

**British Council Ireland**

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**A Year in Pictures  
2025-2026**

**The British Council supports peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide.**



# British Council

We combine the UK's deep expertise in arts and culture, education, and the English language; our global presence and relationships in over 100 countries; our unparalleled access to young people and influencers; and our creative sparkle.

- We work directly with individuals to help them gain the skills, confidence and connections to transform their lives and shape a better world in partnership with the UK. We support them in building networks, exploring creative ideas, learning English, attaining a high-quality education and gaining internationally recognised qualifications.
- We work with governments and our partners in the education, English language and cultural sectors, in the UK and globally. Together, we make a bigger difference, creating benefits for millions of people worldwide.
- We work with people in over 200 countries and in 2024–25, we reached 600 million people.

# Vision by 2027-28

**British Council Ireland will move to strengthen the bilateral relationship in Arts and Education between Ireland and the UK.**

**We will act as a valued broker and convenor, building connections, creating opportunities, collaborations, and networks to support greater trust, understanding and respect between people in the UK and Ireland, working towards a more inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous future on these islands.**



# Overview of Activities

This overview covers activities from April 2025 to March 2026.

It has been arranged in our key sectors of activity:

- Arts and Culture
- Society
- Education

It also includes information on our activities in English Language Education and Exams.



# Culture Connects

British Council's Culture Connects programme supports UK cultural professionals, and organisations connect with their counterparts in Ireland through networking, collaboration, showcasing, and touring. It aims to build knowledge of the local creative industries sector while sharing digital arts packages with key stakeholders.

The main strands of Culture Connects activity in Ireland are:

- Cultural professionals brokering and connecting
- Showcasing and touring
- Creative collaboration
- Scoping and research
- Digital showcasing

The following pages highlight some of the exciting activities in Culture Connects in Ireland over the last 12 months.



## Connecting Cultural Professionals

### EVA International – Ireland’s Biennial of Contemporary Art, August-October 2025

The British Council Ireland supported the participation of Ciarán Ó Dochartaigh at the 41st EVA International – Ireland’s Biennial of Contemporary Art in Limerick City. Ciarán also participated in the panel discussion “Future Infrastructures”, focusing on the shifting landscape of visual arts production in Ireland. His work ‘Triploid / Diploid’ comprised sculptural objects, graphic drawings and illuminated text, set within the displays of Sadlier’s fishmongers, Limerick. The work also included a number of delicate glass-blown works that have been rendered from intestinal microbes and the internal organs of fish and chicken. The work continued the artist’s ongoing research interests in adaptive relationships between human, environmental, and political ecologies; specifically how bodies play host to other bodies.

### Outburst Festival, November 2025

This year, British Council Ireland supported Irish delegate Renn Miano - an anti-disciplinary artist, producer, and writer - to attend the Outburst Queer Arts Festival in Belfast. The festival celebrates queer arts, fosters international artistic networks and explores the diverse meanings of LGBTQIA+ culture around the world.





## **BETA Festival, November 2025**

British Council Ireland was delighted to partner with Beta Festival, Ireland's sole art and technology festival, for the third year in a row in 2025.

In May 2025, we supported Beta's collaboration with the Jordan Arts & AI Assembly at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts (JNGFA). Beta Founder and Director Aisling Murray worked alongside our MENA region colleagues to deliver this collaboration. As part of the Assembly, Murray presented at two sessions, 'Know thy data' and 'Conclusions and future outlook'.



## **Creative and Cultural Industries Research: Roundtable Discussion, November 2025**

We were delighted to host a roundtable discussion on Creative and Cultural Industries research with leading UK academic and expert on cultural and creative economy research, Professor Dave O'Brien. Co-hosted with Creative Ireland and Research Ireland, alongside high-level stakeholders, this discussion explored how academic and sectoral research can support Ireland's creative and cultural development and future growth.

