

POST-COVID ADAPTATION MODELS IN CULTURE



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INTRODUCTION

We present the final report of the bilateral Post-Covid Adaptation Models in Culture project, implemented by the Arts and Theatre Institute (IDU) and Arts and Culture Norway (ACN). This project was supported by the EEA and Norway Grants and was implemented between 1 April 2022 and 30 April 2024. Its aim was to map out the changes in cultural organizations' and individuals' requirements after the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as to map out new models for their support arrangements.

This project was motivated by an awareness that the Covid pandemic has dramatically affected the cultural and creative sector and that this experience has brought with it many uncertainties, while at the same time it has presented an opportunity to reflect on and revise pre-pandemic practices and to introduce changes in the operations of cultural organizations and artists and creative workers. The aim was also to find out to what extent the impact of the pandemic is being felt in present-day cultural policy; how policy-makers and funders are responding to these changes; what themes are now being prioritized; and whether there have been any substantial changes in support programme arrangements.

Both the principal-investigator organizations are institutions that provide financial support to the cultural sector and deal with cultural policy: by analysing and researching requirements and drawing up strategic recommendations primarily for the Ministries of Culture that run them.

Based on an assessment of the baseline cultural and political practices in both countries and the existing research focus requirements of both institutions, the project team agreed to implement the following activities and outcomes.

- Mapping studies on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cultural and creative industries (CCIs) and changes in the behaviour/business models of cultural organizations and individuals as well as changes in public support systems at a European level.
Mapping studies of the impact of the pandemic on the cultural sector and the subsequent restart.
- Mapping of model examples of support measures/schemes reflecting the changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic at national, regional and local levels within selected countries and cities.
Mapping model public cultural support programme changes.
- Mapping the position and behaviour of artists in the labour market.
 - Economic and working conditions of musicians and theatre artists following the pandemic in Norway.
 - Qualitative study of the work situation for musicians and theatre artists following the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Mapping the working conditions of artists in the Czech Republic.

- Workshop on the status of the artist – examples from abroad.

The originally planned format of the workshop was changed to that of an international conference, presenting solutions to issues surrounding the status of artists in selected European countries. The presentation and participation of representatives of the Norwegian project partner made up part of this project. The conference took place on 22 September 2022.

[Focus of interest: The status of the artist](#)

The conference output was presented in

[The Status of the Artist: Contributions to the Discussion.](#)

- An international conference presenting findings, examples of good practice and the recommendations of the final report.
The conference took place on 10 April 2024
[Focus of interest: Artists and culture after Covid](#)
- Compilation of a final report with examples of good practice and recommendations for supporting cultural organizations, cultural projects and artists, which could be used for the new EEA funds programme period and for support programmes at the level of the participating countries.

The following report is a summary and overview of the main findings of the sub-reports presented in the previous overview. The project team participants were professional staff from the partner institutions. Within the IDU, these were mostly staff members with the exception of an external art expert. The Norwegian partner had the core output, a qualitative study, drawn up by a professional agency on the basis of procurement and tender procedures.

The project output is primarily intended for decision makers on the provision of support for culture - i.e. officials, politicians and cultural policy experts.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Status of the artist

The most significant change in cultural policy during and after the COVID-19 pandemic has been the focus on artists and cultural and creative workers. While the status of artists has been addressed for a long time, and some European countries have long-standing special programmes and measures to address the non-standard nature of artistic work, it was the pandemic that highlighted and exposed the fragility and vulnerability of the artistic and other creative professions and accelerated solutions and measures to address and improve their working conditions and social status. As a result, many European countries and the European Union as a whole are currently focusing on establishing more comprehensive or individual legislative arrangements on taxation, social and health security for artists, monitoring and collecting data, mapping needs and defining the artistic and cultural professions.

Collective bargaining is also an important status issue. In 2021 the European Commission issued [guidance on the application of EU competition law](#) in relation to collective agreements on working conditions for the self-employed. The aim of this initiative is to clearly define the scope of EU competition law and improve working conditions through collective bargaining. Efforts to level the bargaining playing field are also being addressed at the level of individual member states.

Professional networks and associations play an important role not only for the establishment of collective bargaining, but also in the period during the pandemic and its aftermath. A unified representation of the fragmented cultural sector is essential to promote the interests of its representatives. This includes the issue of fair remuneration and other topics involving what is known as fair practice in the CCIs.

The need to address the status of artists was confirmed by the findings of this project's research on professional careers and working conditions. One key finding is that artists experience a lack of social respect, interest and care from the state. Both Czech and Norwegian artists agree that society neglects the relevance of the arts to social cohesion, inclusion and the protection and dissemination of values, as well as the economic benefits. The primary motive behind raising the status of artists is the need to increase the social prestige of their professions, as they encounter misunderstanding and denigration of their work. However, based on their pandemic experience, many artists now appreciate their audience more and realize its value. Many of them are interested in how to regain their audience and how to build a larger and more diverse audience or listener base.

In dealing with the status of artists, however, the tension between artistic freedom and the desire for independence on the one hand, and the need for a certain degree of stable financial support on the other, must be sensitively balanced.

Cultural policy challenges

Cultural strategies and programmes today address a number of other topics in addition to the status of artists. Some of these had already emerged before the pandemic, but the pandemic has accentuated the need to address them. Moreover, these days we are facing many other challenges and crises that are quickly consigning the pandemic crisis to the forgotten past. The multi-crises of our fragile, unpredictable and dangerous present were summarized by Kristin Danielsen, Director of Arts and Culture Norway and Executive Director of IFACCA (International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies) in her opening address “The Dawn of a New Cultural Age” at the [final conference of the project](#).

The current challenges of cultural policy are:

- the extreme polarization of society,
- growing social inequality,
- an ageing population,
- population displacement and differences between urban and rural areas,
- fast-paced development of technology,
- climate change,
- declining trust in governments and a lack of common goals and collective solutions,
- increasingly dangerous and unstable geopolitical changes.

The research findings of this report confirm that the recommendations from the studies and the support programmes examined aim to help to meet these challenges.

Support topics

An examination of the studies of the impact of the pandemic at the organizational and sector-wide level shows that inclusion and diversity, new technologies and innovations are among the key support recommendations.

Within the research on programme change models, the aforementioned subjects are recurring and more are being added. In the current programme period, the European Commission is focusing on promoting environmental sustainability and inclusion as well as on strengthening democratic values in contemporary Europe, promoting artistic careers through e.g. the new [Culture Moves Europe](#) programme and innovation through e.g. the [Innovation Labs](#) programme.

The European Commission has also responded to the impact of the pandemic by creating the [EU Recovery and Resilience Facility](#) worth almost €800 billion. This funding is intended for all sectors, but the European Commission has recommended that member states also allocate a proportion of the funding to support the cultural and creative sectors. Some member states have taken up this recommendation and their National Recovery Plans reflect themes related to improving the status and working conditions of artists and creative workers, innovative use of digital technologies and green solutions, support for disadvantaged regions, skills development and other topics. The implementation of the programmes is ongoing and is yet to be evaluated, but it now appears that these interventions are not in

the nature of a de facto reform of the cultural sector to ensure its sustainability in the future.

Stabilization of the sector at national levels is conceived within the broad scope of the aforementioned topics amongst others. These include the sustainability of careers for CCI workers, fair remuneration for the creative professions (e.g. Ireland and Estonia) and more broadly as a fair, transparent and user-friendly distribution of funding across the sector (e.g. Wales). Moreover, Norway has focused on making the environment for arts and culture more inclusive, accessible and resilient, on digital production and distribution and on improving artists' income. There are also programmes to increase accessibility and access to the arts, innovation and internationalization.

The situation in the Czech Republic

The results of the questionnaire survey and interviews with representatives of cities and regions in the Czech Republic show that there seem to have been no significant impacts on or changes in cultural practice and its public support. Spending on culture in 2023 has not actually decreased compared to the previous year and to the pre-pandemic period. There were for the most part no substantial changes recorded in the current state of local culture (established and non-established) as a result of the pandemic and other crises. Based on the European Commission's [Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard](#) analysis, the Czech Republic is the country with the third highest share of spending on CCIs relative to total spending under the National Recovery Plan (NRP). This fact was confirmed by the aforementioned questionnaire survey within the Czech Republic. Respondents generally perceive the NRP support for culture positively and reflect that an unprecedented amount of funding is currently flowing into culture. However, representatives of the cultural sector, including officials and politicians, also express concern about what will happen once this financial injection has come to an end. The majority of respondents perceive the need for the authorities to respond adequately and to change the system of cultural support.

BASIC FRAMEWORK OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The project output brought together a number of suggestions and inspiring ideas for the design and formulation of objectives and of the conditions for support programmes. Our aim was also to draw up recommendations on the support of cultural organizations, cultural projects and artists that could be used for the new EEA funding programme period and for support programmes at the level of the participating countries.

In this context, it should be noted that the examples of programmes mapped are mostly new, often pilot programmes that have not yet been sufficiently evaluated. This also applies to support programmes under the National Recovery Plans. It is thus necessary to focus on their evaluation during and after their implementation.

However, some of the themes and principles of support are already well established and delivering results. This applies, for example, to the priorities and support principles of Creative Europe calls, as well as other programmes at national level.

Cross-sectoral themes

In addition to their main priorities, calls may also involve [cross-sectoral themes](#) along the lines of calls for European cooperation projects under the Creative Europe programme, for example. Proposals for projects must take into account the cross-sectoral themes of inclusion, diversity, gender equality, the environment and the fight against climate change. The [Culture Moves Europe](#) programme calls contain very specific conditions for travel.

