



Protecting the Right to Culture of Persons with Disabilities and Enhancing Cultural Diversity through European Union Law: Exploring New Paths (DANCING)

Report

The ERC DANCING Final Conference

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This report gives an account of the DANCING Final Conference, the unveiling of the DANCING-commissioned artwork 'Odisseo-Ulysses', and the premiere of the documentary 'Steps to Change: Following the DANCING Project 2020 – 2025' produced by Feenish Productions Ltd. and directed by James Kelly. Special thanks go to the President of Maynooth University Professor Eeva Leinonen for marking the unveiling with a powerful and thought-provoking speech. We acknowledge the presence and contribution of Norbert Croonenberg, Accessibility Designer of the project, who designed a bespoke logo for the conference. We are also grateful to Lucy Bennett and Monique Dior Jarrett from Stopgap Dance Company and James Kelly of Feenish Productions Ltd. for their contribution and support. We are grateful to Maynooth University Estates Office, particularly Director of Estates Michael Rafter, for their invaluable support in placing the artwork from Tiziano Pantano and for help with the preparation for the unveiling ceremony with the President. We are grateful to the numerous offices and service providers that, in different capacities, supported the DANCING team in the organization. Special thanks to Elizabeth Rozeboom and Fiona Smith for advice and logistic support, as well as to Nuala Downes – lead administrator of the Assisting Living and Learning (ALL) Institute – and the administration team at the School of Law and Criminology for help in dissemination and communication. A special thanks to our volunteers, PhD candidates Matthew McKenna and Gaia Patarini, who gave their time generously and handled every task with enthusiasm and professionalism. Thanks also to Dr. Paola Pannia and Roberta Esposito for supporting the dissemination of the event as rapporteurs. We are grateful to Styles which managed sound technical support and ensured a seamless experience for all participants. We are particularly thankful to all speakers, chairs and participants who contributed to the discussions and made the event a success. Special thanks to Alessia Palladino and Élodie Makhoul for their formatting, editing and proofreading support during the finalisation of this report. Last but not least, thanks to all DANCING team members: this final conference would not have been possible without their collaborative effort, creativity, and commitment.

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Executive Summary

This report gives an account of the DANCING Final Conference, which was held on 19 and 20 June 2025. The conference presented the main findings and results of the European Research Council-funded project ‘Protecting the Right to Culture of Persons with Disabilities and Enhancing Cultural Diversity through European Union Law: Exploring New Paths – DANCING’, led by Professor Delia Ferri (Professor of Law at the School of Law and Criminology of Maynooth University). The DANCING Final Conference aimed to reflect on the key achievements of the project, but also to explore future directions for research, policy, and practice related to European Union (EU) disability law and the right to cultural participation of persons with disabilities.

The conference brought together academics, policymakers, persons with disabilities, artists, and other stakeholders. Over two days, participants engaged in thematic panels and roundtables. The DANCING project, running from 1 September 2020 to 31 August 2025, pursued three main objectives: to identify barriers and facilitators to cultural participation by persons with disabilities (experiential), to explore how EU law can promote disability rights and cultural diversity (normative), and to offer a new theorisation of cultural diversity in EU law (theoretical). All three objectives were discussed throughout the conference. The first day focused on the research findings and academic contributions of the project, while the second day turned to policy implications and ‘Tools for Change’, including the launch of a Policy Brief – comprising recommendations for European Union and national policymakers and a Toolkit for cultural stakeholders.

Notably, the conference was opened by a video message from Professor Adam Bodnar, Minister of Justice of Poland, on behalf of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union (1 Jan 2025 – 30 Jun 2025). Two keynote speeches – respectively from Professor Bruno De Witte (Emeritus Professor at Maastricht University and Member of the Advisory Board of the DANCING Project) and Ms Inmaculada Placencia Porrero (Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Senior Disability Expert at the European Commission) – marked the two days. A keynote dialogue led by Professor Mark Priestley (Emeritus Professor at Leeds University and Member of the Advisory Board of the DANCING Project) concluded the second day of the conference. The DANCING Final Conference also included two side events that marked the artistic collaborations deployed during the course of the project. The first was the unveiling of the artwork ‘Odisseo-Ulysses’ created by artist Tiziano Pantano. The second was the premiere of the documentary ‘Steps to Change: Following the DANCING Project 2020 – 2025’ produced by Feenish Production Ltd. and directed by James Kelly.

Besides discussing the conference content and its most significant moments, the report outlines key organisational aspects with a focus on how accessibility was planned and delivered throughout the event, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and DANCING’s own accessibility strategy. Strategic planning was vital to ensure venues were accessible to wheelchair users, but also suitable for people with a range

of disabilities. Accessibility measures further included provision of Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpretation throughout, alternative formats (Braille, large print, digital soft copy) of the programme and relevant documentation of the conference, as well as the embedding of accessibility features in the documentary and the artwork.

On the whole, the DANCING Final Conference showcased the cross-cutting nature of the interdisciplinary research conducted, but also highlighted the project's commitment to bridging academic research with practice and to ensuring that persons with disabilities are active participants in shaping inclusive cultural spaces across Europe.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The DANCING Project

The project '[Protecting the Right to Culture of Persons with Disabilities and Enhancing Cultural Diversity through European Union Law: Exploring New Paths – DANCING](#)' explores the right of persons with disabilities to take part in cultural life as an essential aspect of enhancing cultural diversity in the European Union (EU). The project is funded by the [European Research Council](#) (ERC) and is based at [Maynooth University](#) (MU) under [Professor Delia Ferri](#) as Principal Investigator (PI). It explores the extent to which the protection of the right to take part in culture of people with disabilities and the promotion of cultural diversity intersect and complement each other in the European Union (EU) legal order. On the whole, DANCING deploys interdisciplinary approaches to produce ground-breaking knowledge intended to challenge the cultural exclusion often faced by people with disabilities, contributing to the creation of a more inclusive and culturally diverse European society.

DANCING commenced on 1 September 2020 and is due to be completed on 31 August 2025. It has pursued three main objectives. Firstly, it has identified and categorised barriers to and facilitators of cultural participation experienced by persons with disabilities and how they affect the wider cultural domain (experiential objective). Secondly, it has provided a normative exploration of how the EU has used and can use its competence to combat discrimination and its supporting competence on cultural matters, in synergy with its wide internal market powers, to ensure the accessibility of cultural activities, to promote disability identities, while achieving cultural diversity (normative objective). Thirdly, it aims to advance the understanding of the legal concept of cultural diversity, which stems from the intersection of different sources of law, and, in the final phase of the project, it articulates a new theorization of the promotion of cultural diversity within the EU legal order (theoretical objective).

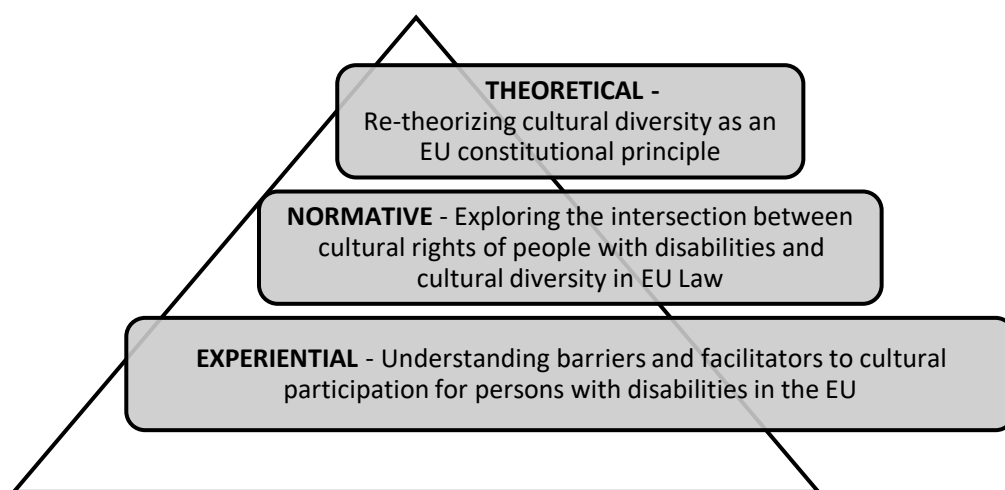
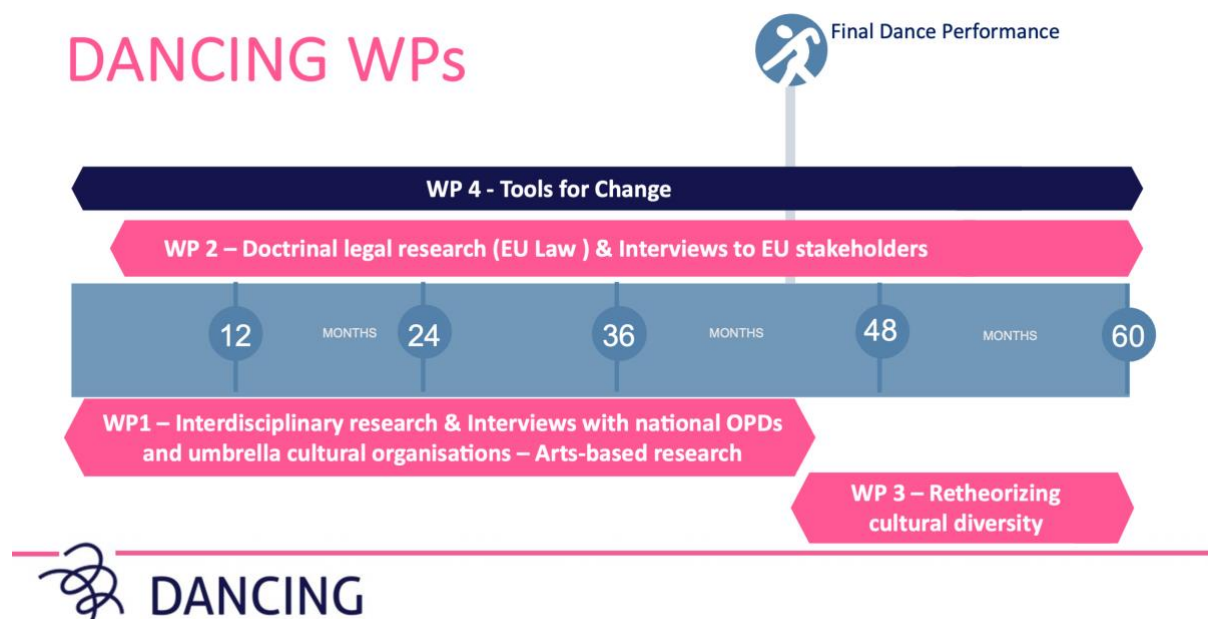


Diagram of the three main objectives of the ERC DANCING project.

The project is underpinned by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which represents the global legal standard on disability rights, and is informed by the human rights model of disability. Methodologically, DANCING combines legal, empirical, and arts-based research to achieve its experiential, normative and theoretical objectives.

DANCING is divided into four complementary and partially overlapping work packages (WPs). Three of them correspond to the key objectives of the project. The fourth one is a cross-cutting WP that focuses on translating scholarly research and key academic findings into practical tools that can effect societal change (Tools for Change).



Overview of ERC DANCING work packages and timeline in 12-month increments.

It has been carried out by a team of researchers led by Professor Delia Ferri. Current research members of the DANCING team include: Ms Eva Sophie Krolla (Senior Research Assistant), Ms Léa Urzel Francil (PhD candidate), Ms Iryna Tekuchova (PhD candidate), Ms Alessia Palladino (Research Assistant), Ms Élodie Makhoul (Research Assistant) and Dr. Lazar Stefanović (Research Assistant) who joined for the final stretch of the project. Former researchers in the DANCING team included: Dr. Ann Leahy (Post-doctoral Researcher), Dr. Neža Šubic (Post-doctoral Researcher), Dr. Vincenzo Tudisco (Post-doctoral Researcher) and Mr Tiarnán McDonough (Research Assistant). The research team is supported by Ms Hilary Hooks (Project Manager).



