

Artist wellbeing

Artist wellbeing

This guide provides advice for visual artists on how to find information on issues related to comprehensive wellbeing at work.

Wellbeing at work consists of **occupational health and safety** as well as **psychological, physical, social and mental wellbeing**. All these factors have an impact on how you cope with your work.

Artists are typically very highly motivated to work in the creative fields and have a multisectoral skill set. Artists have to be able to perform a whole range of tasks besides their creative work.

Artists can be freelancers, self-employed or employed by someone else. Your status dictates where and how you can seek help and support for coping with work and improving your wellbeing at work. Often artists are not in an employment relationship and they are responsible for their own wellbeing, health and work ability. If you are employed, some of these responsibilities are shared by your employer.

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Occupational healthcare for visual artists

Self-employed

If you are not employed by someone else, you are not provided with healthcare by your employer. You are responsible for organising your own occupational healthcare and ensuring your safety.

If you have YEL insurance, you can make your own healthcare arrangements and receive compensation from the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (KELA). You can also take up your own voluntary private insurance to cover yourself at work. Because you have to pay for your own insurance and any tools, etc., you need for your work, you should make sure that you take these expenses into consideration when negotiating on the compensation you receive for your work.

As a self-employed artist, you can use the services of your designated public health centre or go to a private health clinic at your own expense. Basic healthcare services are available at local health centres while specialist care is provided in hospitals. Any acute or prolonged health problems are primarily treated at your local health centre.

If you are an entrepreneur, you can get a private occupational healthcare plan and receive some compensation for it from KELA. KELA will reimburse some occupational healthcare costs if you have YEL or MYEL insurance. Reimbursements can also be granted if your insurance plan was terminated due to disability while you were receiving the cash rehabilitation benefit or fixed-term disability pension. You are also entitled to reimbursement if you took up an occupational healthcare plan during rehabilitation or while receiving a fixed-term disability pension. Dental care is not compensated by KELA.

If you are taxed under the Finnish Business Income Tax Act, you can deduct as business expenses those work-related healthcare expenses that are accepted by KELA. You can deduct the actual amount you paid for your occupational healthcare. The reimbursement paid by KELA is regarded as taxable income. In practice, your occupational healthcare expenses for which you have not received reimbursement from KELA make up the amount you can deduct.

Employees

The Finnish Occupational Health Care Act and the Finnish Occupational Safety and Health Act oblige employers to arrange occupational healthcare services for their employees and ensure their safety at work. Moreover, most employers are legally required to insure their employees against occupational accidents and diseases.

According to the Occupational Health Care Act, “the employer shall arrange occupational health care at their own expense in order to prevent and control health risks and problems related to work and working conditions and to protect and promote the safety, working capacity and health of their employees.

Occupational health care shall be organised and implemented to the extent required by the work, working arrangements, personnel and workplace conditions, and any changes in these”.

The employer must provide employees with at least a minimum level of statutory occupational healthcare. At the bare minimum, such occupational healthcare includes only the preventative occupational healthcare services stated in law, and the employer may acquire these services from a public occupational healthcare provider. Statutory occupational healthcare also includes work-related

health checks, a workplace survey, support for maintaining work ability and examining work-related illnesses or symptoms. Statutory occupational healthcare does not include hospital treatment; providing this is completely at the employer's discretion.

Personal insurance for grant recipients

If you are a recipient of a working grant awarded by a Finnish foundation for several months, the foundation may offer you an additional grant for you to take out personal insurance. Personal insurance includes accident and life insurance and covers expenses from medical treatment. This type of insurance will allow you to use private healthcare services with a small excess. For more information on personal insurance, you should contact the foundation that awarded you your working grant.

More information and instructions on how to arrange your occupational healthcare as an entrepreneur and the expenses involved can be found on the [KELA](#) and [Finnish Tax Administration](#) (in Finnish) websites.

Mental health services

If you experience any issues affecting your mental health, you should contact your designated health centre or go directly to your local Casualty department. [MIELI Mental Health Finland](#) has a Crisis Helpline that can be contacted 24/7.

You can find more information on the mental health services in your local area on the [Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare \(THL\)](#) website.

Rehabilitation

The Artists' Association of Finland offers its professional artist members the possibility to get rehabilitation to maintain their work ability. KIIILA occupational rehabilitation services aim to improve health and support work ability. KIIILA courses are designed to meet the needs of each individual, and they are organised every year in cooperation with the rehabilitation service provider. You can apply for a course if you are an artist and under 67. You need a Medical Statement B from your doctor for your application.

You can find information on KIIILA rehabilitation courses on the Artists' Association of Finland [website](#) and newsletter.

In addition to work-related rehabilitation services, KELA also offers rehabilitation for people suffering from musculoskeletal diseases, for example. There are various group and individual rehabilitation options available across the country. You apply for any of these rehabilitation services through [KELA](#). You first need to see a doctor, who will assess your rehabilitation needs. If you need rehabilitation, your doctor will write you a referral.

Occupational safety

Self-employed

If you are self-employed, you are responsible for your own occupational safety. If you receive a working grant for more than four months, you are eligible for occupational accident insurance in addition to your MYEL pension insurance. Self-employed persons with YEL insurance may take up voluntary accident insurance to cover them against accidents at work or work-related diseases. You can also include leisure insurance in your insurance plan.

