

Evaluation of the Activities of the Performing Arts Alliances



Preface

In the spring of 2011, the parliamentary Committee on Cultural Affairs' follow-up and evaluation group initiated a follow-up and evaluation of the activities of the three performing arts alliances: the Theatre Alliance, the Dance Alliance and the Music Alliance. The purpose was to increase the Committee's knowledge of the results of activities, of the opportunities for performing artists to make a living, and of their situation on the labour market. The study focused on following up results of activities in relation to the purposes set out by the Government and supported by the Riksdag, as well as the conditions decided by the Government for the central government subsidies to the alliances. The results have also been analysed in relation to relevant aspects of the overall national cultural policy goals decided by the Riksdag in 2009.

The Committee on Cultural Affairs' follow-up and evaluation group comprised the following members: Andreas Carlson (Christian Democrats), Chair, Anne Marie Brodén (Moderate Party), Christina Zedell (Social Democratic Party), Per Lodenius (Centre Party)¹, Tina Ehn (Green Party), Mattias Karlsson (Sweden Democrats), Bengt Berg (Left Party) and Anna Steele (Liberal Party).

At the request of the group, the background materials were prepared in the Riksdag Administration by the Parliamentary Evaluation and Research Unit at the Committee Services Division, in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Committee on Cultural Affairs. The evaluation group's report *The Activities of the Performing Arts Alliances - An Evaluation* has been published in the series Reports from the Riksdag (Report 2011/12:RFR10), and was submitted to the Committee on Cultural Affairs in March 2012.

¹ Per Lodenius replaced Anders Flanking from 14 October 2011.

Background

The labour market for professional actors, dancers and musicians is characterised by relatively few permanent positions. In order, among other things, to increase social and economic security for freelancing performing artists, lessen the burden on the unemployment fund, develop employment services and increase the opportunities for freelancing performing artists to take part in skills development activities, the Riksdag has, in stages and starting in 1999, decided to grant funds for performing arts alliances where a number of professional actors, dancers and musicians have been offered employment and remuneration in periods when they have no engagements.

There are currently three performing arts alliances: the Theatre Alliance, the Dance Alliance and the Music Alliance. Together they have 315 employees. In 2012, total central government subsidies to these alliances amount to SEK 62 million.

The organisation of the alliance model

The alliance model is often described as a third form of employment and, in simple terms, offers freelancing actors, dancers and musicians employment through an "alliance" which is run as a limited company. The limited company is in principle funded entirely from central government subsidies and is owned jointly by the employer and employee organisations in the relevant performing arts sector.

The alliances pay a salary to the performing artists in periods when they have no engagements. This employment enables them to take sick leave or parental leave when necessary. Furthermore, the alliances pay pension premiums for the employees, who are also entitled to take out holiday. This form of employment gives the artists a more even income and thus a more secure economic and social situation than they would have if they combined freelance assign-

ments with periods of unemployment, during which many of these individuals would be dependent on the unemployment fund as their means of support.

An employment contract with one of the performing arts alliances does not mean that the employee performs tasks for the employer. Instead, the purpose is that the employee should take as much leave as possible to work as an actor, dancer or musician for other employers or clients. The alliances apply a system of time accounts. An employee who does not take a sufficient amount of leave to work as an actor, dancer or musician risks losing his or her employment.

Skills development and employment services

All three performing arts alliances offer their employees various forms of skills development, and these activities are, to a great extent, also open to other professionals who are not employed by an alliance. The alliances also offer employment services. For all three alliances, the employment services primarily focus on strengthening the employees' contact net with prospective employers and clients and thus providing better matches.

Employment requirements

In order to be offered employment with one of the alliances it is necessary to meet the basic requirements agreed by the parties to the labour market in the collective agreements that regulate the activities of each alliance. Only practising performing artists, i.e. actors, dancers and musicians, can be employed by the Theatre, Dance or Music Alliances. An employee must also, to some extent, have qualifications from some form of central government funded / publicly funded activity.

The evaluation group's assessments and proposals

In the light of the observations presented in the report, the group has made a number of assessments and presents proposals which may be summarised as follows:

The evaluation group considers that the performing arts alliance reform has significantly increased social and economic security for the employees, even if it also notes that many qualified, freelancing actors, dancers and musicians still do not belong to the alliances.

The requirements that need to be met in order to be offered employment with an alliance are regulated in collective agreements reached by the parties to the labour market. The criterion that the artists should, to a certain extent, have qualifications from some form of central government / publicly funded activity in order to be offered employment with an alliance has historical reasons. In the opinion of the evaluation group, however, there is reason to consider to what extent this requirement is still relevant, or should be changed. The group proposes that the Government assign to an appropriate administrative authority the task of further examining this issue. At the same time, the possible practical difficulties connected with evaluating qualifications from privately funded activities should be considered, as well as solutions to this problem. The issue of how qualifications from the TV and film industries should be assessed should also be considered, as well as an individual's qualifications from different performing arts areas. In the opinion of the group, this assignment should be carried out in consultation with the relevant stakeholders.