Status of the artist

Consistent inclusion of the principle of fair remuneration in all new calls for proposals can help to address the status of artists. The [example of Austria](#), where the Federal Government has made fair remuneration an eligibility criterion in all new calls for proposals to support arts and culture, can serve as a model. Members of advisory bodies and evaluation panels are encouraged to take minimum remuneration into account when assessing applications. The Federal Government has also provided legal advice on the presentation of fee recommendations on the websites of umbrella and other relevant bodies informing applicants. [The Ministry of Culture in the Czech Republic also wishes to introduce this principle, and the European Commission is considering a similar approach.](#)

Specialist and professional associations and networks play an important role, and not just in addressing the status of artists. Hence the development of those capacities and activities of theirs which aim to increase the resilience and effectiveness of members are to be systematically supported.

Enhancing competences and skills through education programmes, including those based on creative learning, is also gaining in importance.

Social inclusion and diversity, availability and accessibility of culture

The high polarization of society and growing social inequality constitute a significant crisis in modern times. It is therefore desirable to focus on supporting and improving the situation of cultural organizations, artists and cultural workers not only in large conurbations but also in regions with a low level of cultural infrastructure, with a view to increasing the accessibility of the arts to the general public and thereby strengthening European democratic values. Again, the emphasis on inclusion in the priorities of the Creative Europe - Culture programme calls for support for European cooperation projects can be an inspiration. Thanks to this priority, an increasing number of projects have been supported, e.g. aimed at implementing cultural projects and involving local people in isolated and rural locations outside the main population centres.

New technologies and innovation

Another challenge that has to be faced in the field of culture is the rapid development of new technologies. It is thus necessary to support the readiness of the cultural sector to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by new technologies for the production and distribution of products and services, cross-sectoral cooperation and innovation. A major issue here is artificial intelligence, which has the potential to significantly disrupt existing patterns of creative activity and copyright management.

Clearly, there are many other topics and possible measures and the cultural and political situation and needs of a given country or place must always be taken into account when revising or creating new support programmes.

Setting up support is at present very difficult and responsible work. If we wish to raise the prestige of culture in society, it is essential to create transparent, accessible and open investment models.

IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON THE CULTURAL SECTOR

Focus and Methodology

The aim of mapping the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was to provide an overview of the results of studies and the findings of selected studies, to reveal differences and similarities in the impact of the pandemic on different sectors of the cultural and creative industries (CCIs), and on artists, as well as on how different players have dealt with the pandemic and what recommendations they offer for dealing with similar crises.

The authors have drawn on desk research to draw up this report and have sought to fully depict the complexity of the European context. The results include findings from studies published within Europe. However, despite this effort, there have been some limitations, mainly due to the language barrier, as some relevant reports and information were only available in national languages. Hence studies published in English and Czech have been included.

The studies mapped out as part of this activity were published between 2020 and 2022 and deal with the status of freelance artists and creative workers, cultural organizations and the cultural sector as a whole.

The authors structured the themes, issues and recommendations emerging from the mapped documents into two main areas: artists and creative workers and organizations. These two categories reflect the themes most frequently found in the mapped studies.

Impact of the Pandemic on Artists and Cultural Workers

The pandemic situation had a significant impact on artists and creative workers. This impact was uneven, ranging from a significant negative impact on artists and creative workers in the performing arts to a mildly positive effect on artists in the visual arts. The main themes emerging from the individual-level mapping research activity are:

- highlighting inequalities, insecurities and vulnerabilities in CCIs
- substandard working conditions for artists and creative workers
- the need for targeted financial support during periods of crisis
- the status of the artist
- the importance of artists' unions and associations

Highlighting inequalities, insecurities and vulnerabilities in CCIs

The pandemic exposed weaknesses in the cultural sector's legislative and financial systems. Analyses have highlighted the existing inequalities, insecurities and vulnerabilities of individuals in the sector. This situation had a significant impact on the course of the pandemic and highlighted the need for a European response to the issue. Job losses have not affected all demographic groups equally and the pandemic has highlighted the need for fundamental, perhaps even revolutionary, changes in the approach to work and the workforce in the cultural sector.

In 2019, 32% of workers in the EU27's cultural and creative industries were self-employed, more than double the 14% of the total workforce across all sectors. Employees in these sectors often face a succession of fixed-term contracts and have relatively low incomes compared to other industries. Artists and creatives are often faced with the requirement for additional work or the expectation of working without adequate remuneration. Many of them have side jobs that provide them with a degree of social security, but also limit the time they can devote to artistic or creative activities. This side work can be either within or outside the cultural and creative industries. In addition, the absence of collective bargaining in this area brings precarious employment, low incomes and limited social protection, with the focus predominantly on employees rather than freelancers. Some groups of artists and creative workers, especially women, young people and people with disabilities, are more likely to find themselves in precarious working conditions.

A number of studies mapped highlight that freelancers and the self-employed form an important part of the cultural sector and that targeted financial support during the crisis was necessary to ensure the stability of the sector. These findings underline the need to better understand the crucial role that freelancers play in the cultural industries. These sectors are distinctive and unique, making it particularly challenging for legislators to understand and support them during a pandemic. The cultural sector is built from the bottom up and out, which is why trickle-down or emergency funding strategies will never fully penetrate complex cultural ecosystems or reach the parts that truly sustain the core of the sector. Thus, the mapped studies highlighted the need to identify independent cultural workers much more thoroughly in order to more accurately map out the sector and understand its complex infrastructure.

[Substandard working conditions for artists and creative workers](#)

The substandard working conditions of many artists and creative workers, who often have more limited access to social benefits and other advantages than people in regular employment, have been further exacerbated by the pandemic. While employees receive a net salary after taxes and social contributions, freelance artists invoice for gross fees and are responsible for paying taxes and social contributions themselves. This can place a financial burden on independent artists and creative workers.

Some member states (AT, BE, BG, HR, EE, FI, FR, DE, HU, LV, LT, NL) have special laws and programmes for independent artists. However, these regulations can be complicated, especially for low-income artists who may have difficulties paying monthly social contributions. Although special legislation provides better social security for artists, in some countries the measures are only partially implemented and do not always sufficiently recognize the specific situation of artists.

Recent and current European initiatives, such as the promotion of collective agreements, can help to improve the working conditions for artists. However, it is important to recognize that these initiatives are part of a broader policy framework which includes areas such as competition, the internal market, social policy and fundamental rights. Given the scale of the problems faced by artists, European efforts alone cannot be expected to deal with all the challenges.

The study [“Social Security and the Status of the Artist”](#) suggests that a European framework for working conditions in the CCIs could be a comprehensive, holistic and coherent policy tool. This framework should help set minimum standards and address structural weaknesses and inequalities in the sector. It should also contribute to the post-pandemic sustainability of CCIs through long-term measures and immediate initiatives such as improved access to funding and administrative support.

In 2021, the European Commission issued [guidelines on the application of EU competition law](#) in relation to collective agreements on working conditions for the self-employed. This initiative aims to clearly define the scope of EU competition law and improve working conditions through collective bargaining. The guidelines set out principles for the assessment of agreements between undertakings, decisions by associations of undertakings and agreements which arise in the context of collective bargaining between independent workers without employees and one or more undertakings on their terms and conditions of employment. Although freelancers work on their own account, they are considered to be undertakings within the scope of Article 101 TFEU because they provide their services for remuneration on the market as independent entities.

Some self-employed workers face difficulties in influencing their working conditions, especially those who work independently and support themselves. They may have problems with a lack of full independence or a lack of bargaining power. This situation is influenced by labour market developments such as the trend towards subcontracting and outsourcing in business and personal services, as well as the digitization of production processes and the growth of the online economy. For these self-employed workers, collective bargaining can be an important tool to improve their working conditions.

[The need for targeted financial support during crisis periods](#)

Many of the studies mapped highlight the need for national and local governments to unify and communicate clear public health and safety guidelines to all cultural organizations when a health or other crisis arises. As freelancers and the self-employed represent a significant part of the cultural sector, targeted financial support during the crisis was crucial to ensure the stability of the sector.

The studies mapped often highlighted the lack of targeted financial support as a key obstacle to innovation and further development. One of the proposed strategies to address this situation is structural support for innovation, i.e. state financial aid that is not only targeted at specific projects but at innovative endeavours.

[Status of the artist](#)

The status of artists is a complex issue that involves many institutional, economic and legal aspects. [The 1980 UNESCO Recommendation](#) on the Status of the Artist is an important point of reference in this area. Many CCI organizations are working to bolster the legal and social status of artists. National laws that grant status and recognition to artists can formalize their status as professionals and recognize the uniqueness of their work. However, in some countries such measures are not adopted at all and strategies vary between EU

countries. The most comprehensive laws include a range of practical regulations and measures that address the problems and difficulties faced by artists.

While legislation that focuses on the status of the artist can be useful, some stakeholders argue that such laws are not always the best way to address the problems experienced by artists. Proving that art-making is their profession can be very challenging for artists.

Multiple definitions of the word “artist” in Europe may complicate the uniform recognition of the working status of artists. A clearly defined artist status can play a key role in providing support, recognition and protection to individuals working in CCIs. A well-defined and recognized artist status can provide several benefits such as legal recognition and protection, social and economic support, recognition of cultural contribution, professional development, fair remuneration, representation and collective bargaining, access to job opportunities and international mobility.

In other words, a clearly defined status as an artist contributes to their professional, economic and social well-being by addressing the specific challenges and needs associated with a creative career. It creates an environment in which artists can thrive, contribute meaningfully to society and enrich the cultural scene. The pandemic in particular has acted as a catalyst for a debate that is already under way on artists’ status. Some countries, such as the Czech Republic and Spain, have set themselves the goal of addressing this issue and introducing an “artist status” in coming years.