ERC DANCING team from l-r: Élodie Makhoul, Iryna Tekuchova, Léa Urzel Francil, Eva Sophie Krolla, Professor Delia Ferri, Alessia Palladino, Dr. Lazar Stefanović and Hilary Hooks with former DANCING member Dr. Ann Leahy.

1.2. The Key Tenets of the DANCING Project

DANCING is informed by the principles and rights set out in the CRPD. It is underpinned by values of empowerment, respect for diversity and participation. It embraces the concept of disability laid out in Article 1(2) CRPD, which recognises that persons with disabilities include those ‘who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others’. It further embraces the view, set out in [General Comment No. 6 of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (CRPD Committee), that ‘disability is a social construct’ and ‘is one of several layers of identity’ (CRPD Committee, 2018, para. 9).

Furthermore, DANCING looks at the right to participate in culture in a comprehensive way with reference to its twofold individual dimension and its collective aspect (Romainville, 2015; Chow, 2018). The twofold individual dimension encompasses the right to access cultural activities, goods and services (i.e., the right to cultural consumption) and the right to active involvement in culture, which includes the engagement in the creation of cultural goods, services and activities. The collective aspect entails the right of cultural communities to be recognised and protected as well as to enjoy and make use of their cultural heritage and cultural expressions.

The project acknowledges the current comprehensive definitions of culture and the cultural domain that connect to cultural rights but deliberately focuses on arts practices (encompassing different art forms, including literature, dance, music, theatre, and visual arts) and heritage as forms of cultural expression (Caust, 2019), and uses dance as a selected art practice for the purpose of arts-based research. In that regard, it embraces a broad definition of Cultural and Creative Sectors (CCSs) as including all sectors carrying out activities based on cultural, artistic and other creative expressions, such as activities related to the development, creation, production, dissemination and preservation of goods and services embodying such expressions. This encompasses architecture, archives, libraries and museums, artistic crafts, audiovisual forms of expression (such as film, television, video games and multimedia), tangible and intangible cultural heritage, design (including fashion design), festivals, music, literature, performing arts, books and publishing, radio, visual arts, media, and entertainment ([Art. 2 Regulation \(EU\) 2021/818 establishing the Creative Europe Programme](#)).

The project also embeds and strives to implement the principle of accessibility, provided for in Article 9 CRPD, by making the research available in accessible formats and throughout different media. In that regard, it is also worth recalling that the Preamble to the CRPD explicitly recognises ‘the importance of accessibility to the physical, social, economic and cultural environment, to health and education and to information and communication, in enabling people with disabilities to fully enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms’.

1.3. The Aim of this Report

The aim of this report is to give an account of the DANCING Final Conference, which took place on 19 and 20 June 2025. The conference had two main objectives: to present and reflect upon the achievements of the project and to explore avenues for future research and policy. The DANCING Final Conference featured both academic and policy-oriented discussions, which are outlined in this report in connection with the broader framework of the project’s aims and communication strategy. The DANCING Final Conference also included two side events that marked the artistic collaborations deployed during the course of the project. The first was the unveiling of the artwork ‘Odisseo-Ulysses’ created by artist Tiziano Pantano. The second was the premiere of the documentary ‘Steps to Change: Following the DANCING Project 2020 – 2025’ created and produced by Feenish Production Ltd. and directed by James Kelly.

1.4. Terminology

In line with the CRPD, which represents the global legal standard on disability, the report uses ‘people first language’ (i.e. persons/ people with disabilities). This is consistent with the approach applied in the DANCING project and in the various outputs, communications and activities.

1.5. Structure of the Report

Following these introductory remarks, the report gives an overview of the conference and its organisational features (Section 2). Section 3 provides a day-by-day account of the DANCING Final Conference, structured thematically and including outlines of panel discussions, and roundtables. Each session and roundtable is contextualised and briefly summarised, with attention given to participant contributions and key takeaway points. Section 4 outlines the side events organised in conjunction with the conference: the unveiling of the artwork and the screening of the DANCING documentary. The report concludes with remarks on the project's legacy and forward-looking agenda.

2. THE AIMS AND FEATURES OF THE DANCING FINAL CONFERENCE

This section presents the aims, structure and core features of the DANCING Final Conference, as well as its accessibility and communication strategies.

2.1. The Role and Aims of the DANCING Final Conference

Marking the end of the project, the Final Conference aimed to discuss the achievements and results of DANCING with the academic community, policymakers, persons with disabilities and other stakeholders. It also included forward-looking roundtables and discussions exploring new directions and future research opportunities. The Final Conference was articulated in two days: the first day focused on the academic findings of DANCING, while the second day zoomed in on the policy-oriented aspects of the project.

The first day opened with welcoming speeches from Professor Rachel Msetfi, Vice President for Research and Innovation at MU, and Professor Fergus Ryan, Head of the School of Law and Criminology at MU. It also featured a video message from Professor Adam Bodnar, Minister of Justice of Poland, on behalf of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union (1 Jan 2025 – 30 Jun 2025). The first day, dedicated to academic findings and achievements, included three main panels that explored the key results of WP1 on barriers and facilitators to cultural participation of persons with disabilities, some of the findings of the cross-cutting research conducted in WP2 on the role of EU law in promoting the right to cultural participation of persons with disabilities and its intersection with the protection of cultural diversity. The first day also encompassed roundtables to discuss DANCING's contribution to advancing the human rights model of disability as well as scholarly approaches to EU disability law and EU law scholarship more broadly. These roundtables aimed to offer a unique platform to reflect on and identify future avenues for research. The first day was closed with a keynote by Professor Bruno De Witte (Emeritus Professor at Maastricht University and Member of the Advisory Board of the DANCING Project). At the end of the first day the artwork 'Odisseo-Ulysses' – created by blind artist Tiziano Pantano and commissioned by DANCING – was unveiled by MU President Professor Eeva Leinonen. The artwork has been donated to MU and will be kept on permanent display on the Technology, Society and Innovation (TSI) building on MU campus.

The second day opened with introductory remarks by Dr. Gemma Irvine, Vice President for Equality and Diversity at MU, and Professor Fergus Ryan, Head of the School of Law and Criminology at MU. This second day discussed the role of DANCING in supporting transformative disability policymaking and more inclusive CCS. It included a keynote by Ms Inmaculada Placencia Porrero (Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Senior Disability Expert at the European Commission). This was followed by two roundtable discussions on how to advance cultural participation of persons with disabilities through EU policymaking and on inclusion and accessibility of cultural organisations respectively. A keynote dialogue led by Professor Mark Priestley (Emeritus

Professor at Leeds University and Member of the Advisory Board of the DANCING Project) concluded the second day of the conference. On the whole, the second day aimed to discuss the 'Tools for Change' deployed by DANCING and to review EU policy measures and practical ways to foster cultural participation of persons with disabilities.

After the conference, participants had an opportunity to view and discuss the documentary 'Steps to Change: Following the DANCING Project 2020 – 2025' presenting the course of the project.



Conference participants in front of the TSI Building, Maynooth University North Campus.

2.2. The DANCING Final Conference Logo

In consultation with Professor Delia Ferri, [Accessibility Designer Norbert Croonenberg](#) created a bespoke conference logo using the [original project logo](#) (designed by [Wonder Works Studio](#)). The logo includes the loose hand-drawn lines on the left in various colours of the DANCING palette, building on the primary colour turquoise and using most accent colours for different parts of the lines. The lines in different colours well represent the multifaceted academic and policy contributions of DANCING as well as its interdisciplinary research and different methodologies that complement each other. It then includes the text DANCING and, underneath, the wording 'Final Conference 19|20 June 2025 Maynooth University'. This logo is easily recognisable and catches the eye, contributing to a better widespread recognition of the project and of the Final Conference as a key milestone.



Bespoke logo of the DANCING Final Conference created by Norbert Croonenberg.

The distinctive logo was used throughout all communications related to the Final Conference, whether it is on publications, in presentation slideshows, during correspondences, conference materials or on the social media accounts of the project.



R: Digital Poster of the DANCING Final Conference displayed on a TV in the lobby of the TSI building, Maynooth University. L: Paper Poster of the DANCING Final Conference in the School of Law and Criminology.

2.3. Accessibility as Core Ethos: Making the DANCING Final Conference Inclusive and Accessible

Accessibility, besides being a key principle of the CRPD, is an essential value that informs DANCING as a whole. In line with the project's commitment to be as inclusive and accessible as possible, and consistent with our own [accessibility strategy](#), deployed since the beginning of the project, the DANCING team carefully considered each aspect of the Final Conference. All accessibility features deployed in the Final Conference built on the knowledge acquired during the course of the whole project and on the experience of the [DANCING Mid-Term Academic Conference](#). It also took into account the feedback received from persons with disabilities.

2.3.1. Conference Venues

The conference venues were chosen to allow all attendees to comfortably and independently access and participate in the conference. Given that June is a busy month with several events taking place simultaneously in MU, advice from MU Estates Office and Maynooth Campus as

well as Head of Events, Elizabeth Rozeboom and Events Manager at Maynooth Campus, Fiona Smith was key to secure the space.

The conference room was a large, rectangular and ground-level room, with well-lit space. This was important to support people with mobility impairments and people with visual impairments and allow them to move independently around the room. The seating was arranged facing the far end of the room, where the speakers were placed, with a wide aisle and wide spaced rows of chairs on either side to facilitate people using wheelchairs or walking aids. The room was fitted with a computer and a projector mounted at the ceiling which were used to display information on each session (date, time, chair, speakers and session title) as well as any slides and visual aids used during sessions onto a large pull-down screen behind the speakers. This facilitated both speakers when presenting and attendees in following along presentations benefitting from both uninhibited visual and auditory input. To support clear and uninterrupted sound, the engaged event management company, Styles, installed four speakers at the top of the room to amplify speakers and provided hand-held microphones as well as a stationary microphone to facilitate each speaker during their contribution. Moreover, to reasonably accommodate two speakers, this technology was also used to connect speakers and facilitate their remote participation.

Similar to the main venue, the room in which all breaks, including lunch, took place was located just next to the conference room, connected with a wide internal door and had a well-lit, spacious layout accommodating different needs. Moreover, bathroom facilities including accessible facilities were on the ground level and close to the conference room.

The conference facilities also featured a third room as a quiet room which attendees could use if they needed to step out or be in a less stimulating environment. This room was located at the end of the corridor on the ground-floor of the TSI building, i.e. close by, yet in a less busy part of the building supporting a calm space for attendees to retreat to if needed.

Various types of signage in digital and analogue formats – all containing the conference logo for recognition – were employed to support easy orientation and clear directions to the different venues and facilities.

2.3.2. Conference Materials and Communication

The programme of the conference was devised in multiple formats including Braille, large print and accessible digital soft copies which were compatible with screen readers. The programme in soft copy format was circulated to participants and attendees prior to the conference so that people could become familiar with the schedule, speakers and presentations beforehand. Upon arrival to the conference, attendees were further provided with a physical copy of the programme in a format which suited their needs best and which allowed them to revisit the programme throughout the event.

In the course of inviting and liaising with speakers, the DANCING team inquired about any accessibility needs to gauge which measures would be most effective without conflicting and to be able to provide reasonable accommodation for individuals too. A similar approach was applied to the registration of attendees. An accessible online form was developed and trialled before being placed on the dedicated webpage of the DANCING Final Conference and other promotional outlets. The form inquired about accessibility needs generally in a multiple-choice format as well as through an optional open-ended question which allowed attendees to elaborate on their needs. Additionally, a dedicated e-mail address was set up to allow attendees to register via email rather than through the registration form. This email address was primarily monitored by one member, Élodie Makhoul, as contact point for attendees allowing responsiveness and direct contact supporting a comprehensive understanding and provision of accessibility measures and reasonable accommodation throughout.