Employees

According to the Finnish Occupational Safety and Health Act, employers are responsible for the safety and health of their employees at work. The employer is obliged to monitor the working environment, identify and assess any risks associated with the work, take the necessary corrective measures and monitor the impact of these measures on safety and health at work. If necessary, employers must take further action. The employer is responsible for familiarising employees with the working conditions, correct working methods and safety instructions.

Moreover, most employers are required to insure their employees against occupational accidents and diseases under the Finnish Workers' Compensation Act. However, the employer does not have this insurance obligation if the wages and salaries paid, or agreed to be paid, by the employer for the work commissioned in a calendar year do not exceed EUR 1,200. The Finnish Workers' Compensation Center handles any cases where an accident has occurred while performing uninsured work.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act, the employee is obliged to comply with the regulations and safety instructions issued by the employer. When working, the employee must take care of their

own health and safety and the health and safety of others and inform the employer and the occupational safety and health representative of any faults or defects identified.

If a worker is in an employment relationship and carries out work outside the employer's premises using tools/equipment not provided by the employer, the employer has the following responsibilities concerning safety at work:

- The employer does not have the right to enter the employee's home or office without permission. The employer cannot decide which tools/equipment is used.
- The employer must agree with the artist on which materials, work methods, protective equipment and chemicals will be used. The employer and the artist should discuss the potential risks involved, for example, in welding or using solvents.
- If the artist does not have the necessary protective equipment, the employer is usually obliged to provide them. However, such protective equipment must be returned to the employer when the employment relationship ends.
- It is also possible for the artist to buy tools/equipment and then keep them after the employment relationship has ended. However, this must be agreed between the employer and the artist. The employer cannot expect the artist to buy the tools/equipment necessary for the work.

You can find more information on psychosocial workload, its assessment and management on the [Occupational Safety and Health Administration website](#).

Social media

Social media has changed the way we work and is increasingly part of our virtual working environment. There is great potential in using social media, and every artist has to decide for themselves how they want to use social media to showcase their projects and share information about events.

The Centre for Occupational Safety has drawn up a guide on the safe and sensible use of social media for work purposes. You can find the guide at the [Centre for Occupational Safety website](#) (in Finnish).

Equality and non-discrimination

Everyone has the right to be treated equally at work. Under the Finnish Non-Discrimination Act, no one may be discriminated against on the basis of their age, origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, political activity, trade union activity, family relationships, state of health, disability, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics.

In a fair society, personal characteristics, such as ethnicity or skin colour, must not affect people's access to education, work or services. Fundamental rights belong to everyone. The Finnish Constitution describes both the unlawful nature of discrimination and the principle of equality in front of the law.

Discrimination is illegal in the recruitment stage, during employment and when employment ends. Employers can discriminate against people even before recruitment by setting unfair selection criteria or by the way they advertise jobs. Employers are obliged to take action after being notified of discrimination. If the employer takes no action and nothing is done about the matter, you can contact the occupational safety and health authorities. Their nationwide telephone service gives advice and instructions related to health and safety at work and employment terms.

Ombudsman for Equality (Tasa-arvo.fi)

If you suspect that you have been discriminated against due to your gender, gender identity or gender expression, you can contact the Ombudsman for Equality for guidance and information.

Equality.fi is a database maintained by the Finnish Ministry of Justice and it contains information and tools for persons and organisations interested in promotion of equality and non-discrimination.

Support for visual artists

The Artists' Association of Finland provides its member artists with legal advice and counselling services concerning, for example, work-related discrimination and sexual harassment. You should not hesitate to contact the Association's legal adviser if you think that you have been treated unfairly. All your communications will be in confidence.

The Artists' Association of Finland website Making a living as a visual artist provides you with practical information, advice and support on being an artist and how to advance your professional development. The website contains information for visual artists on social security, taxation, agreements, organisation of work and the sale of works.

Useful websites and literature

Taiteilijan työsuojeluopas Heli Salonen (2015)

An artist's guide to occupational safety which deals comprehensively with issues related to safety in the work of graphic artists and painters covering, for example, materials, technologies and workspaces. (In Finnish)

Taiteilijan työ : Taiteilijan hyvinvointi taidetyön muutoksessa, edited by Pia Houni and Heli Ansio (2013)

A publication on the wellbeing of artists drawing from the study "*Artists' wellbeing in the transition of art work*". (In Finnish)

She plays like a man! How to strengthen equality and wellbeing at work in the cultural field? Anna Anttila (2019)

A Cupore research publication offering a compilation of good practices, regulations, policy recommendations and policies for promoting gender equality. It also includes examples on how wellbeing at work and more equal work conditions can be advanced.

Clear Expectations Archie Barry and Spence Messih (2019)

Guidelines for institutions, galleries and curators working with trans, non-binary and gender diverse artists.

Työsuojelu.fi

Website of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in Finland

The Centre for Occupational Safety

The Centre for Occupational Safety website contains guides, webinars and links to training events.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health Occupational safety and health website



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