

## **She plays like a man!**

### **How to strengthen equality and wellbeing at work in the cultural field?**

Besides legislation, conscious and unconscious attitudes play a major part in people's wellbeing at work. The *Asiallista?* research project examined gender equality and wellbeing at work in the field of arts and culture. Equality and non-discrimination were viewed in the context of working life. The research was based on general studies on work conditions, wellbeing and job satisfaction in working life. The data included example cases of discrimination, harassment and abuse of power unrelated to gender, but the main objective was to examine gender equality and non-discrimination against a broader backdrop.

The project report continues on the discussion on promoting practices that enhance proper and sustainable work conditions and mutual respect in the field of arts and culture. The key questions were what maintains and what reduces problems in the cultural field and what can be done to monitor the situation. The research set its sight on the prevailing gender system and the underlying traditions, as well as on structural or systemic discrimination.

The report offers a compilation of good practices, regulations, policy recommendations and policies for promoting gender equality. It also includes exemplary recommendations for how wellbeing at work and more equal work conditions can be advanced.

The study was commissioned by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. The need for research of this kind was set off by the Me Too movement of 2017, which made the prevalence of gender-based discrimination and harassment visible. The ethical point of departure of the research project was to promote equality and non-discrimination.

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## **Abstract and premises of the research project**

*Men still dominate in the field of arts. Still today men in their fifties or sixties may remark in a so-called “positive tone” that a woman plays an instrument like a man, which is meant to be a compliment but is in fact chauvinistic. (Barometri 2017)*

The *Asiallista* project (‘asiallista’ translates as ‘proper’ in English) carried out by the Center for Cultural Policy Research Cupore in 2018-2019 examined gender equality and wellbeing at work in the culture sector. The need for research of this kind was set off by the Me Too movement of 2017 that stood up against sexual harassment across the world. The campaign, which spread virally as a #MeToo hashtag on social media, brought into light countless cases of discrimination and harassment. The movement or campaign did not categorize the cases; instead, the #MeToo experiences varied from indecent looks to rape. The #MeToo movement broke the silence around harassment and abuse of power. It marked a radical turning point, and the following year, 2018, has been called the year of the empowerment of women or even the year of a revolution in the status of women.

There has been a public outcry for new measures for eradicating abuse of power. Human rights violations are often targeted at women expressly or at people as women. What also makes this research project timely is that 2019 marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*. The year 2019 celebrates women’s rights.

The study was commissioned by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, motivated by the need to gain deeper insight into the #MeToo discussion and into why the arts and culture scene in Finland is especially susceptible to harassment and improper conduct. The research took the objective of bringing into light discriminating practices and norms in work cultures in the Finnish cultural field and gender tradition more broadly. Equality, non-discrimination, power dynamics, work conditions and wellbeing at work were approached from the perspective of cultural policies, gender studies, working life studies and ethics of arts and culture research. In general terms, harassment refers to sexual or gender-based harassment. Sexual harassment and gender-based harassment are prohibited by the Finnish Act on Equality between Women and Men.

In the research project equality and non-discrimination were viewed in the context of working life and the research was based on general studies on work conditions, wellbeing and job satisfaction in working life. The data included example cases of discrimination, harassment and abuse of power unrelated to gender, but the main objective was to examine gender equality and non-discrimination against a broader backdrop.

The research set its sight on the prevailing gender system and the underlying gender traditions as well as on structural or systemic discrimination. In the spirit of Finland’s national agenda 2050 on

societal commitment and sustainable development, the main standpoints in the research project were wellbeing of people and the environment, healthy and sustainable economy and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles. The project strived for its own part to advance at least three of the seventeen goals of the UN Sustainable Development Goals namely: Quality Education (4), Gender Equality (5), and Decent Work and Economic Growth (8). (See: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>)

The ethical premise was the promotion of equality and non-discrimination. When thought and action models that are commonly based on unconscious gender traditions are rendered visible it becomes possible to question them. Research-based information tells something about our surrounding reality. It isn't necessarily anything good or easy to solve, but research data can stimulate new ways to think and act. By reducing discrimination and improper behavior in the field of arts and culture we can improve operating capacities and productivity in the field (Housman & Minor 2015).

In Finland, same as elsewhere, the #MeToo campaign centered on the perhaps most visible and public of all the art forms: the film industry, where the most blatant cases and failures to comply with laws were being exposed (Paanetoja 2018). Problems in the film industry have raised discussion before, both in the industry itself and the media. They were also addressed in a report prepared in 2017 by Tarja Savolainen at Cupore. The industry got to serve as a trailblazer for bringing the issue out in the open.

