Local government cultural provisions in financial figures

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Abstract

Altogether 23 Finnish towns and cities participated in the project to collect data on local government cultural activities: Espoo, Helsinki, Hämeenlinna, Joensuu, Jyväskylä, Kajaani, Kokkola, Kotka, Kuopio, Lahti, Lappeenranta, Mikkeli, Oulu, Pori, Porvoo, Rovaniemi, Salo, Savonlinna, Seinäjoki, Tampere, Turku, Vaasa and Vantaa.

The project was implemented in co-operation between the above towns and cities, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities and the Foundation for Cultural Policy Research (Cupore). The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities was responsible for the project co-ordination and Cupore for the bulk of data collection.

Under the project, data on the revenues and expenditures for cultural activities were collected from the 2007 final accounts of the participating town and cities. The project is a follow-up to a pilot project that was implemented in the previous year and involved 14 towns and cities. Data were collected by sending a questionnaire to the participating towns and cities. The following areas of cultural activities were surveyed: art and cultural institutions, libraries, cultural houses and centres, art schools, basic art education and other cultural services provided by departments of cultural services and other administrative sections.

The project examined the costs and profits of local government cultural activities; the division of costs between different areas of action; the relationship between cultural services provided by the municipality and the support for private cultural actors; and the different working models for the provision of cultural services.

The results show that although there has been in recent years a lot of talk about creativity and culture as key strategic success factors of towns and cities, cultural activities account for a modest proportion of local government finances. The proportion of cultural net operating costs of the total local government tax revenues and central government transfers in operational finances varied from 2.2 to 5.2 per cent in the city of Tampere.

Cultural activities continue to rely mainly on the municipality's own cultural offers and service provision. Of the cultural activity costs given in the municipal financial statements, the proportion of grants to private actors was under 50 per cent for all of the towns and cities. The proportion of municipal activities was largest in the town of Kajaani, at 98 per cent; the smallest proportion was just over 50 per cent.

The total expenses (in euro) for cultural activities were, as expected, the highest in larger cities. When calculated per capita, the net operating costs were the highest in the cities of Vaasa (230 €) and Tampere (225 €). The corresponding expenses for cultural activities per resident were less than 150 euro in seven (7) cities, about 100 euro at the lowest. Museums, theatres and orchestras have a strong position in local cultural services. In eight (8) of the cities, the expenses for these art and cultural institutions accounted for

over 50 per cent of the net operating expenses for cultural functions, 64 per cent in the city of Lahti. For example in the cities of Vantaa and Hämeenlinna, cultural establishments and centres, and in some cities (e.g. Porvoo) also basic art education, have an important role in the cost structure of cultural activities.

There is great variation in how Finnish towns and cities organise and provide cultural activities and services. This makes data collection difficult and reduces the direct comparability of cost data. The expectations and aspirations for cultural activities, and the search for new ways of providing services nevertheless create a need to continue data collection also in the future.