

The Labour Market of Artists. Free, But Not Wild

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The authors present a summary of previous research projects in the field of professional situation of artists in Poland. They refer to the conducted research of the Labour Market of Artists and Creators in Poland as well as the expertise of “The Support for Artists and Creators. International Perspective”. They also present their vision of a support system for creators and artists, which comprises: the monitoring and analysis; the status of an artist; remuneration (government programmes and potential mechanisms to stimulate demand; taxes; copyright law); insurance; foreign promotion of artists; the organisation of the labour market of artists and adjusting education to its requirements. Finally, they refer to the presentation delivered at the conference “Creative Economy in Poland, Facts and Myths”, organised by the Creative Economy Research Center of SWPS University. The main postulate proposed by the authors is to create a platform for constant monitoring and analysis of the professional situation of artists in Poland, to which the project of estimating the number of artists, creators and performers should lead.

Keywords: labour market of artists, the system of support for artists, monitoring, artists, creators, the status of an artist, factors stimulating the labour market of artists

Introduction

The aim of this study is to present the effects of successive stages of research conducted by the Team under the leadership of Prof. Dorota Ilczuk, related to the social and economic situation of artists and creators in Poland. It contains

a summary of subsequent research projects in the area of professional situation of artists in Poland. A completely new component, the work on which started in January, has also been added. And, in this context, we will discuss the application aspect of the research conducted.¹

In search of data on the situation of artists and creators in Poland and abroad

In the period between 2012–2014, the team of the Pro Cultura Foundation (at that time it was headed by Prof. Dorota Ilczuk) and the University of Economy (WSG) in Bydgoszcz carried out a study co-financed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. It resulted in a publication of the report “Rynek Pracy Artystów i Twórców w Polsce” [The Labour Market of Artists and Creators in Poland]. The main objective of the project was to examine the trends in the labour market of artists and creators and identify opportunities and threats to its development.

We developed further expert opinions in 2017. It was “The Support for Artists and Creators. International Perspective”, written by Prof. Dorota Ilczuk in cooperation with Anna Karpińska and Sylwia Stano-Strzałkowska, and published by the NCK (National Centre for Culture). The expert opinion presents support systems for artists and creators in various countries, namely: Austria, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Lithuania, Germany, Great Britain and non-European countries: Australia, Brazil, Canada and South Korea. In the subsequent study “Reform of The Cultural Sector in Poland”, written by Prof. Dorota Ilczuk in cooperation with Prof. Marian Noga and Anna Karpińska, published by the Fryderyk Chopin Institute, each part directly or indirectly concerned the reform of the organisation and financing of the artistic area and proposals for new solutions and sources of financing of the changes in the labour market for artists and creators. One of the three parts entitled “The System of Support for Artists and Creators” included a proposal regarding a comprehensive approach to the system of support for artists. Let us now proceed to the presentation of the essence of the problem.

Global development tendencies mark a new place for culture on the public stage. Before our very eyes, the concept of the creative sector combining the non-industrial with the industrial areas of culture, is emerging. Culture has been

¹ On 15 December 2017, at SWPS University, a conference “Creative Economy in Poland. Facts and Myths”, organised by the Creative Economy Research Center of SWPS University was held. It allowed, among other things, to present the results of the Center’s team’s several years’ research activity, devoted to the labour market of artists and creators. This article refers to the presentation delivered at that time.

recognised as a new area of beneficial investment and job creation, a source of creativity and innovation. Meanwhile, the labour market of artists in Poland is insufficiently monitored and analysed. What is more, one may also be tempted to state that the professional situation of creators and artists is not adequate to the contemporary development trends in culture which have been revealed.

The poor social and financial situation led to the artists' strike action in 2012. This event was widely publicized on in the media. The strike was supposed to show that most artists live without social security or a chance to retire. What is more, a large group literally operates on the verge of poverty. It became a bad practice not to pay for artistic work. On the No Art Day, institutions, such as the Zachęta National Gallery of Art and the National Museum, were closed. The most frequently quoted slogan of this initiative became Zbigniew Libera's slogan: "I am an artist, but this does not mean that I work for free". Although this initiative caused a strong resonance in the media, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy did not take any steps towards creating systemic solutions for pension or health insurance at that time. However, it was an important contribution to launching the research on the labour market of artists and creators in Poland.

