

Let's make arts and culture the driving force of the society of the future!

The University of the Arts Student Union's Art Policy Paper

Unofficial translation

Arts and culture are an essential part of human life, an invaluable means of perceiving oneself and the world as well as a force that promotes a sense of community, dialogue and criticality. Art helps make life more meaningful and drives societal change. It helps us grow as people, teaches us about ourselves and allows us to recognise phenomena that would otherwise go unnoticed. Arts and culture have significant indirect effects – among other things, they strengthen well-being, involvement, learning and the national economy – but if we attempt to understand the value of arts and culture through these, we cannot see everything that makes them valuable. Indeed, the value of arts and culture should not be measured only instrumentally or economically; we must recognise their intrinsic value as a prerequisite for enjoying their societal benefits. Arts and culture are moulding the world and humanity in a better direction, but only if we guarantee their freedom and opportunity to change, break barriers and keep evolving.

The University of the Arts Student Union (ArtSU) is Finland's largest community of young artists. Its members include students of visual arts, music, dance, theatre, writing and arts management. ArtSU strives for a world in which the funding of arts and culture as well as the livelihood and social security of artists are at a sufficient level, cultural services and high-quality art education and training are available to everyone, arts and culture receive the societal appreciation they deserve and the art scene works in a fair and equal manner. In this policy paper, these objectives and detailed proposals for action to achieve them are presented under five themes.

ArtSU also believes that art has the power to change the world: artists create narratives through which we conceive the world and create our impressions of it. One of the most important tasks of art is to highlight different kinds of problems, and ArtSU wants to recognize the potential of the art scene and artists to solve global and social problems. We want to encourage artists to create in their work new perspectives and new narratives to solve the climate crisis, social inequalities and other problems of our time.

1. Increasing and diversifying the funding of arts and culture

Public funding, which should secure the vitality, freedom and diversity of arts and culture, is severely lagging behind the development and does not currently correspond to the societal significance of arts and creative industries. At the moment, the proportion of arts and culture of the state budget is 0.8%, whereas their proportion of the gross domestic product, employment and consumption expenditure is 3–5%. The funding of arts and culture must immediately be increased to 1% of the state budget, simultaneously broadening their funding base and securing their independence from Veikkaus profits. The funding structures must be comprehensively reformed, particularly targeting additional funding at actors who have slipped through the current structures.

- The share of arts and culture (Section 29.80) of the total expenditure in the state budget should be increased to 1% by 2025, meaning an increase of approx. €110 million from the 2019 level.
- The share of state budget funding for arts and culture appropriations in comparison to Veikkaus lottery and gambling profits should be increased, securing the independence of arts and culture from the operations of Veikkaus by means of additional funding, if necessary. In the long term, the funding of arts and culture must be completely separated from the distribution of Veikkaus profits.
- The effects of the reform of the state subsidy system for performing arts should be monitored and the system should be further developed in a way that makes it more agile, equal and responsive to changes in the art scene. Sufficient additional funding should be ensured for the system.
- The structures for supporting arts should be viewed as a strategic whole and, in addition to the state subsidy reform, other state funding (from The Ministry of Education and Culture and Arts Promotion Centre Finland, among others) should also be developed such that the whole system for

funding arts works sensibly and seamlessly. Holistic thinking should also be promoted by no longer dividing the funding into art form-specific silos.

- Additional funding should be particularly targeted at actors who have so far been left with lower funding, such as the free field, completely new art forms, actors left in between current art forms as well as art forms whose funding structures are weaker than those of others, not enabling a proper livelihood for the actors.
- The significance of arts and culture for well-being and business policy should be recognised, and their funding base should be extended from the Ministry of Education and Culture to the administrative sectors of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment.
- Private funding channels for arts and culture should also be developed, e.g. by making donating to the arts easier, and creative industries and their international exports should be highlighted as a key development area for business policy.

2. Improving the livelihood and social security of artists

On average, artists are highly educated, but too few of them have a genuine opportunity to make a living from their artistic work – by contrast, many artists live near or even clearly below the poverty level. The situation is not made easier by the fact that full-time employment relationships are rare in the field of arts, and that artists are regrettably often offered unpaid or grossly underpaid work. On the other hand, the social security system for artists who earn their living from several different sources is inflexible and confusing and, in many cases, leads to welfare traps. The appreciation of arts must also be shown by giving artists, like all other professionals, the chance to achieve a reasonable level of income and social security that takes into account various situations in life.

