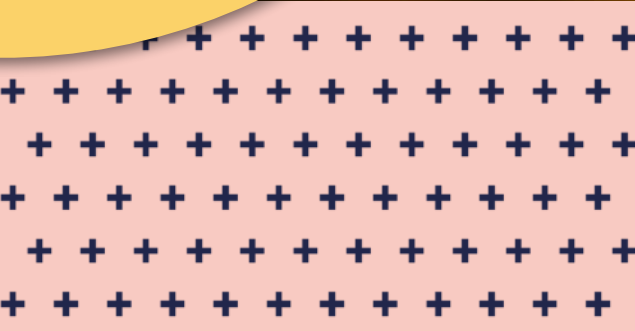


Kom Scenkonst

A plunge into municipal distribution of performing arts to children and young people in school



ASSITEJ
SWEDEN

An English translation of the summary of the report "Kom
Scenkonst" by ASSITEJ Sweden

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Photograph from the performance "Jag vet en hemlighet" (I know a secret)
by Bobbi Lo Produktion.
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Relevant information to the reader about the translated version

Background

In May 2022 we, ASSITEJ Sweden, published the report *Spelar mindre roll? - a report about the unequal distribution of performing arts to children and young people in school*. Due to a request from international ASSITEJ colleagues we made an English translation - a very shortened version covering only the summary with a few adjustments for the reader. This document is a corresponding version of our recent work.

The extent of these shortened versions is due to limitations of time but also to keep only the parts of most relevance to other countries whom we may interest and/or inspire. In addition, this paragraph gives some background as well as some information from other sections of the reports.

As our report continually raise the issue of children's right to performing arts experiences in school, we refer to statements from three different official documents:

- The Swedish national cultural policy goals states that "Everyone has the right to participate in cultural life" and that cultural policy has a task to "especially promote equal access to arts and culture for children and youth".
- The UN convention of the child, that since 2020 is a part of Swedish legislation, states that "Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in cultural and artistic activities." (Article 31)
- The Swedish National Agency for Education's curriculum states that cultural experiences should be a part of learning.

Despite these objectives, there are no official national statistics that follows up children's access to cultural experiences. Although, studies from the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis shows that cultural experiences of children and young people are to a large extent influenced by socioeconomic background (Spelar mindre roll?, 2022).

School is the arena that has the possibility to equalize such injustices. In Sweden all children attend school, the exceptions are rare. Meanwhile, a majority of independent performing arts groups and regional theatres spends a great part of their touring in schools/for students.

In addition, there is a lot of tax money invested in culture intended for school children. Still, the equality between the children is not followed up, and the conditions to succeed are built on weak structures.

Cultural policy should end the waste of resources and instead make use of this opportunity in order to live up to its aim to "promote equal access to arts and culture for children and youth".

Det kommunala självstyret & Kultursamverkansmodellen

Since 2011 Sweden is using "Kultursamverkansmodellen" (Cultural cooperation model) as a way to distribute public funding for culture throughout the country. All regions, except Region Stockholm, are part of the model.

The regions make cultural plans that will serve as foundation for the financial amount that the state, in dialogue with relevant organizations, will allocate them. To receive funding the regions must follow some requirements - requirements that are made for the regions to fulfil the national policy goals. However, these requirements do not mention children and youth.

The model is aiming to "bring the culture closer to the citizens". A great part of the finances within Kultursamverkansmodellen are being further distributed by the regions into regional cultural institutions.

How the regions choose to invest in cultural experiences on school time differ a lot. In some regions, regional institutions produce and take part in the distribution of performances for children in school. Other regions offer catalogues of subsidized performances for the municipalities to choose, buy and administer to their students.

Due to the “Municipal self-government”, municipalities have the right to somewhat choose for themselves what goals, budgets and structures they want to incorporate in their municipalities. This means, that with today’s system, municipalities can choose to not have any budget for culture in school, despite the national cultural policy goals and despite potential extensive commitments in their region. This is a risk we have seen become reality in some municipalities. The only exception is the requirement to have libraries in all municipalities, which is granted by a separate law.

Although many of the municipalities have an ambition to provide cultural experiences to their youth, Swedish municipalities in general lack the conditions to fulfill national policy.

Summary

This report, Kom Scenkonst (Come performing arts), aims to contribute to solutions to secure the equal right of all children and young people to continual performing arts experiences in school, by investigating their actual access to performing arts in school in relation to Swedish national goals of cultural policy.

Kom Scenkonst is somewhat a continuation of our previous work *Spelar mindre roll? - a report about the unequal distribution of performing arts to children and young people in school (2022)*. Whereas the precursor was quantitative, with a wide range of material from all over the country, this report is a qualitative “sequel”.

By narrowing the data to six municipalities in three different regions, we want to create a deeper understanding of how performing arts and culture is distributed to children in school today. We believe that by looking into the details, we can paint a bigger picture that can serve as a foundation for future inquiries and improvements. Through interviews with cultural coordinators, developers, and counselors (on municipal and regional level) we convey the complexity of the distribution in Sweden, that consist of as many different systems as there are municipalities.

The report shows that the distribution in general is muddled and short termed as different solutions comes and goes in the municipalities and regions that we have mapped. Only a few exceptions, depending on municipal regulation and financing as well as passionate individuals, manage to achieve the national policy goals.

Selected conclusions from the survey:

- The statistics of children's performing arts experiences are vague and hard to reach. On municipal level it is difficult to tell how many of the children and young people that get to experience performing arts during school time.
- Several municipalities lack concrete goals that define how many of the students should be reached and how often.
- Continual networks and forums for exchange of experience and competence development are missing.
- When the responsibility for booking performances lies on the schools, the goal of reaching all students is seldom fulfilled.
- Transportation to venues is an explicit problem in many municipalities.

Several of the municipalities and regions have appointed their own cultural plans, policies and guarantees but still, that doesn't guarantee that all, or even a majority, of the students will experience performing arts during school time. Methods of how to integrate plans, policies and "guarantees" in practice tends to be missing, as well as statistics to follow them up.

Our overall conclusion is to be repeated: Current forms of distribution of performing arts (and other cultural-) experiences in school do not secure all children's right to culture, although they are the only group that are mentioned in national cultural policy.

There is a need for pervasive and structural solutions that are conceded by all parties (state, region and municipality) within the Swedish model of cultural distribution to children and young people in school.

ASSITEJ Sweden, once again, calls on the government to set up an investigation to ensure equal access for all children and young people to performing arts experiences in school. We also suggest that the government:

- 1.** Introduce a national model for distribution and funding within the performing arts field, where the Departments of Culture and Education cooperate, so that all children and young people are guaranteed performing arts experiences continually during their school years.
- 2.** Introduce a national competence center that works structurally and operationally to ensure a functioning structure for distribution. Through special initiatives for particularly challenged municipalities, the competence center should work to equalize inequalities.
- 3.** Keep national statistics where the achievement of the goals of performing arts experiences for children and young people is analyzed continuously.