The conference embedded many accessibility measures and bespoke reasonable accommodations for some participants. Since many of these measures and accommodations are not commonly deployed at academic events, chairs of the various sessions were made aware of them with a view of facilitating their role.

2.3.3. Simultaneous Sign Language Interpretation

Moreover, the entire conference was simultaneously interpreted into Irish Sign Languages (ISL) as this is the primary language used by native sign language users in the Republic of Ireland. This supported attendees in both following sessions and engaging in the discussions with speakers.

Three ISL interpreters taking turns were present over the two days of the conference to enable them to cover the entirety of the discussions. To facilitate the work of the interpreters a large pull-down screen at the back-end of the room displayed the same slides and information as were visible to attendees. This supported the interpreters as the information was in their sightline and they did not need to reposition while interpreting. In turn, this benefitted anyone following the interpretation in the audience as it was uninhibited. To further facilitate the simultaneous interpretation, DANCING team members had provided the interpreters with all conference materials prior to the event and one member, Ms Élodie Makhoul (Day 1) and Ms Alessia Palladino (Day 2), was their contact point throughout each day.

On the second day, in addition to ISL, International Sign Language interpretation was provided as a reasonable accommodation measure to facilitate one participant.

2.3.4. Side Events

The artwork – unveiled at the end of the first day – was positioned on the TSI mezzanine on a large space accessible to wheelchair users through an elevator as well as a staircase. Further the artwork itself could be experienced by touching the two panels of the artwork, and by accessing information about it through a Braille label placed on the right side of it. A further explanatory label in written Irish and English (as the two official languages of the Republic of

Ireland) is placed on the left side of the artwork. This information could moreover be accessed through QR codes directing to audio descriptions in Irish and English respectively to serve various access needs.

The DANCING documentary ‘Steps to Change: Following the DANCING Project 2020 – 2025’ was screened in the Drama Room of the School of Education, which was accessible by an elevator as well as stairs. By virtue of it being a performance space, some aspects of the stage area and seating were pre-set, yet featured a spacious entrance and accessible first-row, floor-level seating. The documentary has been produced in three versions: one version with Closed Captions (which was showcased on 20 June 2025 and is now available on the website) as well as one with embedded ISL interpretation and one with audio description (which are [available on the website](#)).

2.4. The DANCING Final Conference Communication Strategy

The PI, Professor Delia Ferri, in conjunction with the DANCING team, deployed a bespoke communication strategy for the Final Conference. Such strategy built on the communication approach adopted by the DANCING project and was designed to maximize the visibility, engagement, and impact of the Final Conference. It also aimed to ensure that people engaging with the Final Conference could easily access the published outcomes, including [reports](#) and [academic publications](#).

All communication materials deployed in advance of the dates of the conference – including LinkedIn posts and Twitter/X posts from the DANCING project accounts as well as post from the private account of the PI – highlighted how the DANCING Final Conference represented a milestone of the project and a pivotal moment to showcase its achievements, celebrate collaborations, and stimulate future opportunities for research, policy influence, and practical application. The communication materials also aimed to ensure strong participation leveraging on existing relationships with stakeholders and well-rooted collaborations, while attracting new audiences. An equally important goal was that of securing visibility not only in Ireland but in the EU and globally. This communication targeted researchers and academics, policymakers and public institutions, as well as professionals from the CCSs and the disability sector. The communication effort aimed to be consistent and compelling, and to emphasize that the DANCING Final Conference was the culmination of five years of research work and that the project has advanced the state-of-the-art. Offline and personal communication channels of the PI supported the digital efforts. Posters and flyers were also distributed in the School of Law and Criminology. The timeline of these communication activities began in May with the release of the programme, although circulation of a save-the-date began approximately five months in advance of the event. Intensive promotional activity occurred in the final two weeks leading up to the Final Conference.

Social media were not only used intensively in the lead-up to the conference but also during and after the event. In addition, various press releases were issued after the conference. More specifically, both LinkedIn and Twitter/X profiles of the project were used before the conference to build momentum and generate engagement, together with the PI's personal account on LinkedIn. This is also supported by the data of LinkedIn, which show a 113.3% increase in the engagement of LinkedIn users on the project account. During the conference, the main social media channel used was Twitter/X, to update about the different sessions. After the conference, social media were used to summarise and wrap up the event. Ultimately, a total of 27 dedicated posts were created on LinkedIn before, during and after the Final Conference, and 24 such posts on Twitter/X.

The dissemination of the conference was also boosted by the use of the hashtag #DancingFinalConference, which featured not only on social media but also in posters and flyers.

The post-conference dissemination was comprehensive and staggered with a total of 10 LinkedIn posts (six from the ERC DANCING account and four from the PI's personal account) published in the days following the event. This was substantiated with two news items being published through the School of Law and Criminology website and through the Maynooth University Communication Office, the latter focusing specifically on the unveiling of the artwork. This last news item was also promoted on LinkedIn through the MU account and in the Monthly Message of the MU President reaching the wider academic community of MU. Moreover, two rapporteurs accompanied the conference with a view of producing reflective accounts on the Final Conference to support further dissemination of the findings and the overall project.

As mentioned above, all communication materials, online and offline, were visually aligned with the DANCING branding and consistently used the bespoke conference logo created by Norbert Croonenberg. This was complemented by the creation of bespoke bags featuring the conference logo which each attendee received. While the active communication efforts of the DANCING project will cease upon the project's conclusion, such a branded tangible item will remain and serves a longer-lasting communication purpose, i.e. the recognition of the project after its completion.

To assess the success of the communication strategy, the team monitored registration and attendance figures, website traffic, social media engagement metrics. As shown above, the social media engagement increased significantly and to new heights with the dedicated communication of the Final Conference. This is also reflected in the traction of the DANCING website which recorded a 79% increase in session during June 2025 and a 91% increase in pageviews, meaning that more individual pages of the DANCING website were viewed by visitors indicating a stronger engagement with its contents and the overall project.

The attendance to the event was of over 100 people across the two days. While the majority of attendees and speakers are based on the island of Ireland, a large share came from further afield in the European Union and from the United Kingdom, with some attendees coming from North America. This demonstrates the DANCING project's reach and potential impact. The DANCING Final Conference moreover engaged diverse stakeholders and audiences ranging from academics and researchers from various fields and disciplines, to policymakers, European and national bodies in the field of disability rights, civil society actors as well as interested individuals.

3. KEY TENETS AND TAKE-AWAY POINTS OF THE DANCING FINAL CONFERENCE

This section revisits and summarises the main take-away points of the conference, panels, and roundtables, as well as of ensuing discussions during the conference. The programme of the DANCING Final Conference is included in the Annex.

3.1. Day I

3.1.1. *Welcome and Presentation of the ERC DANCING Project*

Professor Rachel Msetfi, Vice President for Research and Innovation at MU, opened the conference by highlighting DANCING's overarching objective, i.e. that of advancing the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in cultural life. In that connection, Professor Msetfi emphasised MU's strong commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion in research and innovation. She also underscored the project's interdisciplinary methodology as one of its key strengths, bridging traditional legal analysis with arts-based and participatory research. When looking back at the past five years, Professor Msetfi recalled the [accessible concert](#) performed on occasion of the DANCING Mid-Term Academic Conference as a standout moment in the DANCING trajectory.

Professor Fergus Ryan, Head of the MU School of Law and Criminology, welcomed participants and attendees to the event. He briefly outlined the successful development of the School and the strong focus on the rights of marginalised groups and individuals, including persons with disabilities. He also emphasised DANCING's interdisciplinary approach and its success in linking legal scholarship with public policy development.

Professor Adam Bodnar, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Poland, addressed the conference participants in a pre-recorded video message on behalf of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union (1 Jan 2025 – 30 Jun 2025). He highlighted that the EU legal framework is grounded in the values of anti-discrimination, social inclusion, and artistic freedom, which should guide EU institutions and form the basis of their policies. Minister Bodnar reaffirmed the responsibility of EU Member States to implement the CRPD, including the right of persons with disabilities to participate in cultural life. Notably, Minister Bodnar also underscored the right to independent living and inclusion in the community as a cornerstone of the CRPD, one that inherently encompasses the right to cultural participation. He further expressed confidence that DANCING would have a tangible and real-world impact. He suggested that the right to cultural participation will increasingly enter public discourse, with DANCING playing a leading role in ensuring visibility of that right and providing timely policy recommendations.



Professor Adam Bodnar, Minister of Justice of Poland, on behalf of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union (1 Jan 2025 – 30 Jun 2025), delivering his video message to conference participants. Seated from l-r: Professor Delia Ferri, Professor Fergus Ryan and Professor Rachel Msetfi.

After the official salutations, Professor Delia Ferri, PI of the DANCING project, presented the core tenets of the DANCING project. When taking the floor Professor Ferri thanked all of those who supported the project since the outset, amidst difficult pandemic times. While an ERC project by its very nature is built around the PI and their vision, Professor Ferri acknowledged and emphasized the collective effort that has been key to ensure the success and impact of DANCING and the key role of the DANCING team. She highlighted the strong institutional support from the MU School of Law and Criminology and Professors Michael Doherty (former Head of School) and Fergus Ryan (current Head of School), as well as from the Assisting Living and Learning (ALL) Institute and particularly her fellow co-directors Professor Deirdre Desmond and Professor Mac MacLachlan. She also thanked the School's administrative office and ALL lead administrator Ms Nuala Downes. Professor Ferri also expressed her thanks to the MU Research and Development Office that supported her step-by-step with all the administrative and budgetary aspects and will continue to do so over the following two months.

In thanking all the [artistic collaborators](#), colleagues and friends that supported the project as well as the [DANCING Advisory Board](#), she also took the opportunity to remember Dr. Damjan Tatić, a friend of the DANCING project and former member of the Advisory Board, who sadly

passed away in January 2024. In a heartfelt note, Professor Ferri highlighted how Damjan had always closely followed the research progress and, with his kind words, encouraged her to keep up the work after each milestone. In that regard, she stated that her hope is for DANCING to stand as a tribute to his pioneering work and spirit.



Dr. Damjan Tatić (†)
- Former member of
DANCING Advisory
Board

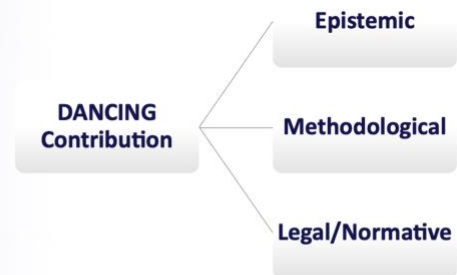


In memoriam: Dr. Damjan Tatić, former member of the DANCING Advisory Board and disability rights advocate.

After recalling the structure, aims and core WPs of DANCING, Professor Ferri alluded to the main results, contributions to scholarship and public policy of DANCING, with the latter aspect to be dealt with during the second day of the conference. Professor Ferri highlighted that DANCING has made three main overarching contributions, respectively epistemic, methodological, and legal/normative which were at the core of the first day of discussions. In that connection, she contended that DANCING has contributed to bridging different semantics and epistemic communities and has given a better understanding of how law interacts with social realities in relation to disability and culture. She also emphasised that DANCING has significantly contributed to the building of EU disability law as stand-alone academic discipline, advancing our knowledge of how disability sits within the process of EU integration.



Looking Back to Look Forward...



Looking Back to Look Forward: The three main overarching contributions of DANCING.

