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Support for children's culture in Finland

English Summary

Introduction

This report focuses the formulation of the concept of children's culture, Finnish cultural policies related to it, and the objectives of government support for children's culture¹. The origin of the policies, as well as the formulation of the concept, have been studied from different points of view based on documents, reports, assessments, committee reports and cultural policy programmes from the 1960s onward. The study also examines cultural policy decisions concerning children's culture and art education, as well as the opportunities of children to influence the content of children's culture as a whole.

The focus of the study lies on the operation of the subcommittee of children's culture established in 1987 as the first separate subcommittee of the Central Arts Council², and which awarded its first children's culture grants in 1988. The statistical data covers a period of twenty years, starting from the foundation of the subcommittee and ending in 2007. The data gives a profound overview on how grants and prizes for the promotion of children's culture have been allocated.

1 The term 'children' applies to those under 18.

2 The Arts Council institution in Finland promotes art, creates and develops art policies and conducts research in the field of art. It comprises the Central Arts Council and its subcommittees, the National Art Councils (Architecture, Cinema, Dance, Design, Literature, Music, Photographic Art, Theatre, and Visual Arts), the State Art Collection Committee and 13 Regional Arts Councils and two grant boards. As a whole they form the Arts Council of Finland (ACF), which works as an arm's length expert body to the Ministry of Education.

The report analyses trends in the amount of discretionary support granted for the promotion of children's culture and the projects and art forms which have received the support. Applicants for and recipients of grants are analysed in terms of their numbers, art form, gender, and sum of grants received/awarded. In addition to individual artists and artists' working groups, the study reviews collective bodies as applicants. Recipients of state prizes for children's culture are also included in the analysis.

The study of the promotion of children's culture in Finland has been part of a more extensive project by the Research Unit of ACF, focusing on the impact of discretionary art subsidies. Thus far the project has produced three other publications³.

The subcommittee of children's culture

The subcommittee of children's culture as an expert body was founded in 1987 by the Ministry of Education. The establishment of the subcommittee was a result of a debate, which started during the International Year of the Child which the United Nations (UN) proclaimed in 1979. This year gave rise to many national programmes and projects, including the governmental committee on children's culture, appointed by the Ministry of Education in Finland. One of the committee's proposals for promoting children's culture in Finland was to found a permanent committee which would operate under the Central Arts Council⁴. In 1986 some members of Parliament took up a question about the status of children's culture in Finland and the following year, in November 1987, the subcommittee of children's culture was established.

The subcommittee consists of members of the art-form based National Councils, and they have been nominated for periods of one

3 Oesch, Pekka (2004): Kulttuuriyhteisöjen harkinnanvarainen tuki. Valtionavustusjärjestelmän muutokset ja yhteisöjen toimintamahdollisuudet. (Foundation support for the arts in 2001 and 2005. English Summary.) Tilastotietoa taiteesta n:o 32. Helsinki: Taiteen keskustoimikunta.

Karttunen, Sari (2005): Suomalainen valokuvakirja. Valtion jakaman laatutuen vaikutukset valokuvakirjallisuuteen. (The Finnish Photo Book. The effects of state quality support on photographic literature. English Summary.) Taiteen keskustoimikunnan julkaisu n:o 29. Helsinki: Taiteen keskustoimikunta.

Karhunen, Paula (2008): Tanssiproduktioiden tuki ja tuotantoehdot. Valtion tuotantotuen kehitys ja merkitys 1991–2008. (Support and conditions of Finnish dance productions. Trends in and importance of state grants for dance productions 1991–2008. English Summary.) Tilastotietoa taiteesta no 39. Helsinki: Taiteen keskustoimikunta.

4 *Lastenkulttuuritoimikunnan mietintö* (1979). (Children's culture committee report.) KM 1979:32. Helsinki: Opetusministeriö.

or three years. The most frequent art form represented by members has been literature (16 %). The representation of theatre (14 %), dance (13 %), music (13 %) and visual arts (13 %) has also been substantial. The proportion of female members has been nearly 70 per cent. The subcommittee awards grants and subsidies annually for costs incurred by the implementation of projects in the field of children's and youth culture⁵. Two forms of support scheme for children's culture are delegated to the subcommittee of children's culture. *The grants* are intended mainly for artists, working groups, critics, art pedagogues and researchers, and *the subsidies* for collective bodies such as associations, foundations, co-operatives, municipalities and companies.