- The number of state artist grants should be increased by 100 grant years, their level should be increased to at least €30,000 per year and tied to an index, and the maximum limit for tax-free grants should be increased.
- Artists working in various fields should have better opportunities to work in an employment relationship if they so desire, and the practice of replacing the permanent ensemble with freelancers, which is currently happening at performing arts institutes, should be discontinued. The opportunity to turn artist grants into employment relationships and wages should also be investigated by carrying out an experiment concerning this.
- Artists working in the teaching profession should be given all their work benefits and unnecessary chaining of fixed-term employment relationships should be eliminated.
- Putting together a living from several different sources should be made more flexible by, among other things, enabling easier mobility between an employment relationship and entrepreneurship, transferring irregular income into a fund like athletes do with their sports income, taking the special nature of artistic work into account in the legislation concerning entrepreneurs and creating legislation on so-called light entrepreneurship.
- Attention should be paid to recognising the work performed by artists, making sure that artists receive reasonable compensation for both their artistic work and the related specialist work. A permanent exhibition remuneration system should be created for visual artists, and it should be ensured that, among others, performing artists also receive compensation during practice seasons.
- The number of supplementary artist pensions should be increased by 100 full pensions, and the pension security for artists should be made clearer by discontinuing the use of several parallel pension systems and bringing all artistic work under MYEL insurance.
- The social security of the self-employed, freelancers and grant recipients should be improved by, for example, allowing short grants to be added up and taking the special nature of artistic work better into account in the instructions for applying social security practices.
- The move to universal basic income as soon as possible should be promoted, since this would solve many of the problems concerning the social security of artists.

3. Increasing the appreciation of arts and improving the availability of cultural services for everyone

As the nature of work changes, creativity, interactive skills and empathy will be increasingly important in the society of the future and can be promoted through arts and culture. Participation in culture has also been found to be connected to good perceived health, quality of life and happiness, and involvement in arts plays an important role in preventing social exclusion. It is of utmost importance that equal opportunities to enjoy cultural services be guaranteed to everyone regardless of their income level, place of residence or background. This in turn requires that the value of arts, culture and artistic work be recognised in both people's daily lives and societal decision-making.

- The accessibility of cultural services for special groups and people with low income should be promoted through various kinds of affirmative action, by ensuring accessibility and the sufficient availability of affordable tickets and by taking art to audiences that are unable to access cultural services themselves.
- It should be ensured that art services are available everywhere in Finland and that artists also have a genuine opportunity to work outside big cities. However, art should not be harnessed for the needs of regional policy.
- The self-motivated cultural activities of people, from various recreational clubs to local events, should be encouraged by, for example, offering more low-threshold subsidies and guidance, better putting unused facilities to temporary use and easing the bureaucracy involved in organising events.
- The Percent for Art principle in construction projects should also be extended to fields other than visual arts, and the implementation of the principle should be promoted in sectors of society other than construction projects.
- The use of artistic thinking and art-based methods should be extended, and artists' skills should be identified as a significant resource and utilised in a versatile manner for varied needs in various sectors of society, from service design to urban planning and from social and health services to creative problem-solving.
- General awareness of art as a profession should be increased, and the appreciation of artists should be improved, along with people's ability to recognise artists who work professionally. General attitudes should be changed such that being an artist is not merely considered a hobby or calling but also a profession that requires hard work and must provide a sufficient level of income like any other.
- General awareness of copyrights should be raised, copyright protection should be strengthened, and proper compensation should be ensured for artists whenever contents produced by them are utilised.
- The significance of arts and culture to Finland's intellectual and financial development should be recognised, and the Finnish Government should have a Minister of Culture who concentrates on cultural policy.

4. Securing high-quality art education and training all the way from early childhood education to universities

According to studies, art and cultural education strengthens the abilities to be actively involved in society, and the use of artistic methods has been found to support learning in all fields. Teaching in various art forms in schools, hobbies and liberal adult education offers resources and skills for self-development and the utilisation of creativity in working life. Finnish higher education in arts is among the best in the world – the country's most successful field of study in terms of international rankings – and a special strength of university art education is the strong link between art and research. Education in various fields of art is a key part of the Finnish university scene, and the position and special needs of arts in comparison to science must be remembered when developing universities and allocating appropriations.

- The role of art education provided by professionals should be strengthened in early childhood education, as well as the position of practical and art subjects in comprehensive school by bringing arts subject teachers already in primary schools and making performing arts a new school subject. Recreational art activities in connection with the school day should be increased, and more use of artistic methods should also be made in subjects other than art subjects.
- The funding of basic art education should be improved to secure the quality of teaching and equal opportunities for children and young people to participate in basic education in various fields of art regardless of their wealth and place of residence.
- Interaction between providers of basic art education and higher art education should be improved in order for basic education to provide sufficient capabilities for transfer to university studies in all art fields and all areas of the country.
- The quality, funding and diversity of higher art education should be ensured, and the educational offering in arts should be developed in line with the development of the art scene. All teachers in higher education in the arts should be required to have sufficient pedagogical skills and they should also be offered opportunities to update their skills.
- The University of the Arts Helsinki will be developed into an increasingly diverse centre of higher art education, providing education in the existing fields as well as cinematic art, circus art and visual arts education, for instance. However, this must not mean the strong or intentional centralisation of art education to Uniarts Helsinki; instead, art education and research must continue to be based on dialogue and various perspectives and be provided at various universities.
- The sense of community in Finnish art education and among art students should be improved, increasing contacts across borders between fields of art and universities and thus creating versatile and innovative artists. The students' interdisciplinary co-operation and activities creating new kinds of relations should be promoted, as well as students' opportunities to form new types of combinations in their studies by taking courses more freely from other universities.
- The internationalisation of art education should be facilitated by restoring free-of-charge education to students from outside the EU/EEA and improving the international study possibilities of Finnish students by increasing the funding of the Erasmus programme, among other things.