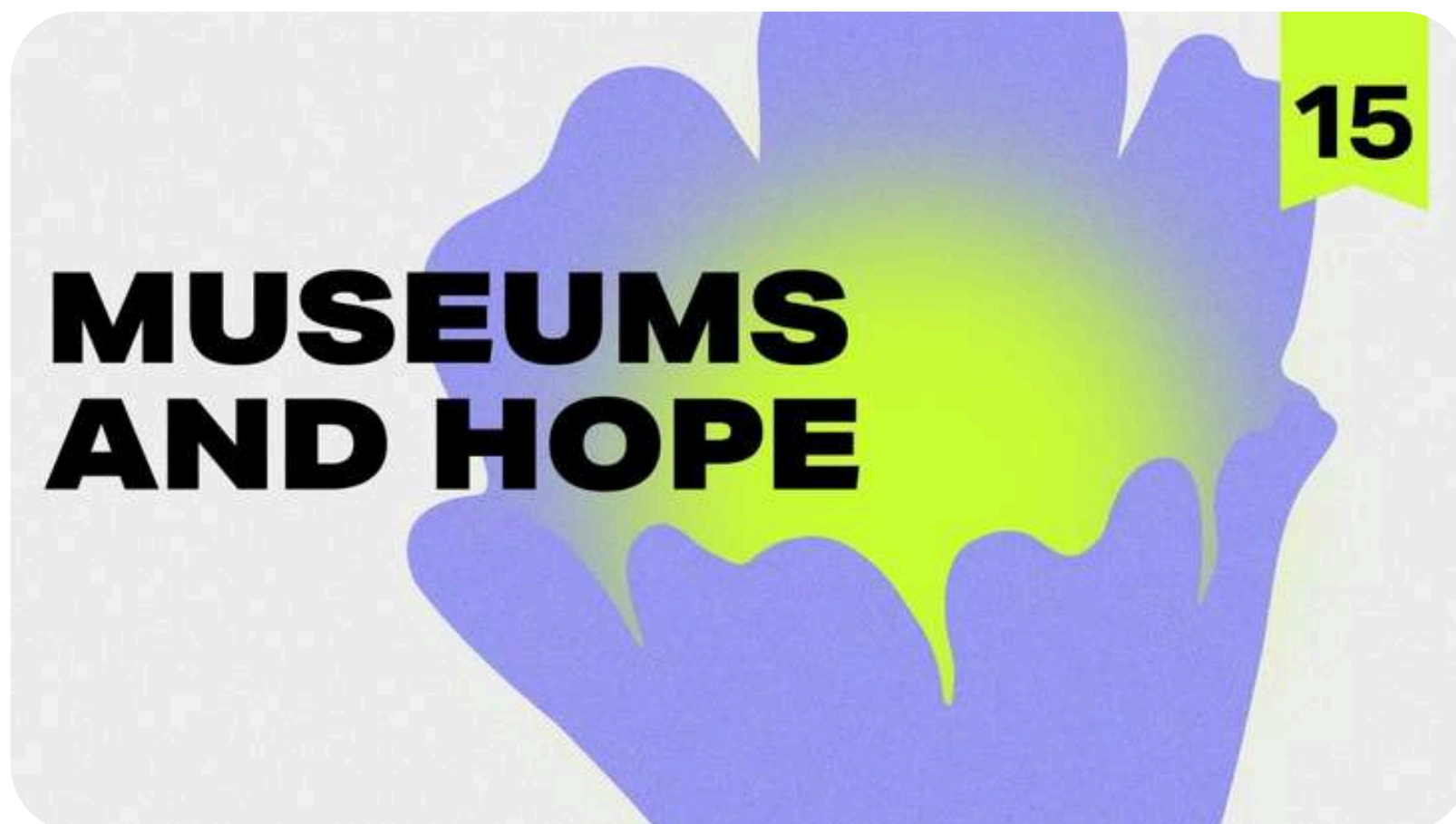
## **EUNIC - Storylines. European Writers' Festival, November 2025**

British Council Ireland participated in the European Writers' Festival in Ireland, a new cultural initiative led by EUNIC Ireland. This one-day festival, entitled "Storylines Europe", brought together authors and translators from nine European countries for a dynamic series of conversations exploring identity, language, memory, and creativity across borders. We were delighted to secure the participation of Menna Elfyn, one of Wales's most celebrated poets, in the session *The Language We Inherit: Poetry as a Bridge Between Generations*. Known for her powerful exploration of language, heritage and identity,



## **CoMuseum International Conference, December 2025**

Director of the National Museum of Ireland, Lynn Scarff, attended the 15th CoMuseum International Conference, Museums and Hope, as the delegate from Ireland. CoMuseum was held from 3 to 5 December 2025 in Thessaloniki, Greece. Discussions focused on the future of museums and their governance. Cultural leaders, curators, artists, policymakers, and community organisers from around the world explored the evolving role of museums in a rapidly changing world.



## Lives Entwined: Fite Fuaite, a music commission, March 2026

The British Embassy and the British Council partnered on a music commission to celebrate the creative ties that connect the UK and Ireland.

The 7-minute-long music commission, titled Fite Fuaite – meaning interwoven – is a seven-minute ensemble piece exploring themes of prehistory, history and "after history", reflecting the intertwined identities, shared heritage and ongoing collaboration across these islands.

