

## **Performing Arts in Residence - summary of the PAiR study**

### **Issues for further discussion, the first recommendations**

The aim of the initiative PAiR was, and still is, to obtain a picture of the current situation - firstly one concerning residence houses, i. e., places where artists can work and produce and, secondly, to capture experiences and wishes of the artists. The questionnaires were distributed worldwide, the majority of responses came from Europe. The present analysis is based on responses from about 200 artists and about 50 responses from residential centers, the survey is still running.

***The questions to the residence houses concerning their self-image and their conditions showed one thing immediately: there are completely different ideas about what is meant by a residence.***

Therefore, 65 individual questions were developed in order to create an actual picture of equipment, mission and selection process, profile, goals and expectations of the artists, local and interregional artistic networking. Furthermore the questionnaire differed between houses with an existing residential program, and houses which want to develop one.

***The second questionnaire was aimed at artists. Here too, a distinction was made between individual artists and groups to obtain a more accurate picture of reasonable working conditions.***

Generally speaking, a very dedicated spirit can be seen at the residence locations. They appear primarily to be in the hands of artistic collectives, which show great idealism in spite of limited financial means. They see themselves primarily in the role of the "patronage of the art" and they want to offer artistic freedom.

Among the artists, a lack of knowledge seems to dominate, in which way they are actually dealing with the residential houses. This is clearly felt in a relationship of dependency. It seems that there is an extreme lack of communication, which probably has built false fronts. The extremely difficult, even precarious situation of the artists - here we refer to the outcome of the study of the "Fonds Darstellende Künste" - can easily lead to a wrong enemy image. To avoid this tendency, the existing residential places through better communication and information to artists should enable them, to fight together for more and better working conditions.

### **Figures from the questionnaires:**

***The initiators are aware that the assessment must be done with extreme caution - but we dare to start the discussion process. The questionnaires will remain open and we hope to have comparisons at a later date.***

From the interviewed artists, 90% describe themselves as "professional", that is in flagrant contradiction to the financial situation: 43% of the artists and 68% of the artists' groups are working as freelancers, however, earn their money with other jobs! A large part of the professional artists can not live on their profession! 50% of individual artists cover even a large part of production costs with private money.

***In summary, one result seems clear, which applies to solo artists, groups and residential houses as well: a surprisingly small proportion of international and EU funding. This should give reason to different levels of reflection and action.***

***For this, the recommendation of the working group PAIR is, not only the cultural field, but national funding agencies themselves should join together at European level in order to allow European and international cooperation through the promotion of residencies.***

Another interesting result in the context of financial resources was demonstrated when the local commitment has been questioned: the artists always see themselves in close relation to the place of production, and they are normally cautious in the commitment when they are invited only for short residence periods. About 60% of the houses are active in the local environment, and not just in the cultural sector, but also in educational programs.

They are also active in the regional development. 30% said they participate in the structure developments, the same percentages appear in the field of tourism and education.

And then the surprise: from which sources are these specific activities financed? **100% from the culture budget!** Finances from education, economic development and international affairs cover only 5% of these activities!

***Policy makers should be asked, why only the narrow cultural budgets are available for these general social issues!***

Art houses, especially in rural areas, verifiably take over a much larger spectrum of tasks, operate cultural development in the broadest sense, which requires the support of various departments.

***The recommendation of the working group PAIR is, national funding institutions should make clear this discrepancy to the political decision-makers.***

The residence houses seem to be well equipped in terms of rehearsal rooms and technical issues. This widely corresponds to the offers, the experiences and wishes of the artists.

When asked about bed capacity, utilization and actual number of resident artists per year, there came up a shocking picture: The houses usually have only a few single rooms or apartments, with some exceptions. Spreading throughout the year, only one fifth of the houses are hosting more than fifty artists, and no house more than one hundred.

The image of a residence is still very attached to individual stays. For groups it is still very difficult. Here the production houses are in front, but in some cases they offer no overnight stay, but probably rent apartments from the production budget.

In fact, the demand seems to grow more and more. In the individual artists' survey was found, one-third do not live in their origin country and artist groups are multinational to more than two-thirds. The comments on mobility were impressive and diverse.

However, most groups can not financially afford a residence. Offers are available for groups only in a very limited extent, as is not difficult to guess from the analysis of the capacities.

The question of the artistic disciplines shows a discrepancy between houses and artists. While the former still work more in the traditional areas of theater, dance and visual arts, the emphasis of the artists lies on interdisciplinary and performance areas.

So we come back to the topics of communication and transparency, which is especially important for the process of tendering and selection. Centers with residence programs have (only) up to 70% an artistic directory and a specific artistic approach to their program. The application process, selection criteria and selection body are very different and often seem to follow personal inclinations.

This is proven by several frustrated remarks done by the artist.

On the other hand must be seen, that many residence programs are private initiatives of culturally active people who want to do with their own money what they like - rightly so.

***As long as there is hardly any significant funding for residency programs, which can thus also fulfill a public mission, the situation is likely to remain "private". Until now there is hardly a "neutral" non-programmatic funding to support the needs of residences. Artists-run residence places should not be misunderstood as a service for general needs. Supported by project funding, they try to transform their own cultural ideas, into which the residence seekers are forced to insert their specific ideas.***

***Here should be considered, in addition to the culture budget, other areas such as regional development, tourism, education and economic development. Then a development of an economic area alongside the ideological and artistic initiatives is possible.***

Concerning the residential houses, there is great interest in offering more programs for the performing arts, but more than half of them see difficulties - particularly financial - to expand their offerings.

**Almost all interviewed artists are of the opinion, that there should be more residence programs for the performing arts, responses e. g.:**

***"Absolutely, we're completely underrepresented, many of us are dedicated to site-specific work and / or working within the community."***

***"We need more variety of residence programs. Different and more experimental, local, small, big-scale, short, long, very long, collaborations with cities, initiatives, houses, institutions ..."***

***"Off-theater would explode if there were more quality in flexible residency program!"***



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