

[annex One]

# Dóchas' Interim Strategy 2021

Prepared: December 2020

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## Background

The uncertainty created by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic looks set to continue for the foreseeable future. This inevitably presents a wide range of challenges, and opportunities for the sector in 2021, both in terms of programming, fundraising and public engagement.

For Dóchas, we need to continue to be responsive to the needs of the sector both in terms of the kind of events and conversations we host, as well as finding ways to connect and support members.

This “**Interim Strategy Statement**” has been developed to guide and prioritise our work, whilst ensuring we remain adaptable to further shocks or changes to the sector. We will need to continue to be ambitious but realistic in terms of what the Secretariat can deliver to meet the wide-ranging needs of our diverse membership.

This interim strategy is expected to complement our Strategic Plan 2015 to 2020, as well as help us develop a new strategy by the end of 2021. It has been developed through a facilitated<sup>1</sup> planning process with the Dóchas team and the Board, as well as reflecting on the findings of a recent Dóchas survey.

## External environment

Our recent Member survey highlighted a number of important issues in relation to the **external environment** that we need to respond to, including:

- It will be a particularly challenging year ahead for members in light of the COVID pandemic and the likely contracting of the global economy. We should not assume that members will always have the time to collaborate, and there will be more competition for resources in the sector. Dóchas therefore needs to be focused and strategic in the use of its convening power.
- COVID-19 has added particular concern around maintaining funding levels, including ODA and public funds. Members therefore want Dóchas to find more opportunities to showcase their contributions, including through our social media, as well as prioritise our ODA campaign; they also want us to continue to invest in insight research to strengthen the sector's approach to public engagement.
- Remote working will continue to pose challenges to our work, particular in relation to building relationships with new members and politicians. However, we need to take advantage of virtual technology to convene more inclusive meetings, including from staff in developing countries.
- Given the multiple pressures facing members, there is also a desire by members for more support to help them reflect on global trends and analysis around the role of International NGOs to ensure the Irish NGO sector is forward looking and pro-active in 'building back better and fairly'. This interest coincides well with our plans to develop a new strategic plan, starting with a consultation process to re-imagine the role of the sector.
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<sup>1</sup> Caplor Horizons facilitated a team meeting, Board Away day, in Sept & Nov 2020, which included detail in on prioritisation and rationale for changes to our SOAP

- We need to continue to build on our strengths, including our convening role to influence Government policy and approaches towards civil society participation and funding as this is perceived to be under threat.

## Internal context

We have also reflected on our internal context so that we can build on these strengths. Given the highly challenging circumstances of 2020, it is very heartening to record that (a) significant initiatives planned at the start of the year were achieved alongside (b) success with pivoting to respond to the needs of members during the pandemic. Some highlights include:

- Convening of several high profile (zoom) events and other spaces to support members' response to COVID-19
- Active convening of 7 Working Groups, 2 virtual groups and more ad hoc groups on institutional funding, COVID response and small members group.
- Development of a Dóchas Charter and finalisation of our Membership Handbook
- The completion of a Small Member research project
- A review of Working Groups and follow through on recommendations
- The ODA campaign, including stronger membership collaboration, effective materials, and lobbying to political parties
- Renewed policy engagement on EU issues, particularly with Irish MEPs
- Strengthening of 'digital' infrastructure including the re-design of our website, and introduction of a new CRM system,
- Effective team working, including induction of new staff and adaptation to home working
- The launch of the Worldwide public engagement research project

Based on our analysis of the internal and external environment, we developed a 'StrengthsWeaknessOpportunityThreat' chart [Annex Two] to help us develop this interim strategy and ensure we are realistic around our assumptions. We have also acted on the recommendations of our mid-term review (2018), notably to ensure our ambitions are realistic and that we are able to deliver on our strategic pillars efficiently and effectively.

## Approach

In developing our 'Strategy on a page', we have paid particular attention to the following:

- Improved clarity about the **essence of Dóchas** – notably the addition of a 'strategic intent' statement, and refining the 'mission' and 'vision' to ensure they are short and memorable. We have also included three key **'values'** to underpin how we work, based on the Dóchas Charter.
- Renewed focus on **three goals**, but then ensuring our **'approach'** to achieve them continues to embrace the original four strategic priorities: 'Build Expertise,' 'Build Voice,' 'Build Alliances', 'Build Network.' We will also continue to ensure effectiveness by investing in organisational development and governance.
- Realistic ambition in relation to **'strategic priorities and deliverables,'** but this assumes that we will continue to have a strong complement of staff and that we reach our income targets.

This Interim Strategy Statement is supported by a revised Results Framework, Budget, and Work plan for 2021.

Interim Strategy  
2021

## Our Vision

A world without poverty in which everyone  
has the right to live in dignity

**Our Mission:** to strengthen learning, influence and collective action by Irish International NGOs

## Our Strategic Intent

To strengthen the enabling environment, accountability and effectiveness of Irish international  
NGOs to influence political and public attitudes in Ireland.

## Our Strategic Goals

**1: FRIEND: TO BE A  
SUPPORTIVE CHALLENGING  
FRIEND TO THE SECTOR**

**2: INFLUENCE: TO BE A  
CREDIBLE TRUSTED VOICE OF  
THE SECTOR**

**3: ENGAGE: TO INSPIRE  
COLLABORATION AND SUSTAIN  
OUR DIVERSE NETWORK**

### Our Approach

BUILD EXPERTISE  
BUILD ALLIANCES

### Our Approach

BUILD VOICE  
BUILD PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

### Our Approach

BUILD NETWORK  
BUILD ORGANISATIONAL  
CAPACITY

### Our Strategic Priorities

Dóchas members are connected, learning  
together and supported to achieve better  
results and accountability

Dóchas uses strategic alliances and  
partnerships in Ireland, Europe and globally  
to inform the sector

#### Deliverables

- Greater connections and knowledge,  
among members, *as a result of our Peer  
Learning Groups, web-site content and  
communications.*
- Irish INGOs are better prepared to  
collectively manage the impact of COVID-  
19 by participating in a *'Future Visioning'  
project*

### Our Strategic Priorities

Dóchas convenes, leads and promotes coordinated  
action to drive and influence policy change and public  
debate in Ireland

Dóchas works with strategic alliances at EU and  
international levels to influence civil society  
participation in the delivery of the SDGs

#### Deliverables

- Cross-party support for international  
development remains strong as a result of  
*policy engagement on the SDGs and  
Budget2022*
- Government respects civil society space and  
participation as a result of Dóchas' engagement  
with Irish Aid, the EU and SecCo campaign
- *Data-driven public engagement material* is  
tested to strengthen public understanding of  
international development.

### Our Strategic Priorities

Dóchas remains a viable organisation.

Dóchas has effective communication  
channels to engage with all its members

#### Deliverables

- New Dóchas strategy is designed through  
effective *member engagement* to ensure  
we remain a relevant, diverse, and active  
network.
- Secretariat has accountable governance  
system in-place, including regular Board and  
sub-committee meetings, active risk  
management, and strong financial  
oversight.
- Sustainable resource base nurtured,  
including *securing grant funding,  
membership fees and in-kind support* from  
research institutions or businesses.



LEARNING



INTEGRITY



COLABORATION

Underpinned by Our Values