The analysis of the labour market of artists and creators in Poland on the basis of the survey

The joint Warsaw-Bydgoszcz research in the period between 2012–2013 created a possibility of diagnosing both general and Poland-specific features of the labour market of artists.

The labour market of artists is a strongly deregulated market, where demand has the greatest impact on the situation of workers. It is a buyer's market, which, in the absence of objective criteria for an artistic work, is often unable to distinguish between a product that is only the result of effective marketing and the work of a talented artist. A characteristic feature of the supply side of the market is the low degree of substitution of artists' talents and skills by technology, but also, for the same reasons, artists have limited opportunities (and willingness) to work in other industries. Artists often work regardless of the amount of remuneration, but also, in the case of exceptionally talented (or successfully promoted) artists, extremely high remuneration rates may occur. This is a market where an income is uncertain and irregular, although it may reach very high levels. Professional success does not always guarantee a high level of financial stability. Non-standard forms of employment prevail in this area.

The specificity of the Polish situation is that, in the absence of favourable systemic solutions, social security in the form of medical and pension insurance begins to be a luxury for the richest. The results obtained in the survey regarding the employment of artists show that symptoms of the so-called inter-industry mobility of the workforce have begun to appear, which may mean a gradual increase in the number of jobs for artists outside the cultural sector, e.g. in creative industries. The low level of professionalisation of the market is reflected in the lack of a well-established position of intermediary institutions (employment agencies, managers). The results of the survey conducted confirmed that entrepreneurship, meant both as an attitude and specific forms of activity, is well perceived and desired by the artists themselves who admit that ‘abilities alone are not enough’. Artists rate their bargaining power in relations with employers from outside the cultural area higher than with employers representing cultural institutions. The image of the environment which is fragmented, and, at the same time, quite hermetically closed within their professional groups, is complemented by a low opinion about organisations operating in the sector (which are considered to be ineffective). Clear gaps in the government’s policy with regard to both supply (artistic education) and demand (the scale of direct support for artists, tax reliefs, the level of cultural education) are apparent.

The conclusion based on the survey “The Labour Market of Artists and Creators” in Poland was as follows: 63% of the respondents assessed the state’s support for artists as bad and very bad. In the context of other survey results, it sounded like a SOS signal sent by artists. The answer to this signal should be to the development of such systemic solutions on the labour market of artists which will make its functioning professional and friendly for the artists themselves. We began to think about such solutions, starting with enumerating factors stimulating the labour market of artists in Poland.

We have compiled a list of recommended factors stimulating the labour market of artists and creators in Poland:

1. The introduction of tools to stimulate demand for the works of artists.
2. Cultural education.
3. The introduction of systemic solutions in the field of professional and social protection of artists and creators, in particular, health and pension insurance.
4. The need to promote international cooperation between artists.
5. The introduction of changes in the Polish art education system in the context of adapting education to the realities of the labour market, requirements of artistic practice, as well as in the field of entrepreneurial skills, basic knowledge in the field of economics, financing cultural activities and intellectual property rights.

6. Increasing access to information on scholarships, ministerial and local government grants for creative and artistic circles.
7. Forming appropriate skills of potential managers of artists.
8. Stimulating the activity of the industry organisations of artists and creators and the non-governmental sector.
9. Carrying out the monitoring and analysis of the labour market of creators and artists in Poland on a regular basis.

The support for artists and creators from an international perspective

When presenting the results of our 2014 survey to the international research community, we have found out that we are not the only ones facing these problems. As they were sharing their experience, researchers from other countries also pointed to the need for continuous work on the creation and improvement of support and protection mechanisms for creators. They emphasised that there are no perfect systems, the artistic circles are diverse and the activities are money-consuming. Therefore, we have similar experiences. However, we have the impression that, in comparison with other countries, Polish efforts are still unstructured and insufficiently thought out from a strategic point of view.