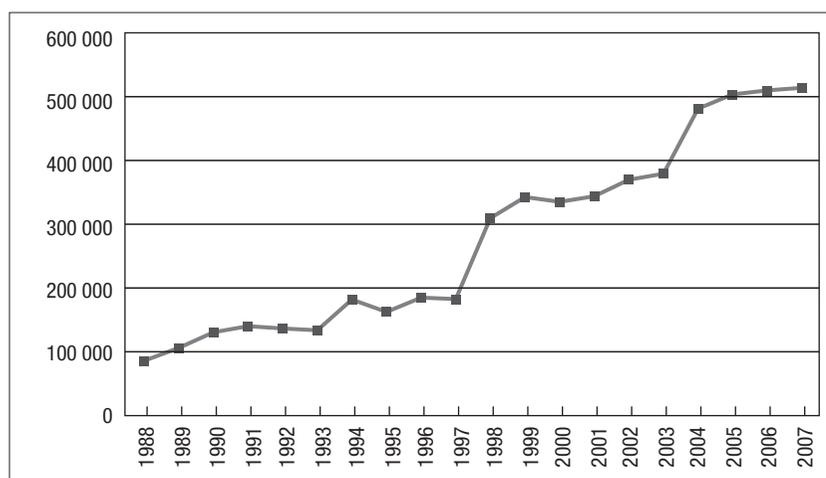
In recent years, the subcommittee of children's culture has launched a notification of priorities at the beginning of each application process. The policy programme for children's culture by the Ministry of Education (2003–2007) has been the main focus in the support granting process. The main purpose of the priorities and policy programme is to confirm the status and amount of children's culture in institutions where children already spend their time.

Support for the children's culture 1988–2007

Appropriations directed to the promotion of children's culture have been small in volume across the years, even though the real value of total support has grown from 86 485 euros to 514 000 euros in two decades (1988–2007) (figure 1 and table 1). In the same period of time the average growth rate per year has been 8 per cent. The total proportion of appropriation for the children's culture from the appropriation for the promotion of the art in Finland (by the ACF) has grown from 2 per cent in 1991 to 2.5 per cent in 2007.

5 The Ministry of Education has other schemes of state support for children's culture (organisations and institutions). Grants and subsidies awarded by art-form-based National Arts Councils are intended for all artists regarding certain art form including the artists working in the field of children's culture. Consequently, the subcommittee of children's culture (and the Central Arts Council) is a part of the system of public funding.

FIGURE 1. The trend in state support (ACF) for the promotion of children's culture 1988–2007*



*The sums (€) (converted into the 2006 value of money) are included in the table 1.

