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*Tallinn, Estonia, November 2025*

*Dr Kerry McCall Magan  
Country Director, British Council Ireland*

## 2025: ***Unity and Diversity - searching for balance***

Previous conference themes:

2024: *Cultural diversity – An Obstacle or an Opportunity in Shaping a Cohesive Society?*

2023: *From Security to Solidarity: Challenges of Integration in the Times of Crisis.*

2022: *Together or Apart: Searching for the Middle Ground.*

***Bridging Borders: Fostering Impact and Connection through Cultural Collaboration – a British Council Perspective***

## British Council

We....

- Build trust, respect, and intercultural understanding through values-led, partnership-focused cultural relations
- Are focussed on making local impact with global relevance
- Work in partnership to nurture relationships with government leaders, policymakers, senior advisers, cultural leaders and the wider public, to help us achieve more than we could do alone
- Organised into 7 Regions, have 100 country operations, 10,000 employees and,
- In 2022, we worked in over 200 countries and territories reaching over 600 million people

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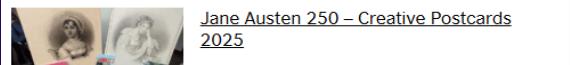
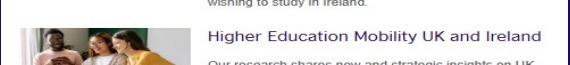
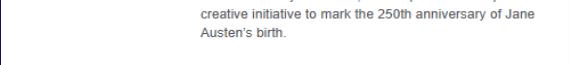
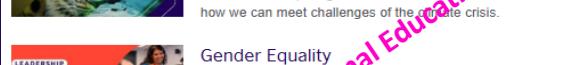
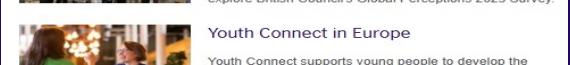


## UK – Ireland... *some key facts*

- The UK is Ireland's 3<sup>rd</sup> largest trading partner and Ireland is the UK's sixth.
  - Last year we exchanged over a 100 billion euros in goods and services.
- No. of British in Ireland just moved to second place as the largest group of foreign nationals in Ireland, (people from Poland are now the largest).
- Numbers of applications from students in Ireland to the UK has jumped by 14.6% in 2025 and is now just over 6,000 (compared to 5,290 in 2024).
  - Ireland is only EU country to show increase in enrolment numbers to UK year-on-year (+2.9 per cent) and has become the largest EU student-sending country.
- Many award winners, media personalities and celebrities in UK are Irish.
  - Liverpool Irish Festival is the UK's largest Irish arts festival, celebrating its 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday in 2025.
  - 1 in 3 Mancunians are lucky enough to have Irish ancestry.



- Ireland is the only country with annual summit with UK and the **UK-Ireland 2030 Joint Statement** is an ambitious programme of cooperation between both countries.