5. Promoting the equality and diversity of the art scene

While art and artists often strive to address societal problems, the field of arts also has structural problems of its own. Women are underrepresented in many fields of art and their income level is lower than that of men, the Finnish art scene and institutions are still very white, various minorities are poorly represented, and the #MeToo campaign revealed a culture of sexual harassment and gender discrimination in arts. Higher art education is very strongly hereditary, there are significant differences in income level between various art forms, and artists often cannot participate in decision-making that concerns themselves. These problems must be addressed, aiming together to build a more equal and diverse art scene that is fairer to everyone, so that artists can make their contribution to building a better world.

- The diversity of arts and culture and their creators as well as the equality and appropriate practices of the field of arts should be promoted by, for instance, taking them into account in the public funding criteria.
- The access of women and gender minorities to art careers should be promoted and their income level should be raised to the same level with male artists. The encouragement and consideration of representatives of various genders ever since childhood should be critically assessed, and so should other factors that affect seeking a career in arts and respect gained in arts.
- The access of minorities and other special groups to art careers and art studies should be supported. For example, Romani and Sami people, people with an immigrant or refugee background and people with disabilities often face obstacles and discriminatory structures when seeking art education; these obstacles must be removed, promoting the opportunities of these people to work as artists, get their work displayed and make their voices heard in the art scene. Genuine circumstances for creating and consuming art in Finnish minority languages should be developed.

- All forms of sexual harassment and gender discrimination in arts must be actively tackled with adequate penalties and by providing victims with low-threshold support services. Inappropriate behaviour must be prevented by means such as mandatory training and creating clear rules for proper treatment and procedures for problem situations.
- The opportunities of people with a low-income background to seek a career in arts should be improved, along with the opportunities of artists at the lowest income level to work equally with their colleagues in the art scene. Structures like exhibition rents, which force artists to pay in order to get their work displayed, should be removed and replaced with subsidies paid to galleries.
- The opportunities of artists to participate in decision-making concerning art and artists should be improved. It should be ensured that bodies making decisions on grants and subsidies, art institutions and work groups preparing large cultural projects also include representatives of artists, who receive reasonable compensation for their work.
- Structures and hierarchies prevailing in the art scene should be critically assessed, developing them and spreading good practices from one field of art to another such that the entire sector can develop in an increasingly equal and fair direction.
- Equality in the arts should be looked after also by fighting climate change. Art institutions should be made genuinely carbon-neutral by 2030 and the criteria for mobility grants for artists should be changed in a more climate-friendly direction.

APPENDIX: Making ArtSU a key influence in Finnish art policy

The University of the Arts Student Union strives to become one of the key parties in the Finnish art and cultural policy discussion, an art policy influence larger than its size. ArtSU's key strength is our ability to bring together the opinions of young artists representing various art forms: we think that the views of a community of art students from various fields should have more weight than those of associations representing individual fields of art. In its activities, ArtSU highlights art policy that transcends the borders between art forms and looks to the future, aiming to actively cooperate with other actors in the art scene and also more extensively increase the joint advocacy work conducted by various actors in arts.

- ArtSU highlights art policy that brings art forms together and transcends their borders, committing itself to promoting the position of artists in a way that does not favour any art form at the expense of others. ArtSU strives to increase dialogue between various fields of art, improve their understanding of problems and reconcile differing interests. ArtSU also takes into account fields of art that are not publicly represented at the University of the Arts Helsinki.
- ArtSU's advocacy work focuses on the future of art, the development of working methods and the position of young artists. ArtSU tries to predict the direction in which art is developing, to highlight the ethics and sustainability of operating practices and working methods and to develop the art scene with an eye to future generations of artists in particular.
- ArtSU emphasises the importance of cooperation and joint advocacy work between various actors in the art scene, actively striving to bring together actors in various fields of art and extend the common, cross-artistic supervision of interests, also aiming to make it part of the activities of other associations.
- ArtSU primarily promotes its art policy guidelines in cooperation with other actors in the culture scene. ArtSU takes part in the activities of existing networks of cultural policy advocacy, actively aiming to establish relations with other actors.
- ArtSU also conducts independent advocacy work at the national level by, for example, meeting officials from Arts Promotion Centre Finland and the Ministry of Education and Culture, Members of Parliament interested in cultural policy and, when possible, also the Minister of Culture and the minister's assistants.
- Methods used by ArtSU in its art policy advocacy work include materials produced for conventional and social media as well as various events (like discussion events for members, partially in collaboration with other art and cultural actors and student unions). If necessary, art policy questions may be kept to the fore in all ArtSU's activities, including various events.

- Students of the University of the Arts Helsinki will be working in various positions in the culture scene in the very near future, and many future decision-makers are growing within the student movement. In this respect, art policy advocacy also includes the capabilities that ArtSU offers to its members for art policy advocacy work, the opportunities for networking as well as the creation of a positive image as an artist and arousing an interest in arts within the entire student movement.

Approved by the University of the Arts Student Union Representative Council at its meeting 1/2020 (9.3.2020).