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**The Role of Intermediary Bodies  
within the Finnish Public Cultural Administration**

**Special Focus on the Chancing Role of the Finnish Arts Council  
- from statutory tasks to managerialism**

A Paper prepared by Eija Ristimäki for the European Round Table in Budapest  
21.-22. March 1994

Arts Council of Finland  
Research and Information Unit  
Helsinki 1994

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ISBN 951-53-0226-9  
ISSN 0788-5318

Arts Council of Finland  
Helsinki 1994

## Introduction

In March 1994 CIRCLE (Cultural Information & Research Centres Liaison in Europe) Network organised an European Round Table on the Distribution of Roles and Changing Nature of Relations between Governments and Independent or Quasi-independent Arts Councils or Foundations. The conference was organised under the auspices of the Council of Europe and at the invitation of the Budapest City Council, as part of its celebrations as European Cultural month.

The Budapest conference examined the trends in the distribution of roles between governments, para-governmental and non-governmental agencies supporting the arts.

As a preparation for the conference the participating countries were asked to describe the national situation through answering seven questions within a maximum of about 5-8 pages. This working paper presents the reply of Finland to the questionnaire.

The paper was supposed to address the following questions

1.  
How does the political process interface with decision-making in the cultural sector?
2.  
Identify the nature and role of any intermediary independent or quasi-independent organisations such as arts councils, major foundations, pseudo foundations, mixed public/private organisations who play an important role on the cultural life of your country.
3.  
What are the legal and fiscal differences between such foundations (a financial body with fixed board of administration), non-profit associations (with democratically elected boards), art councils or agencies operating with public funds but with independent or private management), mixed public/private organisations?
4.  
Indicate which (if any) of these organisations channel government money to support culture.
5.  
What is the relationship of these agencies to government?

6.  
Has the nature of this relationship changed in the last 5 years? If so, how?

7.  
What are the socio-political factors or trends which have led to this change?

8.  
What has been the evolution of government expenditure on culture (1) in constant dollars for the then years 1983-1992 (or if this is not possible in constant prices of your own currency), (2) as a percentage of the general budget?

7.  
Do you consider this model/models is/are best suited to the needs of the cultural sector of your country? If not, why not?

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## **Background**

Economic recession which started in Finland in the early 90's and led to debt-ridden national economy has created - one could say - turbulent movement in public administration. Cost-saving reforms are the issue of the day. A variety of documents, plans and statements have been produced over the last two years - all searching for new models and a new role for public administration. Accountability management is one of the reforms which already has been carried out throughout the public administration.

Efficiency in producing of public services has been one of the main targets, and has been understood to be achieved by decentralising the decision-making from central government to local level on the one hand; and by centralising dispersed services with separate administration under a common umbrella with common administration on the other.

These general trends have naturally reflected also on public cultural administration which is now under re-consideration. Main issues are division of labor and consequently the role of intermediary bodies.

In the following the questions posed by the organizers of the Conference are answered point by point.

**1.**

How does the **political process interface with decision-making** in the cultural sector?

At the political level the **Parliament** has the supreme responsibility for national cultural policy in Finland. However, the role of Parliament in cultural policy issues has remained rather passive. This is mainly due to parliamentary procedure which allows major debates only when Government proposal for a bill is discussed or when Government gives Parliament a more profound report on special issue.

**Government** has given a major report on art and cultural policies to the Parliament only three times (1978, 1982 and 1993).

(In 1993 the major issue was how to finance the arts and culture in the new economic situation. 70 percent of the central government financing of the arts in Finland is based on the revenues government receives from the lotto and football pools. Normally these revenues have been used only on a discretionary basis as special appropriations for the arts; and statutory expenditures have been covered by normal taxation within the state budget. When determining the arts budget of 1993 Parliament was obliged - because of tightened economy - to make an exception in this practice by financing state grants-in-aid to municipalities based on law, by the revenues from the lottery and football pools. The exception aroused the question among the M.P.s whether the Government had any future plans for financing the cultural sector avoiding major financial cutbacks. Parliament asked Government to define its cultural policy objectives in a new economic situation; and this led to a Government report in spring 1993.)

In practice national cultural policy is carried out under the jurisdiction of the **Ministry of Education** headed by two ministries, one for education and the other for cultural affairs. The Minister for Cultural Affairs is one of the seventeen members of **Council of State** (Cabinet), which is politically responsible to the Parliament. There are 12 ministries under the Council of State, each with its own field of responsibility.