The importance of artists’ unions and associations

Networks, artists’ unions and associations are closely linked to the question of the status of the artist and played a crucial role during the pandemic and in its aftermath. These organizations are key in promoting the interests of artists. The lack of a unified voice in the CCIs is often identified as a weakness, and the pandemic has underlined the importance of unified platforms for networks, unions and associations representing artists’ interests. These organizations seek to create and strengthen legal frameworks that protect artists’ rights, including intellectual property, fair remuneration and working conditions. Associations provide advice on fair contractual practices and help artists understand their rights, negotiate better terms and protect their intellectual property.

The associations advocate for policy changes that extend social security to self-employed artists, recognizing their specific work structures and the need for decent financial remuneration. Ensuring fair remuneration for artists’ work is a key objective of many associations, which seek minimum wage standards, fair payment conditions and the right to remuneration or royalties for creative work.

Another key area is the fight against discrimination in CCIs, including efforts to eliminate gender, racial and other forms of discrimination and to promote inclusion and diversity in the arts environment.

The networks and associations that have emerged during the pandemic have a crucial role to play in supporting the cultural sector. These networks can build long-term resilience through collegiality and solidarity, which promotes collective leadership. Cross-sector collaboration

allows organizations to form interconnected networks with communities of independent artists and provide support in terms of funding, advice, grants and commissions.

Associations give artists a collective voice and enable them to engage in collective bargaining with employers, event organizers, institutions and government. Collective bargaining helps artists to redress power imbalances and achieve more favourable terms in remuneration, working conditions and contractual agreements. The association engages in lobbying activities that influence public policy, thus contributing to the sustainability of artistic practice.

A key role of the association is to set and maintain professional standards in the arts community, including ethical principles, best practices, and advocacy for standards that enhance the status of artists and their work. In a globalized world, associations also engage in international advocacy, which includes working with partners in other countries, participating in cultural exchange programmes and advocating for policies that facilitate cross-border collaboration among artists.

Impact of the Pandemic on Cultural Organizations

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on cultural organizations and the cultural sector as a whole. Financial losses were evident due to reduced ticket sales, sponsorship and other resources, threatening the existence of smaller or independent organizations. Creative processes were curtailed due to closures or security measures, leading to postponements or cancellations of projects. Some organizations went digital, which brought new challenges and opportunities.

Restrictions on movement and social contact disrupted community interactions, making it difficult for cultural organizations to build communities and engage audiences. Social impacts included job losses and negative effects on the mental health of artists and cultural sector workers.

Some countries have provided government assistance and grants to mitigate the financial impact on cultural organizations. In these uncertain times, cultural organizations have sought to strengthen their resilience and adaptability. Virtual experiences have become a new way of keeping in touch with the public. Overcoming the challenges requires a combination of government support, digital innovation, community engagement and strategies for the future that take into account new realities and opportunities.

The cultural and creative sector was one of the first to close its doors and one of the last to reopen them. Many activities, including theatres, live music, festivals, cinemas and museums, depend on live performances and encounters and have therefore been particularly hard hit by these constraints.

The following lines outline the main themes and findings from the mapping studies at the organizational and sector-wide level. These themes include:

- Disruption to traditional market and business ecosystems as innovation accelerates
- Inconsistent and uneven reactive capacities

- The reactive and proactive approach of cultural organizations during the crisis
- Support from public resources as a key aid mechanism
- Construction of stronger, more resilient CCIs
- Focus on inclusion and diversity.

Disruption to traditional market and business ecosystems as innovation accelerates

COVID-19 disrupted traditional market and business ecosystems, but also accelerated innovation. Interestingly, the acceleration of innovation did not occur because organizations wanted to innovate, but because they had to deal with the negative consequences of the pandemic. This unique crisis changed mindsets and opened up new business opportunities that were not normally considered. For example, digitization was particularly pronounced in the audiovisual industry. The popularity of traditional pay-TV providers is declining while streaming services are growing, changing the entire value chain. The pandemic has also brought about innovative digital production, distribution and consumption patterns in other CCIs. This trend could lead to new business models in the medium to long term.

As a result of the pandemic, arts and cultural organizations are rethinking their relationships with employees, contractors and audiences, as well as their role in their communities and their business and financial models. The pandemic has exposed systemic weaknesses, including inconsistent and uneven response capacities across sectors. Small and medium-sized institutions and businesses struggled to adapt in this emergency situation and needed support to acquire skills and resources. Without sufficient action and financial support, COVID-19 could have lasting consequences such as reduced operational capacity, further negatively impacting business models, the future of the creative industries and access to culture. Consequences could include a reduction in cultural activities, and ultimately affect the quality of life of the communities these institutions serve.

Inconsistent and uneven reactive capacities

The COVID-19 pandemic caused an extraordinary upheaval in the cultural sector, forcing cultural organizations around the world to adapt to uncharted situations and show resilience and innovation. These institutions quickly adopted a number of strategies to continue their operations and stay connected with their audiences during the lockdown period. The cultural sector has adapted through rapid digital transformation, the development of hybrid models and community-based initiatives, demonstrating remarkable adaptability.

Flexibility and adaptability, together with the digital skills of cultural organizations, made up the backbone of resilience to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the success of some institutions and sectors in adapting, however, other organizations were not resilient enough to adapt quickly to the pandemic. Some organizations faced greater difficulties than others, particularly those that were unable to fully leverage digital technologies (due to low technological maturity or limited resources) and did not have the technical and technological capacity to deliver their products online.

Small and medium-sized institutions and businesses tried to adapt during the emergency, but needed support to acquire the necessary skills and resources. Without sufficient measures and financial assistance, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic would have had a

significant impact on their operational capacity. This could negatively affect business models, the future of CCIs, access to culture and the range of cultural opportunities on offer, which could ultimately impact on the prosperity of the communities they serve.

Reactive and proactive approach of cultural organizations during the crisis

In times of crisis, two main approaches emerge, involving either reactive or proactive strategies. According to the studies mapped, most of the strategies in the cultural sector were reactive. Proactive strategies could not yet be implemented due to the unpredictable scale and impact of this pandemic. The analysis of the data collected shows that the dominant trend was partial or total cessation of live events and a move to online environments, which brought new job opportunities for creatives, makers and users. This led to a significant decline in employment in the creative sector, particularly among freelancers and self-employed individuals. Studies also point to a serious lack of a consistent and uniform response between different sectors during the pandemic.

During the 2020-2022 period, crucial international experience and insights were acquired on effective approaches to leadership and business strategy during the crisis. These findings apply to both large and small cultural organizations. Small organizations demonstrated informal flexibility and versatility, which helped them cope better with turbulent pandemic situations compared to larger institutions. Larger institutions, with their separate structures, struggled to adapt to the uncertainty and disruption.

It is becoming increasingly obvious that traditional hierarchy-based approaches to leadership are not appropriate in times of rapid, unstable and unpredictable change. In leadership, particularly in the cultural and creative sectors, organizations do not appear to have returned to the established ways of responding to the pandemic challenges. However, there is a delicate balance in management issues here, with a tendency to revert to business-as-usual ways of working rather than innovative approaches to leadership.

The pandemic has also highlighted issues related to work, including the meaning of work, how and where it is performed and how it is remunerated. A third of the workforce in this sector does not work as full-time employees, but as freelance, contract or self-employed workers. The sector thus needs to proactively approach and take professional and ethical responsibility for these important workers through supportive and engaged approaches.

Support from public resources as a key aid mechanism

Financial support for cultural organizations during and after the pandemic was crucial to maintaining a vibrant cultural environment. Governments around the world introduced various financial measures to mitigate the economic impact on cultural organizations. One common approach was the creation of arts and culture emergency funds that provided immediate assistance to artists, performers, and cultural institutions that found themselves in financial distress due to event cancellations and venue closures. Financial packages often included grants, subsidies and low-interest loans tailored to the specific needs of cultural entities.

In addition to direct financial support, some governments introduced tax incentives and concessions to ease the financial burden on cultural organizations. These measures were

designed to encourage philanthropic donations, foster partnerships with the private sector and strengthen collective responsibility for the cultural ecosystem. Tax breaks motivated individuals and businesses to contribute to the cultural sector by offering financial incentives.

As the pandemic progressed, collaboration between governments, cultural organizations and the private sector became crucial to developing effective support mechanisms. Governments also introduced wage support programmes to help cultural organizations retain staff while operation was restricted. These initiatives aimed to prevent large job losses and to recognize the value of skilled professionals and their role in sustaining cultural life. Wage subsidies helped bridge the financial gap for cultural workers and organizations, allowing them to cope with the uncertainty caused by the pandemic.

Looking beyond the immediate crisis, discussions focused on the recovery of the cultural sector after the pandemic. Governments and stakeholders recognized the need for long-term strategies to rebuild and strengthen the cultural ecosystem. Investments in digital infrastructure, online platforms and innovative technologies have become essential for cultural organizations to adapt to changing audience preferences and navigate the new reality.

Post-pandemic financial support focused on strengthening the resilience and sustainability of cultural organizations. Initiatives included grants for digitization, capacity building programmes and support for collaboration, which encouraged cultural operators to seek new sources of income and diversify their range on offer. Governments have played a key role in facilitating the transition to a digitally-oriented cultural environment to enable organizations to thrive in an increasingly digital world.

Many of the studies mapped agree that public support remains a key aid mechanism and is considered the most effective form of support.

