiatives across 4 pillars of the Creative Ireland Programme as well as ongoing investment in Cruinniú na nÓg with strategic partners and the local authorities.

Communities
Nine local authorities have received funding of €850,000 for nine projects under the Creative Communities on a Shared Island grant call 2023-2025. As an example, *Birds of a Feather*, is a project that brings together women from various backgrounds: Catholic, Protestant, nationalist, loyalist, ethnic minorities, Travellers, inner-city working class, islanders and people with physical disabilities or mild dementia through the shared activity of craftwork – traditional and contemporary. The visits to Ennis, Ballinasloe, Inishbofin and Belfast have cemented their friendships.

Cruinniú na nÓg
Working with Strategic Partners and local authorities to deliver events between May and June 2024, peer to peer exchanges have continued to strengthen relationships for the future through Circus Explored and Rhyme Island, with a total spend so far of €528,000. A grant call for multi-annual funding for strategic partners is currently being evaluated.

Youth
€1,070,112 has been awarded for six creative initiatives for children and young people, ranging from mythical story exchanges, creation of original parades, residential musical hothousing projects, story-telling and interactive theatre performances through 2024 and 2025. In addition, grantees have been provided with training in youth participation, evaluation and project delivery.

Climate
€734,515 is supporting three Creative Climate Action projects over two years 2024-2025. The investment actively supports three creative, cultural and artistic projects that build awareness around climate change and empowers citizens to make meaningful behavioural changes. The projects are - (i) Divergently Together (ii) Shifting Tides and Sea Change: Creative Coastal Conversations (iii) Creative Boardroom: Collaborate4Climate

Health & Wellbeing
€265,133 is supporting four Local Authority led cross-border arts and health partnerships, with the intention, subject to budgetary processes, to provide the same support in 2025. Projects range across social prescribing, social inclusion, health promotion, supporting people with dementia and end of life and bereavement The scheme leverages the capacity of Creative Ireland to help advance the Healthy Ireland objectives.

thank you

To find out more about the Creative Ireland Programme please go to **www.creativeireland.gov.ie**

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