Public financing for arts and culture isn't always used in a way that is ethically sustainable. People working in the field experience a large amount of unfair treatment, even harassment, but not necessarily quantitatively more compared to any other field. Even one case of harassment is however one too many. A statistically negligible and rare case can as an experience have large and lasting effects. In a small but very public professional field, one person alone can disrupt an entire art field. Both parties are in danger of losing face in public, both the victim and the offender.

In the field of arts and culture success requires being known, and the publicity makes improper behavior more conspicuous there than in working life on the average. The offenders and the victims are known to the general public at least to some extent, and due to the publicity, the revealed experiences at individual level resonate with a larger group than the work community of the persons in question. The public is also harassed. And vice versa: the artist may also be harassed by the public.

The sensitive research topic was analyzed with a multi-data approach and the research data were collected using the desk research method. It is a data-based method for the collection and analysis of data from existing research and statistical sources. What stood out as most interesting were topical discussions regarding artists and studies and surveys dealing with gender status, harassment, work conditions and job satisfaction in the cultural field. The common denominator in

the data were equality and wellbeing at work. Many different sources repeatedly addressed women's lower professional status and level of wellbeing at work.

In sum, one can remark that there has been much talk of harassment and improper behavior in the field of arts and culture. But it is harder to conclude whether there are more cases in the cultural field compared to working life on the average. #MeToo brought into the spotlight harassment in the cultural field expressly and encouraged people working in the field to speak up about their experiences of improper treatment. The uniqueness of an individual's experience stood out strongly in the data. Experiences of harassment are difficult to measure and with a sensitive issue like this, analysis should look beyond numbers.

The special nature of the profession of artist, combined with the special characteristics of the cultural field, make people in the field susceptible to harassment and improper treatment. The artist is an artist in his or her pastime too, which means that harassment experienced during an artist's pastime also involves the artist's work identity. On the other hand, in situations of harassment at work the artist's entire identity is more deeply at stake, in comparison to professions where the work doesn't draw from personal memories and experiences.

A financially unstable status on the one hand and the requirement of publicity on the other converge in work in the cultural field. Artists have to know how to network and make a name for themselves. Poor or non-existent relations make it more difficult to operate in the field. The job markets are informal and work opportunities are found through networks. When the circles are small, the financiers are few and the alternatives for earning an income are scarce, people may feel forced to subject themselves to improper treatment. Those who fall outside the informal 'old boy' networks are at risk of finding themselves in the margins, without sources of income. Strong public support for the arts is also a question of equality, since people in volatile work situations also experience more harassment.

This report continues on the discussion on promoting practices that enhance proper and sustainable work conditions and mutual respect in the field of arts and culture. Besides legislation, conscious and unconscious attitudes play a major part in people's wellbeing at work. The report offers a compilation of good practices, regulations, policy recommendations and policies for promoting gender equality.

The report also includes exemplary recommendations for how wellbeing at work and more equal work conditions can be advanced.

## **MEANS TO ENHANCE EQUALITY AND WELLBEING IN THE CULTURAL FIELD**

### **ZERO TOLERANCE IS THE KEY TO ELIMINATING HARASSMENT**

- Making structures, operating cultures and work communities open, transparent
- Removing conditions that allow harassment and exploitation
- Not leaving the victim to shoulder the responsibility

### **REGULATORY AND FUNDING MANAGEMENT, MONITORING**

- Management and monitoring to ensure compliance with labor and other laws
- Bringing collective agreements up to par
- Including equality plans already in funding applications
- Financial sanctions in cases of misconduct, possibility of recovery of funding
- Continuous and updated collection of data on the state of equality, publicizing equality statistics

### **TRAINING AND MONITORING**

- Personnel management training for managers/leaders/supervisors with competence based on artistic qualifications
- More interaction and equality skills for actors in the field
- Emphasis on pedagogical merits in choice of professors
- Anti-harassment methods and awareness raising for employer and employee organizations: gender equality plans, playing rules for working life, code of conduct, unconscious bias

### **ADVICE**

- Occupational safety and health inspectorates, trade unions and the Ombudsman for Equality offer advice
- Considering also the free art field in the future: would it be possible to follow the example of structures that support free researchers and journalists (ethics committees, councils etc.)?

### **DISMANTLING OUTDATED GENDER TRADITIONS, STEREOTYPES AND GENIUS MYTHS**

- There is nobody so exceptional that they would have the right or special privilege to oppress others
- Work conditions need to be decent even when work is done as a calling
- Attention needs to be paid in all communications to how different genders are treated respectfully
- Examples of good practices that promote equality should be disseminated