TABLE 1. State support for the promotion of children's culture in 1988–2007

Year	Grants	Index*	Special sub- sidies	Index*	State prize	Index*	Total support	Index*
		€		€		€		€
1988	260 000 FIM	64 246	–	–	90 000 FIM	22 239	350 000 FIM	86 485
1989	380 000 FIM	88 084	–	–	80 000 FIM	18 544	460 000 FIM	106 628
1990	500 000 FIM	109 250	–	–	100 000 FIM	21 850	600 000 FIM	131 100
1991	570 000 FIM	119 643	–	–	100 000 FIM	20 990	670 000 FIM	140 633
1992	570 000 FIM	116 565	–	–	100 000 FIM	20 450	670 000 FIM	137 015
1993	600 000 FIM	120 180	–	–	70 000 FIM	14 021	670 000 FIM	134 201
1994	840 000 FIM	166 488	–	–	80 000 FIM	15 856	920 000 FIM	182 344
1995	750 000 FIM	147 225	–	–	80 000 FIM	15 704	830 000 FIM	162 929
1996	700 000 FIM	136 570	200 000 FIM	39 020	50 000 FIM	9 755	950 000 FIM	185 345
1997	700 000 FIM	134 890	200 000 FIM	38 540	50 000 FIM	9 635	950 000 FIM	183 065
1998	700 000 FIM	133 070	880 000 FIM	167 288	50 000 FIM	9 505	1 630 000 FIM	309 863
1999	800 000 FIM	150 320	925 000 FIM	173 808	100 000 FIM	18 790	1 825 000 FIM	342 918
2000	860 000 FIM	156 348	885 000 FIM	160 893	100 000 FIM	18 180	1 845 000 FIM	335 421
2001	995 000 FIM	176 314	897 000 FIM	158 948	50 000 FIM	8 860	1 942 000 FIM	344 122
2002	136 200 €	141 280	213 500 €	221 464	7 000 €	7 261	356 700 €	370 005
2003	145 000 €	149 104	207 200 €	213 064	16 800 €	17 275	369 000 €	379 443
2004	214 500 €	220 163	230 500 €	236 585	24 000 €	24 634	469 000 €	481 382
2005	193 700 €	197 109	302 300 €	307 620	24 000 €	24 422	520 000 €	529 152
2006	186 000 €	186 000	299 000 €	299 000	30 000 €	30 000	515 000 €	515 000
2007	180 000 €	180 000	304 000 €	304 000	30 000 €	30 000	514 000 €	514 000

* The sums are converted into the 2006 value of money according to the cost-of-living index (elinkustannus-indeksi).

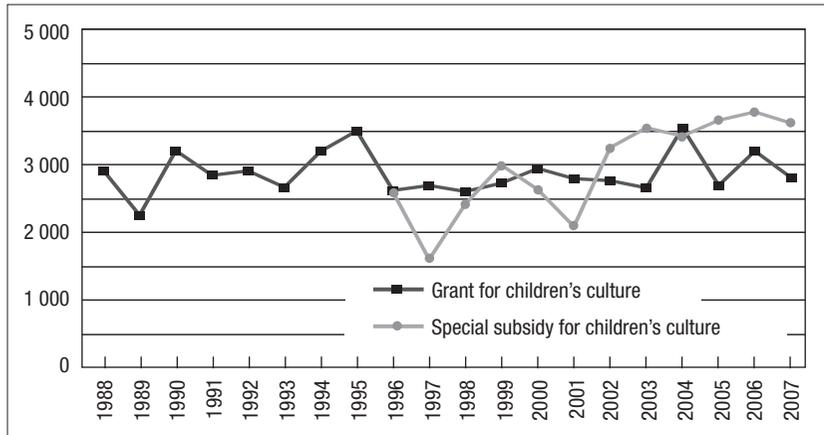
FIM = 5,94573 €.

The number of applicants has increased cyclically whereas the number of recipients has increased constantly. The allocated sums have not raised considerably, but the raised appropriations has been directed to increase the number of those supported, not the sum of the grants. It emerged that decision-makers have preferred to award grants as many applicants as possible instead of raising the sums allocated as grants and subsidies. The rate of acceptance for all applications has increased from 11 per cent in 1988 to 25 per cent in 2007. The average rate of acceptance has been 21 per cent in the group of grant applicants and 32 per cent in the group of special subsidy applicants. (Table 2 and figure 2.)

TABLE 2. *The number of applications and recipients and the rate of acceptance in 1988–2007*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Grant applica- tions</i>	<i>Grant recipients</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Special subsidy applica- tions</i>	<i>Special subsidy recipients</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Appli- cations Total</i>	<i>Reci- pients Total</i>	<i>%</i>
1988	199	22	11				199	22	11
1989	192	39	20				192	39	20
1990	157	34	22				157	34	22
1991	183	42	23				183	42	23
1992	295	40	14				295	40	14
1993	330	45	14				330	45	14
1994	300	52	17				300	52	17
1995	300	42	14				300	42	14
1996	305	52	17	79	15	19	384	67	17
1997	262	50	19	165	24	15	427	74	17
1998	246	51	21	244	69	28	490	120	24
1999	277	55	20	200	58	29	477	113	24
2000	272	53	19	181	61	34	453	114	25
2001	230	63	27	297	76	25	527	139	26
2002	187	51	27	242	68	28	429	119	28
2003	204	56	27	184	60	48	388	116	30
2004	183	62	34	171	69	40	354	131	37
2005	210	73	35	187	84	45	410	157	38
2006	191	58	30	181	79	44	373	137	37
2007	189	64	34	169	84	50	358	148	41
Total	4 712	1 004	21	2 300	747	32	7 026	1 751	25

