

Overview and Summary in English: The report “Taiteen ja kulttuurin barometri 2020. Taiteilijat ja taiteen tekeminen kunnissa.” (“Arts and Culture Barometer 2020. Artists and Artistic Work in Local Municipalities”)

Overview

The theme of the Arts and Culture Barometer 2020 is the status of artists and artistic work in local municipalities. The material for the barometer comprises two surveys, one directed at artists and the other at local officials responsible for cultural activities in municipalities. The 6th Arts and Culture Barometer was conducted by the Arts Promotion Centre Finland (Taike) together with the Center for Cultural Policy Research (Cupore).

The report examines artistic work and the promotion of art in municipalities, the views of artists regarding the role of municipalities in promoting art, and the importance of one’s local municipality for artists and their work. The report also examines the views of municipalities and artists regarding Taike’s local activities and services. In addition, the report presents the findings from the questions on the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic that were included in both surveys.

According to the results of the barometer, the status and promotion of artistic work varies greatly and is developing in somewhat different directions in different municipalities. Both professional artists and artistic work, as well as measures promoting artistic work, are concentrated within urban municipalities. Common barriers to the promotion of the arts in municipalities include a lack of resources, skills and information.

Based on the responses, only a small proportion of artists have received support from their local municipality for their artistic work during their careers, and most feel that the support currently offered by their local municipality for artistic work does not meet their needs. Instead of mere talk, municipalities should deliver concrete support for local actors in the field of the arts. Artists also wish for more financial investments from municipalities, as well as more respect and support in securing workspaces.

Both artists and municipalities share an interest in collaborating more with each other. Collaboration opportunities are seen both in traditional art activities and more broadly in other fields as well. At present, the potential of collaboration remains untapped. Collaboration is hampered by, among other things, a lack of information on both sides, and many artists also find it difficult to contact the municipality.

For artists, the most important factors related to locality that promote their own artistic work are funding opportunities for artistic work as a local resident, the reasonable cost of living in the local municipality, the active artistic and cultural life within the local community, and the availability of spaces suitable for artistic work or performance.

Artists living in rural municipalities value in particular the undisturbed working conditions within their local community. The local municipality in which they work is often perceived as inspiring, and the influence of locality on the contents of their own work is more significant compared to artists living in densely populated and urban municipalities. Artists living in urban municipalities, on the other hand, value in particular the services and the active artistic and cultural life.

In the light of the responses, many local officials responsible for cultural activities in municipalities and artists appear to be poorly acquainted with Taike’s regional activities and services. Accordingly, a need was expressed for more information and greater visibility in general for Taike’s activities. In addition to funding and expert services, the proximity of Taike’s regional offices, Taike’s active work and the work of Regional Artists in the locality were considered important by artists. Local officials responsible for cultural activities

in municipalities consider Taika's most important tasks to be implementing national cultural policy goals within municipalities and developing community subsidies in accordance with the needs of municipalities.

The Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 had a significant impact on the field of the arts and culture, as well as on the working conditions of artists. Three out of four artists who responded to the survey stated that the coronavirus crisis has impacted their artistic work. In most cases, the impact has been negative, especially due to the cancellation, postponement or reduction of work and the resulting financial and earnings challenges.

Summary

The purpose of the Arts and Culture Barometer is to annually monitor and highlight the views of actors in the field of the arts regarding current issues and phenomena. The 2020 barometer examined artistic work from a regional perspective. The results of the barometer report provide information on the work of municipalities in promoting professional artistic work, the experiences and views of artists regarding the activities of municipalities, and the importance of locality for artists in their work. The report also highlights the views of artists and local officials responsible for cultural activities in municipalities on the regional activities and services of the Arts Promotion Centre Finland (Taika). In addition, the report highlights the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the field of the arts and the support provided by municipalities to artists and other actors in the field of the arts during the pandemic.

The results of the barometer are based on two surveys, one of which was aimed at artists and the other at local officials responsible for cultural activities in municipalities. The results are summarised below under six conclusions.

The status and promotion of artistic work varies greatly in different municipalities

Creating the conditions for professional artistic work and activities is one of the duties defined for local authorities in the Act on Cultural Activities in Local Government (166/2019). However, this is perceived as being poorly realised in many municipalities. According to the results of the barometer, there is still a lot of room for improvement in the activities of municipalities to promote artistic work, in their understanding of the field of the arts, and in their contacts with actors in the field of the arts.

At present, the status of the arts in municipalities and the activities of municipalities to promote artistic work and activities vary greatly. Art is supported and afforded important status more often in urban municipalities. A large part of artistic work, activities and actors is also concentrated in cities. Among these cities, the provincial centres in particular stand out as the centres of artistic work in their regions and as actors promoting art. Common barriers to the promotion of the arts in municipalities include a lack of resources, skills and information. Especially in smaller municipalities, the resources for promoting artistic activities are scarce and at worst almost non-existent. The responses to the survey from municipalities called for more collaboration and support for promoting artistic activities.

