

Dóchas

The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

Dóchas Board 107 (1-26)
29/01/26

Dóchas Board

held on Thursday, 29th January 2026 at 10:00 in the Dóchas office, Suite 8, Olympic House,
Pleasants Street, Dublin 8

Minutes

Present: Rosamond Bennett (Christian Aid Ireland) Chairperson
John Moffett (Misean Cara) Vice-Chairperson
Siobhán Cassidy (Trócaire) Treasurer & Company Secretary (Virtually)
Karol Balfe (ActionAid Ireland) (Virtually)
Frank Long (Oxfam Ireland)
Olive Moore (Front Line Defenders) (Virtually)
David Donoghue (External Board Member) (Virtually)

Apologies: Paul Donnelly (External Board Member)
Martina Fitzgerald (External Board Member)

In attendance: Jane-Ann McKenna (CEO of Dóchas)
Mark O'Neill (Interim Finance & Operations Manager, Dóchas)

1. Meeting Opening and Standing Items

a. Welcome

The Chairperson opened the meeting, welcoming those present and allowing for individual introductions to the Interim FOM.

b. Apologies and Agenda

There were two apologies, noted above. There were no changes to the agenda as circulated.

c. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

All members present confirmed that there were no conflicts of interest.

d. Minutes of Board Meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting, held on 27th November 2025 were approved: Frank Long (Proposed), John Moffett (Seconded).

e. Notes on Irish Aid Exchange

The notes of the meeting with Irish Aid of 27th November 2025 were circulated in advance and taken as read.

f. Matters Arising and To-do List

All of the items under Matters Arising and on the to-do list have been completed or will be addressed during the meeting. The date for the Board Away Day was discussed, with a decision to circulate a Doodle poll with a wide range of dates in February.

ACTION: FOM to circulate Doodle poll to schedule Board Away day

2. Reports and Updates

a. CEO Report

The **CEO Report**, which was circulated in advance, was taken as read.

The CEO highlighted some key areas of focus during the period covered by the Report:

- **EUPP6 Application for DEAR Grant:** We await the final confirmation and do not expect to receive a contract until late March 2026 (grant activity period to commence 1st April 2026.) David Donoghue enquired as to how onerous the post-spend reporting would be; the CEO responded that the reporting function would be significant. The CEO highlighted that Dóchas' Head of Policy & Advocacy is in Brussels this week, discussing the practicalities of the grant activity. We will communicate with members around this over the next few weeks.
- **Gates Foundation Funding:** The CEO noted that the funding from the Gates Foundation, was discretely focussed on engagement, and as part of this the executive team are looking at engaging political champions, perhaps to include a group to advocate for ODA in the media.
- **Further Developments in Exchange with Irish Aid regarding hosting other networks:** Dóchas received further communication from Irish Aid on 24th December 2025, as part of Irish Aid's communication to the other networks involved. The CEO also spoke separately with the networks by phone; she noted that they are keen to keep the conversation going in 2026.

b. Emerging Issues

Prospective Office Move: The CEO raised the prospect of Dóchas moving offices this year, most likely in Q2. With an expanded headcount likely as part of the EU Presidency, the organisation needs more office space, and would particularly benefit from a larger space that was conducive to hosting meetings and smaller events. The CEO has explored a number of options for new premises.

Karol Balfe warned against underestimating the scale of work involved in any office move. The CEO noted that the annual budget for 2026 included a line item for costs related to moving.

3. Strategic Topics

a. Membership Survey

The Board was joined by the Head of Membership Engagement, who presented a summary of the findings of the 2025 Membership Survey.

There were year on year improvements in key metrics such as:

- Belief that Dóchas facilitates collaboration between members and with Irish Aid,
- Belief that Dóchas brings added value to their organisation's work, and
- Belief that Dóchas facilitates collaboration with the EU and other international networks and alliances

These improvements were warmly welcomed by the Board. The increase in Members' use of Worldview data in their work was also celebrated. A general discussion on the results of the

survey followed, including speculation regarding the impact of how funding through ICSP or CSF may impact on Members' opinions of Dóchas' effectiveness.

Olive Moore suggested disaggregating the results of large and small Member organisations to better understand the results of the survey.

It was noted that the large breadth of work conducted by Dóchas' Members makes it difficult for all to feel they shape Dóchas' priorities, and naturally impacts on whether they feel that Dóchas' work is relevant to their organisation.

It was noted that the results of the survey are shaped by which Members do and do not participate. The current approach of allowing one response per Member (as opposed to a fully open survey) means that no one organisation dominates the results through excessive participation, but there is a risk that certain voices are not heard because they do not participate.

The Chairperson congratulated the CEO and Head of Membership Engagement on the work involved in conducting the survey and the results themselves.

b. Dóchas, X and social media platforms

The Board was joined by the Head of Media & Communications for this item. The topic had been discussed by Dóchas staff in advance of the Board meeting. It was noted that while Dóchas had not posted on X since October 2025, and had no plans to do so in future, several of the network's members continued to use the platform. It was agreed that it would therefore be counterproductive to formally announce a withdrawal from the platform.

David Donoghue enquired as to which alternative platforms Dóchas uses in lieu of X. These are primarily Instagram and LinkedIn. Olive Moore suggested Dóchas lead by example in future use of BlueSky - it was noted that Dóchas does have an account and could use this platform more often.

It was resolved that Dóchas would remain inactive on X, and the CEO will communicate the decision directly to members, while retaining a neutral stance on public platforms.

4. Finance, Audit & Risk Committee

a. Risk Register: The CEO presented the Risk Register, copies of which were circulated in advance, noting that:

- Risk 5 (Anti-NGO and civil society sentiment amongst Irish public and EU): Moves from Amber to Green. The downward trend in Anti-civil society and anti-ODA sentiment has continued, lessening the risk of reduced funding. The award of money from the Gates Foundation also strengthens Dóchas' security.
- There were no changes to the Risk Register as presented.

b. Signatories on Bank Mandate

- The signatories on the Bank Mandate were updated to include the Chair, the Treasurer, the Vice-Chair and the CEO. Frank Long (Proposed), Siobhan Cassidy (Seconded)

c. Credit Card Holders

- It was agreed that Mark O'Neill's name be added to the Finance & Operations Manager Credit Card, and that Anna Farrell's name be removed from the same card following her retirement.

5. Upcoming Board Elections

The CEO noted that three Board members' current terms would be ending and they would be eligible for re-election. A discussion followed regarding a replacement for Martina Fitzgerald should she not stand for re-election. It was roundly agreed that in that case, a new External Board Member should be sought.

It was noted that the Board may also benefit from the inclusion of a candidate from one of the smaller member organisations.

ACTION: Governance Committee to look at profiles for external candidates, particularly focussed on Communications, Media and Public Affairs.

6. Other Business

The CEO raised the possibility of moving the AGM from the 7th to the 14th of May and asked if there were any barriers to holding the AGM on this date.

ACTION: The CEO will confirm whether there is a change to the date of the AGM by email.

7. Private Business

The Board met for a private discussion.

The CEO and Finance and Operations Manager left the meeting for this agenda item.