	<p><b>Culture Connects: Lives Entwined Reception and Performance</b></p> <p>We partnered with the British Embassy in Dublin on a Culture Connects: Lives Entwined reception and performance on 10th March 2025.</p>	 <p><b>Higher Education Information Guide: UK - Ireland</b></p> <p>We are happy to share our higher education guide, developed to provide information to students from Ireland wishing to study in the UK, and students from the UK wishing to study in Ireland.</p>	 <p><b>Jane Austen 250 – Creative Postcards 2025</b></p> <p>In partnership with the British Embassy Dublin and the National Library of Ireland, we are proud to take part in a creative initiative to mark the 250th anniversary of Jane Austen's birth.</p>
	<p><b>Sustainability Through Festivals: A Collective Approach</b></p> <p>We partnered with Dublin International Film Festival as part of their 2025 programme on a panel focusing on how festivals can act as catalysts for improving sustainable practices.</p>	 <p><b>Higher Education Mobility UK and Ireland</b></p> <p>Our research shares new and strategic insights on UK-Ireland higher education collaboration, student mobility, institutional engagement and alumni engagement.</p>	 <p><b>Empowering Voices: LGBTQ+ Youth Untold Stories</b></p> <p>We are delighted to support Empowering Voices: LGBTQ+ Youth Untold Stories. This project brings together young people from Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, North-West of England, Wales.</p>
	<p><b>Celtic Connections 2025</b></p> <p>We supported Irish delegate Juno King to take part in Showcase Scotland at Celtic Connections, Glasgow, 22-26 January 2025.</p>	 <p><b>Universities UK International (UUKI) Delegation Visit</b></p> <p>We are partnering with Universities UK International (UUKI) to support an inward delegation of representatives from UK universities to Ireland in March 2025.</p>	 <p><b>Media literacy in the age of AI</b></p> <p>Explore how AI shapes media and learn to spot bias, misinformation and deepfakes in Youth Connect's new season.</p>
	<p><b>Culture Connects: mapping UK Ireland arts &amp; cultural connections</b></p> <p>British Council Ireland commissioned research to explore arts and cultural connections between the UK and Ireland.</p>	 <p><b>UK Ireland Alumni Reception</b></p> <p>British Council Ireland and the British Embassy in Dublin hosted an inaugural UK Ireland Alumni Reception in 2024 and will host a second in March 2025.</p>	 <p><b>Climate Change</b></p> <p>Our climate change activities bring young people from across EU Europe together to share ideas and reflect on how we can meet challenges of the climate crisis.</p>
	<p><b>CoMUSEUM International Conference</b></p> <p>We supported three delegates from the ULYSSES European Odyssey project to participate in the 14th CoMUSEUM International Conference in Greece from 4-6 December 2024.</p>	 <p><b>International Education Programme: Wales Study Visit 2025</b></p> <p>We partnered with the British Council International Education Programme Unit on a study visit to Ireland for Welsh school teachers and local authority stakeholders from 10-14 February 2025.</p>	 <p><b>Gender Equality</b></p> <p>This course prepares young people to make a difference to gender equality issues through building their leadership capability.</p>
	<p><b>Outburst Festival 2024</b></p> <p>We supported visual artist, diversity, equity and inclusion advocate and writer, Pradeep Mahadeswari, to attend Outburst Festival 2024 in Belfast, Northern Ireland.</p>	 <p><b>Higher Options 2024</b></p> <p>We took part in the Irish Times Higher Options for the second year to disseminate information and promote the UK as a study destination to Irish students.</p>	 <p><b>Non-formal Education</b></p> <p>Our non-formal education strand aims to increase trust at community level by facilitating the creation of spaces and platforms for public discussion.</p>
	<p><b>British Council Literature Seminar 2024</b></p> <p>We were delighted to support Simon O'Connor, Director of the Museum of Literature Ireland, to attend British Council's Literature Seminar in Berlin from 14-16 November 2024.</p>	 <p><b>Global Perceptions: UK Ireland</b></p> <p>On 27 March 2024, in collaboration with Cooperation Ireland, we hosted a focus group with 15 young people to explore British Council's Global Perceptions 2023 Survey.</p>	 <p><b>Social Cohesion</b></p> <p>The social cohesion strand of our Youth Connect programme aims to increase trust at community level by facilitating the creation of spaces and platforms for public discussion.</p>
	<p><b>Beta Festival</b></p> <p>British Council Ireland were delighted to support Beta Festival, Ireland's first art and technology festival.</p>	 <p><b>Youth Connect in Europe</b></p> <p>Youth Connect supports young people to develop the skills, inspiration and connections to tackle major challenges.</p>	

## IRELAND

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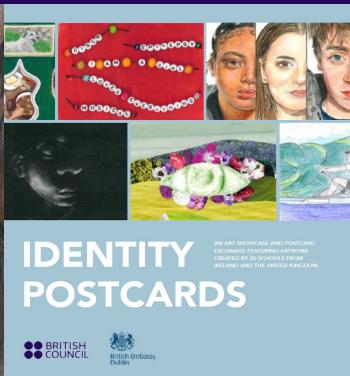
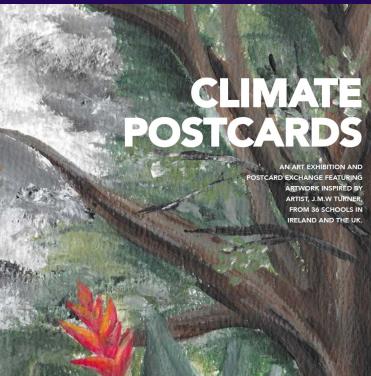
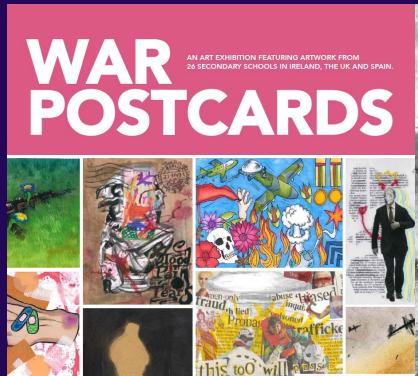
**Be a catalyst in strengthening the bilateral relationship in Arts and Education**  
**Act as a valued broker and convenor nurturing growth**  
**Build connections and collaborations, create opportunities and insight, foster networks and skills**