The evaluation group underlines that it is important that central government checks and follows up that the central government subsidies are used in accordance with the given purposes and conditions. The evaluation group considers that, in view of this, it is crucial that the results of the performing arts alliances' activities are regularly

followed up and evaluated and that the Government ensures that relevant information is submitted to the Riksdag in accordance with the provisions of the Budget Act (2011:203).

The central government subsidies to the performing arts alliances are not adjusted to compensate for changed costs arising from pay increases agreed by the parties. This is in accordance with the main principle for the price and wage indexing (PLO) system which is only applied in the case of certain allocations in the central government budget. The evaluation shows that central government subsidies to the alliances have increased manifold in the last decade. The evaluation group therefore considers that there is no reason, at present, to urge the Government to disregard the main principle for the PLO in this case.

The overall socio-economic effects on the unemployment fund can be assumed to be limited as, in this context, relatively few individuals are affected by the alliance reform. At the same time, the evaluation group considers that the alliances have led to a decrease in the administration of the temporary, but repeated periods of unemployment that many freelancing performing artists have.

The consequences of the 1998 pension reform and the introduction of the right for permanent employees to work to the age of 67 in 2003, combined with certain labour law agreements and the transition from pension premiums designed to address imbalances in the industry to institution-specific premiums have had a considerable impact in the field of the performing arts. The employers pay, among other things, large pension premiums which the employees will not use, and the costs for the institutions have increased and become difficult to predict. Of the alliances, it is the Theatre Alliance that is directly affected by the above problems, even if the Dance Alliance is indirectly affected. The evaluation group considers that the Committee on Cultural Affairs' evaluation further underlines the need

for change as regards performing artists' pensions, as pointed out by the Riksdag to the Government earlier.

The evaluation group considers that the alliances offer their employees appropriate support if the issue of changing careers arises.

They also offer one of few opportunities for freelancing performing artists to take part in skills development activities. The group considers that these activities fulfil an important function for both employees and non-employed freelancers, giving them an opportunity for professional development.

The alliances work actively with employment services and the way in which they have organised this is adapted to conditions in the business. At the same time, the group notes that the results of these measures have not yet been evaluated in a systematic way. It assumes that this will be done in the future.

The evaluation group considers that cooperation between the performing arts alliances and the Swedish Public Employment Service should be aimed for where appropriate. It notes that it is important that the valid regulatory framework, including the Public Procurement Act (2007:1091), is observed so that tax revenues are used in an efficient and responsible manner and to ensure compliance with the rule of law. To the extent that measures can be taken to facilitate cooperation without disregarding these principles, these measures should be tested.

The evaluation group considers it important that the alliances seek to find ways to develop their contacts with the business sector as this could provide increased job opportunities.

It is positive that the performing arts alliances cooperate with each other where they consider it appropriate. It is also positive that the alliances cooperate with various artistic centres in cases where this is considered to generate added value.

The evaluation shows that the activities of the performing arts alliances are, in several respects, well in line with the ambitions of the overall cultural policy goals decided by the Riksdag, but that there are also certain mechanisms that contribute to the goals not being fulfilled. As a result of the demand that an individual must have been active as a professional performing artist for a long time in order to receive employment with one of the alliances, the average age of employees is relatively high. In the light of this, the evaluation group considers that there is a risk that new generations of competent performing artists will not benefit from the alliance reform as few young people can take advantage of the security of an employment with a performing arts alliance. A low regeneration of younger performing artists would be an obstacle to artistic renewal and maintained quality in the future.

In order to increase social and economic security for freelancing performing artists, lessen the burden of the unemployment fund, develop employment services and increase opportunities for freelancing performing artists to take part in skills development activities, the Riksdag has, in stages and starting in 1999, decided to grant funds for performing arts alliances where a number of professional actors, dancers and musicians have been offered employment and remuneration in periods when they have no engagements. The parliamentary Committee on Cultural Affairs' follow-up and evaluation group has carried out a follow-up and evaluation of the activities of the three performing arts alliances. The intention has been to examine whether the purposes of the central government subsidies, which have been supported by the Riksdag, have been achieved.

The evaluation shows that the performing arts alliances reform has increased social and economic security in a decisive way for the performing artists who have been offered employment. However, there may be reason to consider the extent to which the demand that individuals must have worked with central government funded / publicly funded activities in order to be offered employment is still relevant or whether it should be changed.

The central government subsidies to the performing arts alliances are not adjusted to compensate for changed costs arising from pay increases agreed by the parties. This is in line with the basic principle for the price and waging index (PLO) system and no changes should, at present, be made in this respect. Instead, the central government subsidies have been increased on several occasions.

It is important that central government regularly follows up that the subsidies to the performing arts alliances are used in accordance with the purposes and conditions decided by the Government and Riksdag, and that the Government presents relevant information to the Riksdag.



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