

EQUALITY AND ACCESSIBILITY IN FINNISH CULTURAL POLICY

Accessibility means taking people's different needs into account and advancing equal opportunities. Equality is embedded in the recognition that all people have equal rights regardless of personal characteristics. Accessible arts and culture means equal rights and opportunities for all people to develop themselves, use arts and cultural services and participate in cultural life, also as actors and professionals. The Finnish Non-Discrimination Act underscores the authorities' duty to promote equality and access.

TOWARDS EQUAL CULTURAL POLICIES

Many of Cupore's studies have shown that single reports, policy programmes or funding mechanisms are not in themselves enough to advance accessibility and equality. Questions of access and non-discrimination should be taken better into account in the measures, phases and different levels of arts and cultural policy, in the planning, implementation and assessment alike. Promoting equality among different population groups and in all parts of Finland requires clear goals. Aside from the state, Finland's municipalities also have a key role in this work.

Points of consideration:

■ **Accessibility and equality need to be taken into account in public funding**, for example in the allocation of state subsidies and when planning reforms of the government transfer system. Arts and cultural institutions and organizations should keep accessibility and equality in mind when planning the content of their programme. Attention should also be paid to questions of preservation and acquisitions.

■ **The key factor in efforts to eliminate structural discrimination are attitudes**, as the law already lays down conditions regarding accessibility and equality. Cultural policy makers should be aware of the obstacles that minorities and artists with minority backgrounds encounter. Cultural participation among different population groups and inclusive arts and culture benefit the whole society.

■ **Everyone should have the possibility to participate in arts and culture and the decision making concerning it.** Transparency, easy

to understand language and representation of different groups need to be ensured when planning and making cultural policy or monitoring its measures. Equality also needs to be considered in goal settings, knowledge bases, statistics and the distribution of resources.

■ **Barriers to the realization of cultural rights need to be systematically removed.** People may have different backgrounds and characteristics that hinder cultural participation. Regardless of these factors all people have the right to experience and create arts and culture. This should be manifested in arts policies and in the mechanisms for supporting artistic work.

■ **Several factors can affect people's ability to participate in arts and culture, and people should be regarded as individuals instead of through classification in given groups.** The goal should be to bring down structures that produce inequalities and to ensure that cultural rights are fully realized rather than supporting accessibility with only specific measures.

■ **The promotion of equality and accessibility does not involve only cultural policies but is a matter that concerns also the Government and all policy sectors.** A holistic perspective and cross-sectoral cooperation are needed at both national and municipal level.

Equality

- Equality means that all **people are valued equally**. Equality is a fundamental right.
- In a just society everyone should have **equal opportunities** to education, employment and services.
- www.equality.fi

Accessibility

- An accessible product or service is **well-functioning regardless of the users' special characteristics**. Accessibility takes into account the diversity of society.
- Good accessibility means that attention is paid to access in terms of **attitudes, communications, finances, recruitment, strategies and facilities**.
- Accessibility can also be advanced by supporting participation and understanding or offering information and experiences in different sensory forms.
- **Accessibility is not the same thing as availability.** Availability means that a service or product is obtainable, but it doesn't as such guarantee that the service or product is usable, i.e. accessible, for all.

Inclusion and participation in culture

- Increasing participation among diverse population groups is one of the strategic goals of Finnish cultural policy.
- Inclusion refers to a person's ability to take part in action that s/he finds important and meaningful. **Good accessibility is a precondition of inclusion.**
- Participation in communities and society and **cultural inclusion enhance democracy.**

Cultural rights as human rights are guaranteed for all people. They are the foundation for promoting equality and accessibility.

POLICY ORIENTATIONS ON ACCESSIBILITY IN FINLAND

According to the visions presented in the strategy of the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (*Opetusministeriön strategia 2020*, 2009) by 2020 Finland will be a leading country in knowledge, participation and creativity, where all citizens will have equal rights to individual development and active citizenship. The goal presupposes measures that support the participation of all citizens. Publicly funded actions and policies need to steer society in a more equal direction. From cultural policy making this requires a clear setting of goals and systematic work towards achieving them.

The report *In from the Margins* (1998) commissioned by the Council of Europe proposed that public measures to support equality should be more broadly centred on supporting all population groups rather

than focused on minorities through targeted funding mechanisms. Cultural policy needs to be reformed to take cultural diversity into account in a more comprehensive way.

Both fundamental and cultural rights are an important basis for Finland's national cultural policies. Educational rights and people's right to use their own language and choose their culture are guaranteed in the Constitution of Finland. A report initiated by the Minister of Culture reviewing the ethical dimensions of cultural policy (*Reilu kulttuuri* 2006) brought cultural rights under profound discussion. The report defines cultural rights as an ethical starting point for cultural policy, which requires that attention is paid to accessibility and equality in public arts and cultural institutions and among other stakeholders in the field. Cultural

rights are human rights that belong to all people. They are central to the identity, autonomy and self-esteem of individuals and nations.

