

# Art builds a better society

Strategic goals for  
the Government  
Programme 2023–  
2027 by the Artists'  
Association of Finland

## Visual arts in numbers

4,8	million visits to visual arts sites every year (2019)
3 300	professional artists
67	art museums
121	art galleries
45	visual arts events every year (approx.)
39	art rental services
41	municipalities apply the Percent for Art principle
> 7,9	sales by galleries (MEUR) *

\* according to the respondents to the gallery survey, approx. 48% of all galleries (2019)

## Art builds a better society

1. Creative competence makes Finland stronger
2. Respect for visual artists' work
3. Making a living from visual arts

Finns are very fond of going to art exhibitions. About 5 million visits are made to visual arts sites in Finland every year.

# 1. Creative competence makes Finland stronger

Art is a fundamental right of every citizen, which must be financed by public funds and which must be seen as a public service, like education and health care. Art improves quality of life and is scientifically proven to promote holistic well-being.

Yet the financing of art in Finland lags behind the average level in Europe. This hinders the development of the sector, the creation of jobs and the building of commercial operating models.

## FOR THIS REASON:

→ Funding for art and culture should gradually be raised to two percent of the state budget

Art is an ecologically and socially sustainable, dynamic and forward-looking sector of the economy. Creative industries are a more important part of the national economy than many traditional industries. Culture accounts for 3.4% of GDP and for 3.1% of people in employment (Statistics Finland 2019). Yet arts and culture currently only account for 0.8% of the state budget, while business subsidies, for example, account for 2.4%.

- The share of funding for arts and culture in the state budget **must be increased to 1% in the next government term and then gradually to 2%**, so that a sector that employs a growing number of people can develop.
- The funding of art and culture must **be transferred to the general state budget** during the 2023–2027 government term, and the link to the Finnish state-owned gaming company Veikkaus must be severed. The predictability and level of funding must be guaranteed over government terms.

## → Funding for visual arts is lagging and needs to be increased

Funding for the visual arts sector currently only accounts for 1% of the state's cultural budget (MEUR 15.6), and even including art museums and combination museums the share is just 4%, while the share of performing arts is 20%. Yet the number of visitors to visual arts sites is higher than that to theatre, dance and circus sites combined.

- **Funding for visual arts must be put on an equal footing with other art forms.** Additional funding would improve the accessibility of visual arts and create job opportunities in the visual arts sector. For the visual arts sector to have equal status in terms of public funding, **the funding for visual arts needs to be increased by a total of EUR 15 million.** This level of funding would be sufficient to meet the development needs set out in these goals.

## → Investments should be made in visual arts communities

Finland has a high-quality but under-resourced nationwide network of visual arts communities. Increasing community funding would create job opportunities for visual arts professionals, offer experiences to audiences and enhance regional attractiveness. Investments in operations such as sales, marketing and digitalisation efforts would create commercial opportunities for the visual arts sector and make it a stronger part of the creative economy.

- **Funding for visual sector communities, such as visual arts organisations, galleries and art rental services operating in different parts of the country, should be increased by EUR 3 million.**