3.1.2. Panel I – The Experiential Objective and Arts-based Research

The introductory session was followed by a panel (Panel I) chaired by Dr. Charles O'Mahony (University of Galway), focusing on DANCING's experiential objective and its socio-legal and arts-based research. In this panel, Dr. Ann Leahy (Family Carers Ireland, formerly Post-doctoral Researcher in DANCING) presented the project's empirical findings of WP1 with a focus on the strand of [interviews with national Organisations of Persons with Disabilities \(OPDs\) and arts and disability organisations](#). The audience was introduced to key barriers to the cultural participation of persons with disabilities, including the lack of effective law and policy, despite the presence of relatively supportive regulations in most Member States. The results presented during the conference are all published in a series of [academic articles](#) co-authored by Dr. Leahy and Professor Ferri, and in a [monograph](#), which are all Open Access (OA), in compliance with [open research obligations](#).

Professor Ferri focused on the significance of arts-based research in deepening the understanding of legal concepts, and she presented her work on an embodied understanding of accessibility, published in December 2024 on the [Journal of Human Rights Practice](#). She highlighted that arts-based research offers profound insights into legal concepts by moving beyond purely rational and cognitive modes of knowing. On foot of the arts-based research undertaken in DANCING, she identified three interrelated dimensions of accessibility: respect for difference, collaboration and care, and layered complexity. These dimensions tally with the normative core of Article 9 CRPD.

Professor Laverne Jacobs (University of Windsor and Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) and Professor Sarah Whatley (Coventry University) proffered insightful remarks on the project's empirical findings and the concept of embodied

accessibility. Professor Whatley highlighted the importance of inclusive dance in the DANCING project. Professor Jacobs highlighted, among other issues, the relevance of the research conducted to other rights under the CRPD, including the right to independent living and community inclusion, as well as to broader economic and social rights.



Following Panel I Professor Sarah Whatley and Professor Delia Ferri sat together.

3.1.3. Roundtable I – ERC DANCING Contribution to Advance the Human Rights Model of Disability

Roundtable I focused on the project's contribution to the prevailing model of disability grounded in the CRPD – the Human Rights Model of Disability. The roundtable, chaired by Dr. Paolo Vargiu (University of Leicester), brought together distinguished scholars whose expertise spans international law (Professor Cora True-Frost, Syracuse University), intersectional humanities (Professor Anna Hickey-Moody, MU), equality and education law (Dr. Shivaun Quinlivan, University of Galway), and social work and social policy (Dr. Edurne Garcia Iriarte, Trinity College Dublin).

The discussion underscored DANCING's methodological innovation, particularly its integration of participatory research and creative practices. Speakers emphasised DANCING's success in addressing cultural exclusion, expanding the discourse on accessibility beyond employment, and demonstrating how accessibility can be embedded into the artistic process itself. The project was recognised as both impactful and pioneering, offering a replicable model for academic, cultural, and policy institutions, while pushing the boundaries of conventional legal and social research.

Professor True-Frost described DANCING as a ‘revolutionary’ project. She drew from her personal experience with her son, who is a person with disabilities and, despite his passion for music and dance, faces significant barriers to participating in cultural life, barriers that DANCING addresses in a deeply meaningful way. Additionally, Professor True-Frost emphasised the project’s impact beyond the EU and its success in breaking out of disciplinary silos to a greater extent than comparable initiatives. Professor Hickey-Moody similarly highlighted both the importance and the challenges of participatory research, which DANCING not only adopted but also successfully overcame. Dr. Quinlivan identified the project’s major contribution in broadening the discourse on accessibility and reasonable accommodation beyond the employment context. Notably, she emphasised that the project serves as an example of good practice due to the breadth and quality of accessibility measures implemented, making it a potential blueprint for other academic institutions, cultural organisations, and public bodies. Lastly, she underscored DANCING’s creative approach to accessibility, which moves beyond the traditionally technical lens. Dr. Garcia Iriarte underlined DANCING’s exploration of the accessibility of artistic processes, an aspect often overlooked in both research and practice. Professor Hickey-Moody further drew attention to the project’s central message that accessibility must not be treated as an afterthought, but as an integral element of the creative process.

3.1.4. Panel II – The Role of EU Law in Advancing the Right of People with Disabilities to Participate in Cultural Life

Panel II focused on the role of EU law in advancing the right of persons with disabilities to participate in cultural life, drawing on the research and academic outputs of DANCING as well as other relevant studies and practices. The panel presented a snapshot of the research on how EU law can support the cultural participation of persons with disabilities, both within the EU and in its external action. It highlighted legal and policy gaps, as well as opportunities for strengthening the implementation of rights through non-discrimination law, international cooperation, and the role of civil society.

The panel was chaired by Professor Imelda Maher (University College Dublin). Léa Urzel Francil, DANCING PhD candidate, presented her research on the role of EU non-discrimination law in protecting cultural and creative professionals with disabilities. She argued that the Employment Equality Directive can be leveraged to support greater participation of persons with disabilities in the CCS, particularly in light of its broad material scope. She also suggested that case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union and the interpretation of the Directive in line with the CRPD might have a great potential to foster equality for artists and cultural professionals with disabilities. Iryna Tekuchova, also a DANCING PhD candidate, presented her research on the external dimension of EU disability law, with a focus on the Eastern Partnership and Ukraine as case study. Tekuchova observed that disability is not explicitly addressed as a standalone policy in EU external action, but can be framed within the broader objective of promoting human rights in third countries. She emphasised that the

primary drivers for the transfer of EU disability norms in the Eastern Partnership countries are conditionalities – particularly conditionalities related to access to funding and the EU internal market – as well as processes of socialisation. In the Ukrainian context, she argued that technical assistance serves as the most influential mechanism of socialisation, whereas support for civil society and international cooperation play a comparatively less prominent role. She highlighted that EU disability norms trigger law reforms in partner countries, and she pointed to the example of the Law of Ukraine ‘On Media’, modelled on the Audiovisual Media Service Directive.

Two discussants, Professor Bernardo Cortese (University of Padua) and Dr. Charles O’Sullivan (MU) engaged with the points raised by the two PhD candidates and further developed the discussion. Professor Cortese drew participants’ attention to the importance of EU law across various domains, and to what triggers its application in fields such as employment – particularly precarious work and income instability – as well as social protection, education, and training. He also suggested that improving access to and the position of persons with disabilities in the CCS could best be achieved through the strengthened engagement of OPDs, employing strategies such as advocacy and collective action. Professor Cortese expressed concern about the limited effectiveness of political conditionalities in the Eastern Partnership countries, noting that they are often not enforced, even in cases of gross human rights violations. In this regard, he argued that civil society may play a key role in the promotion of EU disability norms in the Eastern Partnership. Dr. O’Sullivan highlighted, with reference to Urzel Francil’s research, the interesting methodological approach with a socio-legal research that focus on the concerns of the sectors in relation to the involvement of persons with disabilities in the CCS. He further noted Tekuchova’s innovative approach and the reality of the reach of EU law beyond its borders.

3.1.5. Panel III – Disability and Cultural Diversity

Panel III on Disability and Cultural Diversity was chaired by Professor Juan Jorge Piernas López (University of Murcia) and looked into the link between disability and cultural diversity.

Eva Sophie Krolla, DANCING Senior Research Assistant, presented on Braille as intangible cultural heritage and its contribution to cultural diversity in the EU. Krolla emphasised the role of Braille in the identity formation of its users. She linked Braille to the notion of intangible cultural heritage under the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, and connected Braille to the realisation of the right to choose one’s own cultural identity. Professor Ferri presented her research on the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled (Marrakesh Treaty), and its implementation at the EU level. She focused on how the EU could overcome the limitations of the Marrakesh Treaty and go beyond its scope to advance access for persons with disabilities to printed works in line with the CRPD. Alessia Palladino, DANCING Research Assistant, presented her work on sustainability, disability, and cultural diversity in the context of the New European Bauhaus (NEB) initiative. Palladino

highlighted NEB's emphasis on inclusion and physical accessibility, particularly the participation of persons with disabilities in the design phase, which reflects an 'embedded understanding of accessibility'. She noted the initiative's cultural relevance, given that its scope includes the design and adaptation of cultural buildings.

In the discussion that followed, Professor Evangelia Psychogiopoulou (University of the Peloponnese) called for further exploration of Braille as a form of cultural expression falling under the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. The latter Convention is at the core of the project, with outputs that are currently being finalised and will be released by the end of August or published shortly thereafter. Professor Caterina Sganga (Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies), the other discussant, reflected on fascinating prospective reforms to align EU legislation more closely with the social model of disability, including repealing the Marrakesh Directive altogether instead of reforming it and going beyond the concept of disability exception in copyright legislation.

3.1.6. Roundtable II – EU Disability Law and the Process of EU Integration

The final roundtable of the first conference day was chaired by Professor Elaine Fahey (City St. Georges, University of London). The session focused on EU disability law, the process of EU integration, and DANCING's contributions to it, building on and commenting upon Ferri and Šubic's contribution and the [federalisation of disability rights](#), on Ferri's theorisation of the [hybridity of EU disability law](#) and on the very recent volume on '[Actors and Roles in EU Disability Law](#)' published by Hart Publishing. The roundtable included Professor Giuseppe Martinico (Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies), Dr. Annalisa Volpato (University of Padua), Professor Michael Doherty (MU) and Professor Francesco Palermo (University of Verona; EURAC Bolzano/Bozen).

Professor Martinico commented on the contribution of DANCING's findings to the study of EU constitutional law and emphasized the expansion of the methodological toolbox for EU legal research. Dr. Annalisa Volpato highlighted the growing importance of soft law and the troubles in conceptualising this soft law, which can be, among other things, anticipatory or complementary to hard law, and highlighted the importance of furthering the discussion on the 'who does what' in EU disability law. In this respect, she highlighted how this output of the DANCING project can be seen as a starting point for further research. Professor Palermo commented on the contribution of DANCING on the understanding federalisation dynamics in EU law, and briefly highlighted the centralisation dynamics that characterise EU disability law. He also argued that EU disability law calls for collaboration in its implementation in the EU, which calls for further research. Professor Doherty stressed the need to concentrate attention on the context in which EU disability law exists, and the 'social environment' of law. In commenting of the impact of DANCING and its approach, he also discussed the need for academic research paying renewed attention to structural changes in society, beyond legal developments.

3.1.7. Closing Keynote Address

The closing keynote was delivered by Emeritus Professor Bruno De Witte (Maastricht University). Professor De Witte reflected on the complex and nuanced relationship between EU funding and fundamental rights. In his insightful speech, among other reflections, Professor De Witte suggested that while Article 51 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (Charter) obliges institutions to promote fundamental rights, no general funding programme exists for this. Instead, specific provisions like Article 19(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, which allows for incentive measures to combat discrimination, underpin specific programmes such as the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme. Professor De Witte further highlighted the distinction between directly managed funds (e.g. Horizon) and large-scale shared management funds under the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR), such as the European Social Fund. In that connection, he recalled that the 2021 CPR marked the first explicit inclusion of the Charter and the CRPD as binding horizontal conditions, requiring Member States to ensure compliance throughout the programming cycle. In his remarks Professor De Witte also emphasised that the EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) – which simultaneously establishes around 50 funding programmes – does not align neatly with the political institutions' five-year cycle, calling into question the democratic legitimacy of EU action but also further complicating both planning and implementation.

On the whole, Professor De Witte's keynote, while highlighting the contribution of projects such as DANCING to the strengthening of fundamental rights and values of the EU, outlined the potential and pitfalls of current EU funding streams and policy.



Professor Bruno De Witte's keynote address.

