

Local government cultural provisions in financial figures III

Minna Ruusuvirta & Pasi Saukkonen 2013. Cupore and the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities.

Original publication: Minna Ruusuvirta ja Pasi Saukkonen 2014. Kuntien kulttuuritoiminta lukujen valossa III. Kulttuuritoiminnan kustannukset 24 kaupungissa vuonna 2013. Helsinki: Cupore ja Suomen Kuntaliitto.

Abstract

This is the third in a series of projects to collect data on local government cultural provision. Data was gathered on cultural provision revenue and expenditure recorded in the 2013 financial statements of the 24 Finnish towns and cities participating in the project. They were: Espoo, Helsinki, Hämeenlinna, Joensuu, Jyväskylä, Kajaani, Kokkola, Kotka, Kouvola, Kuopio, Lahti, Lappeenranta, Mikkeli, Oulu, Pori, Porvoo, Rauma, Rovaniemi, Salo, Seinäjoki, Tampere, Turku, Vaasa and Vantaa. The project was jointly implemented by the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, the Foundation for Cultural Policy Research (Cupore), and the participant towns and cities.

The towns and cities surveyed account for about half of Finland's population; furthermore, the bulk of the country's cultural services are concentrated there. Thus the survey builds a picture of Finnish urban culture and public cultural policy. A follow-up to two earlier projects carried out in 2007 and 2010, this project also provides insight into the cultural provision trends in these towns and cities in recent years. The project surveyed the expenditure and revenue of urban cultural provision; cost division between different areas of operation and types of expenditure; the balance between cultural services provided by the municipality and support for private cultural actors; and the different models for cultural service production and provision. For the purposes of the survey, the following cultural provision categories were used: libraries, art and cultural institutions, cultural centres, art schools and basic art education, and the general cultural provision, and other departments' cultural provision not included in the above categories. Finnish towns and cities vary in their organisation and provision of cultural services, which complicates data collection and reduces direct comparability of cost data. This variation and its effects on cultural provision's cost data need, therefore, to be taken account of in cost data analyses and comparisons between towns/cities.

In 2013, the combined net operating costs for cultural provision in the 24 participant towns and cities amounted to about €523 million. There was considerable variation between the towns/cities with the costs ranging from €5.7 million all the way up to €105.8 million. The per capita costs for six of the towns/cities ranged from €200 to €250. For fourteen towns/cities, the corresponding figure was €150–€199, and for four towns/cities €105–€150. Following municipal mergers, the per capita costs of some of the participant towns/cities decreased substantially, because the increase in residential numbers outstripped the growth of cultural provision volumes. Compared to 2010, cultural provision costs increased by about €28.3 million. However, with reference to the public expenditure trend, the costs decreased. This general development is attributable to the divergence of the participant towns and cities. In most of them, the difficult economic situation is manifested in the slowing of growth, whereas in some, the situation is also manifested in decreasing costs.

A high proportion of the net operating costs for urban cultural provision is attributable to libraries and art and cultural institutions, which account for 75 per cent of all cultural provision costs of the participant towns and cities put together. Library costs constituted 25 to 54 per cent of total costs with the proportion of art and cultural institutions varying between 10 and 62 per cent. In the case of six towns/cities, museums, theatres and orchestras accounted for over half of all cultural provision costs. It should be

further pointed out that in some cities and towns, the cost structure is being burdened by cultural centres (cities of Espoo, Vantaa) and basic art education (towns of Porvoo, Kajaani).

Municipalities still provide the majority of municipal cultural services. All the towns and cities combined, grants or grant-like items accounted for about 22.5 per cent of the costs – a figure which remained more or less constant over the period 2007–2013. However, the proportion of cultural grants varies widely among the participant towns and cities, ranging from about two to forty-one per cent in 2013.

The survey data shows that cultural provision still accounts for only a small part of the local economy. Cultural provision's net operating costs ranged from about two to close to five per cent of the total local government tax revenue and central government transfers. For most towns and cities, the proportion of cultural provision decreased slightly between 2010 and 2013.

In conclusion, the survey shows that cultural funding and priorities have remained almost unchanged; however, there are differences between the participant towns and cities in terms of costs and cost development. What is more, some of the towns and cities are likely to face severe cuts over the coming years. This means that if the costs of 2016 were to be surveyed in three years time, the changes and differences between the towns/cities might be even more profound.