

SUMMARY

Sticks and Carrots of Arts Policy. Operational subsidies of Arts Promotion Centre Finland for communities in different fields of the arts, 2013-2019.

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Purpose and background of assessment

The Center for Cultural Policy Research Cupore was commissioned by Arts Promotion Centre Finland (Taike) to assess the operational subsidies it allocates to communities in different fields of the arts. The research project started at the beginning of 2018. The researchers for the project were senior researcher Sakariias Sokka and researcher Olli Jakonen. Researcher Ari Kurlin helped with the statistical analyses. The report was commented on by senior researcher Sari Karttunen and director Marjo Mäenpää.

Both the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (MinEduC) and Taike have in recent years aimed to improve their policies regarding state subsidies and to coordinate concerted efforts in this area, and to further develop the structures of promoting and supporting the arts (e.g. OKM 2018).

Taike, which was established in 2013 as the successor of the Arts Council of Finland, operates under the performance supervision of the Finnish Ministry of Culture as a national agency and expert in arts policy with the objective of implementing the state's arts policies. This assessment focuses especially on Taike's operational subsidies for communities, but the broader frame of reference are the state subsidy policies implemented by MinEduC and Taike. The assessment also extends beyond Taike's internal process to review the goal setting and resourcing in a policy sector overseen by MinEduC. The assessment moreover includes a mapping of the views of communities that have received or applied for Taike subsidies.

The discretionary subsidies awarded by Taike make up an important part of the overall support for Finnish arts, alongside artist grants and the central government transfers to arts and cultural institutions (VOS system). Taike distributes nearly 40 million euros worth of grants and subsidies annually. In addition, 2.4 million euros are allocated to projects and the work of regional artists. The share awarded to artistic communities has grown from 5.8 million euros (2010) to 12.7 million euros (2020), especially due to the establishment of additional funding for performing arts.

Research design

The review is based on a combination of summative assessment and formative assessment. Summative assessment examines data that describe past activities and results. Formative assessment in turn looks at, among other things, the current situation and maps development needs through interviews and other data. We applied as the frame for the overall analysis the logical data model, which is rather commonly used in assessments today. As a theoretical frame of reference we used a theory of state subsidy processes where the awarders of state subsidies are seen as responsible for the administrative process and the recipients, i.e. the beneficiaries, for the societal processes. The other essential themes in the analysis are the role of civil society in cultural activities and managerialism and performance management in public administration.

Data and methods

The central data for the assessment consist of interviews with public officials and other experts (altogether 15 interviews + 1 group interview). We furthermore compiled another key set of data with a survey aimed at the applicants and recipients of operational subsidies in spring 2019 (population 585, 119 respondents, of which 55 had applied for and 64 had received funding). We also used the responses to Taike's own survey assessing its subsidies for communities (94 responses for artistic communities that had received subsidies) and responses to another Taike survey aimed at peer reviewers in the decision making process. Statistics on Taike's subsidies and especially subsidies for communities were also an important source of data. They include data on the applicants and recipients of the subsidies in 2013-2019. Alongside the statistical data from Taike, we compiled supplementary comparative data on the subsidies allocated by MinEduC to national communities in the arts and cultural field in 2013-2019. We also used documentary data including e.g. calls for applications, application forms and introductory memos as well as performance agreements and budgets. As secondary data we used earlier reviews, studies and development reports.

Assessment goal and questions

MinEduC has in recent years conducted several reviews for developing the state subsidy policies further. Our assessment touches upon certain so-called eternal questions in efforts to reform the arts administration regarding e.g. the relationship between MinEduC and the Arts Council of Finland/Taike, the status of peer reviewing and the arts councils and the ability of the state subsidy system to flexibly react to developments in different art forms. Taike's subsidies for communities serve to implement state subsidy policies in arts and culture as one of the ministry's policy sectors.

Our assessment is however focused on Taike's subsidies to different fields of the arts and answers the following questions:

- How does Taike fulfill the responsibilities assigned to it in state administration when it distributes subsidies to communities?
- How do the subsidies work in relation to the general cultural policy goals and the strategic goals of MinEduC, and how can the support for the operations of communities be developed from this perspective?
- How do the different stages in Taike's administrative process regarding the subsidies (from defining the different subsidy types to preparing the calls for applications and following up on the granted subsidies) work?
- What kind of activities have been enhanced with the subsidies (so-called outputs)?
- What kind of impacts have the subsidies had especially from the viewpoint of the communities themselves?
- How could the monitoring of the measures to support communities be improved in the future a) from the point of view of administration and b) from the point of view of the beneficiaries?

Key results

The establishment of Taike linked in with the development goals emphasizing managerialism in arts and state administration and an integrated state establishment that were introduced already in the 1990s. Performance management and legislation connect Taike more strongly with the wider societal and cultural policy goals than was the case with Taike's predecessor (the Arts Council of Finland). When Taike was

founded the organization was assigned the legally constituted role of supporting culture. The organization thereby took on the task of developing and implemented not only arts policies but also cultural policies.

The operational subsidies have a long history and a cultural policy purpose of their own which is clear and justifiable as such. The discretionary subsidies for artistic communities are a central part of the system for supporting the arts directly, alongside artist grants and the central government transfers to institutions. In our assessment, discretion has however been used less than would principally be possible.