In March 2026, the British Council and the British Embassy in Dublin launched the world premiere of Fite Fuaite at an intimate music salon at Glencairn, The British Ambassador's Residence in Ireland.

The performance was held just days ahead of the UK–Ireland 2030 Leaders' Summit in Ireland and the landmark Irish cultural celebrations of Seachtain na Gaelige and St Patrick's Day.

Listen here: <https://soundcloud.com/british-council-ireland/fite-fuaite>

This recording was produced ahead of the first live performance, and featured the following artists: Colm Mac Con Iomaire - Composer - Fiddle / Piano (Ireland), Brìghde Chaimbeul - Scottish Small Pipes (Scotland), Rakhi Singh - Violin / Vocal (Wales), Simmi Singh - Violin (Wales), Brian Dillon - Piano (England), Frank Tate - Bouzouki (Northern Ireland), Lorcan Byrne - Drums & Percussion (Ireland)



## AI Media Literacy Workshop, March 2026

This year's AI Media Literacy workshop in Belfast brought together participants from the National College of Art and Design (NCAD) and emerging creatives, as well as media experts and stakeholders, to discuss and explore ways to navigate misinformation in the digital age. The series forms part of the wider YouthConnect program run by the British Council and delivers glimpses and insights into the future of creative media.



## State of the Nation – Irish Distribution Event Panel Talk at DIFF, March 2026

British Council Ireland supported Ben Luxford, the British Film Institute's Director of UK-Wide Audiences, in the panel discussion "State of the Nation – Irish Distribution Event" at the Dublin International Film Festival. The session brought together six film professionals to examine current trends in film distribution and the challenges facing Ireland's film industry within a UK-Ireland context.



## Culture Connects Research Report, November 2025

The Culture Mobility and Connection: Ireland and the Four Nations of the UK report was launched by British Council Ireland and British Council Deputy Director Arts, Cortina Butler, to celebrate the UK-Ireland 2030 Cultural Co-operation Programme.

The report provides insights and information on the core of the creative ecology on these islands – artists and cultural professionals. It notes the strategic funds, partnerships and intergovernmental frameworks that support collaboration and mobility. It provides a vital analysis of data made available by the key national arm's-length bodies and government agencies in the Ireland-UK relationship.



## Culture Mobility and Connection: Ireland and the Four Nations of the UK report

This research engaged with arm's-length bodies, arts and cultural policymakers, strategic cultural organisations, arts practitioners and cultural producers across the UK and Ireland. In total, 278 individuals from 5 nations participated through an online survey and semi-structured interviews, which reflect the experiences of various arts agencies, organisations, and individuals

The opportunities for improved partnership and collaboration between Ireland and the four nations of the UK are grouped around three pillars:

### Steer

Through coordinated leadership, a shared long-term vision, and stronger cultural diplomacy.

### Collaborate

By investing in evidence-based policymaking, shared research, and informed funding decisions.

### Support

By creating meaningful mobility opportunities, flexible joint funding, and better access to information for artists.

**278**

Participants

**5**

Nations

One shared challenge:  
enabling meaningful  
cultural collaboration.

“Awareness of how things operate in a different jurisdiction / geography / cultural environment allows me to keep my imagination alive - it remind me that **things don't need to be the way they are** and that **it may be possible to change** things for the better, It also reminds me that our history and environment have taught us things that others don't yet know and that we have something of value to offer to others.”

## Culture Mobility and Connection: Ireland and the Four Nations of the UK report

This landmark cultural research project, the first of its kind, is a valuable resource in strengthening understanding of the nuanced, entwined and deeply important relationship between Ireland and the four nations of the UK. The report analyses the importance of artist and cultural professional mobility across Ireland and the four nations of the UK, emphasising the immense potential and shared appetite for deeper cultural collaboration.

It provides insights and information from a contemporary vantage point, focusing on the core of the creative ecology on these islands – artists and cultural professionals. It highlights the strategic funds, partnerships and intergovernmental frameworks that support collaboration and mobility and provides analysis of data from the key national arm's-length bodies and government agencies in the Ireland – UK relationship.

# Higher Education

The British Council's Higher Education program aims to create educational opportunities globally through partnerships and dialogue with policy-makers, academics, researchers, and students.

Higher Education is key to building and maintaining enduring relationships between people in the UK and other countries. Through our global Higher Education programmes, we focus on International Student Mobility and Marketing, Education Insights and Engagement, and celebrating Alumni and student networks.



