

A more inclusive cultural sector in the Nordics

Guiding principles

Dear cultural workers in the Nordic region,

Our societies have always been and will always be diverse but we have not seen this diversity reflected in our respective cultural fields up to now. Everyone in the cultural sector of the Nordic region, should seek to change this. These are some of our recommendations for how to achieve a more representative arts and culture sector.



All people have a fundamental right to actively participate in cultural life.

Diversity and equality are crucial to the arts because it will increase quality and release the true potential of what the sector has to offer. It will also increase audience numbers and ensure increased ticket sales for cultural institutions.

Projects alone cannot solve these inequalities. Long-term, stable commitment and action on political, institutional and local level is essential.

In order to build a successful effort to increase diversity in the cultural sector, we must reflect on our role as gate-keepers and work with norm critical perspectives. The term diversity is not always useful. It can set up a distinction between «us and them», thus running the risk of adding friction to a discussion we hope to contribute constructively to. Therefore it is important to accept that this work always will be critical and analytical work.

Inclusivity holds high rewards but will never be simple to achieve.

The need for political commitment



The transition towards a more diverse society requires a rethinking of the democratic policy development in our sector.

At times the political discourse surrounding migration and ethnic diversity can still have an alienating effect on our social cohesion, our communities and our institutions. This needs to change and policy makers need to engage in the conversation.

Emphasising diversity and inclusion for everyone should be highly prioritised in the formation of cultural policies and a goal for publicly funded cultural institutions.

Good policies have been written, but have not always been followed up by action and necessary funding to support this action.

Public funding should be measured towards its results and its work with diversity. Public bodies should work much more proactively with funding as a steering tool.

We recommend that the evaluation and assessment of all institutions, large and small, should include their efforts towards inclusion, and that this perspective should be articulated in reports and feedback.

Benchmarks need to measure

Institutional policy and vision
Audience/visitor relations
Partners/collaborators for programming and profiling

Employees
Board members
Suppliers
Programme/repertoire/ collections

11 steps for you as a cultural worker



- 1 Get out of the institution**
Meet your audience/users on their home turf and then invite them to visit.
- 2 Small steps first**
Send your staff into the field to meet the users. Let relations evolve
- 3 Build upon others' relations**
Involve people with established contacts in the areas you want to reach.
- 4 Building relations is no quick fix**
Building and maintaining positive relations requires time, presence and persistence.
- 5 Engaging in long-term processes** with people will provide your institution with more insight into your new users preferences and wishes, rather than a focus on quantity.
- 6 Be open**
Start with the interests and needs of the new users and take no final decisions about content before you know who they are and what they are interested in.
- 7 Consciously relinquish control**
Let your users help define the content, at the same time maintaining your professional overview and the strengths and goals of your institution.
- 8 Set the bar high**
Do not be afraid of having professional ambitions, but be prepared to adjust your ideas and let them move unexpectedly in the encounter with new users.
- 9 Involve professional artists**
It raises the level and ensures a product and process that makes participants proud of being part of the project.
- 10 Drop regular target measurements**, new methods for measuring impact are needed in order to develop and improve the efforts made, keeping in mind that certain aspects of changing practice in cultural institutions is long-term and some parts are easy to measure.
- 11 Translate knowledge into your institutions everyday life**
Make sure that the knowledge generated is incorporated into the entire organisation: for example, in the form of strategies and policies.

Building a critical practice from within

To build an inclusive and representative institution, we need to work on three levels:

- Recruit and communicate broader
- Offer relevant and accessible programming
- Build new relations with audiences

Inclusivity should be at the core of your institution and everyday practice, not a project-based side endeavour.

Clear and articulated strategies on how to work with intercultural competence need to be articulated and anchored within the board, the management and the staff. It might lead to internal discussions when it comes to how power is organized within the institution.

Research and experience show that cultural organizations that are successful are also internally diverse. All new recruitments need to have a clear diversity target and should be regarded with special attention and affirmative action.

Boards, management and staff in the Nordic arts institution, need to reflect the diversity in the region to a much larger degree than what is currently the case. A massive amount of artistic

talent does not find its way on stage, and cultural institutions owe it to themselves, the artists, and their audiences to change this.

There is often a dissonance between the desired offer and what is actually offered in the programme. If your cultural offer is perceived as relevant, audiences will come.

Collaborate with new groups and institutions in mutually beneficial ways to ensure engagement for diversity and inclusion.

Engaging target audiences in developing the programmes and institutions ensures larger commitment and impact.

Volunteer efforts should however not replace funds and proper pay for a professional cultural scene.

Concrete action must be taken to address the obstacles to attending arts events for diverse audiences (psychological, social, cultural, economic, physical, etc.)

Things take time, but without dedication, your institution will lose out and no longer be relevant.

Do's and don'ts

When working towards a greater degree of inclusion in arts and culture it is vital to remember that it's a responsibility for all of us, the individual as well as the institutions and the political level. As simple guidelines in the process, we recommend that you:

Don't categorize mankind. It is at any time more complex than that what fits into separate categories.

- **Do recruit differently. Look for competencies and resources that will help you achieve your goals.**

Don't assume you know the multitudes of perspectives of the people surrounding you while doing this work.

- **Do work with professionals in designing tools and models that fit your institution. Understanding your potential audiences will help you develop adequate strategies.**

Don't feel threatened when meeting critical perspectives that challenge your position. Do engage in the conversation with a more diverse critical mass and you'll get a much broader perspective on your practice, activities and programs.

Don't be trapped into believing that you are the one that renders the powerless.

- **Do believe in the full capacity of people of all backgrounds**

Don't think you can achieve diversity without a team coming in from different backgrounds relevant to the field you work within. You just won't. Hegemony breeds hegemony.



- **Do challenge your assumptions and try to get as much real knowledge of the people you want to engage with. Data, surveys and one to one encounters can help you on the way.**

God arbeidslyst!

The Nordic Forum for Interculture (NFI) is a network of Nordic resource centers, consisting of TrAP, CKI, Reykjavik City Library, Intercult and Interkultur Drammen, that all work to promote cultural diversity in the field of arts and culture.

NFI gathers experience and knowledge in a wide Nordic context and thereby offers tools to develop cultural diversity, politically and institutionally. Forming a Nordic competence environment, we hope to be of value to politicians and practitioners alike. The network, which was initiated for the first time in 2007 mapping the current situation in the Nordic region at that time, has been revitalized in 2017 in connection with the Nordic initiative An Inclusive Cultural Sector in the Nordics.

For the project NFI has been responsible for

-  A set of recommendations for practitioners, professionals and policy makers
-  Two reports: one in Scandinavian and one in English
-  Designing the first day of the final conference **Nordic Dialogues: Towards an inclusive cultural sector**