3.2. Day II

3.2.1. Welcome and Presentation of the Tools for Change

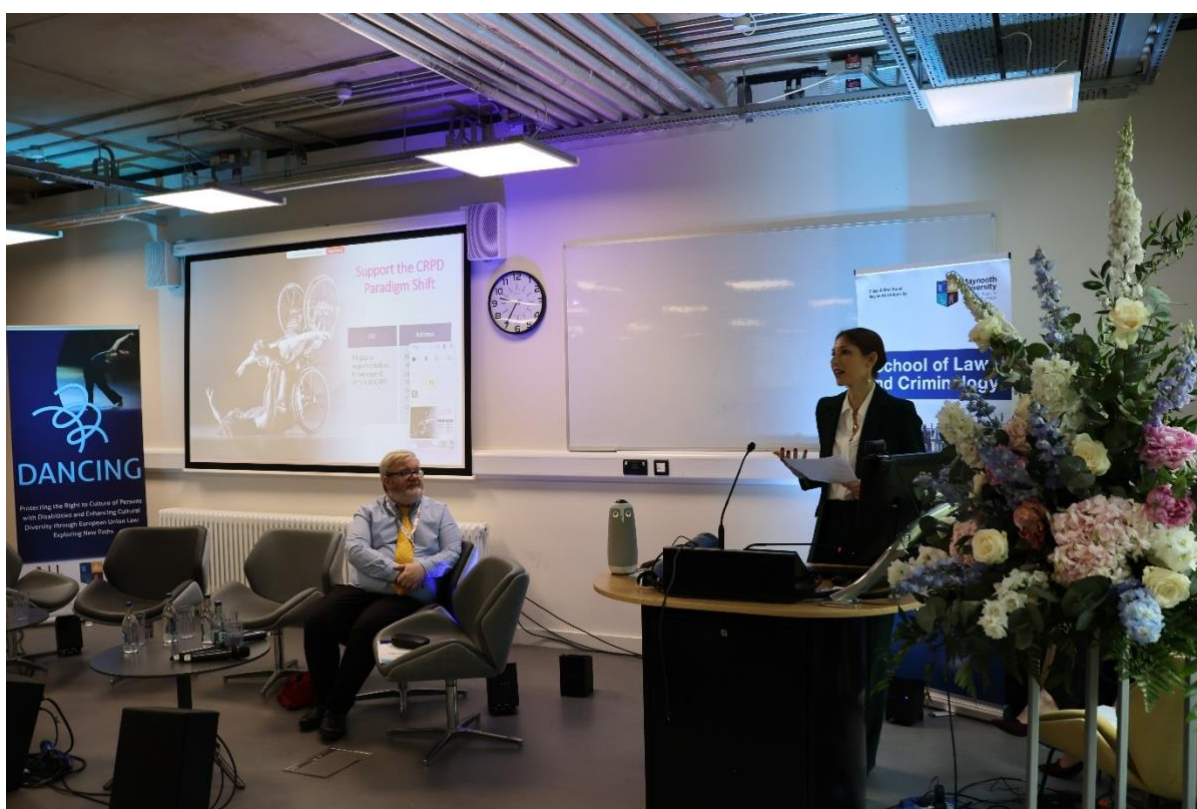
The second conference day opened with a welcome note by Dr. Gemma Irvine, Vice President for Equality and Diversity at MU, whose work resonates closely with the themes of DANCING – diversity, equality, access, and participation. Commenting on DANCING’s contributions, Dr. Irvine emphasised that the project ensured that its outputs are both relevant and actionable, and that it charts a path to wellbeing and cohesion by promoting the right to cultural participation for all. In line with Dr. Irvine insightful speech, Professor Ryan’s opening remarks highlighted that DANCING generated new knowledge to support the implementation of Article 30 of the CRPD in Europe and globally.

Professor Ferri presented the ‘Tools for Change’, i.e. the main outputs of DANCING’s Work Package 4. In doing so, she recalled that DANCING is informed and guided by the CRPD, which represents the global legal standards on disability rights. She also highlighted how the CRPD profoundly challenges our way of thinking about disability because it embeds a paradigm where rights are considered in a holistic manner, are interdependent and tied to one another, and must be read through the lens of dignity, equality, participation and accessibility. In this respect, she emphasised how the CRPD challenges our thinking about implementing human rights. She placed emphasis on the three ways in which DANCING has endeavoured to support this complex paradigm shift. First, DANCING has striven to effect change in policy, society and in the lives of people with disabilities. Secondly, DANCING has tried to address and fulfil the complex shift called for by the CRPD through a participatory approach to research, involving persons with disabilities and embedding – in a PI-led project – co-creation components, particularly through the collaboration with [Stopgap Dance Company](#). The third way in which DANCING has striven to contribute to the paradigm shift is by meaningfully embracing accessibility, in all its aspects. She highlighted how DANCING has endeavoured to ensure that academic advancements could be shared with the general public, and particularly with people with disabilities. In that connection she recalled how many of DANCING’s research findings are available in accessible formats, including Irish Sign Language and Easy-to-Read, and throughout different media.



DANCING embraced and embedded the paradigm shift of the CRPD in various ways throughout the project.

Professor Ferri further pointed to the importance of the [Policy Brief](#), aimed at EU institutions and decision-makers, and the [Toolkit](#), designed to provide cultural organisations with guidance and a pool of promising practices from across Europe. The purpose of these tools is to help overcome the piecemeal approach and the treatment of good practices as isolated actions, by fostering the exchange of ideas through an easily accessible resource pool.



Professor Ferri introducing the Tools for Change of WP 4 of DANCING.

3.2.2. Keynote Address

Ms Inmaculada Placencia Porrero (Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Senior Disability Expert at the European Commission) delivered a keynote address via video link. She was introduced by Professor Dorothy Estrada-Tanck (University of Murcia). Ms Placencia Porrero situated the discussion of the DANCING key policy recommendations within the current EU policy framework by highlighting the main legal and policy developments underway and the core plans under the current [Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (Strategy) as well as the implementation of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#). In response to audience questions, she further noted that the Strategy has been well received by Member States and has led to the adoption of national disability strategies in several countries.

3.2.3. Roundtable III – Advancing Cultural Participation of Persons with Disabilities Through EU Policymaking

Dr. Barry Colfer (Institute of International and European Affairs) chaired Roundtable III which focused on how EU institutions can better support the implementation of Article 30 CRPD. The participants to this roundtable included Susan Kennefick (EU Fundamental Rights Agency), Ciarán Finlay (National Disability Authority – NDA), Elizabeth Gosme (COFACE Families Europe), Frankie Picron (European Union of the Deaf), Lina Kouzi (Vision Ireland – European Blind Union Member), and Dr. Claudia Coveney (University of Leeds).

Participants in the roundtable, building on the recommendations from the DANCING project, shared examples from national and EU levels, highlighting both progress and persistent challenges, such as the misuse of EU funds, informational gaps, and weak enforcement mechanisms. The discussion also addressed the role of accessible publishing, digital inclusion, and the formal recognition of sign languages in promoting the rights and cultural inclusion of persons with disabilities and Deaf communities across Europe.

The discussion touched upon various aspects. Among the multifaceted responses, Susan Kennefick (EU Fundamental Rights Agency), when asked about the steps that EU institutions could take to better implement Article 30 CRPD, argued that an independent and effective monitoring mechanism is crucial for the implementation of the CRPD. Dr. Coveney (Leeds University) highlighted the importance of the involvement of OPDs in EU policymaking and placed emphasis on examples of successful advocacy. Dr. Coveney's remarks also pointed to the need for further constructive involvement of OPDs in the Disability Platform. Ms Gosme (COFACE), *inter alia*, highlighted that including cultural aspects in the monitoring action carried out in Member States by the [AccessibleEU](#) would be a welcome development. In response to the question on how EU-level legal recognition of sign languages could strengthen the cultural participation and rights of the Deaf community, Frankie Picron (European Union of the Deaf) emphasised that recognition is only the starting point. He argued that securing

linguistic human rights for all Deaf persons is essential, and that sign languages should be recognised as minority languages to access funding and ensure inclusion. Zooming in on national implementation of EU policies, Ciarán Finlay (National Disability Authority Ireland) contended that EU law has contributed to improvements in Irish legislation on accessibility, particularly in the digital domain. As a consequence of the [Web Accessibility Directive \(WAD\)](#), notable progress has been observed in the accessibility of public service websites, and an increasing number of private organisations in Ireland are beginning to adopt similar measures. In response to how EU policy can better support accessibility of cultural materials, Lina Kouzi (Vision Ireland) emphasised the importance of promoting the production of ‘born accessible’ books, particularly in the EPUB3 format, which allows for navigation and includes image and table descriptions unlike PDFs, which remain largely inaccessible. She highlighted Vision Ireland’s leadership in accessible e-book production and the role of Bookshare Ireland, which, under the Marrakesh Treaty, offers over 1.5 million accessible titles for cross-border sharing. Kouzi called for the abolition of exemptions for small publishers, under the [European Accessibility Act \(EAA\)](#), urging instead that they receive targeted support to produce accessible content.

3.2.4. Roundtable IV – Making Cultural Organisations More Inclusive and Accessible

Dr. Patricia McCarthy (Trinity College Dublin) chaired the final roundtable of the conference focusing on the practical steps and lessons learned that can help cultural organisation become more inclusive and accessible both for audience and artists/employees with disabilities. The need for systemic change, early integration of accessibility, and inclusive policy design emerged as key themes. Participants in the roundtable comprised Élodie Makhoul (DANCING Research Assistant), Pádraig Naughton (Arts & Disability Ireland), Dr. Victoria Durrer (University College Dublin) as well as Lucy Bennett and Monique Dior Jarrett of Stopgap Dance Company.

The roundtable was rich in its content and topics discussed. Élodie Makoul emphasised the key role that DANCING outputs such as the Toolkit and the Resource List can play in making the CCS more inclusive. She highlighted several key recommendations, including the importance of involving persons with disabilities in decision-making roles within cultural organisations. Pádraig Naughton (Arts & Disability Ireland) emphasised that persons with disabilities want real choice, not tokenistic or substandard programming. He indicated that given the absence of standardised accessibility guidelines in the arts, many organisations claiming to be accessible fall short in practice. He hence stressed that all programmes must be made accessible and that arts organisations should regularly evaluate their accessibility practices. He also noted that arts funders can play a key role by adapting their funding schemes to better support inclusion. Discussing how cultural policy frameworks can support deeper inclusion of persons with disabilities as cultural professionals, performers, and creators, Dr. Victoria Durrer (University College Dublin) emphasised the importance of how issues are framed in policy proposals. In doing so, she warned that evidence can be misused

or misinterpreted to support ineffective policies, and called for interdisciplinary approaches grounded in an understanding of both existing and desired policy frameworks. She stressed that policy success should be measured through lived experience. Durrer also advocated for creating spaces for critical self-reflection and for participatory policymaking and decision-making processes. Members of Stopgap Dance Company, Lucy Bennett and Monique Dior Jarrett, emphasised the importance of embedding accessibility in the design of a performance from the outset. They argued that treating accessibility as an afterthought cannot produce meaningful or effective results, and briefly pointed at their experience with the inclusive piece '[Lived Fiction](#)'.

3.2.5. Closing Keynote Dialogue

The closing keynote dialogue explored how research, law, and policy can work together to advance disability rights through cultural participation. Emeritus Professor Mark Priestley (University of Leeds) drew on a Theory of Change (ToC) approach, prompting conference attendees to reflect on how structural change happens, who the key actors are, and what specific steps are needed. Professor Priestley emphasised the importance of making ToC frameworks explicit – identifying long-term outcomes, defining roles, and setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) objectives. Dialogue participants were asked to pinpoint concrete institutional levers and name specific actions or allies needed to bring change. The discussion also underscored how disability impacts not only persons with disabilities themselves, but also the wider communities around them, including those in shared creative spaces like dance companies.