Even though one of the seventeen ministerial posts is manned by a Minister for Cultural Affairs cultural policy has never been a major issue in Finnish national politics. This is mainly due to the historical development in the public cultural administration based on rather extensive autonomy of the arts and culture. The autonomy has been guaranteed both by the legislation and by decision-making structure.

The detailed legislation has protected the artists and their work from undue external political or ideological interference; and consequently clear national policy lines - once designed by the legislation - have remained rather fragmented. Cultural policy initiatives and plans are made by "arms-length" bodies, associations and organizations as well as civil servants and the Minister, and the implementation of these plans is carried out when there is enough money and political or good will. The real center of decision-making power concerning individual decisions is in the present system difficult to pinpoint. The Ministry of Finance, holding the budgetary power, is not the least actor in the cultural sector.

**The Arts Council of Finland** and the national and regional arts councils provide an important link between artists, regional interests and the Ministry of Education in matters relating to the arts and culture. This link is manifested by the appointment procedure of the members of councils.

At present the members and chairpersons of the national art councils are appointed for a period of three years by the Council of State from among persons proposed by main associations/organizations and institutions in the field of arts. Members (from seven to eleven per each "art form" council) must possess "artistic merit" or "artistic expertise". The members of the joint body, the Arts Council of Finland, include the nine chairpersons of the National Arts Councils and four other members appointed by the Council of State. The members of the regional arts councils are appointed by the provincial council from among the candidates of regional organisations, art institutions and cultural policy interest organisations.

The major issues concerning the appointment procedure have been, whom the members should represent and which organisations and institutions should be consulted in the process. Several interests are involved:

- the interest of political decision makers to shape the implementation of art policy
- the interest of organisations to maintain advantages or to overcome assumed deficits in allocation of resources
- and the interest of civil servants of the Ministry to guarantee the expertise and functional capacity of the councils.

## 2.

Identify the **nature and role** of any **intermediary** independent or quasi-independent organisations such as arts councils, major

foundations, pseudo foundations, mixed public/private organisations who play an important role in the **cultural life** of your country.

Different type of intermediary bodies can be found within the Finnish public cultural administration. (See Appendix 1.) Following can be mentioned:

*Arts councils*

- The Arts Council of Finland
- National Arts Councils (nine)
- Regional Arts Councils (eleven)

*Mixed public/private foundations*

- Finnish Film Foundation
- Book Foundation

*Boards and committees*

- Board for Library Compensations
- Board for Art Exhibition Guarantees
- National Committee for the Purchase of Works of Art
- National Board of Film Censorship
- National Film Board
- Government Copyright Council
- Consultative Board for Popular Science

Additionally, in the copyright sector there are some arrangements which come very close to the *public* administration e.g. public sector has delegated some tasks to private rightsholders' organizations.

The nature and role of the above mentioned bodies differs greatly. In the following focus will be on the system of arts councils.

After independence (1917) the present system of professional autonomy of the arts and artists was established first in terms of expert bodies (boards) granting scholarships to artists. These boards were manned by the representatives of artists and arts organizations and they advised the Ministry and the Council of State in matters relating to the support, promotion and development of the arts.

In 1968 the old board system was transformed into a modern arts council system planned by the Government ad hoc commission. Simultaneously, the basis for new art policies was created. This new policy was defined as 'promotion of the arts' based on legislative measures.

The Finnish system of arts councils comprises eleven regional arts councils, nine national arts councils (one for each art form i.e.

architecture, cinema, crafts and design, dance, literature, music, photographic art, theatre and visual arts) and the Arts Council of Finland which acts as a "joint body" to the "art form" councils. The Arts Council of Finland and national art councils act as expert bodies to the Ministry of Education in matters related to the arts. Acting as an expert body has meant a role of counselling - not independent decision-making power over the public expenditure on the arts. Independent decision-making has not been extended any further than decisions concerning state grants to individual artists (amounting 26,3 million FIM in 1994 of the total arts budget of 715 million FIM); and even this has happened on strictly statutory basis e.g. each art form has been entitled to a certain amount of one-year, three-year or five-year grants regulated by law.