Construction of stronger, more resilient CCI's

The pandemic has taught us several key lessons on enhancing the sustainability and resilience of cultural institutions. One of the most important findings is the need to adapt to highly volatile financial conditions and to develop strategies for leveraging digital technologies and increasing the digital capabilities of organizations, which gave them an advantage in dealing with the pandemic. The enduring link between digital technologies and the organizational skills of these institutions remains crucial even now that the pandemic is over. There is a need to focus on developing digital resources that respect copyright, including facilitating their use through licensing of educational and research materials. This can reduce the damage caused by piracy during crises, support local industry and protect the rights of creators.

Based on the studies mapped, the aspects that are essential for building resilience vary across sectors:

- Founder support was particularly crucial in the visual arts sector compared to other sectors, while in the music sector this support was minimal.

- Public support is of key importance particularly in music, multidisciplinary organizations and theatres.
- Organizational flexibility is important for all sectors, but it has proven to be particularly crucial for the theatre and visual arts sectors.
- Openness to change is essential, especially for the visual arts and multidisciplinary organizations.
- Government support played a key role particularly in the music and theatre sectors, while for the arts sector government support was a rather negligible factor in overcoming the crisis. The financial reserve was particularly crucial in the music sector.

Focus on inclusion and diversity

One of the distinctive features of the post-pandemic renewal of the cultural sector has been the focus on inclusion and diversity. Recognizing the disproportionate impact of the crisis on marginalized groups, the cultural sector is actively working to create more inclusive spaces and activities. Efforts to amplify the voices of underrepresented groups, to emphasize diverse perspectives, and to address systemic inequalities have become an essential part of the mission of many cultural institutions.

The focus on inclusion and diversity in the context of building a more resilient and stronger sector is demonstrated by the fact that these aspects are strongly represented in the National Recovery Plans (NRPs), of which more in the following section of the report. The European Union's [Recovery and Resilience Facility](#) framework that supports NRP activities recognizes that some communities may have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic and therefore encourages cultural organizations to implement initiatives that promote accessibility and engage underserved populations. This commitment to inclusion not only increases the social impact of cultural activities, but also contributes to the overall resilience of the sector.

MODEL CHANGES TO PUBLIC SUPPORT PROGRAMMES FOR CULTURE

Focus and methodology

This research focused on changes in donor actors in CCI support programmes in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and also covered emerging strategies to some extent. This research was limited to the European and Canadian spheres and was divided into the EU level, the national level of selected countries and the Czech level. For the Czech level, the research was conducted between June 2023 and February 2024.

The research was divided into three areas:

Mapping and analysis of programmes

The qualitative research was conducted in the form of secondary data analysis. In the mapping process, those programmes were selected that most strongly indicate a particular paradigm shift. The European Commission programmes were further elaborated and specified in more detail in the follow-up phase. As a special addendum, the programmes and challenges of the National Recovery Plans in the European sphere were elaborated. The research took place between 2022 and the first quarter of 2023.

Questionnaire survey

The questionnaire survey was targeted at administrators of budgets for cultural support at the level of regions and larger cities in the Czech Republic and included seven thematic headings and a combination of closed and open-ended responses. It was carried out between June and August 2023. Fifteen larger city councils and regional authorities were contacted, a total of 38 authorities. The return rate of the questionnaire came to approximately 26%.

The aim was to find out what changes have occurred, are occurring or will occur in relation to past and current crises (COVID-19, energy, war, financial) at local government level. The survey was conducted between June and August 2023.

Interviews with stakeholders

Interviews with selected actors were conducted both in the Czech Republic and in one case in Norway. In the Czech Republic, a total of five semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected political representatives of the regions and cities between September 2023 and February 2024. The core of the interviews were the questions asked in the questionnaire survey, but were expanded to include other areas such as the targeting and specifics of local cultural strategies or subsidy titles.

In Norway, there was one semi-structured interview with Haakon Bekeng-Flemmen from Arts and Culture Norway (Cultural Analysis Department). The interview took place online in August 2023.

The interview focused on a project commissioned for the Arts Council and Norwegian Ministry of Culture. Its aim was to analyse the impact of COVID-19 on the cultural sector in Norway and to propose measures to strengthen the sector. The project was launched in winter 2021 and completed in April 2022, when a report was submitted to the Ministry

entitled [*Sterkere tilbake. Pandemiens konsekvenser for kultursektoren og mulige virkemidler for gjenoppbygging*](#) (*Back stronger. The impact of the pandemic on the cultural sector and possible recovery measures*), which summarizes the main findings of the project. The focus of the interview was specifically on measures to strengthen the cultural sector and how these will be handled in the future.

The output based on the mapping of individual programmes is divided into four levels.

The first part consists of programmes at the level of the whole European Union, the second of programmes developed within the framework of the National Recovery Plans, the third at the level of individual countries in Europe and the fourth at the level of the Czech Republic. All of them refer to themes that are common to the entire Global North.

European level

The pan-European level of support for culture has been explored with a particular focus on new themes in the calls of the [Creative Europe Programme of the European Union](#).

Creative Europe is the European Union's programme to support CCIs (performing arts, visual arts, literature, music, film, television, games, cultural heritage, etc.). Each year, the programme offers more than 20 calls for funding for cultural and creative projects. Each grant call has specific objectives and priorities. The calls are also in line with the objectives of the [New European Agenda for Culture 2018](#) and the Working Plan for Culture. Some calls are also influenced by European Parliament initiatives.

The Work Plan for Culture for the 2023-2026 period was adopted by [Resolution of the EU Council of Ministers for Culture](#) on 29 November 2022. The Plan sets out priorities for addressing the main challenges facing CCIs and the corresponding measures to address them. Its implementation involves close cooperation between member states, the Commission and the Council Presidency.

The Creative Europe programme comprises three strands:

- Culture (support for international collaboration projects in the CCI sphere excluding audiovisual ones),
- Media (support for the European cinema and audiovisual industry),
- Interdisciplinary strand (support for innovative projects linking culture, arts and technology and support for news media and media education).

In addition to these three strands of support, the programme includes a number of initiatives such as the European Capital of Culture, prizes (cultural heritage, architecture, music, literature), the European Heritage Label (EHL), and [the New European Bauhaus](#).

In addition to the Creative Europe programme, the European Commission supports projects with a cultural dimension in a number of other programmes primarily focused on other areas such as education (Erasmus) and research (Horizon). Culture is also supported through

the EU Funds, whose programmes are drawn up at a national level. Here too, the basic parameters reflect the challenges of the current state of the cultural and creative sectors.

The Creative Europe programme covers a large number of themes and seeks to capture the trends and changing environment affecting the development of CCIs. However, given the budget, the programme cannot have a major impact on the development and direction of culture and creativity in Europe. Hence its sub-programmes/actions and the setting of their objectives and conditions should be seen more as pilot/model examples and models for action at national level in European countries.

In the last programme period (2015-2021), for example, the theme of working with audiences proved very successful and was extended to the level of national and other programmes. In the current period, the programme is looking for ways to influence and stimulate the cultural and creative sector to respect and take an interest in the rules of environmental sustainability, inclusion and gender equality.

Ecological sustainability

For example, the very specific conditions set for travel under the [Culture Moves Europe](#) programme or the requirement to think strategically about ecological sustainability in all European cooperation projects fall under the theme of ecological sustainability. Due to the inclusion of its possible priority in calls for European cooperation projects, the share of projects focusing on this topic is increasing and is currently close to 20% of the projects supported.

Including and strengthening democratic values in contemporary Europe

The emphasis on inclusion established within the priorities of the Creative Europe - Culture programme calls for support for European cooperation projects is beginning to make itself evident in an increase in projects aimed at, for example, the implementation of cultural projects and the involvement of local people in isolated and rural locations outside the main population centres. This focus can also be seen as an important impetus for maintaining the democratic values of contemporary Europe. Current programmes to promote high-standard journalism and media pluralism and media literacy also contribute to strengthening democracy.

Artistic careers

Another issue addressed by the new programme period is the reinforcement of the status of the artist by supporting individual artists in the aforementioned [Culture Moves Europe](#) programme aimed at short-term international mobility. The European Platforms programme and the cascade programmes focusing on specific artistic disciplines are also aimed at supporting artistic careers.

Innovative approaches

The Creative Europe programme also supports the theme of the intersection between culture, creativity and innovation through the [Innovation Labs](#) programme, a dedicated call to support organizations from the cultural and creative sectors, including the audiovisual sector, to develop and test innovative digital solutions.

This programme can also respond to critical situations outside the confines of careful planning. This is evidenced by the support for the Ukrainian cultural and creative sector within the framework of special calls.

National recovery plans

To help recover and increase resilience after a pandemic in different sectors, the European Commission has created the [EU Recovery and Resilience Facility](#), which is the centrepiece of the nearly €800 billion [NextGenerationEU](#) programme. In order to benefit from support under the facility, EU governments had to submit national recovery plans outlining the reforms and investments they will put in place by the end of 2026, with clear milestones and targets.

National Recovery Plans reflect themes ranging from improving the status and working conditions of artists and cultural workers, to innovative use of digital technologies and green solutions, to supporting disadvantaged regions. Yet even here, it often appears that actors are not entirely clear how to bring about a real transformation that is sustainable for the future.

Various countries have included important legislative reforms to improve the status and working conditions of artists and cultural workers or to exploit digital and environmental opportunities. Among these countries, the Czech Republic has set itself the goal of reflecting the status of the artist in its legislation. Member states have also planned investments to support the digitization, production and dissemination of content as well as the development of digital skills in CCIs.

Some plans also include renovations to improve energy efficiency in cultural heritage buildings and incentives for green and climate-friendly projects by cultural operators. Other investments will focus on competitiveness, innovation and the internationalization of CCIs.

Several member states have planned to fund the creation and production of cultural content and the promotion of cultural offerings to boost cultural tourism and increase the attractiveness of regions. Other innovative activities will improve access to culture and harness its power for social cohesion and well-being.