According to Taike's own policy statement, the operational subsidies aim to promote income and employment for artists and diversify the conditions of doing other creative work. Based on our assessment, especially the smaller operational subsidies are not very effective at supporting income opportunities for artists. The typical amount (median) of subsidy was in 2013-2019 around 30 000 euros (see Figure 37). Concurrently, the funds allocated from Taike to subsidies for communities in general have grown more than the funds for artist grants. In 2020 the support for communities grew again to 12.7 million euros, which is consistent with the amount of funding allocated from Taike as state grants for artists.

The funding for the operational subsidies awarded by Taike comes from the proceeds from gambling services. The amounts of funds allocated to the different fields of the arts and to other forms of subsidy for communities are determined in MinEduC and its plan for the use of funds from gambling activities. Taike is, in other words, thus still a strictly resource-managed agency, although the intention is to generally move away from resource-management along with the growing emphasis on performance management.

In arts and cultural administration the trend has been to shift towards more formal performance and assessment criteria and monitoring based on outputs and indicators. The decision making powers of public officials concerning the operative field have also been increased in the subsidies for communities. The art communities however find the evaluation grounds applied in the decision making unclear. Our assessment showed that it remains unclear to the operators who in fact decide about the awarding of the subsidies. The decision making system is to some extent experienced as obscure and heavy even by the peer reviewers appointed to Taike's expert bodies.

In each of the years under study altogether 60 percent of the funds (€) annually distributed as operational subsidies have been allocated to communities in the fields of theater and dance. The share of theater has been 35-42 percent of the subsidies awarded annually, and that of dance has varied between 15 and 26 percent. The share for visual arts has been 7-11 %, for music 7-10 %, for film 6-9 %, for circus 7-8 % and for photography 4-6 %. The shares for literature, media art, comic art and design have generally been just a few percent. In photography, film and dance the shares are affected by support from the system of regional centers (See Figure 36).

Altogether 662 communities applied for operational subsidies from Taike during the studied period. 239 different communities were awarded subsidies. A total of 423 communities, i.e. 64 % of the applicants, had not been awarded a subsidy even once.

During 2013-2019 nearly 60 % of the awarded funds had gone to the Uusimaa (capital city) region. With all the other counties the share in the total funding falls under 10 percent. The share of communities in performing arts (theater, dance, circus) based in Uusimaa has been around 44 percent in the studied period. Besides the decision criteria, the size of the operative field at regional level, the nature of the operators and the degree of activeness in applying for support affect how the funds are directed (See Table 16).

Taike's operational subsidies support many different kinds of operating concepts (representation of interests/NGO activities, artistic communities and production platforms/houses, art schools/educational

institutions, regional centers, regional and local communities). The communities in the different fields of the arts make up a very versatile group that represents the arts in diverse ways. They often pursue and realize other goals than those of strictly supplying and promoting the arts. The scope of goals covers e.g. applied arts, inclusion, community, wellbeing, regional development and audience work. (See Figure 39).

The impacts and effectiveness of artistic communities are manifested in different ways depending on the extent, nature and goals of the operations. The impacts of the communities supported through discretionary subsidies cannot be assessed with any one indicator alone. Easily measurable impacts do not provide a full picture of the operative field in the overall. Some of the communities have an impact on continuity in their field through education, some by ensuring regional balance and an accessible supply, some by concentrating on diversifying the contents of the supply. The production of arts services and representation of interests also entail different kinds of impacts. Our perspective on impacts and effectiveness emphasizes the need to clarify the goals of the state subsidy policies and a more systematic approach to the implementation.

Recommendations for future measures

An overall picture needs to be formed of the situation in the different fields of the arts to specify the needs of state subsidy policies. The subsidy system of arts and cultural policies needs to be viewed on the whole. At the same time, the division of work between MinEduC and Taike with regard to supporting communities and associations needs to be clarified and concerted coordination of state subsidy policies should be increased. Taike's responsibility for supporting culture and implementing cultural policies still needs to be more clearly articulated. The level of trust between the ministry and the agency needs to be improved.

Basing state subsidy policies on a strict division by art form (organizing the administration, budgeting, rapporteur work, peer reviewing and representation of interests) reduces its flexibility. In order to allow the agency to act more flexibly with regard to the subsidies and to enhance the expert role, consideration should be given to loosening resource management further. The resources need to be in line with the goals and strategies. The operational subsidies need to be big enough. Moreover, all the communities that apply for subsidies should principally be given the chance to receive subsidies for periods longer than one year. The choices regarding the allocation of subsidies, such as budgeting and supporting different kinds of operating concepts, should be made openly and based on need analyses. The operational subsidies need to support diversity. Choices also need to be made to improve the system of operational subsidies. The implementation needs to be long-term, open and dialogical. Excess bureaucracy should be avoided. The subsidy system and the development work must be based on systematic information. The state subsidy process should include mechanisms that provide a better perception of the operators in the field of arts. The monitoring processes need to be improved. The aim should be that activities supported with the subsidies are monitored and the information gained through the monitoring is used for updating the picture of the overall situation. The peer reviewing system could be developed to better respond to the variety of information needs. The subsidy policies could then be revised based on the information. This kind of a link between the assessment and the drafting of subsidy policies has in practice been lacking.