meitheal

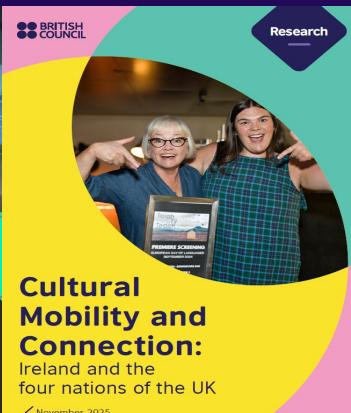
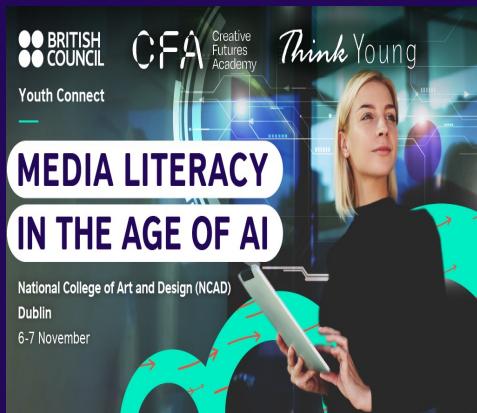
iseidteam

Arts & Culture

Higher Education



Jane Austen 250 – Creative Postcards  
2025



## IRELAND

# Reach

In 2023-24 we reached:

**28,338** Students  
**389** Education Leaders  
**36** Artists  
**50** Arts Leaders  
**12** Community/CSO /NGO leaders

Publication and Broadcast: **35,525**  
 Website: **252,061**  
 Social Media: **13,390**  
 Online: **67,952**  
 Face to Face: **23,274**  
 Total: 399,491



*“Connecting with other people in this exploratory space is helping me see and feel my place in all of it.”*

*Dance and Ecology Light Moves workshop participant*

*“The skills and techniques I learned have proved invaluable in my academic pursuits, and I feel grateful to have had the opportunity to attend such a transformative event. I want to express my appreciation to the British Council Ireland and Malcolm Love for working together to coordinate this project.”*

*Academically Speaking workshop participant*

*“It has been a genuinely revolutionary experience for me and one which I will be incorporating into my research and practice going forward!”*

*AI for the Common Good Hackathon Participant*

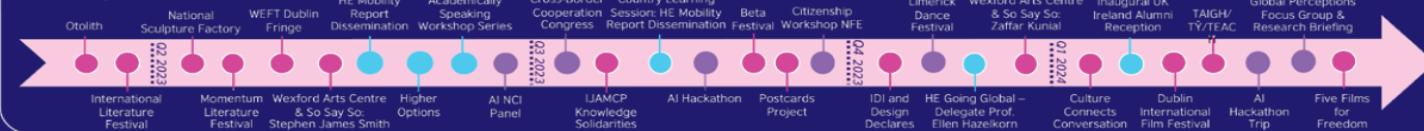
In 2024-25:

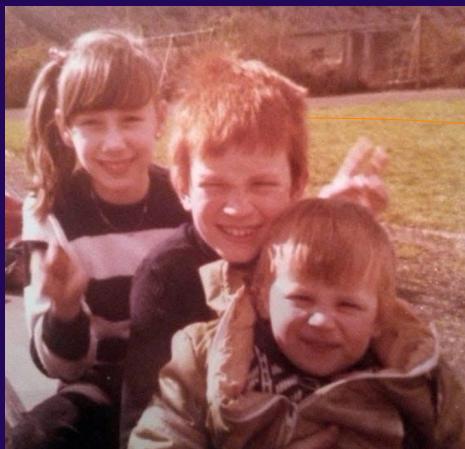
Students: 22,670  
 Education Leaders: 1100  
 Artists: 319  
 Arts Leaders: 189  
 Community/CSO/ NGO leaders: 76

Publication and Broadcast: 196,000  
 Website: 218,592  
 Social Media: 13,754  
 Online: 52,103  
 Face to Face: 8,004

Total: 488,469

### Country Activities





Ireland – Northern Ireland

[Film25 | British Council](#)

## Film25



British Council Ireland  
Partners



**Peace is not a destination; it is a journey  
that requires constant effort and  
commitment.**

Marti Ahtisaari

Monday 10 April 2023 to Sunday 30 April 2023

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## PEACEPLUS CONNECT



- **1 July 2025 – 30 June 2029**
- **Cross-border and cross-community**
- **Delivery in 6 counties in Northern Ireland and 6 counties in Ireland**
- **€2,08 million over the next four years**



**PEACEPLUS**  
Northern Ireland - Ireland

Co-funded by the



European Union



UK Government



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## PEACEPLUS CONNECT



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**Overall objective:** To contribute to a more peaceful, prosperous and stable society in Northern Ireland and the border region of Ireland.