One of the countries that have comprehensively included CCIs in their plans is Spain. The activities that Spain plans to support from this budget are divided into two main areas: increasing the value of the cultural industry and creating a Spanish audiovisual hub for Europe. Another interesting example is Ireland, which among other activities is focusing on a pilot basic income scheme for artists (see also below).

Based on the European Commission's [Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard](#) analysis, the Czech Republic is the third country with the highest share of spending on CCIs relative to total spending under the national plan, behind Italy and Slovakia. The Czech Republic is mentioned in this study, along with Austria, Greece and Spain, as an example of good practice. In particular, the study highlights the fact that a number of measures are aimed at

reforms to introduce the status of artist or changes in legislation. These reforms should also include grants to develop knowledge and skills in digitization, financial and managerial skills, cultural innovation, internationalization and linking the arts and culture sector with the education sector.

The national level in individual countries

Stabilization of the sector at national levels is understood in the broadest terms, whether it is the sustainability of the careers of CCI workers or the fair remuneration of the creative professions (e.g. Ireland or Estonia) or in a broader sense as a fair, transparent and above all user-friendly distribution of funds to the whole sector (e.g. Norway has also focused on increasing a more inclusive, accessible and resilient environment for arts and culture, on digital production and distribution, and on improving artists' incomes).

Stabilization of the sector following COVID-19

The focus of a number of national programmes in the post-2022 period has been to stabilize and kick-start the cultural and creative sector following the pandemic. In general, the main purpose has been to sustain the careers of CCI workers, who, particularly in technical professions, began to leave the sector during the pandemic.

One of the selected examples is the [Canada Performing Arts Workers Resilience Fund \(CPAWRF\)](#), a temporary (2022-2023) programme whose main objective was to retain qualified Canadian workers in the CCIs. The goal was to improve the economic, personal and career circumstances of independent and self-employed workers in the performing arts sector. The programme provided individuals with direct financial assistance and professional counselling and training to increase professional resilience in the sector.

Fair and effective remuneration and funding for the creative professions

Likewise, fairness in the remuneration of the creative professions was already an issue before 2020. As a result of the impact of the pandemic on the CCI workforce, remuneration has once again become a priority in strategic documents and individual grant programmes. The calls were mostly made in a participatory manner, with the cooperation of CCIs, very often involving pilot programmes to provide mapping of real needs and to set the conditions for future stable support.

The most frequently cited programme in this context is Ireland's pilot [Basic Income Scheme for the Arts](#), running for three years (2022-2025) and open to eligible artists and workers in the creative arts sector. The main aim of the measure is to address the earnings instability that can be associated with the intermittent, periodic and often project-based nature of working in the arts. The principle of selection of applicants is interesting. Once an applicant meets the eligibility criteria, they are entered into an anonymous random selection process that determines the final participants in the pilot programme. Each of them will then receive €325 per week for a period of three years.

The pilot programme also includes research into the impact of providing basic income security on the creative practice of artists and other creative workers in the arts.

Similarly, the Estonian Ministry of Culture launched a [pilot tender procedure](#) to examine the practice of paying remuneration for creative work and to determine the effects of the tools for paying such remuneration. The analysis of the payment of creative grants to artists and writers is meant to evaluate the principles involved in financing creative activities in the future. An examination is made of the effects of the tool for rewarding artists and writers in 2015-2021, the possibilities of expanding the number of beneficiaries in 2023-2030 and the involvement of other disciplines. The study will focus on the creative disciplines within the Ministry's administrative competence: architecture, design, performing arts, film, music, literature and visual arts.

Policy recommendations and legislative changes should also be made within this context. For example, the Ministry has announced its intention to amend the Act on Creative Persons and Artistic Associations to identify gaps in the relevant remuneration and describe possible intervention at the policy-making level through additional support or other measures.

Traditional tools for promoting fair funding include the Wales Arts International's procedure known as the [Investment Review](#). In this procedure, the Arts Council typically looks at how it distributes funding to key organizations in the CCIs every five years. The previous review took place in 2015 and the current one in 2022. The review was originally scheduled for 2020 but was postponed due to the pandemic. The Arts Council therefore did not commence a review of investment in culture until 2021 and has undertaken a public consultation to amend the grant application process from 2023.

The proposed new model envisages a simplification of the application process and a move away from funding a "portfolio" of organizations towards a mix of multi-year project funding agreements. Instead of the traditional five-year funding agreement, three-year funding is envisaged, with the possibility of an additional three years based on performance.

Increasing the availability and accessibility of the arts

Improving the situation of cultural organizations not only in large agglomerations, but also in regions with a low level of cultural infrastructure in order to increase the accessibility of the arts to the general public – these are other topics that donors address in their funding programmes.

For example, Arts Council England has substantially increased its investment in funding for cultural organizations under the [Levelling Up for Culture Places](#) programme for 2023-2026. The Arts Council has increased its investment by 95%, with 78 designated towns and cities receiving £43.5m per year over the next three years. There will also be a 20% increase in support for organizations involved in creative and cultural activities for children and young people.

Overall, there will be investment in a very diverse mix of organizations - from established icons such as the Royal Opera House and Royal Shakespeare Company, to new entrants such as the National Football Museum in Manchester, to innovative projects such as [Ballet Black](#), [Open Sky Theatre](#), [Touretteshero](#) and [Stanley Arts](#).

The increase in investment was based on interviews and public opinion surveys conducted over the past five years, which reiterated that “people want and need easy access to meaningful and impactful cultural events and creative activities where they live”. The new investment is therefore designed to ensure that as many people in England as possible – no matter where they come from or what their circumstances – can access the best of arts and culture right on the high streets and in the community spaces of their towns and cities.

Another example is the strategic support for [sparsely populated areas in Finland](#). In its 2022 programme, Arts Promotion Center Finland supports a wide range of cultural content in addition to art projects and employment of artists. These projects relate to cultural tourism and/or intangible cultural heritage. The overall aim is that the grants will increase the cultural activity of the regions. Grants are intended for registered communities such as municipalities, foundations, associations, cooperatives and societies in sparsely populated areas (as defined by law).

Supporting innovative approaches in artistic practice

The support programmes mapped include innovative approaches that introduce new principles to the entire value chain in the arts, be it sustainability or inclusion. An example of a specific programme in this respect is the [support for inclusive artistic practice](#) at the Kulturstiftung des Bundes/Federal Cultural Foundation in Germany. The aim of this programme is to improve the working situation of artists with disabilities.

The condition is that cultural institutions are to be supported and enabled to work inclusively and to employ disabled artists. This is to accompany the necessary change in cultural institutions that will benefit all artists. In a society characterized by diversity, an inclusive culture promotes an orientation towards the abilities and needs of different people and facilitates new perspectives on artistic practice and collaboration. It encourages a process that is ultimately beneficial to all.

The aim of the programme is to enable artistic innovation and compensate for the existing disadvantages of people with disabilities. It consists of three modules, each focusing on different groups and sectors of the inclusive cultural scene in Germany: a mentoring programme for disabled senior staff, a performing arts network and advisory services provided by a national advisory team for culture and inclusion, which will, among other things, develop a public academy programme for cultural actors and evaluate and disseminate the results of the programme.

Individual support offers are designed for people with physical, mental and cognitive disabilities. The decisive factor is the self-determination of the individual. The programme for inclusive artistic practice will run for four years (2022-2025) and is funded by the Federal Cultural Foundation with 3.9 million euros.

Strengthening internationalization

The post-pandemic period is also characterized by increased support for internationalization, international cooperation and exports, and the search for new sustainable models. [The Arts Development Programme](#), announced by Arts Council Malta, consists of four specific

programmes to facilitate the strengthening of artistic talent and community development for local and international platforms.

In addition to the traditional support for international projects, this programme also includes research and development of projects focused on creative risk-taking and active community involvement, as well as support for the development of ambitious audiovisual quality programmes with international distribution potential. In this respect, the aim is to motivate and strengthen quality artistic and cultural television programmes on private broadcasting stations in Malta.

Another supporter, Basilicata Creativa (Matera, Italy), also focuses on internationalization in CCIs, but with the support of other activities as coordinator of the [CREA-Thriv-EU Consortium/Cluster](#) (Euroclusters for Thriving Creative and Cultural Industries). It provides what are known as cascade grants for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). SME projects in CCIs must address one of the following challenges:

- diversification of products/services/content based on digital technologies, especially in the field of cultural heritage, archives and libraries,
- support for the eco-friendly transition of the audiovisual, multimedia and performing arts sectors,
- bridging the skills gap for workers in the cultural and creative industries and encouraging the greater participation of women,
- increasing business opportunities through internationalization and synergies along and across value chains.

Strengthening specific types of art through strategies generated through a participatory approach

Public consultations and other participatory tools are commonplace in the post-Covid era, not only during the drafting of subsidy programmes, but also of strategic documents and recommendations. The disruption of arts practice activities during the pandemic taught CCIs to interact more and to demand the attention of public actors in the preparation of important decisions. Participation is only a useful tool if both parties are active and if they can define their needs within the CCIs.

Arts Council Ireland's new dance strategy [Advancing Dance 2022–2025](#) has been developed through a broad sector-wide consultation. It aims to increase the capacity of the dance sector in Ireland through specific measures and investment. The implementation of this policy should lead to increased opportunities for both dance artists and audiences.

As part of the strategy, a new (Advanced Dance Training) programme will be piloted to remove financial barriers to young people accessing high-level pre-professional training all over the country. Research and follow-up development will also be undertaken, which should lead to the creation of a national dance group with international reach.

