

NATIONAL REPORT

**Estonian Artists' Association / IAA Estonian National Committee
IAA Europe General Assembly, Dublin, September 2017**

Estonian culture

Estonia is a small country with only **1,3 million inhabitants**, yet we have a vivid and complex cultural life. Estonian language, culture and education are the cornerstones of our national mindset and our constitution. One can say that music in different forms and theatre are most popular fields of culture – and also a business card of our country at the international level. Traditionally the choir music is favoured - and famous Estonian **singing festivals**. For instance in 2014, the number of participants of the Song Festival reached 33 thousand singers and musicians as well as 153 000 visitors. However, every cultural field has its thankful audience and position in our cultural life.

Year after year, Estonian art has become more and more international while being increasingly open to new trends and artists' mobility – exchange of ideas and experience with the colleagues both in Europe and the whole world. **Cultural exchange, internationalization and export** are the most important keywords in the state cultural policy in Estonia as well. The context for these developments is created by the increasingly worrying situation of security in the whole world, by a certain identity crisis in the European Union and by the efforts of Estonian state and its nation to form a safe and sustainable future.

There are **17 creative unions** or associations in Estonia recognized by the state law; Estonian Artists' Association (EAA) is the second biggest, uniting almost one thousand members. During the times of Singing Revolution and regaining our independence the creative unions played an important role as the centres of national resistance and sources of inspiration for people – as havens of free thinking and free speech.

Important players in the art field are also the local **development centers**. Center For Contemporary Arts, Estonia (CCA, Estonia) main objectives include collecting and distributing information about contemporary art while promoting and mediating Estonia's art scene in international art events. The center is also responsible for the Estonian exposition at the Venice Biennial. There is also Estonian Contemporary Art Development Center that is focused both on fostering international exposure for artists from Estonia and on developing the contemporary art scene in Estonia. Its main focus is on art export, supporting Estonian artists' participation at professional art fairs and educating local gallery workers.

And, of course, **Art Museum of Estonia** with its branches, **Tallinn Art Hall** and numerous **galleries** have their role to play in Estonian art life – among others 4 galleries run by Estonian Artists' Association: Hobusepea Gallery, HOP Gallery, Draakon Gallery and Vabaduse Gallery. Beside the traditional galleries there are all kinds of project rooms, open workshops and pop-up galleries – these possibilities are especially important for young and emerging artists. The variety of **art spaces** supports the diversity of artistic practices and positions as well as makes the art scene more flexible and mobile. Beside Tallinn other bigger Estonian cities like Tartu and Pärnu have a strong community of artists and a vivid art life.

Professional art can evolve and flourish only in fruitful cooperation with **art education**, especially the higher art education. In Estonia we have the Estonian Academy of Arts which was established in 1914. Today it has more than 1000 students – around 300 of them are studying in MA programme and around 50 in the Doctoral programme. Every year about 100 students come from abroad to study in our academy. The Academy provides higher

education in fine arts, design, architecture, media, visual studies, art culture, and conservation. In Tartu there is Art College which educates future media and advertisement designers, textile and leather design and so on.

There are several **art festivals** taking place in Estonia: Tallinn Print Triennial, which first time took place in 1968, and Tallinn Applied Art Triennial which dates back to 1979. There is also quite a new – and unique – art festival - **Eksperimenta!** Triennial. Eksperimenta! is an international art education project for students between the ages of 14 and 19, as well as for artists and art teachers. The main aim of Eksperimenta! is to bring art and art education closer to each other. The next Eksperimenta! will take place in October 2017 in Tallinn Art Hall under the theme of "Art and Economy".

Foundations of cultural policy until 2020

An important document which sets the priorities of the Republic of Estonia for the coming years in developing the Arts sector is "Foundations of Cultural Policy until 2020". This document states the following: "The objective of the cultural policy is to develop a society that values creativity, while maintaining national identity, passing down cultural memory and creating favourable conditions for the development of a viable, open and diverse cultural environment."

With regard to visual and applied arts, it is said that the state:

- stresses the importance of the internationalisation of Estonian art and considers it important that Estonian artists, curators and critics participate actively in the international art world, and that international exhibitions and art projects are organised in Estonia;
- encourages mobility and residency programmes for art professionals;
- supports the activity of exhibition halls, including the modernisation of their technical equipment, and the training of specialists in exhibition management;
- encourages the aspirations of Estonian artists and galleries to enter international markets and supports their joint marketing for that purpose;
- supports a more efficient implementation of the Placing Orders for Works of Art Act (i.e. the "1% rule").

The abovementioned document considers exports as the main driver of the development of the visual arts in Estonia. However, the development of the local art market would also need to be supported as much as possible. The main obstacles here are the slow growth of the wealthy middle class and, first and foremost, the low level of art awareness.