For this reason, we confidently joined the works initiated by the National Centre for Culture and, subsequently, the Chopin Institute on the concept of supporting artists and creators in Poland as part of the Polish Culture Conference. In order to develop a system that reflects one's own specificity, one has to look around. On the European map of the professional situation of artists, we can find a multitude of solutions in this area and, despite the awareness regarding their limitations, it is worth reaching for them. The Nordic countries attract special attention as the level of availability of social benefits in these countries is so high that it is not necessary to apply solutions designed for artists, as is the case, for example, in the countries of Central Europe. Certainly, France and the Netherlands stand out positively with their systemic approach. The expert opinion "The Support for Artists and Creators. International Perspective" shows the kinds of regulations to which the labour market is subjected by various, not only European, countries. Several examples are given below:

AUSTRALIA – It is in Australia that research on the economic situation of artists has the longest tradition. At the request of the Australian Art Council, the first reconnaissance took place there in 1981. It was carried out by a team of researchers from Macquire University under the leadership of Prof. David

Throsby. The same team conducted subsequent research in 1983, 1987, 1993 and 2002. Another interesting solution from this country is what they include in tax deductible expenses of an artist. In 2016, people performing artistic work could deduct costs related to, among others:

- the employment of an agent or artistic agency;
- the purchase of equipment necessary to perform artistic work, e.g. computer, software, etc.;
- training or courses taken in order to improve the skills needed to carry out artistic activity and to acquire new skills necessary to play a role or perform an artistic performance;
- fitness classes or other workouts taken to maintain physical fitness if it is necessary in order to perform the role;
- services rendered by a hairdresser, beautician, make-up artist, if it is directly related to the role or stage performance (the same expenses borne for private purposes are not deductible);
- maintaining and renting a professional studio or workroom (also when it is located at home).

CANADA – the status of an artist is regulated by law. The Status of Artist Act defines who the artist is in point 6 (2)(b). Within the meaning of the Act, a professional artist must be the author of artistic, dramatic, musical, literary works or works within the meaning of the Copyright Act. This group also includes directors responsible for the general appearance of audiovisual works. He or she must perform, sing, recite, recite, direct or act in a musical, literary or dramatic work or perform in a circus, create various pantomimes or puppet shows. He or she must contribute to the creation of any production in the field of performing arts, music, dance, film, radio, television, video, sound recording, dubbing, recording of advertising or art and crafts or visual arts, covered by the categorisation set out in the relevant regulation.

FRANCE – In France, there is no clear, statutory definition of who the artist is. However, people who are engaged in artistic activity may become members of one of the two national associations of creators (established under the laws of the second half of the 1970s), which deal, among other things, with the issue of social security for creators. It's La Maison des Artistes, established for visual artists, and AGESEA (Association pour la Gestion de la Sécurité Sociale des Auteurs) for authors, i.e. writers and composers. Membership of these associations gives certain rights to use the support in the field of social security. Artists pay social insurance contributions through two organisations: Maison des Artistes-Sécurité Sociale and AGESEA. Both organisations have a government accreditation, based on which they mediate the payment of social insurance contributions by all artists

(divided by sectors: MDA for Visual Arts and AGESEA – for others), who state in their tax declaration that they perform the profession of an artist. In the case of artists running their own economic activity (the so-called non-salariés) and freelance artists (profession libérale – a special status for some professions in France), social insurance contributions are paid within the framework of another system (Régime social des indépendants – RIS).

GERMANY– Awards granted to artists are a significant instrument of support that has grown in importance in recent years. In 1985, there were only 1329 of them, and in 1994, their number increased to almost 2000. In 2010, an online version of the handbook of cultural awards was launched.

LITHUANIA – In 2006, with the support of the European Structural Funds, the Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts established the Centre for Project Innovations which promotes cooperation between university students and business, including foreign.

THE NETHERLANDS – Cultuur+Ondernemen (Culture+Entrepreneurship) is a centre for knowledge about entrepreneurship in the cultural sector. The centre helps artists to obtain low-interest loans. It offers loans for artists, cultural and creative institutions. It supports projects from which the investments made pay off, e.g. start-ups, the creation of workshop spaces or the purchase of instruments.

THE CZECH REPUBLIC – Primary schools of art are a typical Czech phenomenon. They offer a comprehensive programme of extra-curricular artistic education. In line with the Framework Programme for Education, they teach music, dance, fine arts, literature and drama, complementing the school curriculum.