The basis for this strategy was a broad consultative approach that mapped the needs of the existing dance sector and the broader industry, including an analysis of dance policy at an international level. It involved focus groups and interviews with key individuals across the sector, representing a broad cross-section of practice, as well as extensive research and

comparative data analysis of Arts Councils' activities and strategies in an international context.

Level of the Czech Republic

The findings from the questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews can be summarized as follows.

According to respondents, spending on local government culture was effectively flat in 2023 compared to 2022. In some cases, there have only been transfers of individual items, e.g. a reduction in spending on one's own events or a change in allocations for particular areas of support. In one case, the budget was reduced, but this was due to a one-off higher investment in 2022.

On the other hand, most of the increases in spending have been in double-figure percentages. These were mostly increases in operating budgets for established and contributory organizations due to the need to compensate for increased energy prices and state-directed salary increases, and in some cases there were also increases in subsidy titles or the opening of new programmes. In only one other case did the budget remain the same in 2023 as in 2022.

No major changes in the current state of local culture (established and non-established) resulting from the pandemic and other crises have been observed to any significant degree. The biggest change is perceived to be reduced attendance and increased collaboration between different bodies. However, for the reduction in attendance, it should be added that in 2023, according to the interviewees, attendance is returning to normal and is at the same, slightly lower and higher level compared to 2019.

In the vast majority of cases, organizations have not been closed down or officials are not aware of this happening. There has been no reduction in the number of projects or applicants for individual grants. Nor has there been any decrease or increase in the performance of the organizations. There has been an increase in online activities as well as a decrease in sponsors. In almost all cases, an increased level of seeking additional funding sources has been recorded, as well as an increased interest in environmental sustainability. However, ecological sustainability is perceived as primarily involving an emphasis on reducing the energy consumption of building operations.

Half of the respondents conducted their own research on the situation of the supported cultural institutions during the pandemic. They monitored mainly contributory organizations, but also the implementers of supported non-profit activities. Attendance was also monitored. The majority of respondents indicated that their authorities had implemented changes in the support system. However, apart from increasing the financial participation or shifting and renewing sub-grant titles, respondents did not give more specific examples. However, most respondents are considering implementing or expanding changes to the aid system in the future. Examples cited were training/arts management for the nonprofit sector, technical equipment for venues, free admissions, and broader city collaboration with cultural event organizers. The City of Prague mentioned the reflection of the principles of

excellence in the grant system (adjustment of criteria, increased support for excellent projects) and the creation and introduction of a new tool for strategic evaluation and management of Evaluart contributory organizations and the MAPK2O tool for mapping CCIs.

In addition to the changes already planned, some respondents indicated other types of changes they would like to see. These included rationalizing positions in cultural organizations, providing cultural infrastructure, discounting the lease of marketing tools belonging to cities, support for crafts, support for innovation and creativity, and connecting up cultural and creative actors.

All respondents indicated that they had embedded culture in their strategic materials. The majority are convinced that the strategies are valid even in light of the current crises. Regarding the implementation of action objectives, many recognize the need for monitoring, seeking a higher degree of collaboration, sustainability in terms of emphasis on community character and participation.

The National Recovery Plan for Culture is perceived as largely positive and all respondents are familiar with it. With the exception of one smaller town, all of the authorities that completed the questionnaire or responded to the interview questions are involved in these calls. Only one respondent to the questionnaire survey stated that they did not consider the NRP to be an asset to culture. The reason given was the lack of a coherent line on digitization of the cultural sector and cultural heritage. There were also reservations in the comments and interviews regarding the establishment of conditions for some programmes and timetables. The interviews highlighted the crucial and historically unprecedented importance of high-standard financial support for culture.

Respondents are rather familiar with the issues and calls involved in the NRP. Only some do not have an opinion on the benefits of some calls. Regarding the individual support topics, Support for the development of regional cultural and creative centres - small cultural and creative centres, Status of the artist - support for training projects for artists and cultural and creative workers, Status of the artist - support for creative learning projects, Status of the artist - support for international cooperation and mobility are almost 100% positively perceived. The lowest contribution or lack of knowledge is seen in the Creative Vouchers and Mapping and development of regional strategies for the cultural and creative sectors components. Only one respondent in the questionnaire survey was outright negative regarding four components.

Cooperation at regional and city level is seen as necessary. Most authorities have established cooperation with partner cities or regions, and see the exchange of experience and examples in meetings at the level of associations of regions and cities in a positive light. The majority of respondents would welcome more opportunities to share cultural policy practice, such as working meetings at the national level, as well as greater awareness of cultural policy trends and projects and programmes within local authorities and at the state administration level.

As for the future, most respondents perceive the need for the authorities to respond adequately and change the cultural support system. A positive vision of cultural development was expressed in the interviews.

WORKING CONDITIONS FOR MUSICIANS AND THEATRE ARTISTS IN NORWAY AFTER THE COVID PANDEMIC

Objective and Methodology

Proba Research compiled a study for Arts and Culture Norway mapping the working conditions of artists after the pandemic. The aim of the study, which ran from September to November 2022, was to find out more about the way artists work during and after the pandemic, the transition to an online environment, the production conditions and distribution of artworks, opportunities for international collaboration, artists' relationships with their audience, their motivation and their evaluation of their own work. The study is based on fifteen qualitative interviews with artists in the music and performing arts.

Main findings

The study indicates that most artists were able to continue working during the pandemic, although some reported experiencing intermittent loss of motivation and income. In general, it could be said that the pandemic was an impetus for many artists to review their working conditions and financial security and to better set them up for the future. At the same time, a number of people reported that they had gained new impetus for their artistic work, and quite a number had taken advantage of the various funding schemes that had been put in place to compensate for the loss of earnings during the pandemic. The motivation to continue artistic activity and take artistic risks remains unchanged, while the willingness to take financial risks now appears to be somewhat lower.

The study also shows that artists, like the rest of society, came to be better able to work with digital tools during the pandemic. For example, while online meetings and digital studio production will remain part of their future practice, artists' attitudes towards streaming live performances are mostly negative. Our respondents have varying opinions on whether audiences will return, and many express uncertainty over what the future holds. One consequence of the pandemic, however, is that artists value their audiences more than they did before; they are interested in attracting and maintaining a relationship with them, and they want to further educate themselves with regard to working with the audiences.

Artists who work internationally report that they travel abroad as often now as they did before the pandemic. At the same time, however, they report that international activities and collaborations are more challenging because the financial situation of partners outside Norway is worse and the cost of touring abroad has increased.

Background

The world entered a state of emergency with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The first case of COVID-19 in Norway was recorded on 26 February 2020, and what are termed the strictest and most extensive peacetime measures in Norway came into force on 12 March. The cultural sector was hit hard by the precautionary measures, which had a significant impact involving a decline in income in all cultural sectors, especially in the first

months of the pandemic. At the same time, the Norwegian authorities introduced a number of financial measures to compensate for the loss of revenue.

[A survey of Norwegian artists in 2021](#) indicates not only a decline in overall income, but also large differences in losses between different groups of artists, with the biggest drop occurring in the performing arts. The report also indicates that the pandemic had an adverse impact on artists' mental health, but that relatively few artists are concerned that they will not be able to pursue the arts after the pandemic. The "[Kunst i tall 2021](#)" (Art in Numbers 2021) report also points to a significant decline in income in the music and performing arts industries. A number of other surveys have also been produced on artists' working conditions before, during and after the pandemic, which, among other things, point to the need for a more detailed treatment of the subject.

Issues

The primary objective of this study is to obtain information on the working conditions of artists following the pandemic, their experience during the pandemic, and how the pandemic has altered their working lives and motivation. A substantial theme in this study has turned out to be the tension between artistic motivation and a desire for independence on the one hand, and the need for a certain degree of financial stability on the other. This topic has very much come to the fore during the pandemic. The study is based on five main issues:

- How has the pandemic altered artists' working life affiliation, and what experiences have individual artists encountered during this period?
- What impact has the pandemic and the transition to the online environment had on the shape of their artistic practice? How has the rise of digitization affected production, distribution and collaboration across different disciplines?
- What problems have artists faced in the context of the cultural sector shutdown? How was this reflected in their financial situation, working conditions, artistic quality and diversity?
- How has the pandemic affected artists' ambitions and opportunities for international activity and collaboration?
- Has the pandemic led to changes in the motivation and self-perception of artists?

Artists' working-life affiliations

We found that artists who had established an artistic career before the pandemic – which is the case for most of our respondents – were largely able to maintain their work levels and coped financially throughout the pandemic despite the fact that many of them say things were very difficult at times, and that they had to dip into their savings. The various funding schemes established during the pandemic appear to have worked well, and many of our respondents applied for and were awarded funding.

Risk, unpredictability and uncertain income are largely perceived as a fundamental aspect of being an artist. Nevertheless, our interviews indicate that the pandemic provided a number of our respondents with a wake-up call in respect of their work situation, income conditions and the lack of regulation in their industry. Although the willingness to take artistic risks appears to remain unchanged, more people are saying they have become more concerned

with maintaining a stable and predictable income than was the case before the pandemic. One important insight from this study is that artists who run their own companies and wear many hats on behalf of their own organizations found the pandemic to be a particularly stressful time.

Transition online and deployment of technology

Our interviews indicate that artists have differing experiences and preferences when it comes to access to production facilities. While some say there are fewer venues than before, others are finding the opposite and state that access to venues is good. One consequence of the pandemic for creative artists and others was that more people worked from home. A number of our respondents say they will continue to do so, for both practical and financial reasons. Furthermore, many of them say that they scaled down costs for production and distribution and did more of the work themselves. Examples are given in our interviews of how more local, independent and artist-driven initiatives and productions played an active part during the pandemic, in both music and the performing arts.