## Higher Options Student Recruitment Fair, September 2025

In September 2025, we welcomed UCAS onto our stand at the Irish Times Higher Options Student Recruitment Fair. We were delighted to be joined by Sam Sykes, Hd of International at UCAS as well as colleagues from the Scottish and Welsh Governments in Ireland. Together we promoted student mobility to the four nations of the UK. Ireland is growing in prominence as a source of students for UK universities and January 2026 UCAS data shows that globally Ireland is the 3rd largest source of applications in 2026, alongside China and the United States.



## Higher Education Information Guide: UK-Ireland, September 2025

We are delighted to present at Higher Options our 2025-26 Higher Education Information Guide: UK-Ireland, developed to provide information to students from Ireland wishing to study in the UK, students from the UK wishing to study in Ireland.

It provides guidance on understanding the Common Travel Area, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), as well as points conversion, the financial support available and other frequently queried topics.



## Launch: Higher Education Mobility UK and Ireland, May 2025

In May 2025, British Council Ireland launched Higher Education Postgraduate Mobility: UK-Ireland. This research identified key opportunities for strengthened engagement in higher education research for policymakers and higher education bodies across the UK and Ireland.

## UK-Ireland Alumni Reception, February 2026

British Council Ireland and the British Embassy in Dublin hosted their third UK-Ireland Alumni Networking Reception in the Aula Maxima at University College Cork on 5 February. The networking event in Cork - the first of this series of annual events to be held outside Dublin - has been a highlight of UK-Ireland engagement in recent years, bringing together alumni who studied at higher education institutions across the UK, who are now based in Ireland.



## IEP Welsh-Irish schools delegation, November 2025

We partnered with Dublin City University's Institute of Education in November 2025 to deliver the British Council's International Education Programme study visit for Welsh school teachers and local authority officials to learn about policy and best practice approaches in literacy, numeracy and teaching in Ireland.

Funded by the Welsh Government Education Directorate, Welsh school teachers and local authority stakeholders engaged in a week-long study visit to Ireland as part of the International Education Programme.

Across the week, delegates met with partners at Dublin City University's Institute of Education, the Welsh Government in Ireland, the Irish Government's Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), as well as Irish and English medium schools:

- Rutland Street School
- Gaelscoil na Fuinseoige
- Scoil Mhuire gan Smal, Inchicore
- Faughart CNS, Dundalk



# Non-Formal Education

The Youth Connects programme aims to connect young people with government, civil society, businesses and institutions to address various contemporary crises. This includes climate change, employment issues, social disconnection, conflict resolution and more. The programme offers a variety of activities, including focus groups, policy dialogue workshops, and networking opportunities.

The programme has four strands:

- Artificial Intelligence for the Common Good
- Climate Change
- Leadership for Gender Equality
- Social Cohesion



## Youth Connect: AI Media Literacy Workshop at the Creative Futures Academy (CFA), November 2025

CFA and British Council have once again joined forces to support young adults in navigating the digital landscape through the Youth Connect AI Media Literacy two-day workshop at National College of Art and Design (NCAD). Working collaboratively, participants developed innovative digital solutions such as apps, games, and tools to strengthen media literacy. The winning team travelled to Belfast for a Study trip and joined 35 young people from other winning teams in Cyprus, Romania, France, Greece and the UK.

## COP30 Pupil's Climate Crisis Simulation, Belfast, November 2025

More than 80 students aged 16–18 from 28 schools in Northern Ireland and Ireland simulated COP30 climate talks at Belfast Castle, role-playing as politicians, journalists, and lobbyists. Facilitated by Dr Peter Doran, Senior Lecturer in Law from Queen's University Belfast and an expert in UN negotiations, the event advanced the British Council's Schools Connect and Climate Connection initiatives.

## “Belong To” – Physical Exhibition, January 2026

This project has brought together young people from Belong To – LGBTQ+ Youth Ireland (Republic of Ireland), the Education Authority Youth Service (Northern Ireland), LGBT Youth Scotland, The Proud Trust (Greater Manchester and the North West of England), and Viva LGBTQ+ (Wales) to create a book and a digital exhibition sharing the stories of LGBTQ+ youth. Collaborating with these young people offers a unique way of engaging with and understanding their lived experiences across five nations. The exhibition took place in Dublin in January 2026.



## Jane Austen 250 'Friendship' Creative Postcards: December to May 2026

On 16 December 2025, British Council Ireland, in partnership with the British Embassy Dublin and the National Library of Ireland, hosted the Jane Austen 250 'Friendship' Creative Postcards exhibition. 35 schools from across Ireland and the UK took part in this year's project, submitting 819 creative postcards. The postcards were on display in December at the National Library of Ireland, in January, they travelled to Jane Austen's House in England, ensuring that the voices and creative responses of young people from Ireland and the UK were shared with wider audiences. Inspired by the friendship between the two writers, the Postcards travel to Maria Edgeworth's House in Co. Longford in May and are on exhibition as part of the Maria Edgeworth Literary Festival.