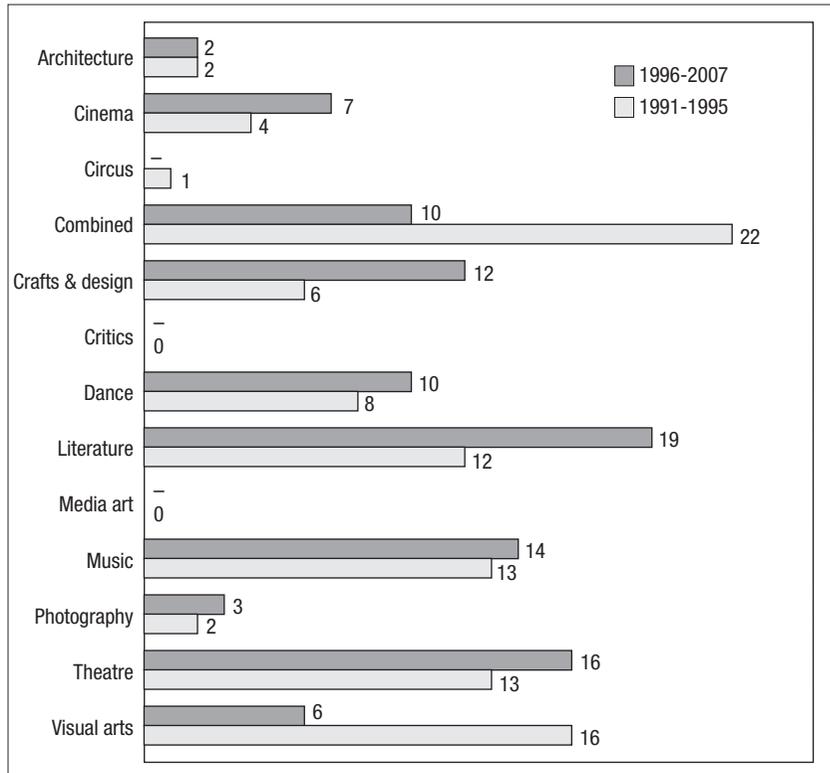
FIGURE 2. Mean values of grants and special subsidies (€) for the children's culture 1988–2007



The sums (€) are converted into the 2006 value of money according to the cost-of-living index (elinkustannusindeksi).

The subcommittee's history of two decades can be divided into two separate periods of time. The first (1988–1995) can be characterised as a period of supporting the artist, and the second (1996–2007) as a period of support for collective bodies. According to the grant and subsidy register, the top three in the art form based order is multidisciplinary (or combined), theatre and literature. The projects operating in the “new” fields of art, e.g. media art and circus art, are furthermore infrequently awarded by grants and subsidies. (Figure 3.) The distribution of recipients corresponds well to applicants. The share of various art forms is different in two separate periods. In the first period projects of literature, theatre and crafts & design were more frequently awarded by grants (and subsidies) than projects of e.g. multidisciplinary or visual arts. The variation is in relation to the change with support schemes in 1996. In the first period of supporting artists, the projects were mainly artworks (incl. books, performances, recordings etc.) and in the second period of supporting collective bodies, the projects have been often connected to art education (workshops, club-house activity etc.).

FIGURE 3. Awarded grants and special subsidies by art form (%) in 1991–1995 and in 1996–2007*



* Critique from 1998, circus art from 2000 and media art from 2005.