**Specific objective:** To promote positive relations characterised by respect, where cultural diversity is celebrated and people can live, learn and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance.

The 3 major activity strands: **Communities – Festivals – Media**

## The three working strands within PEACEPLUS CONNECT

### Communities Connect

- Led by Politics in Action

### Festivals Connect

- Led by Create
- with Assoc Partners: Arts Council Northern Ireland & Arts Council Ireland

### Media Connect

- Led by the British Council

# PEACEPLUS CONNECT

## Impact groups



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**3,464** people  
from different  
communities and  
backgrounds engaged  
in regional level  
projects and building  
relationships.

**CONNECT will place particular emphasis on providing support to most marginalised /harder to reach within our communities.**

These include:

- Women
- Older people
- Migrants and refugees
- People living with disabilities
- People with issues arising from the legacy of the conflict including ex-prisoners and security service personnel
- Members of the Traveller Community
- Members of the LGBTQIA+ Community

## Communities CONNECT

A community leadership programme led by Politics in Action that aims to bring together communities with civil society to address multiple 21<sup>st</sup> century crises: from climate change, gender inequality and unemployment to alienation and conflict.

### Training for trainers

based on the 'Civic Community Work' model

### Community mapping workshops

online introduction workshop followed by a day-long face-to-face workshop

### Thematic workshops

cross-border engagement organised on a cross-community and cross-border basis

### Community social action projects

based on agreed action plans supported on an ongoing basis by project members and facilitators

## Festivals CONNECT

A programme led by Create aiming to engage with existing festivals and provide opportunities, centred in cultural democratic approaches that foster inclusive social engagement and build sustainable structures to continually develop community-led programmes and partnerships.

### Co-design Steering Group

Cross-community co-design steering group guiding the development phase based on previously identified needs and co-designing subsequent programme with focus on future challenges and opportunities.

### Training workshops

Programme of bespoke training workshops to upskill practitioners in areas of community engagement and principles of collaborative and inclusive arts practice.

### Peer-to-Peer Connections

Consortia of geographically dispersed individuals and a leading practitioner working together for approx. 3 months.

### Diversity in Practice

Staff and volunteers trained on community engagement focusing on diversity and inclusion in practice.

### Festival Makers

A core group of cross-community contributors convened to co-design and develop content for the programme of the biennial 'Festival Makers' conference in Ireland.

## Media CONNECT

A training programme led by the British Council that will weave the community and festival strands together.

**Media training** online and with local education institutes (peace journalism/ fact-based journalism/community cohesion)

### Networking and dissemination actions

including a launch event, two Community Collaboration Spaces, and a final celebration event.

### Cross-community workshops

for 500 journalists, digital media content creators, students, community members and representatives of CSOs/ Festivals aiming to introduce critical journalism for positive social change. With 7 ed providers

# PEACEPLUS CONNECT

## Impact Areas

- Build capacity (cross-border and cross-community)
- Develop new community leaders and volunteers
- Conflict resolution interventions
- Improve and sustain relationships by addressing issues of trust, prejudice and intolerance
- Engage those with opposing and dissenting views
- Increase civic participation
- Increase minority and women's participation in public, social, cultural and political life
- Facilitate positive cultural expression within diverse communities
- Work towards sensitive and inclusive cultural expression and celebration



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## PEACEPLUS CONNECT

Most of all...

- By promoting social inclusion, cultural diversity, placemaking, and mutual respect,
- the project creates opportunities for people from across and within the border counties of Ireland, and Northern Ireland,
- to participate, learn, and cooperate with each other by building mutually beneficial connections and celebrating the diversity, distinctiveness, creativity and innovation of Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland.



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***"Our greatest obligation as human beings is to be good ancestors and take the best actions we can take"***

**Tim O'Connor**

*Former Irish diplomat & one of the architects of the Good Friday Agreement*

*Thank you for listening...*