## Global Perceptions UK-Ireland research focus group, March 2026

British Council Ireland partnered with Co-operation Ireland to host a focus group of young Irish people aged 18-34 years and invite them to share their personal and professional reflections on the findings of the Global Perceptions 2025 survey. Following the focus group, we invited key stakeholders in government, UK-Ireland relations, bilateral, media and cultural organisations to a closed-room research briefing with global British Council Experts.



## Global Perceptions UK-Ireland research focus group, March 2026

In March 2026, the British Council partnered with Cooperation Ireland and the ARINS network to host a Global Perceptions focus group and roundtable at the Royal Irish Academy.

The event brought together young people from Ireland and Northern Ireland, alongside key stakeholders, to explore how younger generations view the UK, Ireland's international role, and evolving cross-border relationships.

Combining survey findings with lived experience, discussions highlighted strong support for peace, equality and mutual respect, as well as pride in the island's shared history. Participants expressed nuanced views on Ireland's neutrality and international engagement, alongside mixed attitudes towards the UK shaped by Brexit, political change and close personal ties.

Insights from the event feed into the [Global Perceptions 2025–26 UK–Ireland Report](#), offering a valuable evidence base for understanding how younger generations view cross-border relations and Ireland's role in a changing world.



## PEACEPLUS CONNECT

**PEACEPLUS CONNECT** creates opportunities for people from diverse communities and cultural, ethnic and political backgrounds to learn and collaborate by building mutually beneficial connections and celebrating the diversity, distinctiveness, creativity and innovation of Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland.

Launched in July, the project is being implemented in partnership with Politics in Action (Northern Ireland) and Create (Ireland), and local Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), with the support of Arts Council of Northern Ireland and Arts Council Ireland | An Chomhairle Ealaíon as associate partners.

Over four years, the project will involve more than 3,400 participants in regional-level initiatives, fostering relationships that contribute to a peaceful, prosperous and stable society in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland.



# Teaching English

TeachingEnglish is a global programme for English teachers and teacher educators, offering the opportunity to learn from expert English language teaching practitioners from all over the world.

Between April 2025 and March 2026, there were 16,655 visitors from Ireland to the [TeachingEnglish website](#), which provides free online teaching resources, professional development and content (including lesson plans, classroom materials, resource books, and podcasts) for teachers and teacher educators of English.

There were 787 views of online events for teachers and teacher educators across various TeachingEnglish platforms (including Facebook, Microsoft Teams and Zoom), and 321 enrollments for [online training courses](#).

- Between October and December 2025, the TeachingEnglish theme for teachers was [Planning lessons and courses](#).
- Between January and March 2026, the TeachingEnglish theme was [Managing the lesson](#).
- For teacher educators, it was [Managing teacher learning](#).
- The resources include articles, webinars, podcast episodes, research, teaching tips and tools designed to help teachers develop their skills and knowledge.



# English and Exams

In Ireland, the British Council deliver IELTS through 3 independent test centres (ITCs) operating in five locations across the country. The British Council UK operation manages these centres.

In 2025-26, we delivered 6,616 IELTS tests in Ireland, down 3% year-on-year. One of the contributing factors was a 14% decrease in tests taken for employment purposes. Another factor will be the loss in market split (as the British Council competes with IDP, which also delivers IELTS in Ireland), down from 87% to 76% in 2025-26. We responded by engaging more directly with our delivery partners, which has led to an upturn in the latter part of the year.

Our NPS in Ireland, which measures customer satisfaction & loyalty by asking how likely users are to recommend us, decreased from 56 in 2024-25 to 45 in 2025-26 – this is still a good score, but we are drilling into the reasons for the decline – this is partially attributed to a change in platform/questions used for these surveys.

In Ireland, our other major activity is delivering ACCA (professional accountancy qualifications). In 2025-26, we delivered 9,062 ACCA exams across Dublin, Cork, and Limerick, up 15% year-on-year.

# UK-Ireland Map - Numbers and Activities

**In 2025-26, we reached :**

**Students: 26,119**

**Education Leaders: 1,019**

**Artists: 8,839**

**Arts Leaders: 2,246**

**Community/CSO/NGO leaders: 2,248**

**Publication and Broadcast: 236,000**

**Website: 227,666**

**Social Media: 190,555**

**Online: 36,789**

**Face to Face: 47,628**

**Total: 543,345**



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