The Government report on the future of culture (*Valtioneuvoston selonteko kulttuurin tulevaisuudesta* 2011) advocated the importance of promoting the realization of cultural rights, accessibility and participation in culture among different population groups.

According to the final report of the Access to Art and Culture Committee appointed by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (*Taiteen ja kulttuurin saavutettavuus -loppuraportti* 2014), special measures need to be developed to ensure equal opportunities for all people to participate in arts and culture. Support is needed to improve the accessibility of arts and cultural

services as well as for education and employment in the field.

The Strategy for Cultural Policy 2025 of the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (2017) consistently links accessibility and culture to the same goals: the possibility of different groups to maintain and develop their own language and culture, realization of cultural and language rights and realization of accessibility and equality in arts and cultural services.

One of the current **Government's key projects** (2015–2019) centres on enhancing access to arts and culture through two measures: by increasing the possibilities of children and young people to engage in extracurricular arts and culture activities in school facilities and by promoting the supply and use of different art forms and cultural services in the social and health sector.

The English and Swedish models

There are some notable differences in the funding models on accessibility applied by the Swedish Arts Council (Kulturrådet) and Arts Council England compared to the Finnish policy.

The Swedish Arts Council

includes the element of accessibility in the conditions for all its allocations. The responsibilities of the recipients of funding were drafted in cooperation with other stakeholders in the field of arts and culture. Failure to fulfil the responsibilities may lead to withdrawal of funding. The cooperation offered a forum for discussing what accessibility means in the field of arts and culture. The initiative to reform the funding policy came from the Government of Sweden. The Government's support largely contributed to the success of the reform.

http://www.kulturradet.se/sv/publikationer/_/Kultur-for-alla--inget-hinder

Arts Council England

distributes public funding for projects that promote accessibility and equality based on various strategic priorities. The priority areas are highlighted for a few years at a time. Moreover, all the recipients of funding must be committed to advance equality in their operations. If a recipient is unable to show how it has considered equal access in its operations it may not be eligible for funding in the next funding period.

www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/equality-diversity-creative-case

THE CULTURE FOR ALL SERVICE

promotes equality in Finland with support from the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. The Service offers operators in the field of arts and culture information and support about accessibility and diversity.

www.kulttuuriakaikille.fi/en.php

STATISTICS AND RESEARCH

Different population groups should be more diversely identified in the evaluation of the degree to which cultural rights are realized and cultural needs are met. The lack of comprehensive statistical data on people who belong to minority groups form an obstacle to the assessment of their situation.

Statistic producers need to develop statistics for identifying structural discrimination and the status and situation of minority groups. Indicators need to be developed to produce more expedient data to improve accessibility of arts and culture. A sufficient knowledge base would facilitate the monitoring of the degree to which accessibility is realized and the impacts of cultural participation among different groups. It would also create better conditions for evaluating the effectiveness of policies.

THE NON-DISCRIMINATION ACT

- Authorities have the duty to foster equality in all their actions.
- Nobody may be discriminated against on the basis of age, ethnic or national origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, health, disability, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics.
- The act prohibits both direct and indirect discrimination, but does not prevent justified positive treatment (positive discrimination).
- Any organization that employs 30 or more persons must draw up a plan for fostering equality.
- The prohibition of discrimination based on gender is covered by the Act on Equality between Women and Men.

Further reading:

Kangas, Anita (2017). *Removing Barriers. Participative and Collaborative Cultural Activities in KUULTO Action Research*. Cupore webpublications 44.

Lahtinen, Emmi & Jakonen, Olli & Sokka, Sakarias (2017). *Yhdenvertainen kulttuuri! Selvitys vammaisyhteisöjen kulttuuri-toimintaan ja kulttuurin saavutettavuuden edistämiseen myönnettävistä valtionavustuksista*. Cuporen verkkojulkaisuja 41.

Portolés, Jordi Baltà & Šešić, Milena Dragičević (2017). *Cultural rights and their contribution to sustainable development: implications for cultural policy*, International Journal of Cultural Policy, 23:2, 159-173.

Pyykkönen, Teijo (2016). *Yhdenvertaisuus- ja tasa-arvotyö valtion liikuntapolitiikassa*. Valtion liikuntaneuvoston julkaisuja 2016:1.

Rautiainen, Pauli & Lavapuro, Juha & työryhmä (2016). *Ihmisoikeusindikaattorien käyttäminen Suomen perus- ja ihmisoikeus-tilanteen seurantaan*. Valtioneuvoston selvitys- ja tutkimustoiminnan julkaisusarja 36/2016.

Violainen, Jutta (2015). *Kulttuuri-osallistumisen muuttuvat merkitykset. Katsaus taiteeseen ja kulttuuriin osallistumiseen, osallisuuteen ja osallistumattomuuteen*. Cuporen verkkojulkaisuja 26.