The content of applications submitted to the subcommittee was also examined as a case study by using a cross section of projects planned for 2007. In addition, the content of applications submitted for one year is also analysed more detailed. The case study focuses on both approved and rejected applications and project plans. It includes facts about a typical grant recipient of children's culture.

The individual artist working in the field of children's culture can be profiled as the following:

- Female artist (65 %)
- 42 years old
- Finnish-speaking
- Literature (24 %) or theatre (24 %) [male: literature 45 %]
- Allocated amount: 45 % of the applied amount
- Children as targets (82 %), not actors
- Project planned for children less than 13 years of age (47 %)
- 2/3 of the projects funded by other organisations
- Policy priorities in children's culture did not have a role in the project plan

The profile of typical collective body awarded by the subcommittee of children's culture:

- Association, fund or co-operative (68 %)
- Art form: combined, multidisciplinary (19 %)
- Language: Finnish (92 %)
- Allocated amount: 47 % of the applied amount
- Children as targets and as actors (47 %)
- Project planned for school children (7–16 year-olds) (28 %)
- 3/4 of the projects funded by other organisations
- 21 % of the subsidised projects took into account the priorities of the Ministry of Education

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the opportunities of children to influence the content of children's culture as a whole are limited. The actor in cultural activities supported by the subcommittee of children's culture is not the child but the adult artist. During the two decades (1988–2007) of the children's culture subcommittee's existence the three art forms supported belong to the groups "combined, multidisciplinary", theatre, and literature. Typically she (or he) plans her (or his) work of art for a child less than 13 years of age. The child is the target and belongs to the target group of the subcommittee. Nevertheless, one hardly ever asks the child what kind of culture or art he or she like to have and what belongs to or is missing from the present-day children's world of experience. Cultural policy decisions affect children's culture indirectly through adult artists and art teachers.

If we consider the impact of the support for children's culture in financial terms, it did not appear to be of major significance as regards the implementation of children's culture projects. The real value of the grants and subsidies has remained nearly the same between 1988 and 2007. A large proportion of the projects are supported by other channels and the financial support of the subcommittee seems to be quite marginal. All in all the subcommittee has awarded grants and subsidies to 1,727 projects in this 20-year period. Approximately 300 applications are processed per year and about half of them receive grants and subsidies.

The relation between two different support schemes (grants and subsidies for the children's culture) has changed significantly in the end of 1990. Since then the major part of the appropriation has been allocated to the projects planned and organised by collective bodies, and art projects planned by individual artists and artists' working groups, form a distinct minority in the section of supported projects in the field of children's culture.

When the state allocates resources for promoting children's culture, it also defines special forms of children's culture as worthy of grants. In this meaning, the government formulates a scale of aesthetics in culture for children. Support for children's culture has been dealt with mainly in the same way as other project grants for various art forms, and the aesthetic value measured by the value of the grants has become quite similar to the other art forms in Finland. However, children's culture as produced by children's own peer groups hardly exists at the top of the formal aesthetic scale. It seems that an active role in children's culture has been given to adult artists or art teachers. The government formulates a scale of best practices for artists and other cultural practitioners working in the field of children's culture. The projects receiving grants and subsidies may emerge as tools for implementing other goals than artistic in the field of children's culture even if the artistic quality has been the main objective of support for the arts in all other art-form-based support schemes.

The peer evaluation process in the system of arts councils is mainly meant for assessment of artistic quality. The wide expertise of the subcommittee is needed in many ways when assessing the eligibility of applications. In the decision-making process the peer evaluation based on artistic expertise is too narrow in many cases. This is the reason for the necessity of having multi-skilled members of the subcommittee in the future.

The range of children's culture has proved to be wider than the traditional concept of art. One of the dimensions concerning children's culture is art education including media and audience education (regeneration and inclusion). There has been widely expressed concern about the poor quality and commercialism of children's culture in Finland since the 1960s, and proper art education has been con-

ceived as a solution to the problem. The major definition of policy rests on the faith that children's culture of the best quality can lead children away from bad taste and consumption of low culture. The intention of the policy was to create a culture-conscious child and, above all, a culture-conscious adult of the future.