

WHEN ART THRIVES, FINLAND THRIVES

The background is a vibrant red. A series of diagonal stripes in a lighter shade of red runs from the bottom left towards the top right. Several circles of different colors and patterns are scattered across the page: a dark red circle in the upper right, a purple circle in the middle left, a white circle with a grey geometric pattern in the middle right, a yellow circle in the bottom right, and a circle with red and white diagonal stripes in the middle left.

Strategic goals for
the Government Programme
2019–2023 by the Artists'
Association of Finland

Artists' Association of Finland

The Artists' Association of Finland, founded in 1864, is an advocate for visual art and artists. Through 6 member organisations the Association represents 3 000 professional artists in Finland. AAF works to improve working conditions for visual artists as well as to advance policy and legislative change to encourage the growth and development of the sector. The Association also enhances the visibility and significance of visual arts in the society.

The Artists' Association of Finland has 6 member organisations:

Artists' Association MUU
Association of Finnish Sculptors
Union of Finnish Art Associations
Association of Finnish Printmakers
Finnish Painters' Union
Photographic Artists' Association

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STRATEGIC GOALS FOR THE GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME 2019-2023 BY THE ARTISTS' ASSOCIATION OF FINLAND

- 1.** Increasing funding for visual art to parallel that in other art forms
- 2.** Permanently raising funding for art and culture to a minimum of one percent of the government budget
- 3.** Raising the level of working grants for artists and increasing their number
- 4.** Increasing the number of artist pensions
- 5.** Consolidating the system of exhibition payment
- 6.** Strengthening the percent for art principle
- 7.** Developing the spectrum of artists' livelihood
- 8.** Developing the mediator level of visual art

Artists deserve proper compensation for their work

Finnish museums, galleries and visual art events see about 4.6 million visitors every year.¹ That is an impressive number. It is more than the number of visitors for theatre, dance and circus combined.² Finland is indeed a nation of art lovers.

Visual arts are part of the everyday lives, identities and welfare of Finnish citizens, providing experiences and fostering new ideas that benefit society as a whole. Diverse, high-quality art that is regionally accessible is a right enjoyed by everyone in Finland.

The presence of art is vital – an absolute necessity – for a thriving and successful nation.

Artists document and interpret the society in which they live, anticipating the future and challenging existing ideas and conceptions. Art is a collective way for thinking about how we want to live and for what purpose. Art is also a distinct form of enjoyment and a way to create and rehearse new, pleasurable forms of experience. Art can make us more sensitive and compassionate.

Art is also an important industry. Over 3,000 professional artists work in this field in Finland, which also provides employment for thousands of other professionals in e.g. museums and galleries. A vibrant art world is an important asset for national image and for the tourism industry. Art is always worth investing in, not only because it involves collective, intangible benefits but also because investment in culture is beneficial to the national economy and its competitiveness.

The production of art and other cultural content is not free, however; it requires creative professionals, who in turn need financial security. Without the work of visual artists, there would be no art exhibitions in museums, no public artworks to catch a glimpse of on our way to work, nor would we be able to buy art from a gallery to hang on our walls.

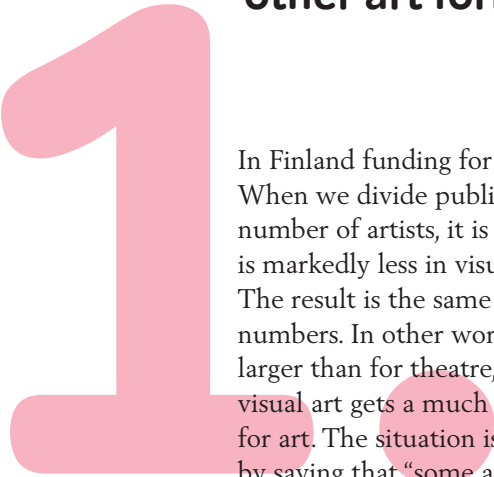
Like all workers, artists need adequate support structures and proper compensation for their work in order to ensure success in their creative work and their wellbeing. Visual arts are popular in Finland, and people are accustomed to enjoying art for free or inexpensively. A consequence of existing structures and inadequate funding in visual art is that often even popular artists are unable to earn but nominal compensation for their work. The structures must therefore be changed, and funding for visual art must be raised to the same level as other art forms.

1 Frame Contemporary Art Finland: Statistics for visual art 2017.

2 Theatre Info Finland: Theatre statistics 2017.



Increasing funding for visual art to parallel that in other art forms



In Finland funding for art is weakest in the visual arts. When we divide public funds for visual art by the number of artists, it is clear that per capita funding is markedly less in visual art than in other art forms. The result is the same if we divide the funds by audience numbers. In other words, audiences for visual art are larger than for theatre, dance and circus combined, yet visual art gets a much smaller slice of public allocations for art. The situation is unfair, and it cannot be dismissed by saying that “some artforms simply have bigger production costs than others”. It is the opinion of Artists’ Association of Finland that visual art must finally be raised to the same level of funding as other artforms.