Professor Mark Priestley and Professor Dorothy Estrada-Tanck during the closing keynote dialogue.

4. ARTWORK UNVEILING AND DOCUMENTARY

The DANCING Final Conference also included two side events that marked the artistic collaborations deployed during the course of the project. The first was the unveiling of the artwork ‘Odisseo-Ulysses’ created by artist Tiziano Pantano. The second was the premiere of the documentary ‘Steps to Change: Following the DANCING Project 2020 – 2025’ created and produced by Feenish Production Ltd. and directed by James Kelly.

4.1. Artwork Unveiling

At the end of the first conference day, MU President Eeva Leinonen marked the unveiling of the artwork ‘[Odisseo-Ulysses](#)’ with a speech. The artwork, commissioned by the [ERC DANCING Project](#), was created by [Tiziano Pantano](#), a blind artist living with retinitis pigmentosa who uses paper and collage techniques to ‘[create distinctive artistic works that can be appreciated in different ways by diverse people and can be “experimented” with and touched by people who are blind or have a visual impairment](#)’. ‘Odisseo-Ulysses’ consists of two side-by-side panels of the same size. The left panel is a collage – of coloured paper cut-out pieces – depicting a stylized composition inspired by Greek mythology, while the right panel presents the same composition but rendered in white paper cut-out pieces. This tactile representation enables exploration of the shapes and forms, emphasising the mythological story through texture rather than colour.

The President highlighted how ‘the project has leveraged on arts-based research and collaboration with artists with disabilities to demonstrate and celebrate cultural diversity’. In the President’s words, ‘the artwork also showcases ongoing engagement of Maynooth University with research, creativity, and inclusion. It exemplifies Maynooth University’s broader commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion as outlined in the University’s Strategic Plan’.

‘Odisseo-Ulysses’ is now on display on the Mezzanine of the TSI building and it features an explanatory label in Irish and English languages, accompanied by audio descriptions accessible through respective QR codes and a Braille version.

Besides participants in the conference, Honourable Mr Justice John MacMenamin, Honorary Adjunct Professor at MU School of Law and Criminology, also attended the unveiling.



Professor Delia Ferri, MU President Professor Eeva Leinonen and Honourable Mr Justice John MacMenamin at the unveiling of the DANCING-commissioned artwork 'Odisseo-Ulysses' by Tiziano Pantano.

4.2. Documentary 'Steps to Change: Following the DANCING Project 2020 – 2025'

The documentary 'Steps to Change: Following the DANCING Project 2020 – 2025' created and produced by Feenish Production Ltd. and directed by James Kelly was premiered at the end of the conference.

The documentary illustrates the research process and its outcomes and amplifies the voices and contributions of those involved in DANCING, aiming to reach a broader audience. The documentary was filmed at various stages throughout the project until December 2024 and captures key research challenges, progress, and findings. It promotes understanding of the interrelation between culture and disability and of the experiential, normative, and theoretical objectives, serving as an audio-visual representation of the process leading to their realisation. The version screened at the conference included Closed Captions, while two other versions – with ISL and audio description are made available online.

The screening was followed by a discussion chaired by Dr. Denis Condon (MU) featuring speakers James Kelly of Feenish Productions Ltd., Monique Dior Jarrett and Lucy Bennett from Stopgap Dance Company, as well as Hilary Hooks, DANCING project manager. All speakers highlighted key strengths of the documentary process, with Ms Hooks focusing on her work on how accessibility was integrated into the documentary's production from the outset, shaping its design, visual storytelling, and pacing. She further elaborated on how each

accessibility feature also benefits audiences without disabilities, ultimately enhancing the viewing experience, increasing engagement, and raising awareness.



Post-documentary discussion with Monique Dior Jarrett, Lucy Bennett, Hilary Hooks, Dr. Denis Condon and James Kelly.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The DANCING Final Conference marked a key milestone in the project's trajectory, bringing together scholars, policymakers, artists, and advocates to reflect on its achievements and discuss future research and policy reform. Over two days, the conference created a space for critical engagement on the right of persons with disabilities to participate in cultural life, situating this right firmly within the broader legal, policy, and social context of the EU.

The presentations and discussions across panels and roundtables showcased the project's interdisciplinary and participatory approach, as well as its contribution to knowledge in the fields of EU law and disability law. From arts-based methodologies and empirical research to normative legal analysis, DANCING has succeeded in illuminating both persistent barriers and innovative solutions to cultural exclusion. Particular attention was paid to the transformative potential of accessibility when embedded from the outset in research, policy, and cultural production. The project's emphasis on an embodied understanding of accessibility, and its integration of lived experience into knowledge production, was repeatedly recognised as pioneering.

Importantly, the conference highlighted the need for sustained efforts at EU and Member State levels to translate legal commitments under the CRPD into meaningful practice. This includes not only improving legislation and funding mechanisms but also supporting civil society, cultural organisations, and persons with disabilities as key actors in shaping inclusive cultural environments.

The event also served as a platform to present DANCING's practical outputs, including policy tools and the documentary, aimed at facilitating real-world impact beyond academia. These tools are intended to inform and inspire continued efforts to make cultural life more inclusive, accessible, and diverse across the EU.

As DANCING enters its final phase, the conference affirmed the project's contribution to EU disability law, cultural rights, and legal scholarship, and, above all, its commitment to advancing the cultural participation of persons with disabilities.

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Annex – Programme of the DANCING Final Conference, 19-20 June 2025

The formatting of the programme has been adapted to the file and does not fully reflect the final graphic format of the final programme. Accessible versions are available elsewhere on the DANCING website, see here:

<https://ercdancing.maynoothuniversity.ie/diary/events/event-dancing-final-conference/>



ERC Project
"Protecting the Right to Culture of Persons with Disabilities and Enhancing
Cultural Diversity Through European Union Law: Exploring New Paths -
DANCING"



The Project



The project “*Protecting the Right to Culture of Persons with Disabilities and Enhancing Cultural Diversity through European Union Law: Exploring New Paths - DANCING*”, funded by the European Research Council (ERC) and led by Professor Delia Ferri, investigates the extent to which the protection

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of the right to participate in culture of people with disabilities and the promotion of cultural diversity intersect and complement each other in the European Union (EU) legal order. It aims to disrupt the conventional approach adopted by EU law scholarship by using a combination of legal, empirical and arts-based research to pursue three complementary objectives. Firstly, it identifies and categorises barriers and facilitators to cultural participation experienced by people with disabilities and how they affect the wider cultural domain. Empirical research, in form of semi-structured interviews and focus groups with several stakeholders across the 27 Member States of the EU and the United Kingdom (UK) as well as arts-based research underpin the achievement of this objective within Work Package (WP) 1. Secondly, it provides a normative exploration of how the EU has used and can use its competence to combat discrimination and its supporting competence on cultural matters, in synergy with its wide internal market powers, to ensure the accessibility of cultural life and activities, to promote disability identities, while achieving cultural diversity. Through an in-depth legal analysis, it aims to bridge the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. Thirdly, it aims to advance the understanding of the legal concept of cultural diversity, which stems from the intersection of different sources of law and will propose a new theorization of the promotion of cultural diversity within the EU legal order. Fourthly, the project produces outputs for the general public to foster civic participation, legal change and effective policy responses at the EU level, collaborating with different professionals. In this way, the project fosters the dialogue with both the academic community and organisations of persons with disabilities, creating platforms to discuss the latest findings.

To know more about the project visit: <https://ercdancing.maynoothuniversity.ie/>



The Principal Investigator – Professor Delia Ferri



Delia Ferri is Professor of Law at Maynooth University (MU) School of Law and Criminology, where she lectures primarily in the fields of EU Law and International and European Disability Law. Since March 2020, she is co-Director of the MU Assisting Living & Learning (ALL) Institute, an interdisciplinary research institute that promotes person-centred systems and evidence-based policies that empower people across their life course. Professor Delia Ferri is also affiliated researcher at the DIRPOLIS Institute (Institute of Law, Politics and Development) of Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies (Italy) within the research cluster on social rights, social inclusion and disability, and a fellow at the Burton Blatt Institute of Syracuse University (USA). She is a senior member of the European Disability Expertise network funded by the European Commission, and a member of the Scientific Committee of the Fundamental Rights Agency of the EU.

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The ERC DANCING Final Conference



The ERC DANCING Final Conference presents the main findings of the “*Protecting the Right to Culture of Persons with Disabilities and Enhancing Cultural Diversity through European Union Law: Exploring New Paths* –

DANCING” project (DANCING). Marking the end of the project, the Final Conference aims to discuss the achievements and results of DANCING with the academic community, policy-makers, persons with disabilities and other stakeholders. It also includes forward-looking roundtables and discussions exploring new directions and future research opportunities. The Final Conference is articulated in two days: the first day focuses on the academic findings of DANCING, while the second day zooms in on the policy-oriented aspects of the project.

The first day, after salutations from Professor Rachel Msetfi, Vice President for Research and Innovation and Professor Fergus Ryan, Head of School of Law and Criminology, comprises three main panels respectively discussing the findings of the interdisciplinary research on barriers and facilitators to cultural participation of persons with disabilities and the role of EU law in advancing the right to participate in cultural life of persons with disabilities and how this intersects with the protection of cultural diversity. The first day also encompasses roundtables to discuss DANCING’s contribution to advancing the human rights model of disability as well as scholarly approaches to EU disability law and EU scholarship more broadly. These roundtables will offer a unique platform to connect, reflect and highlight future avenues for research on disability. The first day will be closed with a keynote by Emeritus Professor Bruno De Witte, member of the DANCING Advisory Board. At the end of the conference the artwork “Odisseo-Ulysses”, created by artist



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Tiziano Pantano and commissioned by DANCING will be unveiled by the President of Maynooth University Professor Eeva Leinonen.

The second day opens with introductory remarks by Dr. Gemma Irvine, Vice President for Equality and Diversity and Professor Fergus Ryan, Head of School of Law and Criminology, and discusses the role of DANCING in supporting transformative disability policymaking and a more inclusive cultural sector. It includes a keynote by EU Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Ms Inmaculada Placencia Porrero. This is followed by two roundtable discussions on how to advance cultural participation of persons with disabilities through EU policymaking and on inclusion and accessibility of cultural organisations. A closing keynote dialogue with Emeritus Professor Mark Priestley, member of the DANCING Advisory Board, concludes the DANCING Final Conference.



After the Conference

On 20 June, following the Final Conference, all participants and attendees are warmly welcome to attend the screening of the ERC DANCING documentary “Steps to Change” which closely followed the five years of work in DANCING.

The screening begins at 2.30 p.m. in the Drama Room of the School of Education (SEO 133). A post-documentary dialogue is moderated by Dr. Denis Condon and features director James Kelly of Feenish Productions Ltd., Stopgap Dance Company collaborators Lucy Bennett and Monique Dior Jarrett as well as DANCING project manager Hilary Hooks.



When?

Thursday, 19 and Friday, 20 June 2025

Where?

Maynooth University, North Campus

Technology, Society and Innovation Building (TSI), Ground Floor Room 028

Enter through sliding doors, turn left and past the café. The conference venue is located behind the café on the left-hand side.

