

## Equality initiatives at Swedish Arts Council

### Introduction and background

In the light of current concerns regarding sexual harassment of women in the cultural sector, this document provides a brief description of equality initiatives at Kulturrådet, the Swedish Arts Council.

Kulturrådet has long taken a proactive approach to equality issues. Since 2006 our budget allocation from central government has required us to incorporate equality considerations into all aspects of our operations. The following year, in 2007, this requirement was enshrined in our mandate, and that same year we were specifically tasked with promoting equality in the performing arts. In 2013 we were asked to lead a reading advocacy project targeting young people involved in sports, and in 2015 we were assigned a JiM project to run from 2015 to 2018 (see below).

Since 2010 Kulturrådet's equality initiatives have been guided by strategy documents. We adopted an equality strategy in 2010 and a *Strategy for Equal Opportunities and Rights 2016-18* in 2016. Given Kulturrådet's overall responsibility for accessibility issues and LGBTQ issues in the cultural sector, we have chosen to bring all these issues under the umbrella of a single equality strategy.

According to the strategy, Kulturrådet is to *promote equal distribution of power, influence and resources between men and women in awarding grants and delivering other support and advocacy programmes.*

In autumn 2017 we adopted a revised set of terms and conditions to apply to every grant award. One of the conditions is that the grant recipient must comply with all legal requirements and take responsibility for ensuring that the project or activity operates in accordance with the laws of Sweden.

### JiM – Integrating Equality in Public Bodies

As part of the Swedish government's JiM programme (Jämställdhetsintegrering i myndigheter, Integrating Equality in Public Bodies), Kulturrådet was asked in 2015 to step up its efforts to make equality integral to the organisation. We have pursued a number of initiatives in this regard. These included reviewing Kulturrådet's public face and website from an equality perspective and improving the comparability of collected data when broken down by gender.

We believe we have succeeded in making equality considerations integral to the work of Kulturrådet. Our application and review forms ask applicants how they incorporate equality, LGBTQ, diversity and multicultural considerations in their projects, and what they are doing to improve access for people with disabilities. We take equality considerations into account when reviewing regional cultural plans and

monitoring public funding for the activities of regional and Stockholm-based cultural institutions.

Kulturrådet is currently the designated strategic authority for LGBT issues in the cultural sector. A similar designation with regard to equality issues could improve our ability to promote qualitative equality initiatives by players in the cultural sector beyond the scope of our grants programmes.

### **Action by Kulturrådet**

An official study in 2006 entitled *Plats på scen* ('Room on Stage') considered the issues of inequality and sexual harassment of women in the performing arts. To improve gender equality, the study proposed that at least 40 per cent of all positions in the performing arts should be filled by women. This proposal has been a guiding principle for Kulturrådet's long-term equality programme, which has been a success in many respects. We applied the 40/60 principle in our 2010–13 equality strategy.

Under Kulturrådet's *Action Plan for Integrating Equality 2016–18*, in cases where one gender represents 60 per cent or more of grant recipients, we must ensure that no gender is over-represented in relation to the proportion of applicants of that gender. Where more than 60 per cent of recipients are of one gender, we must also analyse and explain the situation in our decision notice.

Currently, gender representation among performers in grant-funded projects is almost evenly balanced in the drama category, there is a surplus of women in the dance category, and in November for the first time we met our target of no gender representing more than 60 per cent of recipients in the independent music category.

We see potential for further steps. One possibility might be stricter requirements concerning action by regional cultural institutions against sexual harassment and abuse.

### **Improving expertise**

In 2016 the board and management of Kulturrådet, along with the chairs of our working and reference groups and the chair of the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, held discussions regarding quality assessments from an equality perspective. Similar discussions have also taken place among the organisation's staff.

### **Advocacy work**

Art and culture often highlight and challenge traditional gender patterns and stereotypes, thereby encouraging change. However, it is of course completely unacceptable that sexual harassment and abuse continue to occur in the cultural sector. Equality is not just about numbers, but also about attitudes and the ways in which publicly funded cultural institutions are allowed to perpetuate stereotypes and unequal gender roles.

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Music is one area where there remains much to be done, in terms of both funding allocation and attitudes, but we can also note that considerable progress has been made. From 2012 to 2014, Kulturrådet and Musikverket (the Swedish Performing Arts Agency) worked together to promote equality in the music field, and for two years Kulturrådet was tasked with promoting a more gender-balanced orchestral repertoire. As part of this project, we brought together national and regional players, decision makers and managers for dialogue about the issue. We also initiated dialogue with higher education institutions and Kulturskolerådet (the Swedish Arts Schools Council) to continue discussing the challenges that exist and how we can work together to bring about change.

### **Concluding remarks**

In order to focus our qualitative initiatives against sexual harassment and abuse in the cultural sector most effectively, we should like to see a study conducted of where and to what extent such incidents are occurring. In the performing arts field, Teaterförbundet för scen och film (the Swedish Union for Performing Arts and Film) and Svensk Scenkonst (the Swedish Performing Arts Association) have agreed to set up a joint investigation and action committee to address sexual harassment and other forms of abuse. They are planning to conduct surveys from both the employer's and the employee's perspective. The committee's remit is to develop proposals for specific action to prevent, highlight and tackle harassment in all its forms.

Kulturrådet is well placed to advance the issue and achieve progress through our role in the collaborative cultural model, which involves dialogue with representatives from the regions, and as the body responsible for allocating public arts funding. We should also raise these issues in future discussions on the implications of equality-based budgeting for Kulturrådet.

As part of this process, we are bringing together representatives from across the sector for a roundtable discussion on 1 December 2017. Participants will talk about how individual organisations are handling the issues raised by the #metoo campaign, compare notes and learn from one another.

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