Unlike the performing arts, visual art enjoys no system of statutory central government transfers in which the

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state and municipalities together contribute to funding in art. This structural funding bias cannot be rectified simply with additional funding: what visual art needs is a law that will safeguard their position vis-à-vis public funding. The law would ensure the continuity and renewal on the national level of organisations, intermediary structures and independent groups. It would also improve the livelihood and working conditions of artists, the accessibility of art and regional attractiveness. In the long term, the law would ensure a more equal funding position for visual art compared to other art forms. **While the law is being prepared, we need to take efficient action to rectify funding problems in the present moment.**

Art and culture funding must be increased permanently to a minimum of one percent of the government budget

Creative industries are growing rapidly in Finland: their combined share of the GDP is 3.6%,³ and 3.5% of all Finns work in the sector.⁴ Creative industries are already a more important part of the national economy than many traditional fields of industrial and primary production.

Art is a worthwhile investment because it is an unlimited and generally very ecological resource with a huge potential for growth and a high level of processing.

Appropriations for art and culture in the Government budget should also be increased because of their welfare impacts. Mere growth of the GDP does not increase happiness or remove obstacles from happiness. We also need contemplative experiences and meaningfulness that art can produce.

It is also important to sever the link between funding in the arts and the Finnish state-owned gaming company Veikkaus. The share of gambling proceeds in the funding of art and culture has been growing for a long time and currently constitutes over one-half of the total. This trend needs to be reversed, because art is a vital basic right and a pillar of society, and its funding must not rely on revenues from gambling.

³ *Luova talous ja aineettoman arvon luominen kasvun kärjiksi. Report of the working group on recognising the creative sectors as a driver of Finnish economy and employment.* Publications of the Ministry of Education and Culture 2017:18.

⁴ Labour Force Survey 2017, Statistics Finland.

GOVERNMENT BUDGET

The share of art and culture in the Government budget in 2018 was about 0.8%.⁵ This should be increased to at least one percent to ensure that this growing sector, which employs an ever-greater number of people, will continue to develop. The increase would require an additional annual investment of about 100 million euros.

0.8%

⁵ The share of art and culture in the 2018 Government budget is about 457,000,000 euros.

Increasing the size and number of working grants for artists

Artists create content that the public enjoys in venues such as museums and galleries. In some sectors such as visual arts and literature, most of this productive work is done alone and without the protection afforded by an employment relationship. One can concentrate on creative work only if one has sufficient resources. Working grants awarded by the State and foundations are therefore a crucially important form of visual art funding.

The amount of working grants awarded by the Finnish State for periods extending from six months to five years, about 1,700 euros/month, lags markedly behind other income levels. When the system was launched in 1968, the grant lifted the recipient to the middle-income bracket and even beyond – for at least a year or even a few years. Currently, the grant is so small that it often fails to elevate the artist above the poverty threshold;⁶ up to one third of Finnish visual artists presently live and work below the poverty line.⁷

The number of these State grants is also insufficient: only one in nine applicants is awarded the grant. **Visual arts fare worse than other art forms, with just one applicant in 12, or about eight percent, awarded the working grant.**

The Finnish Government is currently allocating only 10.5 million euros per year for artist working grants. Although that accounts for just 2.3% of all cultural appropriations of the State, it is arguably the most cost-efficient and important form of funding for artists. When art appropriations are increased, the additional funding should therefore target working grants.

6 When the statutory pension and accident insurance is deducted from the working grant (1,709 euros/month), the remainder is 1,479 euros/month. That is only 279 euros over the official poverty line (appr. 1,200 euros/month as of 2016). If an artist needs to use the grant for work-related expenses in addition to living, the real net income easily falls below the poverty line. Income distribution statistics 2016, Statistics Finland.

7 Kaija Rensuieff: *Taiteilijan asema* (Arts Promotion Centre Finland, 2014). According to Rensuieff's study, visual artists earn, on average, less than professionals in other fields of art.

8 The amount of a display grant will rise to 10,400 euros in 2019, but because the total funds used for the grants remains unchanged, fewer artists will receive the grant.

WE RECOMMEND THAT

- 1 The State working grant be raised to a minimum of 2,400 euros per month + MYEL insurance (ca. 14%), and that the grant be linked to general indexation as per general collective labour agreements.
- 2 The total amount of State working grants awarded annually be increased by a hundred grant years (grants are awarded for 0.5, 1, 3, and 5 years).
- 3 The amount of display grants awarded to visual artists should be doubled by raising the annually awarded sum to 1,920,000 euros.
- 4 An experimental system of an artist wage should be instituted to complement the working grant system.