The role of regional arts councils is somewhat different from the role of national art councils. Their task is to promote arts in eleven Finnish administrative provinces and they possess independent decision-making power over the money allocated by the Ministry.

### 3.

What are the **legal and fiscal differences** between such foundations (a financial body with fixed board of administration), non-profit associations (with democratically elected boards), arts councils or agencies **operating with public funds** but with independent or private management), mixed public/private organisations?

The Arts Council of Finland is an expert body under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education under *public law*. It receives its funds from the state budget. The members of the Arts Council are appointed by the Council of State.

The Finnish Film Foundation is a private foundation under *civil law*. It was established in 1969 by the Finnish Cinema Owners's Association, the Finnish Film Producers's Association and the Ministry of Education. The Administrative Council of the Foundation is appointed by the Ministry of Education for a period of three years. The Council has a chairperson, a vice-chairperson and members from 19 to 23. The Council appoints the members of the Board consisting of five to seven members. The Ministry of Education is entitled to a representative in both bodies. The Film Foundation receives its funds from the state arts budget, from the tax revenues of cinema ticket sales and from the empty cassette tax.

The Finnish Book Foundation is a private foundation under *civil law*. It was established in 1983 by the Finnish Publishers' Association and



the Ministry of Education. The board of the Foundation consists of five members, three appointed by the Publishers' Association and two by the Ministry. It receives its funds from copyright revenues and from the state arts budget.

Boards and committees mentioned above act as advisory bodies to the Ministry under public law.

Additionally, Finland has developed an extensive copyright and neighbouring right system functioning under civil law and based mainly on legalizations, including legislation stipulating the revenues from the blank tape levy.

#### 4.

Indicate which (if any) of these organisations **channel government money** to support culture

In Finland most of the government support to the arts and culture is channelled via the Ministry of Education. The Ministry allocates the money in three different ways:

- 1) Part of the government support is allocated to the 'end-users' directly by the Ministry (proposals are made by civil servants; and final decisions are made by the Minister for Cultural Affairs)
- 2) part of the support is allocated as a lump sum to an intermediary body to be further allocated to the 'end-users'.
- 3) part of the government support is administered through municipalities

National arts councils channel state grants to individual artists on a statutory basis (26,3 million FIM in 1994). In recent years national arts councils have been authorized to channel also discretionary money in terms of the arts budget. (See Appendix 2.)

The Finnish Film Foundation channels state support to film, tv- and video production and distribution (38,5 million FIM in 1994).

The Book Foundation of Finland channels state support for publishing (700 000 FIM in 1994).

The National Committee for the Purchase of Works of Art dispenses the appropriations provided by the state budget for the purchases of works of art for public government buildings (2.2 million FIM in 1994).

## 5.

What is the **relationship** of these agencies to government?

The arts councils' relationship to government is a role of counselling. Legislatively the Arts Council is defined only as "a joint organ" to the "art form" councils. Its statutory tasks are to "initiate and suggest", "report", "give statements", "co-ordinate", "mediate between councils", "suggest appropriations into State Arts Budget", "promote Finnish arts abroad", and "carry out other tasks ordered by the Council of State and the Ministry".

The Film Foundation's and the Book Foundation's relationship to government is only to act as an administrative channel for state support to publishing.

## 6.

Has the nature of this **relationship changed** in the last 5 years? If so, how?

The basic organisational design for the arts council system adopted in Finland in the reform of 1968 has remained unaltered up today. However, in 1993 two working groups were set up by the Ministry of Education to make a proposal for re-organising the arts administration. The one dealt with regional arts and cultural administration, the other central arts administration. In November 1993 a proposal for reorganising the regional cultural administration was tabled; and in January 1994 a proposal for a profound reform concerning the central government arts administration was tabled. Both proposals are now under intense public debate.

The proposal concerning central arts administration aims to make clear division of labour between the arts councils and the Ministry. The role of the Ministry in a new organisational design would be to prepare legislation and the state arts budget, strategic planning of cultural policy, accountability consultations and organizing international co-operation.

A new organization, the *Finnish Centre for the Advancement of the Arts and Culture*, would be responsible for planning and implementation of the promotion of the arts. The Arts Council would be the supreme decision-making body of the Centre. The members (from ten to fourteen) would be appointed by the Council of State for a period of three years. The Arts Council would make a proposal for "art form" councils and the members would be appointed by the Council of State. Additionally, the Arts Council could appoint boards,

working groups, divisions and panels for a certain period of time to carry out special tasks.