Conference Rapporteurs:

Dr. Paola Pannia – University of Milan

Roberta Esposito – Phd Candidate, University of Pavia



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ERC Project
 “Protecting the Right to Culture of Persons with **Disabilities** and **Enhancing** Cultural
 Diversity Through European Union Law: Exploring New Paths - **DANCING**”

Final Conference

TSI Room 028
 TSI Building – North Campus
 Maynooth University

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Day 1
19 June 2025

Coffee and Registration from 8.45 am

9.15 – 9.30 am	Welcome Prof. Rachel Msetfi (Vice President Research and Innovation, Maynooth University) Prof. Fergus Ryan (Head of School of Law and Criminology, Maynooth University)
9.30 – 9.45 am	The ERC Project DANCING Prof. Delia Ferri (DANCING - Maynooth University)
9.45 – 11.00 am	Panel I – The Experiential Objective and Arts-based Research Chair: Dr. Charles O'Mahony (University of Galway) <i>Barriers and Facilitators to Cultural Participation: An Appraisal –</i> Dr. Ann Leahy (Family Carers Ireland – formerly DANCING - Maynooth University) <i>The Role of Arts-based Research in Understanding Accessibility and Diversity in Culture –</i> Prof. Delia Ferri (DANCING - Maynooth University) Discussants: Prof. Laverne Jacobs (University of Windsor - Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) Prof. Sarah Whatley (University of Coventry)
	Q&A
11.00 – 11.15 am	Coffee Break
11.15 – 12.00 pm	Roundtable I – DANCING Contribution to Advance the Human Rights Model of Disability Chair: Dr. Paolo Vargiu (University of Leicester) Prof. Cora True-Frost (Syracuse University) Prof. Anna Hickey-Moody (Maynooth University) Dr. Shivaun Quinlivan (University of Galway) Dr. Edurne Garcia Iriarte (Trinity College Dublin)



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12.00 – 1.15 pm	Panel II – The Role of EU Law in Advancing the Right of People with Disabilities to Participate in Cultural Life Chair: Prof. Imelda Maher (University College Dublin) <i>The Role of EU Non-discrimination Law in Protecting Cultural and Creative Professionals with Disabilities –</i> Léa Urzel Francil (DANCING - Maynooth University) <i>The External Dimension of EU Disability Law Through an Eastern Partnership Lens –</i> Iryna Tekuchova (DANCING - Maynooth University) Discussants: Prof. Bernardo Cortese (University of Padua) Dr. Charles O’Sullivan (Maynooth University) Q&A
1.15 – 2.15 pm	Lunch
2.15 – 3.45 pm	Panel III – Disability and Cultural Diversity Chair: Prof. Juan Jorge Piernas López (University of Murcia) <i>Braille and Cultural Diversity in the EU –</i> Eva Sophie Krolla (DANCING - Maynooth University) <i>The Marrakesh Directive and Cultural Diversity in the EU –</i> Prof. Delia Ferri (DANCING - Maynooth University) <i>Sustainability, Disability and Cultural Diversity –</i> Alessia Palladino (DANCING - Maynooth University) Discussants: Prof. Caterina Sganga (Sant’Anna School of Advanced Studies) Dr. Evangelia Psychogiopoulou (University of the Peloponnese) Q&A
3.45 – 4.00 pm	Coffee Break
4.00 – 4.45 pm	Roundtable II – EU Disability Law and the Process of EU Integration Chair: Prof. Elaine Fahey (City Law School, University of London) Prof. Michael Doherty (Maynooth University) Dr. Annalisa Volpato (University of Padua) Prof. Giuseppe Martinico (Sant’Anna School of Advanced Studies) Prof. Francesco Palermo (University of Verona - EURAC Bolzano/Bozen)
4.45 – 5.30 pm	Closing Keynote Prof. Bruno De Witte (Maastricht University) introduced by Prof. Delia Ferri (DANCING - Maynooth University) Q&A

Unveiling of Artwork and Reception

with Maynooth University President Professor Eeva Leinonen on the mezzanine floor of the TSI building.



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Final Conference

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 Maynooth University



Day 2
 20 June 2025

Coffee and Registration from 8.45 am

9.15 – 9.30 am	Welcome Dr. Gemma Irvine (Vice President for Equality and Diversity, Maynooth University) Prof. Fergus Ryan (Head of School of Law and Criminology, Maynooth University)
9.30 – 9.40 am	The ERC Project DANCING: Tools for Change Prof. Delia Ferri (DANCING - Maynooth University)
9.40 – 10.15 am	Keynote Address Inmaculada Placencia Porrero (European Commission - Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) introduced by Prof. Dorothy Estrada-Tanck (University of Murcia)
Q&A	
10.15 – 11.30 am	Roundtable III – Advancing Cultural Participation of Persons with Disabilities Through EU Policymaking Chair: Dr. Barry Colfer (Institute of International and European Affairs) Susan Kennefick (Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union) Ciarán Finlay (National Disability Authority Ireland) Elizabeth Gosme (COFACE Families Europe) Frankie Picron (European Union of the Deaf) Lina Kouzi (Vision Ireland) Dr. Claudia Coveney (University of Leeds)
11.30 – 11.45 am	Coffee Break



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 and Innovation programme (grant agreement No. 894182).



11.45 – 12.45 pm	Roundtable IV – Making Cultural Organisations More Inclusive and Accessible Chair: Dr. Patricia McCarthy (Trinity College Dublin) Élodie Makhoul (DANCING - Maynooth University) Pádraig Naughton (Arts & Disability Ireland) Dr. Victoria Durrer (University College Dublin) Lucy Bennett (Stopgap Dance Company) Monique Dior Jarrett (Stopgap Dance Company)
12.45 – 1.15 pm	Closing Keynote Dialogue with Prof. Mark Priestley (Leeds University) introduced and moderated by Prof. Dorothy Estrada-Tanck (University of Murcia)
1.15 – 2.30 pm	Lunch
2.30 – 3.30 pm	“Steps to Change” Documentary Screening – Drama Room Introduced and moderated by Dr. Denis Condon (Maynooth University) Post-Documentary Dialogue with: James Kelly (Feenish Productions Ltd.) Monique Dior Jarrett (Stopgap Dance Company) Lucy Bennett (Stopgap Dance Company) Hilary Hooks (DANCING - Maynooth University)

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Keynote Speakers

Bruno De Witte



Bruno De Witte is Emeritus Professor of European Union Law at Maastricht University, the Netherlands and former Professor at the European University Institute (EUI), Florence, Italy. Previously, he was Co-Director of the Maastricht Centre for European Law and of the Academy of European Law at EUI. He studied law at the University of Leuven and the College of Europe and obtained a doctorate at the European University Institute in 1985, on 'The Protection of Linguistic Diversity through Fundamental Rights'. His principal interests lie in the constitutional law of the European Union, with a particular focus on the relation between international, European and national law, the protection of fundamental rights, law-making and treaty revision procedures, internal market law and non-market values. Moreover, his research interests include the law of cultural diversity, with a particular focus on language law, the protection of minorities and the relation between market integration and cultural diversity in European Union law.



Inmaculada Placencia Porrero



Inmaculada Placencia Porrero is a member of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2024 – 2028) and a Senior Expert on Disability at the European Commission, leading work on the rights of persons with disabilities with a focus on accessibility and assistive technologies. She has led the development of several policies and legislation, such as the landmark European Accessibility

Act. She has over 30 years of expertise in the area of disability. Throughout those years, she has worked passionately and constructively with organisations representing persons with disabilities, public administrations, experts, human rights defenders, and industry to advance the development of disability policy, legislation, action plans and strategies across the areas covered by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the European Union and internationally.



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Mark Priestley



Mark Priestley is Emeritus Professor of Disability Policy at Leeds University, UK, where he worked since 1997. Previously, he was Head of the School of Sociology and Social Policy (2011-2014), and Pro-dean for Research in the Faculty of Education, Social Sciences and Law (2004-2007), and became a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in 2016. From 2008-2019 Professor Priestley was Scientific Director of the European Commission's Academic Network of European Disability experts (ANED) and has a continuing role in providing expertise in this area. His research has focused on disability policy and politics, mostly in European and international comparative contexts, using both quantitative and qualitative methods, which translate into policy relevant analysis. He has often been engaged in policy advice to government departments in the UK and internationally.

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Chairs, Speakers, and Discussants

Lucy Bennett is the Co-Artistic Director of Stopgap Dance Company (Stopgap) and has been creating acclaimed dance works for the company since 2003. She has shaped Stopgap to become world-renowned for their inclusive choreographic and teaching practice, leading residencies throughout Europe and Asia. Together with Stopgap's Deaf, Disabled, non-disabled and neurodivergent creatives, Lucy conceived, choreographed, devised and wrote 'Lived Fiction', which premiered at Project Arts Centre, Dublin, Ireland. The production received two 4-star reviews from The Guardian and was nominated in 'The Best of Dance 2024' by the same paper. 'Lived Fiction' won the One Dance UK award for Artistic Innovation in 2024.

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Barry Colfer is Director of Research at the Institute for International and European Affairs, Dublin, Ireland. He holds a Ph.D. and M.Phil from the Department of Politics and International Studies (POLIS) at the University of Cambridge, UK. He is a fellow of the UK Royal Society of the Arts (RSA) and has worked at both the Irish and European Parliaments as well as with a number of leading European think tanks.

Denis Condon lectures on cinema at the Departments of English and Media Studies at Maynooth University, Ireland. His publications include 'Early Irish Cinema, 1895-1921' (2008) and as co-editor 'Music and Visual Cultures: Threshold, Intermediality, Synchresis' (2021). He is currently working on the book 'The Explosion of Images: Ireland's First Cinemas' and the collaborative website Ireland's First Cinemas.

Bernardo Cortese is Professor of EU Law at the University of Padua, Italy. His research interests include Competition and State Aid Law, International Law, Private International Law, and on the interaction between International Law, European Law and the National Laws of the Member States. Previously, he has been Legal Secretary (Référéndaire) at the Court of Justice of the European Union (2001-2004).

Claudia Coveney is a lecturer in the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds, UK. Her research examines opportunities for social movement organisations, such as organisations of people with disabilities and their allies, as institutions of governance develop new decision-making formats.

Michael Doherty is Professor of Law at the School of Law and Criminology at Maynooth University, Ireland. His expertise lies in the areas of Irish and EU Employment and Labour Law, industrial relations, and social dialogue. He has published widely on these topics in international books and journals, has worked on a number of EU-wide projects on cross-border working terms and conditions, and is a member of several European research networks looking at Employment and Labour Law and Policy in the EU.

Victoria Durrer is Assistant Professor and former Ad Astra Fellow in Cultural Policy at University College Dublin and co-founder and director of the interdisciplinary, industry and policy-engaged network Cultural Policy Observatory Ireland. Her research considers the conditions and value of artistic and creative practice as social, cultural, and professional endeavours, with focus on their spatial, temporal, and relational dynamics. She holds expertise in engaged and policy-informing research, with projects often involving collaborative research designs, data collection and analysis with research participants and policymakers.

Elaine Fahey is Professor of EU Law at City Law School, University of London, UK and Deputy Head of Department for academic programmes. She is co-convenor of the Institute for the Study of European Law (ISEL) at City Law School. Her research interests span the relationship between EU Law and global governance, trade, transatlantic relations, the EU's Area of Freedom, Security and Justice and the study of law beyond the State.

Ciarán Finlay is a Senior Policy & Public Affairs Advisor at the National Disability Authority (NDA), Ireland, focusing on justice and equality matters and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. A qualified barrister, he has served as Senior Policy Advisor with the Permanent Missions of Ireland and Malta to the United Nations in New York during their recent terms of membership of the UN Security Council.

Cora True-Frost is Bond, Schoeneck & King Distinguished Professor of Law at the College of Law at Syracuse University, USA. She received the L. Douglas Meredith Teaching Recognition Award from Syracuse University in 2017 and in 2024 was named a Professor of Teaching Excellence for her work on universal design for learning. Her most recent research focuses on travel equality, including accessibility and reasonable accommodation law before the European Court of Human Rights and conflicts between interpretations of international human rights and regional human rights law.