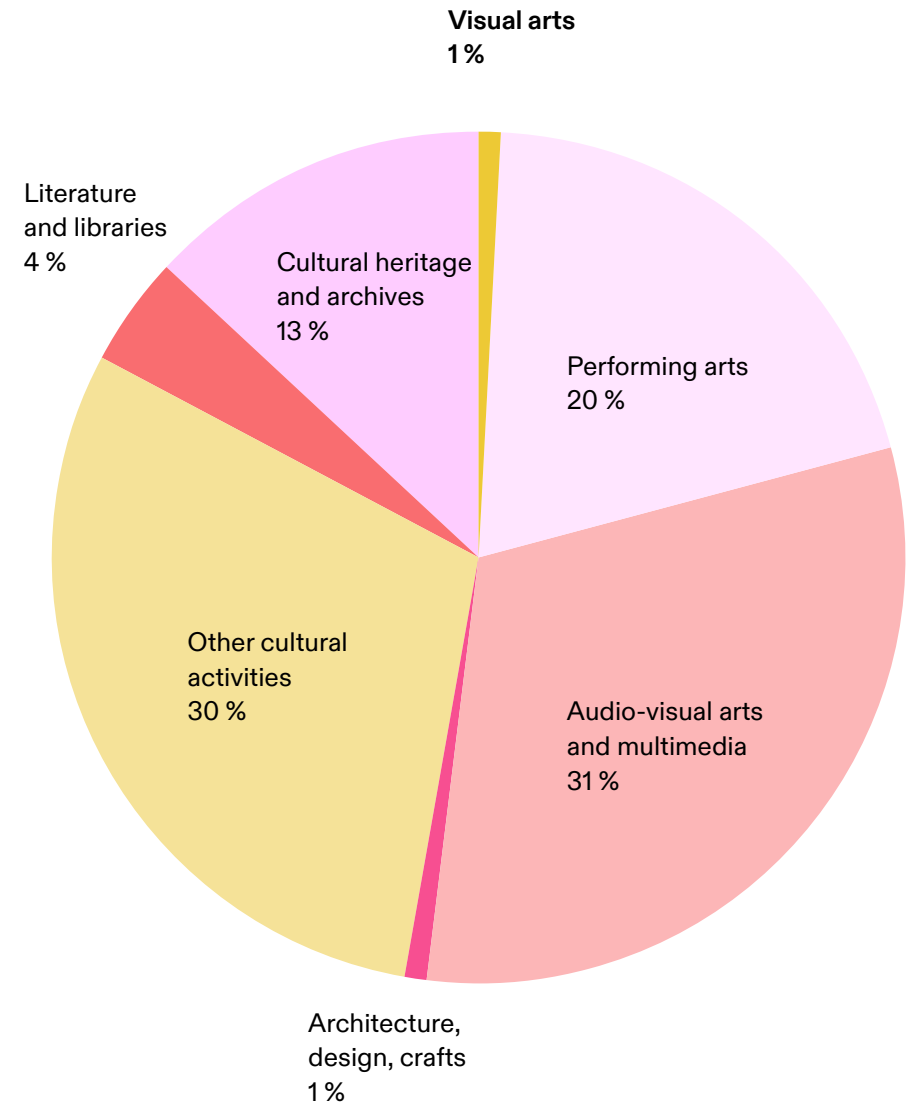
## → Finnish art should be exported across the world

The Finnish visual arts sector produces art that is of a high standard and of international interest. Supporting international activities promotes the visibility of Finnish contemporary art as well as commercial sales abroad.

- **Support should be offered to contemporary art exports** in areas such as improving operating conditions for organisations involved in international trade fairs and exhibitions.
- **Artist residency activities and mobility of contemporary art professionals in Finland and abroad need to be supported.**

The share of the Finnish cultural budget in the state budget is among the five lowest in the EU countries. For the sake of comparison: Estonia spends 2.9% on culture, Iceland 2.4%, Norway 1.3%, Sweden 1.0% – the EU average is 1.0%. (Eurostat 2019)

## Shares of funding for art forms in the overall state art budget



Source: *Possibly culture? State funding for culture in Finland in 2019*, Center for Cultural Policy Research Cupore (2021)

## 2. Respect for visual artists' work

Art is a platform for democracy and critical debate. By supporting the work of artists, we introduce nurturing and constructive creative thinking into society.

However, the conditions for pursuing a profession in visual arts are significantly poorer than those for other art forms. It has been proven that visual artists' earnings are by far the lowest of all groups of artists.

### FOR THIS REASON:

→ The number and size of grants needs to be increased

Working grants awarded by the state for artists are a particularly cost-effective way of supporting art and improving the livelihoods of artists in weak positions.