> We will support such an experiment, subject to the following conditions:

- 4.1 That the number of annually awarded working grants is not reduced by the experiment.
- 4.2 The level of taxable artist wage is, at minimum, the same as for Finland Arts Promotion Centre's regional artists (ca. 2,700 euros/month).
- 4.3 Artists working with an artist wage are guaranteed the same artistic freedom as artists working on a grant.

Alongside working grants, display grants play an important role in the funding of visual art. They are awarded to professional artists who exhibit their work publicly. The grant amount is 8,000 euros, and it is awarded to 120 artists annually.⁸ The overall sum of display grants awarded has remained almost unchanged since 1997, when the first grants were awarded (960,000 euros in 2018).

Increasing the number of artist pensions

A large number of artists are in a situation where hardly any pension accrues during their active years, regardless of how industrious they are and how prominently they feature in leading art forums. The reason for this is that many artists are neither salaried employees or entrepreneurs but work as freelancers or in casual employment. An artist pension granted by the Government is therefore an important and highly desirable form of basic security, in particular to many visual artists. However, less than 12% of all applicants received an artist pension in 2017.

In recent years, about 60 artists pensions have been granted annually. We suggest that this number be increased by 100 pensions.

Establishing an exhibition payment system

Holding an exhibition is at the very core of a visual artist's practice. **Without works created by artists, art museums would display empty walls. It is therefore only fair and right that artists are compensated for holding an exhibition.**

Art museums are a key distribution channel for visual art. Unfortunately, artists often receive insignificant or even no compensation for presenting their work in a museum. Museums admittedly buy art for their collections, but statistically that is an exception: the majority of works by living artists shown in museums are on loan from the artist. Moreover, an increasingly large number of visual artworks are temporary structures, performances or participatory actions that by their very nature cannot be purchased for a collection.

Most art museums pay the artist an exhibition copyright fee required by copyright law for the public display of artworks.⁹ The copyright fee often remains quite small, however, and does not include wages or compensation for the production of the exhibition. It is therefore important that artists are paid an exhibition payment in addition to the exhibition copyright fee,

⁹ kuvasto.fi/
nayttelykorvaus
(in Finnish only).

The results of the experiment were so encouraging that the exhibition payment system should be made permanent.

ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EXHIBITION PAYMENT SYSTEM WOULD REQUIRE THE FOLLOWING MEASURES TO BE TAKEN:

- 1 The Government must require that art museums pay an exhibition payment every time an exhibition includes work by living artists. Government funding for museums must be made conditional of payment of both the exhibition copyright fee and the exhibition payment.
- 2 The Government must increase operational appropriations to museums so that museums are able to pay the exhibition copyright fee and payment without having to scale down their operations.
- 3 The size of the exhibition payment should be determined approximately as follows: Participation in a group exhibition in a museum is roughly equal to one week's worth of work, and a solo exhibition corresponds to, at minimum, one month's workload.
- 4 Museums must pay both the copyright fee and the exhibition payment – one cannot be used to replace the other.
- 5 Calculations made by the Artists' Association of Finland indicate that establishment of the exhibition payment system will cost about 1,000,000 euros per year.

that is, compensation for the work undertaken for arranging the exhibition. In this respect, an artist's work in an art museum can be compared to the work of performing arts professionals in orchestras and theatres.

The Ministry of Education and Culture launched an experimental exhibition payment project in 2017. Museums were presented with an opportunity to apply for additional funding to pay artists for holding an exhibition at the museum. The results of the project were so encouraging that the exhibition payment system should be made permanent.

Strengthening the Percent for Art principle

Under the Percent for Art principle, a certain percentage of the budget of construction projects must be set aside for the purchase of art.

The scheme is an excellent and tested means to bring artworks into public spaces and everyday environments. The increase in commissions generated by the system entails more job opportunities and therefore better livelihood for artists. The system has produced excellent results in many construction and renovation projects, and application of the principle should be strengthened. In the future, the Percent for Art system should also be applied in projects other than just those of the construction sector.

OUR SUGGESTION FOR PRACTICAL MEASURES:

- 1 The Percent for Art principle also should be applied in the Government's construction and renovations projects.
- 2 Support services should be created for municipalities and private contractors on how to apply the Percent for Art principle and other models for the procurement and funding of public art.
- 3 The Percent for Art principle should be extended to other areas such as social and health services. Artists have a lot to offer any organisation and context as long as their particular competences and artistic freedom are respected.