Financing arts, creative industries

When it comes to financing the art sector the main source for art projects and exhibitions is **Estonian Cultural Endowment** which is financed by collecting tobacco, alcohol and gambling taxes. The **Ministry of Culture** has a support program for non-profit art galleries and also supports exhibiting Estonian art abroad.

Artists and other creative workers who have no stable income can apply for a financial support for a 6 or 12 months period based on **Creative Persons and Artistic Associations Act**. This support is equal to the minimum wage and there must be a 2 years break between support periods – so it can help you out in difficult times but does not guarantee a stable income for a longer period.

In 2016 a new artists' support scheme – "**the artists' salary**" – was introduced in Estonia. It started as a pilot for 5 professional artists and 5 writers – the carefully selected lucky ones will get a 3 years support in the amount of average salary. In 2017 the next 4 artists

were granted with artists' salary – and hopefully there will be several more next year. The focus of the support program is on creative persons who are at the peak of their professional activity and who have potential to operate in the international art scene. So it is an investment into developing the future players in the playground of international art market, so to say.

The same year, as a major shift in understanding and valuing artists' work, **artist fee** for exhibiting their art work was implemented in several Estonian galleries, including EAA's galleries and Tallinn Art Hall.

In 2011 the **percentage law** was adopted in Estonia and since then more than 50 public buildings and spaces have been equipped with sculptures, paintings and installations. The EAA has quite an important role here designating experts to participate in the juries and commissions.

For several years now, "creative industries" has been one of the most important keywords when it comes to the state and culture in Estonia. The state hopes that artists will become more efficient and profit-minded and thus will be able to produce art that both local people and tourists would like to buy.

Estonian Artists' Association

The history of EAA dates back to **1922**. Today, the Estonian Artists' Association unites **962 professional artists** and acts as **an umbrella-organisation for 19 professional artist unions** i.e. NGOs dedicated to a specific field of art – painting, sculpture, ceramics, art criticism, graphic design etc. The activities of the EAA are led by its Management Board (Vano Allsalu, President; Elin Kard, Vice-President; Toomas Johanson).

The mission of EAA is to support the activities of our members and other creative persons and to protect their interests; to develop the field of art and further awareness of art; to support the sustainable development of Estonian culture and society.

Today EAA has **3 main directions** in its activities. The first is **union** – a sort of trade union of creative persons which is fighting for the rights of its members – and for the rights of the artists in general. We have our say in developing the legislation in Estonia – is it copyright law, Creative Persons and Artistic Associations Act, percentage law or else. The social guarantees for art workers are of utmost importance these days - and a subject for almost every round-table discussion.

EAA has a possibility to be an opinion leader regarding artists rights as well as shaping the cultural policy and, more specifically, the art policy in Estonia. So we see our second challenge in being an **expert organization** that - for example - can be a reliable partner in working out the official development plan for the arts.

The third aspect in EAA's activities is connected to **real estate development** and providing artists with **working space**. Today we offer working space to almost 200 clients – most of them are creative people. The members of the EAA and other professional artists can rent the workshops and studios located in the buildings of the EAA at a considerably lower price than they could on the open market. EAA is also running **4 galleries** which – beside exhibiting the artwork of established artists - have become a starting platform for the young artists.

Beside that we support Tallinn Art Hall Foundation providing it and its 2 galleries with about 1000 square metres of exhibition space for free. The Tallinn Art Hall was established in 1934

and its annual programme includes more than 20 art exhibitions, which are organised in its main building and two galleries and which are visited by more than 30 thousand people a year.

What was written in previous annual reports of EAA also holds true today: the Estonian Artists' Association is one of the few artists' organisations in Europe that is required to earn the lion's share of funds for running the organisation itself. The EAA earns its income, which is used for financing its art programmes, its social programme for members, its staff expenses and building maintenance expenses, mostly from renting out its property. Although the EAA intermediates support and grants for artists under the Creative Persons and Artistic Associations Act, it does not receive any considerable support for its everyday duties and activities neither from the state nor from the local municipality.

There is also some good news as EAA lately received a **0,4 Mil eur funding by Enterprise Estonia** to renovate a central part of ARS art factory. Established in 1944, **ARS art factory** ensured the production of quality applied art and design items in the field of ceramics, textile and leather design, interior design etc. throughout the Soviet era. Today's ARS (www.arsimaja.ee) is an attractive **art hub**, housing more than 90 art professionals and creative companies.

We are convinced that the contribution by the state and the business sector in **supporting the arts** should increase. Continued attention is needed to improve the social guarantees for creative individuals. To achieve better mutual understanding, entrepreneurship training for artists should be complemented by training in the arts for businessmen. **Arts education** in its broadest sense – promoting creativity and expanding the 'coverage' of art – creates the preconditions for a mutually rewarding relationship between the creator and the consumer and for their cooperation.

The Estonian Artists' Association is in ready state to initiate cross-border and cross-sectoral cooperation projects, and to act as a partner in projects, the aim of which is to enhance the understanding of art and the welfare of artists in Europe.