- **The number of working grants awarded to artists every year must be increased by one hundred.** The grants must be allocated to different art forms according to their application pressure.
- The working grants for artists account for a very small part of Finland's cultural budget, and their level has fallen short of the average income of wage-earners. **The size of the grant should correspond to the median earnings of Finnish wage-earners, which is EUR 3,444/month.** (The median of Finnish salary income and remunerations 6/2022. Source: Statistics Finland.)
- Approximately 80 visual artists receive a public display grant for their artistic work each year. The sum total of grants awarded, EUR 960,000, has remained unchanged for 25 years. **The overall amount of display grants awarded should be doubled** to better reflect the increased number of professionals in the field.
- **There should be a pilot project for an artist wage,** to be implemented in a manner that ensures that the number of working grants awarded would not be reduced by this project.

In visual arts, a working grant is awarded to an average of one in twelve applicants, while in all fields the average number is one in eight.

(Source: Arts Promotion Centre Finland / Taike, 2019)

## → The number of artist pensions granted should be increased

As visual artists have few opportunities for working as employees, they often only accumulate a small pension pot. Artist pensions granted by the state are, thus, an important means of combating poverty in later life among artists. However, only about 50 artist pensions are granted each year for all art forms combined.

- **The number of artist pensions granted every year needs to be increased by one hundred.**

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There are around 200,000 self-employed people in Finland who alternate between paid work, self-employment and other types of work.

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## → Social security for self-employed persons needs to be improved

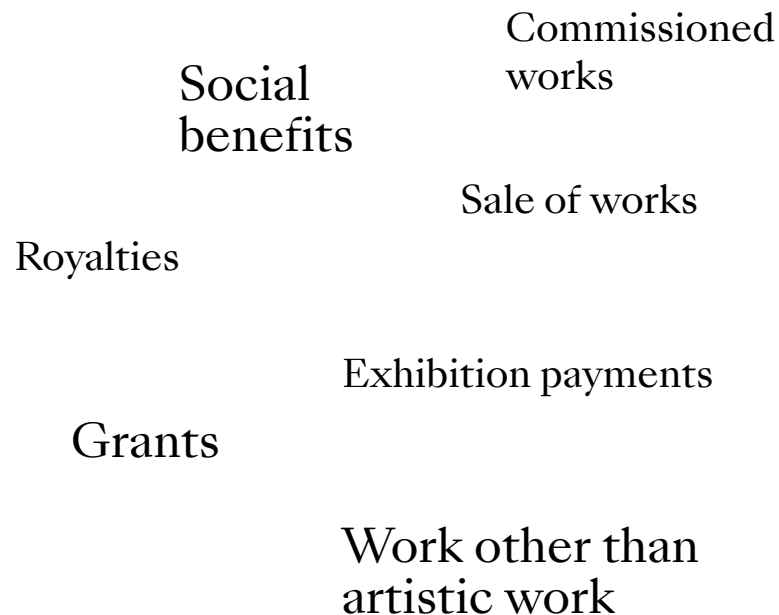
The future of work is already here, but the current social security system hardly recognises self-employed people. Applying general labour-market policy conditions to the work of visual artists is problematic.

- **Earnings from paid work, self-employment and other sources of income need to be better coordinated within the social security system,** especially with regard to unemployment benefits. Royalties accrued by an artist before a period of unemployment must not reduce the artist's unemployment benefit. Entrepreneurs must be entitled to the basic amount of labour market subsidy even after the experiment carried out during the Covid pandemic.
- As an immediate measure, **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 be underwritten by the Farmers' Social Insurance Institution (Mela).** The development of a **combinatory unemployment insurance** as a long-term solution must also continue.

On average, only one third of an artist's income comes from artistic work. The median annual taxable income for visual artists is approx. EUR 20,200, including grants. The majority of visual artists work as independent artists and are self-employed.