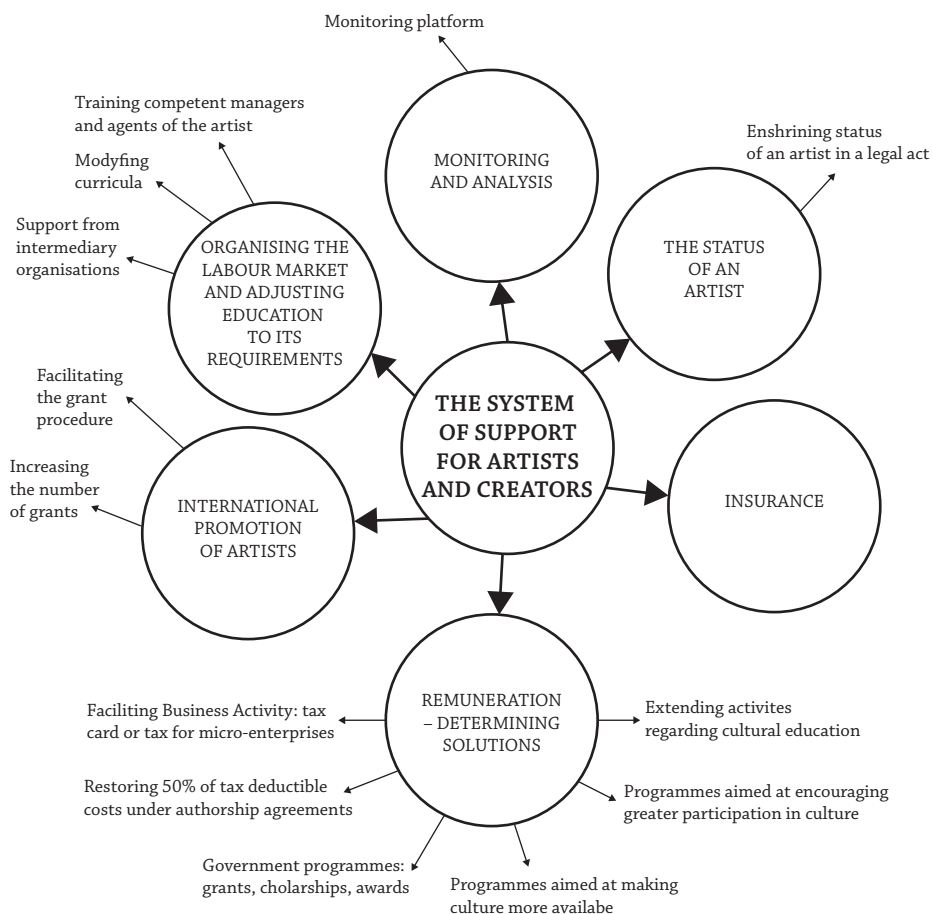
The need to create a systemic concept of support for artists and creators in Poland

When listening to the ongoing debate in Poland on the professional situation of artists and creators, one can get the impression that we are finally moving from the stage of problem-setting, pointing to weaknesses, to the search for constructive solutions. We hope that a wide range of international programmes and mechanisms will prove useful in these efforts. But let us fight for a system. One could fight for one solution, but wouldn't it be a pity to limit ourselves to a minimum programme? Especially at a time when the professional situation of artists has been diagnosed as a problem and noticed by people and institutions creating the cultural policy of the country. We should expect them to have a solid and tangible support system that will regulate the status of an artist; it will cover

both social security and various forms of stimulating demand in the cultural sector, as well as professional monitoring and analysis of the situation of artists.

We have developed an original concept of the System of Support for Artists and Creators in Poland. The following elements, presented in the chart, make up the whole and are necessary elements of a systemic approach to the issue of the support for artists.

Diagram 1. The system of support for artists and creators



Source: Own research.

The basic elements of the systems are:

- monitoring and analysis;
- the status of an artist;

- remuneration (government programmes and possible demand stimulation mechanisms, taxes, copyrights);
- social security;
- promotion of artists abroad;
- organising the labour market for artists and adapting their education to its requirements.

From the point of view of Poland, the status of an artist and the rights resulting from it are raising great interest. In Poland, the status of an artist is not legally defined. Only attempts have been made to define the notion of artist in research projects. Meanwhile, in different countries, the practice of granting the status of an artist varies: it may be regulated by law, but also a popular solution is granting it by organisations (unions and associations) working in the sector, and commissions, established for this very purpose.