Municipalities promote professional artistic work and activities as part of their statutory duties, to provide services to their residents and promote the vitality and wellbeing of their local community. By providing and producing cultural and other services, municipalities also create opportunities for artists to display their work or art, collaborate with actors in the field of the arts, and procure services or artworks from artists and art communities. In contrast, few actual artist grants or subsidies are awarded within

municipalities. In 2019, less than half of all municipalities that responded to the survey had awarded grants for artistic work.

The status and promotion of art and culture is developing in different directions in different municipalities. Some of the responses to the survey from municipalities indicate an intention to invest in arts and cultural activities, as well as an effort to integrate the work of artists more broadly into the activities and structures of the municipality. Others indicate concerns regarding a steady decline in municipal resources, the withering of arts and cultural activities, and the relinquishing of activities to voluntary associations and other actors. An important factor in promoting art activities within municipalities is the support and appreciation of decision-makers for these activities. According to the results of the survey, many local officials responsible for cultural activities in municipalities feel that the senior officials and decision-makers lack an appreciation and understanding of artistic work and its opportunities.

The current support provided by municipalities is not of great significance to artists – artists call for more funding and spaces in which to make and present their art

According to the results of the barometer, only a small proportion of artists have received support from their local municipality for their artistic work during their careers, and most feel that the support currently offered by their local municipality for artistic work does not meet their needs. Since most have not received support from the municipality, or the support has been very limited, many of the artists who responded to the survey did not consider municipal support to be a particularly relevant issue in their own work. Based on the responses, dissatisfaction with the support provided by municipalities is high in all fields of the arts.

Artists call for more financial investments from municipalities, such as grants and subsidies, work opportunities or art procurements, but also more respect and support in such areas as networking and collaboration. The responses from artists also strongly suggest that municipalities should do more to help artists find workspaces, for example by making unused spaces available to artists, facilitating the sharing of spaces, or renting spaces more affordably. There is a shortage of affordable spaces for making and presenting art throughout Finland. The responses from both municipalities and artists also highlight the important role of municipalities in providing a local perspective in promoting art activities and the desire to strengthen this role.

Based on their responses, artists have a strong distrust of municipal decision-making and expertise. Instead of keynote speeches, municipalities should deliver concrete support and provide increased visibility for local actors in the field of the arts. According to the respondents, the existing appropriations of municipalities are often directed towards recreational activities or the maintenance of art institutions, and little funding is available for professional free artists and working groups. In small municipalities, personal relationships and the preferences of individual decision-makers are also perceived as excessively influencing funding decisions. In larger cities, more funding may be available, but there is fierce competition for it. In general, artists perceive that municipal funding focuses on only a small handful and that municipal decision-making does not recognise the full spectrum of the arts.

An active artistic and cultural life and being part of local artist communities are important for artists living in cities – undisturbed working conditions valued especially in rural municipalities

For artists, the most important factors related to the local community that promote their own artistic work include funding opportunities for artistic work as a local resident and the reasonable cost of living locally. More often than not, however, the choice of location is influenced by non-artistic considerations, as only a

third of the artists who responded to the survey chose their current place of residence because of the good conditions for artistic work. Nevertheless, many would like to live in another municipality if the conditions for artistic work were better there.

Artists living in rural municipalities value in particular the undisturbed working conditions. They often perceive their own municipality as inspiring, and locality has more influence on the content of their own artistic work compared to artists from densely populated and urban municipalities. However, the responses also highlighted the loneliness experienced by artists living in rural municipalities in the absence of an artist community around them. Especially when moving to smaller municipalities, access to already established local artist communities can be difficult, creating a sense of alienation. Artists prefer to have an artistic community around them, and they seek this together with an active artistic and cultural life especially in cities.

The responses highlighted the regional inequalities in terms of artistic work experienced by many artists. Artistic work in different parts of the country is hindered by, among other things, poor transport connections and the high cost of mobility. More than half of the respondents felt that the opportunities for earning a living as an artist are better in the capital region than elsewhere in Finland. For example, networks and actors in the field of the arts are often located in capital region, which, according to the respondents, necessitates regular “appearances” in Helsinki by artists living elsewhere in Finland. Traveling within Finland is expensive, and artists would like more financial support for mobility within Finland. Based on the responses, artists living outside Helsinki and the capital region also experience more difficulties in gaining national visibility. One of the reasons for this mentioned by respondents is the capital-bias of the national media.

Both artists and municipalities are interested in more collaboration

The survey identified a desire among both municipalities and artists for wider collaboration and more joint activities. The majority of artists stated that they would be happy to work together with their local municipality’s cultural services or the like and use their professional skills teaching the arts or even outside the traditional fields of the arts. Local officials responsible for cultural activities in municipalities also saw many opportunities in developing collaboration with artists and other actors in the field of the arts. By promoting artistic work and collaborating with artists, municipalities hope is to positively influence the vitality and wellbeing of their local community.