This study also supports findings from a number of earlier surveys as regards experience with production, distribution and collaboration via digital platforms: these show that many artists have negative attitudes towards streaming e.g. concerts and performances. This is because they feel that face-to-face encounters with audiences, and opportunities to gauge their response, are of basic importance for their work. That said, a number of people have gained experience with digital tools which they will carry on using after the pandemic. This includes the use of digital platforms for meetings, digital tools for composing and producing music, and development of visual elements.

Artistic work and audiences since the pandemic

This study suggests that artistic output was largely maintained throughout the pandemic. Those artists who had the requisite capabilities, capacity and motivation shifted their work from tasks related to distribution to output for later distribution. A number of artists found that after quarantine measures were relaxed, productions ended up being “queued” and that access to theatres and concert halls, particularly outside Norway, still presents a challenge.

Our respondents do not entirely agree over whether audiences have returned to cultural offerings to the same extent as before the pandemic, and the issue of absent audiences appears to be of great relevance to them. When asked to explain why they think audiences are not turning out, they say that the pandemic has resulted in audiences developing new habits, that tickets cost too much, and that the range of cultural offerings is not sufficiently appealing. Another explanation is that culture is regarded more as a source of entertainment than of reflection or inspiration for discussion. One important insight from this study is that the pandemic has made it even clearer to artists that art and culture are dependent on the recipients for their value. This means that more people are increasingly keen to use new methods for reaching out to audiences – preferably larger, more diverse audiences. Cocreation and co-involvement are referred to as important initiatives in this regard. Artists are also requesting more information on what it takes to attract audiences, and what is needed for audiences to perceive cultural offerings as interesting and relevant.

International collaboration

For many artists, international collaboration and work abroad provide an interesting job opportunity and source of income; they are part of their artistic development and enhance their artistic status. For dancers in particular, international work experience is an integral part of career development. The pandemic does not appear to have ended international activity and collaboration, but interviews suggest that cross-border collaboration has become more challenging since the pandemic. This is mainly due to the fact that partners in other countries are in a worse financial situation as a result of the pandemic and the sharp increase in the cost of living. In addition, the costs of travelling abroad and touring are now significantly higher. A number of respondents also state that they want to travel less than before due to the environmental and climate crisis.

Motivation and perception of own work

One of the chief conclusions of the study is that the pandemic did not change artists' motivation to pursue their existing work. However, many of them experienced a sharp decline in inspiration and motivation during this period, partly because the state downplayed the importance of art and culture: cultural activities were the first to be cancelled under the anti-pandemic measures and the last to be made available again. For others, the pandemic was an opportunity to develop their artistic creativity; it provided them with new impetus and inspired them to work with new formats.

Most of the study respondents had well-established artistic careers at the time of the pandemic and can be characterized as relatively successful. This is reflected in the fact that none of them had changed professions, although some had partially reoriented within their fields with the pandemic. The vast majority also report that the pandemic has not changed their ability or willingness to take artistic risks, but their willingness to take financial risks has decreased to some extent. Most of them managed financially during the pandemic, not only because of their established careers, but also because of various compensatory measures. It can be assumed that if emerging artists and graduates had been included in the study, the conclusions would have been different.

Assessment and summary

This study indicates that artists are more aware of the conditions in which they work as a result of the pandemic; they are more aware of their artistic motivations and what it means to be an artist in practical terms. They are now demanding better working conditions from the state and are more interested in long-term employment prospects. For some, this means trying to obtain a part-time or full-time job in the arts – of which there are very few – or having other more financially stable employment. Several respondents already have a full-time or part-time job and plan to keep it. Nevertheless, their need for artistic expression and independence is great, so many are accepting the risk of financial insecurity and pursuing creative work. The pandemic is not a strong enough factor for artists to change their profession, despite the temporary decline in motivation and the state's underestimation of the value of culture and art. Some of them also express disappointment that audiences perceive art and culture primarily as a source of entertainment rather than a source of reflection, discussion and development. However, it is also clear from the study that as a

result of the pandemic, artists are more appreciative of their audiences and aware of their value. Many respondents are interested in how to reclaim their audiences and build a larger and more diverse audience or listener base.

Many of our respondents are concerned about the extent to which – and perhaps when – audiences will return, while in this regard their answers vary. However, there is a significant need among all for greater awareness of how to present their work as relevant and engage the audience. This study indicates that artists want to know the needs and preferences of the audience, to know more about the mechanisms of the audience experience and artist-audience interactions, and to create good conditions for encounters with the audience.

The study also raises questions and topics worthy of further research, such as how artists who are less successful than those included in the study fare. Another separate topic is that of recent art school graduates who felt that their opportunities to practice their profession and build their networks were severely limited during the pandemic. A number of people also mentioned freelance artists as a particularly vulnerable group about whom more information is needed.

We seem to be missing data on artists who are also employers. It is known that most artists on the independent scene are self-employed; however, less attention has been paid to artists who employ other people. In this study, we interviewed several artists who are also directors or managers with a range of financial and administrative responsibilities, which proved to be another major burden during the pandemic. Given the emphasis in Norwegian cultural policy on culture as a sector, this topic is suitable for further research.

MAPPING THE WORKING CONDITIONS FOR ARTISTS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Objective and methodology

This part of the project focused on mapping specific professional creative practices in the arts, based on in-depth interviews with artists from various artistic disciplines who are currently working. The reason why the research team decided to explore the real picture of what the work of artists looks like is that there is a vague, distorted, often romanticized or reductive idea about the course of their professional practice, not only in the public mind but also among “decision makers” – politicians and officials.

The experiences, insights and opinions of the respondents helped to cast light on lived experience, identify the obstacles and needs involved, and reflect on the career trajectory, the quality of the professional environment and the situation of the arts in the period shortly following the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings and conclusions of the research should be used to effectively lay down legislation that would ensure sustainability and support for a specific professional group such as artists.

In terms of its methodology and objectives, the research was a follow-up to the 2022 pilot survey on the topic of artist status conducted by the Institute of Arts – Theatre Institute (in the chapter entitled [Probes into the careers of professional artists](#)), which was based on seven in-depth interviews with artists from the fields of dance, visual arts, literature and music. The current bilateral research increased the research sample of respondents to thirty and expanded the thematic areas, while maintaining the basic biographical trajectory to chart the development of careers from the beginning to the present. As with the 2022 pilot survey, this research presents qualitative findings, which are models of careers, individual and collective experiences, attitudes, and examples of life and work situations.

Area of research

The research sphere included artists involved in music, theatre and dance, visual arts and literature. From a professional standpoint, each of these spheres represents a broad and ever-evolving framework of diverse genres and specializations, manuscripts and focuses. The attempt to include a wide range of professions in each artistic field meant including their various combinations, as the trend towards “crossover” creativity is part of the contemporary artistic dynamic. The emphasis was on diversity and an attempt to assemble a representative sample for each field determined by a common denominator. This was done by compiling a matrix that was created through a joint discussion of experts in the field who have been in that field for a long time, understand its structure, internal dynamics and issues, as well as having contacts among and, not least, the trust of, the community.

Research objective

Initially a definition was made of the research objective, which was to map out and identify needs, weaknesses and strengths using artistic careers as specific examples. We wanted to find out how artists behave in the labour market, and whether and how they function within

the social system (i.e. with regard to registration, taxes and social and health insurance). We also monitored how artists' careers changed in the context of the covid pandemic and we took an interest in their attitudes and opinions on the current situation in the field.

Hence the main research question was: How does the artist operate on the labour market - what are the biggest obstacles to/weak points in professional practice?

We supplemented the main research question with the following sub-questions (selection).

- What are the prerequisites for starting an artistic career?
- How do schools prepare artists to enter the job market?
- What problems do artists encounter in their studies?
- What is artistic practice in terms of labour market conditions and obstacles?
- What role does lifelong professional education play in careers?
- How do artists perceive career interruption, change or termination?
- How do they take care of their health?
- How has covid affected artists' performance in the labour market?
- What has changed in their practice since the covid pandemic?
- How do artists perceive professional associations?
- What are artists' perceptions of their status as artists and what do they expect?

Research resposdency

Aspects ensuring representation based on gender, age, artistic specialization in a given artistic field and geography were essential parameters for the selection of respondents. In terms of employment status, the research gave preference to the self-employed and also took into account the fact that different varieties of family situation (e.g. childless or parents) were represented. Proven professionals were put forward as respondents, i.e. people who make a living and are socially fulfilled by their work. The main goal was to achieve personnel diversity within each artistic field.

Respondent matrix parameters:

- Gender
- Age (including estimated)
- Type of work, genre, focus (prose, painting, choreography, singing, etc.)
- Career stage (from students, beginning and peak of career, to doyens)
- Type of work (self-employed, employed, studying, retired)
- Living situation and status (single, parenthood, property)
- Geography (different places in the Czech Republic)
- Art school (graduates of different art schools in the Czech Republic)
- Position within the field (commercial, mainstream, alternative)

As part of the research, 30 in-depth anonymized interviews were conducted with 17 women and 13 men, 21 of whom were self-employed, seven were combining employment with other projects under other employment relationships, three were pensioners still working and active, and one was an artist in full-time employment. Overall, the sample had an age range of 23-74 years. The interviews were conducted between January and May 2023.

Field specifics – asymmetry of outputs

Since each of the artistic disciplines represented in our research has its own specific traditionally developed infrastructure, education system, methods of public presentation and distribution, specific internal links and processes, and so forth, the outputs for each discipline are not entirely symmetrical and differ in certain aspects.