The term ‘the status of an artist’ can have two meanings. On the one hand, it is used to mark the position in the social hierarchy, awarded to artists in a given society. On the other hand, it is used to determine the level of freedoms and rights, including personal, property and social rights that artists should be entitled to (Krystyna Piaseczna, member of the Board of ZASP – Association of Polish Stage Artists). From the point of view of creating a system of support for artists, we focus on the latter meaning. Until 1980, only the issues of artists’ work were discussed in copyright law. Due to the efforts of UNESCO and the International Labour Organisation, a resolution was adopted in Belgrade in 1980, which contained a number of recommendations concerning the working conditions of artists, the exercise of their labour rights and the need to introduce the institution of the ‘social status of artists’ in legal systems. At the end of the 1990s, the European Parliament also began work on the status of artists and a number of resolutions were adopted in this area. Documents of UNESCO and the European Parliament are the so-called ‘soft law’ instruments: they define certain standards, they are a tool that can be used, but it is up to the Member States to make the final decision on whether and what provisions concerning the status of an artist will be included in the legal regulations (M. Iwański in “Czarna księga polskich artystów” (The Black Book of Polish Artists, 2015).

From the point of view of us as researchers of the whole area of the artist’s labour market, it is extremely important to monitor and analyse the social and economic situation of artists. However, we will come back to this element of the support system later in the article.

Looking for sources of financing for the solutions proposed

Regardless of how varied the forms of direct support, and how large the scale of support, the costs involved are not high and represent at most a fraction of public spending on culture. This does not relieve us all from looking for new sources of financing for the new system. Currently, we see additional sources of funding for culture in the following:

- Increasing extra charges to the price of a Lotto voucher for culture from 5% to 10%;
- Increasing household spending on culture (currently, it is on the level of 4%);
- 1% of the costs for activities connected with culture for private investors in public construction (banks, shopping centres, car parks, excluding housing);
- Extending the catalogue of blank carriers (tablets, smartphones, etc.);
- 50% of tax deductible costs under authorship agreements – no limitations;
- Introducing 1% of the CIT tax on culture.

What next? The proposal to carry out the monitoring and socio-economic analysis of the situation of artists

Currently, within the framework of the debates of the All-Poland Conference, proposals from artistic circles concerning various aspects of the socio-professional situation of artists and creators are being collected. A hot topic is the issue of the status of an artist and the associated rights, criteria and procedures for awarding them. We believe that these proposals should be developed in agreement with the circles and they should have the last say. In this regard, our role as researchers and experts stops here. But we have very good reasons to continue our work on the professional situation of artists and creators in Poland.

The artistic community is extremely scattered and unexplored in Poland, and, additionally, threatened by high income and insurance risk due to the intermittent and unstable nature of work. It is therefore necessary to monitor the social and economic situation of this group, so that the state and local governments have reliable and comparable data necessary as a basis for competent, and necessary intervention activities which shape cultural policy in the artistic area. And also, for example, to use the potential of artists and creators in order to increase the competitiveness of the economy based on the quality of human capital and the creation of new jobs.

The scope of activities undertaken with the aim of carrying out the monitoring and analysis of the professional situation of creators and artists in Poland is very small compared to other countries. What is more, it is not even about an insignificant number, but rather the incidental nature of activities undertaken in this respect. Studies prepared by particular creative and artistic circles are unsuitable for comparative purposes. In the case of artists, public statistics provide extremely limited data. They concern only art school graduates, or they are based on research carried out on a group of entities employing at least ten employees; therefore, they do not include the smallest, but also, potentially, the most numerous economic entities in the cultural sector. Meanwhile, statistics on creators and artists in Poland have become particularly important. The lack of detailed and reliable data on the size of this environment prevents any estimations of the costs of reform measures planned in this area.

For this reason, we are working on the preparation and implementation of the following two-stage and long-term research project leading to continuous monitoring of the labour market of artists and creators in Poland. In the first stage, our activities would focus on the ESTIMATION OF THE NUMBER OF ARTISTS AND CREATORS IN POLAND, including those with a special status of an artist. The second stage, in turn, would be aimed at creating an ONLINE PLATFORM FOR MONITORING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION OF ARTISTS AND CREATORS IN POLAND.

The whole project will use positively verified Polish and foreign solutions, analysed by us in the previous research. Concrete solutions and ideas, such as the inclusion of artists in the national census since 2011 are among the most interesting, but this is a topic for the next study.

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