Although there is interest in collaboration on both sides, it does not always materialise as desired. Municipalities lack expertise and information about different fields of the arts and the possibilities of utilising the professional skills of artists in municipal activities. Especially in smaller municipalities, the financial and human resources for promoting and collaborating in art activities are often limited. According to the responses, awareness among artists of municipal activities and opportunities for collaboration is also limited. Some artists also feel that their municipalities are not even interested in collaboration or do not offer collaboration or work opportunities that the artist could do. Only a third of the artists who responded to the survey felt that it was easy to contact the decision-makers and civil servants in their local municipality. Many artists also make art outside their own municipality, which can make the relationship between the artist and the municipality even more distant.

Nevertheless, based on the results of the barometer, there is a lot of potential in collaboration between municipalities and artists and other actors in the field of the arts. Both municipal and artist respondents suggested that artists could be more widely involved in municipal activities and their development. However, there is still much room for improvement in the desired implementation of collaboration. The

responses presented ideas about regional cooperation, as well as support and funding structures through which art activities and collaboration between municipalities and artists could be better promoted.

Local activities of Taike are considered important, but both municipalities and artists are poorly acquainted with Taike's regional activities and services

According to the results of the survey, both municipalities and artists are poorly acquainted with Taike's regional activities and services. According to the survey among municipalities, Taike's activities and services are best known in urban municipalities, but in many municipalities they have remained distant. Municipal respondents expressed a wish to receive more information about Taike's activities and services, as well as greater visibility in general for Taike's activities, especially in rural municipalities.

Also according to the artist survey, artists lack information about Taike's regional activities and services, and Taike's regional offices have remained distant for many artists. The responses highlighted a clear desire for Taike to inform and communicate about its activities and services more broadly and effectively. Respondents also expressed a wish that the regional offices would contact directly artists working within the region.

Taike's local activities and services in the regions were considered extremely important among both groups of respondents. Local officials responsible for cultural activities in municipalities considered Taike's most important tasks to be implementing national cultural policy goals within municipalities and developing community subsidies in accordance with the needs of municipalities. Among Taike's expert services, the most essential according to municipal respondents were considered to be services related to the wellbeing effects of art and culture, as well as those related to developing children's and youth culture.

Among artist respondents, the most important activities and expert services of Taike involve the funding provided by both national and regional arts councils to artists and art communities. Approximately half of the respondents also considered Taike's active work in their local municipality, the proximity and expertise of a Taike's regional offices, and the work of Taike's Regional Artists to be important. In the responses of both artists and municipalities, Taike's expertise and partnership with municipalities was generally desired in order to improve the status of artists and promote their artistic activities.

At present, Taike's operations were seen to be strongly focused on the Finnish capital. However, mostly artists living outside the capital region most considered Taike's regional presence and activity to be more important for their own artistic activity. Artists wished for more Taike offices or offices that were closer to their own locality or region. On the whole, there was a call for more opportunities to sharpen regional activity and enable activity and interaction.

Artists thanked Taike for conducting the survey, for supporting artists, for its regional activities and for the work of Regional Artists. Those local officials responsible for cultural activities who had become acquainted with or participated in Taike's activities also gave positive feedback regarding Taike's activities.

Covid-19 pandemic has been devastating for the arts

The Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions on gatherings and movement imposed by it have hit the arts and culture sector hard. A clear majority of respondents to the barometer survey conducted in autumn 2020 had been negatively impacted by the pandemic. Job opportunities and activities have been cancelled or reduced, leading to financial and earnings challenges. Art activities have become more difficult in many ways, also due to the closure of work and rehearsal spaces. Shifting schedules, maintaining safety, and

learning the technology of remote events have required additional arrangements and efforts. The general uncertainty and stress caused by the pandemic have also reduced the ability to function of many artists.

The coronavirus crisis has had a major impact on the already uncertain livelihoods of artists. While the pandemic has affected all fields of the arts, it has hit artists in the performing arts and music particularly hard. According to the survey, artists who were already in the weakest and most precarious situations before the pandemic, such as young people, freelancers, part-time workers, the unemployed and grant recipients, have felt the impacts of the pandemic the most.

The effects of the pandemic on artists are both individual and shared. Several of the responses to the survey highlighted concerns about the respondent's own survival and coping. Many are considering a career change or have already changed professions. For example, just over a fifth of young artists and freelancers in the performing arts and music have considered or have already changed professions due to the coronavirus situation.

There is a great need for support and remedial action. Artists have received emergency funding from the State (especially Taïke) and foundations, among others. Only a few artists had received support from municipalities, and based on the barometer survey among municipalities, the number of municipalities that had granted support was also small. Support was provided especially in provincial centres and other urban municipalities, where the number of professional actors in the fields of the arts is also the highest. The most common forms of support granted by municipalities were entrepreneurship support and rent relief. However, these forms of support are applicable only to certain artists.