Elizabeth Gosme is Director of the Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union (COFACE) since 2016. She is an EU social policy analyst with extensive experience in EU affairs representing the interests of civil society organisations. She has worked extensively with various EU institutions contributing to building a social policy architecture for Europe.

Edurne Garcia Iriarte is Associate Professor in the School of Social Work and Social Policy at Trinity College Dublin, Ireland and is Academic Director of the Trinity Inclusive Curriculum Project. Her research focuses on social inclusion and disability, inclusive research, participatory research and teaching approaches, the intersection of disability, migration, and ethnicity, and inclusive education.

Laverne Jacobs is Professor of Law at the University of Windsor, Canada, where she is also Founding Director of the Law, Disability & Social Change Project, a research and public advocacy centre in Canada. She is also Co-Director of the Disability Rights Working Group of the Berkeley Center on Comparative Equality & Anti-Discrimination Law at the University of California, Berkeley, USA. She is an expert member of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2022 – 2026).

Monique Dior Jarrett is a Model, Influencer, Advocate, Ambassador and Dancer. She is one of the Directors of the arts-based BAFTA award-winning company TripleC and a professional contemporary dancer for the inclusive dance company Stopgap Dance Company. Monique is an advocate for disabled body positivity and true representation of disabled artists and models within the media all while being an ambassador for several organisations and companies.

James Kelly is the film director of the ERC DANCING documentary “Steps to Change” by Feenish Productions Ltd.. He directs most of Feenish’s work which is greatly influenced by his work in the arts, with which he maintains a professional engagement. James has worked in management & leadership roles in Project Arts Centre, the Irish Film Institute, St. Patrick’s Festival, the Ireland Canada University Foundation and as an Advisor to the Arts Council. He has also taught at University College Dublin (Arts Management), the National Film School (IADT) and Griffith College Dublin.

Susan Kennefick is a Seconded National Expert in the Director’s Office at the Agency for Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Previously, she was a Senior Policy and Public Affairs Advisor at the National Disability Authority (NDA), Ireland, where her portfolio included the introduction and implementation of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act, and Ireland’s obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Lina Kouzi is the Head of Library Access Services at Vision Ireland. She leads the Bookshare Ireland accessible digital library service and has a keen focus in developing accessible digital materials. She also oversees the Media Conversion Centre at Vision Ireland which produces Braille and audio documents and books.

Ann Leahy is Research Manager at Family Carers Ireland. Previously, she was post-doctoral researcher in Sociology within the ERC DANCING Project where her main focus was qualitative research on cultural participation by people with disabilities across Europe under Work Package 1. She received her PhD in Sociology from Maynooth University for her interdisciplinary qualitative study examining intersections between disability and ageing.

Juan Jorge Piernas López is Professor of EU Law at the University of Murcia, Spain. He holds positions as international consultant for the World Bank, for several governments and for the ENI CBC MedProgramme. He has participated in several European and national competitive research projects and is currently the holder of the Jean Monnet Chair “The Transformative Power of European Union Law II” (TEULP II).

Imelda Maher is Sutherland Full Professor of European Law at University College Dublin (UCD), Ireland and is Director of the UCD Dublin European Institute. She is interested in the relationship between law and governance and has published extensively on competition law and EU governance. She is currently Senior Vice-President of the Royal Irish Academy and serves on the Advisory Board of the Cambridge Centre for European Legal Studies, the Max Planck Institute for Innovation and Competition, Munich and The Institute for Consumer Antitrust Studies, Loyola University, Chicago.

Giuseppe Martinico is Professor of Comparative Public Law at Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies Pisa, Italy, where he also serves as an Editor for STALS (Sant'Anna Legal Studies). Previously, he was García Pelayo Fellow at the Centre for Political and Constitutional Studies (CEPC) in Madrid, Spain and Max Weber Fellow at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy. His research interests cover Comparative and European Constitutional Law, in which he publishes extensively in international peer-reviewed journals in three languages (English, Italian and Spanish).

Patricia McCarthy graduated with a PhD from Trinity College Dublin (TCD), Ireland in 2014. Her thesis focused on the educational experiences and transition opportunities of vision impaired people. She coordinates the PME Sociology of Education module in TCD. Her research focuses on UD(L), inclusion and participation. Patricia's ontological position as a disabled researcher has been instrumental in the development of her research and recent publications. She is the current Co-Chair of the Equality Committee - Staff Disability Working Group, TCD and member of Electoral Commission Research Advisory Group.

Anna Hickey-Moody is the inaugural Professor of Intersectional Humanities in the Arts and Humanities Research Institute at Maynooth University, Ireland. Her work explores intersecting angles of disadvantage through philosophical and creative approaches. Previously, she was Professor of Media and Communication at RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia, where she held an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship called Interfaith Childhoods.

Pádraig Naughton became Executive Director of Arts & Disability Ireland (ADI) in 2005. Working strategically in partnership with the arts sector ADI champions the creativity of artists and promotes inclusive experiences for audiences. In 2022 Pádraig graduated with an LLM in International & Comparative Disability Law & Policy from the University of Galway, Ireland. That same year The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington D.C., USA, recognised his lifetime achievement with an Excellence in Accessibility Leadership Award. Pádraig will represent Project Arts Centre, Dublin, Ireland, as an Expert Collaborator on the Europe Beyond Access consortium (2024-2027).

Charles O'Mahony is Lecturer in Law at the University of Galway, Ireland. He was Head of the School of Law between 2017-2021. His research and teaching include Disability Law, Mental Health Law and Policy, and allied areas. He previously worked as Amnesty International Ireland's Legal Officer on its mental health campaign and as a legal researcher for the Law Reform Commission of Ireland.

Charles O'Sullivan is Assistant Professor at the School of Law and Criminology at Maynooth University, Ireland. His research interests centre on law and the modern welfare state, and he has lectured primarily in areas including European Union, Common and Constitutional Law. In 2018, he received a PG Teaching Award for the 2017/2018 academic year, and was a finalist for Educator of the Year within the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences in 2022.

Francesco Palermo is Professor of Comparative Constitutional Law at the University of Verona, Italy and is Director of the Institute for Comparative Federalism at Eurac Research in Bolzano/Bozen, Italy. He worked for the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and was member and president of the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Francesco is also a former member of the Scientific Committee of the Fundamental Rights Agency of the EU (2018-2023).

Frankie Picron is Executive Director of European Union of the Deaf (EUD) since January 2024. Prior to this appointment, he served as EUD Project Officer and Project Manager since 2016. He is currently in charge of promoting the rights of deaf persons in EU countries and attending all European-level meetings related to deaf/disability issues. Besides building and strengthening the EUD's networking with EU institutions, he is also responsible for EUD's general management and communication with EUD member organisations.

Evangelia Psychogiopoulou is Assistant Professor in EU Policies and Institutions at the Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of the Peloponnese, Greece. She is also a senior research fellow at the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP) and a lawyer. Her main areas of research are EU law and governance, fundamental rights and the EU's values, EU law-making, EU law and policies for the digital transformation, cultural diversity and the media, EU horizontal policy priorities and judicial dialogue in Europe.

Shivaun Quinlivan is Associate Professor in Law at the University of Galway, Ireland. She researches on the right to equality with a particular focus on the right to education for people with disabilities. She is a member of the Berkeley Centre on Comparative Equality and Anti-Discrimination Law and the Irish Women's Lawyers Association. In 2024 she was awarded the SATLE Impact Award for her work on Inclusive Learning at the University of Galway.

Caterina Sganga is Professor of Comparative Private Law at Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies Pisa, Italy. Her key research area is International and Comparative Intellectual Property Law, with a focus on European Copyright Law, Intellectual Property (IP) and new technologies (especially artificial intelligence and data science), the balance between IP and fundamental/human rights, and the law and economics of cultural and creative industries.

Dorothy Estrada-Tanck is Professor of Public International Law at the University of Murcia, Spain and is Co-director of its Legal Clinic. She is Chair of the UN Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls. She enjoys broad academic and professional experience in the UN, State bodies, non-governmental organisations and universities in Mexico, Italy, Spain, USA and Canada.

Paolo Vargiu is Associate Professor at the Leicester Law School, University of Leicester, UK. His research interests lie primarily in the fields of law and religion, legal theory, and international law. He is a qualified practitioner and acts as an independent arbitrator, and he is an active member of associations of persons with spinal cord injuries and organisation for the rights of persons with disabilities in the UK and in Italy.

Annalisa Volpato is Associate Professor of EU Law at the University of Padua, Italy. Previously, she worked as Assistant Professor at Maastricht University, the Netherlands, and as managing editor for the Review of European Administrative Law. Her research interests concern the institutional and administrative aspects of EU Law, the internal market as well as EU food law.

Sarah Whatley is Professor of Dance and Director of the Centre for Dance Research at Coventry University, UK. Her research focuses on dance in the context of cultural heritage, digital technologies, somatic practices, and inclusion in dance. Her current funded projects and publications are concerned with the intersection between dance, disability, prosthetics, and robotics. She chairs the Arts and Humanities Research Council sponsored 'Dance Research Matters' campaign to raise the profile of dance research in the UK.



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ERC DANCING Team



Léa Urzel Francil is a PhD candidate within the ERC DANCING Project. Her PhD research investigates the challenges faced by persons with disabilities as cultural and creative professionals, and the extent to which the EU legal framework can enable their active participation in the cultural and creative sectors.

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Hilary Hooks is the project manager of the ERC DANCING Project. She is also responsible for ensuring the accessibility of the project. Previously she was administrator at the Assisting Living and Learning (ALL) Institute.



Eva Sophie Krolla is a Research Assistant within the ERC DANCING Project. She holds a joint Erasmus Mundus Master of Arts in Euroculture from the University of Groningen, the Netherlands and University of Udine, Italy.



Élodie Makhoul is a Research Assistant within the ERC DANCING Project. She holds a Bachelor of Law (LLB) from Maynooth University, Ireland, a French Bachelor of Laws (Licence de droit) from the Catholic University of Lyon, France as well as a Master of European and International Business Law (LLM) from Trinity College Dublin, Ireland.



Alessia Palladino is a Research Assistant within the ERC DANCING Project. She holds an LLM from the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy and her thesis focused on European Environmental Law. Prior to joining DANCING, she worked as a trainee at Maynooth University, Ireland.



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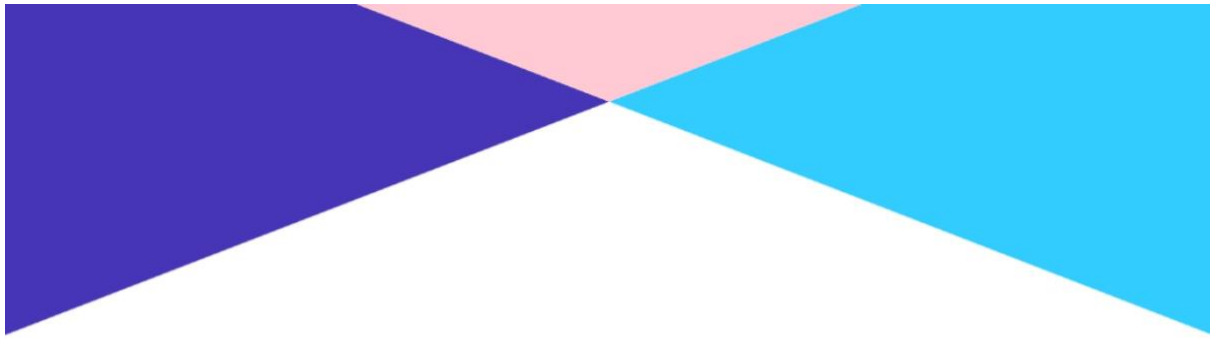
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“Protecting the Right to Culture of Persons with **Disabilities** and **Enhancing**
Cultural Diversity Through European Union Law: Exploring New Paths -
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