7

Developing the palette of livelihoods of artists

Work and the nature of employment relations have changed radically in our society. The number of temporary workers, freelancers and precarious labour is growing fast. Artists, for the most part, belong to the group of people dependent on fragmented income. **Artists typically earn their livelihood from various sources: sale of artworks, gigs, grants, copyright fees, wages and income from entrepreneurship.**

Many artists finance their creative endeavours by taking on all sorts of other work, such as teaching art or even working in an entirely different field. It is also common for artists to create art and maintain their skills while living on social or unemployment benefits, because artistic work is essentially holistic: a writer writes, a painter paints and a dancer dances, regardless of whether they are able to receive any income from it or not.

Together all these sources of income constitute the complex palette of livelihoods. The palette merits to also be developed by the Government while accepting the facts and cherishing the distinctive character of the artistic endeavour.

This issue needs to be addressed, because demand and success do not automatically translate into a fair livelihood. Many artists enjoy large audiences and prestige yet are poor. Moreover, the income palette of artists is unbalanced: some forms of artistic work pay well, while others earn one merely a nominal sum or no compensation at all.

10 Visual artists pay pension contributions to the Farmers' Social Insurance Institution (Mela) from their working grants, and self-employed persons' pension contributions (YEL) from other work-related income.

OUR SUGGESTIONS ARE:

- 1 Measures are needed to make it easier for artists to move between an employment relationship and independent entrepreneurship and also to engage in artistic work that does not fit the traditional categories of wage-based work or entrepreneurship.
- 2 Independent artists' pension insurance earned from sources of income other than in an employment relationship needs to be moved entirely under the Farmers' Pensions Act and to be administered by the Farmers' Social Insurance Institution (Mela). Currently, visual artists need to pay pension insurance for themselves in two different systems.¹⁰ The practice is confusing, and in some cases the pension contribution for a piece of work must be paid twice. Under the current system, pension accrual is poor relative to the insurance payments.
- 3 The system of social and unemployment benefits needs to be developed to ensure that laws and justice are also carried out in the case of artists. Artists often receive no social or unemployment benefits due to unfamiliarity with existing law and its arbitrary application. In reality, the so-called "activation model", that was recently adopted in Finland, does not activate the self-employed but punishes them and makes artists' work more difficult. The law needs to be interpreted to mean that artists are allowed to exhibit when they are unemployed: it maintains their professional skills, promotes their potential for employment and does not prevent them from accepting other work such as commissions or teaching.
- 4 The copyright system needs to be developed. Artists need to have a stronger position in negotiations concerning their own rights as creators. The authority of copyright organisations must be strengthened to ensure that artists do not find themselves the underdog when negotiating with large institutions or companies. The Government must not pretend to be merely a judge in this situation it must take a more active role in developing legislation and prevalent practices so as to safeguard the author's rights of artists and improve their opportunities for earning.

Developing the system of intermediaries in visual art

Visual art audiences are huge, yet artists are struggling to receive fair compensation for their work.

One of the most efficient ways to improve this situation is to develop the system of visual art intermediaries in Finland. **The system of intermediaries comprises galleries, museums, curators, art coordinators, art lending services and online sales.** These actors and their modes of operation need to be improved to reduce the detrimental free distribution of visual art, to enhance artists' income from sales and copyright fees and to facilitate the path of Finnish art to the international market.

WE SUGGEST THAT THE SYSTEM OF INTERMEDIARIES BE DEVELOPED AS FOLLOWS:

- 1 The exhibition payment system should be established as an obligatory component of the contractual and remunerative practices of museum exhibitions. Holding exhibitions in art museums is a key aspect of a visual artist's practice, one that must bring a fair monetary compensation instead of just a handshake.
- 2 The majority of art exhibitions are held in galleries where admission is free. The field of galleries must be developed so as to ensure that artists will receive income from exhibitions more regularly than at present, instead of having to carry the cost of free distribution. On the one hand, the commercial skills of galleries need to be improved and their efforts at selling and exporting art to international markets must be supported. On the other hand, we must recognise that many galleries are more akin to libraries than commercial outlets: their value lies in that they bring visual art to the public in places and contexts where it is difficult to operate profitably in a commercial sense. Non-commercial galleries often focus on presenting experimental, new and socially critical art rarely exhibited in commercial galleries. Both types of galleries and their exhibition operations must be developed.
- 3 Art lending services must be developed. Art renters loan and sell art to private individuals and companies. Lending services help the general public find and acquire artworks, generate extra income for artists and significantly lower the threshold for buying art. New forms of income are sorely needed, because from an artist's perspective, exhibitions are currently more or less a form of free art distribution, and purchases are quite rare.



ARTISTS'
ASSOCIATION
OF FINLAND