Main Research Findings

This mapping of the situation in the arts, i.e. theatre, dance, literature, music and visual arts provided a number of insights into their specific working practices, as well as access to experiences, attitudes and opinions on a number of issues pertaining to these fields. Despite several differences that complicate or preclude any comparison of conclusions between artistic fields, common themes emerge in the mapping, or themes that predominate and correspond to the experiences of representatives of most fields. We will now focus on these.

The thirty interviews we used to map professional life revealed that all respondents are artistically active and their work is the source of their income. The exceptions were a dancer (42), whose main income comes from teaching at a conservatory, and a poet (57), who is a library employee and has a secondary income from writing and publishing poetry.

Focus on the artistic profession and education

There was broadly consistent – and positive – experience on the topic of identifying and supporting talent in childhood. Overwhelmingly and across disciplines, our respondents report a good supportive family background, even though the majority of them come from a non-arts background. An important role in their lives had been played by Primary Art Schools (formerly People's Art Schools), whose network was accessible to respondents from the regions. Reference was often made to the individual teacher who directed the person concerned towards an artistic career.

The overwhelming majority of respondents graduated from a vocational art school – that is, they are fully qualified for their artistic work. The majority studied at the highest educational level – i.e. at an art college. The exception to this is the authors, who have no public vocational school and have studied various related disciplines – e.g. Czech studies, journalism, media studies and the like. For example, dance performers do not have a university degree – their highest possible level of education in this country is graduation from a conservatory, which is not the same as a university degree. This fact implies that, for example, ballet dancers cannot be included in the salaries of the contributory theatre grade corresponding to a university degree. Another field for which we do not have formal training in the Czech Republic is the extremely successful and dynamically developing new circus.

Respondents describe studying at a secondary art school or academy as a crucial life experience. Schools are a source of generational contacts, first job opportunities, a place of inspiration and meetings with authorities in the field. This contact with practical professional life during studies varies greatly from one discipline to another. While at the music academy students normally enter the field of professional practice on their own – forming groups, giving concerts and recording – and this activity is actually a condition for future employment in the labour market, for theatre students such activity is almost unimaginable.

For example, studying at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague is strictly tied to the educational programme, and the school's rules prohibit or only very exceptionally allow professional collaboration in theatre, television, radio and film.

The respondents were rather critical in their assessment of the quality of education – it was often said that the teachers applied stereotypical procedures, did not have an overview of current events in the field, and failed to work in partnership with students in such a way that the students' individuality could be expressed. Visual artists emphasize the key role of the individual studio manager.

But overwhelmingly, the artists stated that the school did not sufficiently familiarize them with the context they would be entering after graduation. They had little idea about matters of contracts, fees, negotiating terms, obligations to the state, and communication within the professional labour market. They shared and passed on this necessary information among themselves. The transition from college to practice thus appears to be the most precarious phase in an artist's career.

Work and financial compensation

The work itself cannot easily be compared from one discipline to another, but a common thread was the insecurity due to irregular income and seasonal work, as well as low financial remuneration. In literature, for example, only two respondents make a living from purely literary work, both of whom belong to the older generation. For a well-known literary author, royalties from dramatizations and royalties from reprints of her works in the media play a significant role in her income, i.e. not the writing itself. On the other hand, younger authors are considering leaving the literary field for financial reasons.

In dance, as the dancer stated, the fees have not changed for decades; in theatre directing, the fees may seem high at first glance, but they are lump sums for several months' work, which cannot be repeated more than three times a year at most; moreover, directors' contracts do not include licences, which are included in the case of performers – actors and singers - and this improves their income.

The most common employment status within the group studied came under the classification of self-employed person (21 cases), where it is possible to work in "liberal professions" mode, preferably under the Copyright Act, or as an alternative – under the Trade Licensing Act, with an IČO identification number. Employees combining other work commitments under various contracts (Work Performance Agreement, Work Activity Agreement, royalties, and the like) accounted for a quarter (seven) and in three cases we observed the work practice of pensioners. An interesting example is that of a retired theatre worker who stated that she was economically best off in her entire working life – as she combined income from part-time work in a contributory theatre, part-time teaching work, royalties from independent projects and a retirement pension.

However, combining part-time jobs and various projects is not easy and usually does not lead to well-being, as we have found. At best, artists provide themselves and their families with a standard social base, if not a bare minimum. But their low incomes put them at a

disadvantage, for example, vis-à-vis banking institutions, which refuse to grant loans to people in the cultural sector – not just the artists themselves. The creditworthiness of people working in the cultural sector is assessed as low and therefore risky. Another risk of low incomes is the inability to build up reserves. It also means low (or no) social security contributions and therefore the prospect of a low pension.

The annual income in our sample ranges from CZK 200,000 to CZK 1,000,000.

In this context, we can cite data on average wages in culture according to the statistical office's finding for 2019: "[The cultural sector accounted for approximately 4% of total employment in 2019](#). The average wage in the cultural sector reached CZK 32,800 in the last year before the election and was 3.7% lower compared to the average wage in the whole economy, which was CZK 34,100," says Milan Dederá from Czech Statistics Office Department of Statistics on the Development of Society.

The currently available figure for average wages in culture for 2023 is CZK 37,347, while the overall median wage in the Czech economy was CZK 39,685. Let us recall that these are the total figures for people working in the cultural sector and they are not adjusted purely for artistic and creative professions.

Artists can also receive financial support in the form of grants. However, in our sample, applicants for grants made up a significant minority. Respondents were put off by the administrative and accounting requirements, as well as the uncertain outcome – often stating that grants involve undue stress.

In terms of managing finances and obligations to the state, we have seen a generally disciplined approach. In this regard, the artistes refer to those providing accounting services to get everything in order. They cited as problematic the fact that the legislation and tax regulations are not entirely clear and understandable even to professionals in accounting services. They quoted the example of double taxation or the disadvantageous tax flat rate for freelancers, which puts low-income artists at a disadvantage.

For many, working abroad was important, either financially or as an inspiring work experience. However, respondents generally stated that after the pandemic, offers of work abroad were not so readily available.

Career interruption

Careers can be interrupted by illness, injury, parenthood or caring for a loved one. This theme resonated in various ways in our sample of respondents. Older respondents' motherhood took place "on the fly", while younger parents managed to prepare for the arrival of their offspring and then adapt with the support of their partners or family. It was said several times that a combination of motherhood and active creative work is extremely demanding and that the interruption of contacts with the art scene puts parent-artists at a disadvantage. During an interview on this topic, one respondent referred to a major exhaustion crisis.

The topic of injuries and illnesses was not felt to be particularly pressing in any of the artistic disciplines. Artists in the somatic arts (theatre and dance) are aware of the risks and try to

prevent injury or illness in various ways and at their own expense. Recent [research by the Dance Careers Foundation](#) has addressed this issue.

The pandemic period

The pandemic period was a big test for artists, with their individual conditions and personal dispositions, as well as state support, having a bearing on how they coped with it. The type of medium that the artists worked in played a significant role. The effects of the pandemic are diametrically opposed in arts that depend on interaction with the audience and those which are not consumed on the spot – i.e. literature and visual arts. The visual arts have even emerged from the pandemic strengthened in some ways – interest in artworks has increased, people have had time to look around for contemporary artworks and to improve their homes with the works. Unexpectedly, the art market has picked up speed. Social networks have played a significant role in this sense.

The development of technical skills has made itself felt in all fields – artists have learned to stream, perform in front of the camera, create social media posts and collaborate on a global scale thanks to online platforms and the like. This probably would not have happened without the pandemic emergency. These skills are now also being deployed by artists in the post-pandemic period.

The pandemic was no great disaster for the writers either. Quite the reverse, for many of them there was some longed-for peace and space, and new themes emerged. Then again, parents with young children, who experienced the pandemic as a particularly stressful time, describe the course of the pandemic and its stressful impact differently.

In the group of writers, concern over post-pandemic developments marked by the war in Ukraine and the deteriorating social mood appears particularly pressing. Literary authors perceive these developments as more serious than covid lockdowns.

Most respondents criticized the lack of transparency and confusion in the provision of financial support during the pandemic. They also noted that state assistance came relatively late. However, no one suffered fatal losses and, in the end, all of them managed to cope with the pandemic period, in one case at the cost of a temporary job change. From this experience, the respondents came away with a strong realization of the vulnerability and fragility of their operations and the need to rethink their activities with an eye towards sustainability.

Relations with professional associations and artist status

This consideration is inevitably linked to the question of the position of artists on the labour market and their ability to influence their working conditions. This is a topic that is addressed by professional associations, or in the case of employees, trade unions. During the pandemic, the importance of professional associations and their activities increased, as did their number. To a large extent, it was thanks to the leaders of these organizations that support programmes aimed at artists, cultural workers and legal entities in the arts and culture were launched.

Relations between these important entities and the community of artists have not been good for a long time, as our research confirmed. Artists are universally unwilling to join, let alone become actively involved. The experience of the pandemic has nevertheless slightly increased awareness of the existence of professional associations and their activities. All the respondents knew that an association existed in their field.

On the related topic of the status of the artist, which some noted in public discussions, attitudes were generally favourable. Respondents welcomed the possibility of measures to improve their status in society. Ideas about what the concept of status should entail were not very definite. Mention was made of a flat-rate tax solution, or in certain circumstances relief on social payments or taxes. Some respondents also saw artist status as an opportunity to address industry-specific issues such as remuneration for visual arts exhibitions.

However, what was fundamentally needed was to change the perceived lack of respect, lack of importance and low appreciation of artistic work within society. Artists feel overlooked and undervalued in terms of the relevance of their work to social inclusion, cohesion, well-being, reflection, protection and dissemination of values, as well as in terms of recognition of the economic contribution of the arts to the national economy.