The most common sources of visual artists' livelihood are:

Work related to artistic work, e.g. teaching



## 3. Making a living from visual arts

As an art form, visual arts are approachable and close to people. Many works of visual art are available to the public free of charge or for a small fee. Artists must receive reasonable remuneration whenever the public enjoys or uses their works.

Even the most recognised visual artists seldom earn a living from their art as the visual arts sector does not have employment structures similar to those in many other fields of art.



## FOR THIS REASON:

### → The exhibition payment model needs to expand to include art galleries

An exhibition payment is the remuneration paid to an artist for the preparatory work done for an exhibition. The model is based on the proposal by a working group set up by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

- **Funding for the exhibition payment model should be established as a permanent part of the annual state budget.**
- In addition to museums, **the exhibition payment model should be extended to cover art galleries.** A uniform practice of the exhibition payment for the entire visual arts sector would be fair and would put Finnish visual artists on a more equal footing in terms of where they live as the compensation paid for an exhibition would be the same across the country. The annual cost of the system for museum and gallery organisations would be approx. MEUR 2.8, and its impact would extend to almost all professional visual artists engaged in exhibition activities. According to the recommendation of the exhibition payment working group, the payment for artists should be included in the organisations' operating grants.
- Artists' professional skills can be applied to a wide range of jobs in different industries. **Job opportunities for artists need to be explored** by supporting experiments in which artists are employed by bodies such as art museums or municipalities.

An exhibition payment is the remuneration paid to an artist for the preparatory work done for an exhibition. These tasks include planning and hanging an exhibition, transporting works of art and participating in communications, marketing and side events related to the exhibition.

## → Public art needs to be supported

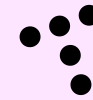
Public art improves quality of life, makes common spaces more attractive and brings art into people's everyday environments. Commissioned works of public art and procurements by cultural institutions provide artists with a livelihood while increasing the accessibility of art and giving artists income from their artistic work. A survey by Taike survey shows that 72% of Finnish people want art in their everyday environment and up to 47% are prepared to allocate more tax revenue for the purchase of public art.

- It is necessary for the state to set an example **by committing to the Percent for Art principle** (whereby 1% of construction costs is allocated to works of art) **in all its construction and renovation projects.**
- The budget of the **Finnish State Art Commission needs to be increased to correspond to the Percent for Art principle.**

## → Visual artists' copyrights must be more strongly protected

Copyright is an artist's fundamental right, which provides the artist with earnings based on the use of their works.

- **Visual artists have the right to earn royalties on their artistic work.** The royalties due to artists must be taken into account in the budgets of public bodies that use works of art.
- Digitalisation changes artistic work as well as distribution and consumption of works of art. **For this reason, it is increasingly important that visual artists' copyrights are also protected in digital environments.**



Artists' Association of Finland

## The Artists' Association of Finland

The Artists' Association of Finland is an advocate and expert association representing over 3 000 professional visual artists in Finland. The Artists' Association of Finland has six member associations, which are nationwide artists' associations: Artists' Association MUU, The Association of Finnish Sculptors, The Union of Finnish Art Associations, The Association of Finnish Printmakers, Finnish Painters' Union and The Association of Photographic Artists.

The Artists' Association of Finland works with Frame Contemporary Art Finland to promote the goals of the Creative competence makes Finland stronger section and together with Kuvasto to promote the goals related to the protection of visual artists' copyrights.

frame  
finland



# Ten solutions to strengthen the visual arts sector in Finland

1. Funding for art and culture should gradually be raised to two percent of the state budget
2. Funding for visual arts is lagging and needs to be increased
3. Investments should be made in visual arts communities
4. Finnish art should be exported across the world
5. The number and size of grants needs to be increased
6. The number of artist pensions granted should be increased
7. Social security for self-employed persons needs to be improved
8. The exhibition payment model needs to expand to include art galleries
9. Public art needs to be supported
10. Visual artists' copyrights must be more strongly protected