This new architectural design would - according to the proposal - change the role of the Arts Council to be more active, more innovative and more managerial.

The proposal concerning the regional level suggests establishing new bodies called the *Regional Centre for the Promotion of Culture*. Regional arts councils, regional boards for sport and youth affairs and advisors for regional library affairs - all of which have until now been operating separately - should be gathered under these new "umbrellas".

## 7.

What are the **socio-political factors or trends** which have led to this change?

### ***External demands/pressures for change***

Over the years of growing economy in the 80's public sector expanded to the extent one cannot afford to maintain any more. The expenditures on public sector have increased more rapidly than the national economy, being now over 60 percent of the national product. The tax rate has now reached the level of 48,5 percent. A serious effort is now being made in order to decrease the over-expanded public sector. Overlapping functions are under thorough scrutiny throughout the public administration. But the imbalanced national economy is not the only reason why the efforts to decrease the central government administration are under way. Finland's preparations for the membership of European Union play an equally important role in the process.

Five major areas have been mentioned where improvements should be made. within public administration:

- 1) the ability to serve the citizens
- 2) efficiency
- 3) effectiveness
- 4) inessential or overlapping functions (which should be removed)
- 5) development of monitoring systems

The aim is that the documents should not be handled more than once at the central government level. Ministries should be concentrating only on strategic planning, preparative functions and monitoring. Detailed norms combined with tight control systems should be given up. Decision-making process concerning single

appropriations and grants should be taking place in the units operating under the central government administration and more and more in the regions and at the local level.

These general trends have impacts also on labor division between the Ministry of Education and the Arts Councils. The Ministry is now gradually abdicating its decision-making power over individual appropriations to the arts and concentrating on strategic planning.

### ***Internal problems***

In spite of on-going delegation process from the Ministry to the arts councils the share of independent allocation by the councils is still very small - being only around 8 per cent of the total financing of the arts within the jurisdiction of the Ministry. Also, the balance between different art forms and the objects of support have remained unaltered.

The present system of arts councils has proved to be successful in safeguarding traditional forms of art having their "own" council safeguarding their interests. New forms of art (performance, audiovisual arts etc.) e.g. those not having their own council have remained outsiders in the present public support system. Also co-products combining different art forms are practically impossible to finance in the present over-regulated system.

It is not an overstatement to say that the arts and cultural policy carried out by the arts councils has been representative policy of special interest groups. The statutory task of promoting the arts has in practice meant support for the institutionalised forms of art; and the main cultural policy issues have been the allocation of money between the institutionalised art forms.

Issues like access to the arts and culture, amateur activities or art education have not been promoted in the art policies carried out by the national arts councils.

Also, the arts councils' measures to promote international co-operation have been limited. International affairs have traditionally been centralised under the jurisdiction of the Department for International Affairs at the Ministry of Education. The Department has been responsible for the coordination of international cultural cooperation. European integration and expanded internationalism are, however, issues which cannot any more be administered by centralised systems. Networking, desk-services and raising money

from international funds are measures which the arts councils have not paid enough attention to.

8.

What has been the evolution of **government expenditure on culture** (1) in constant dollars for the ten years 1983-1992 (or if this is not possible in constant prices of your own currency), (2) as a **percentage of the general budget**?

See Appendix 3A and 3B.

9.

Do you consider this model/models is/are best **suited to the needs of the cultural sector** of your country? If not, why not?

The assessment of the system of arts councils in the Finnish context can be done by comparing the Finnish model to the ideal model of an arts council.

The four main characteristics of the ideal model can be mentioned

1. The arm's length principle
2. The principle of competence
3. The principle of representation
4. The principle of "time guarantee" and continuity.

The Finnish Arts Council as an arms-length body functions well as a buffer against politics. The role of the Finnish Arts Council and "art form" councils is, however, too limited due to detailed legislation. Delegation of decision-making power has been rather meaningless in terms of real improvement in parameters.

The present system has been successful in peer evaluation - but only as far as traditional art forms have been concerned. The other side of the coin is, of course, that every now and then the art councils have been blamed for "from friend to friend" decisions. The problem seems to be unavoidable in the case of a small nation like Finland with five million inhabitants and 11.000-15.000 professional artists.

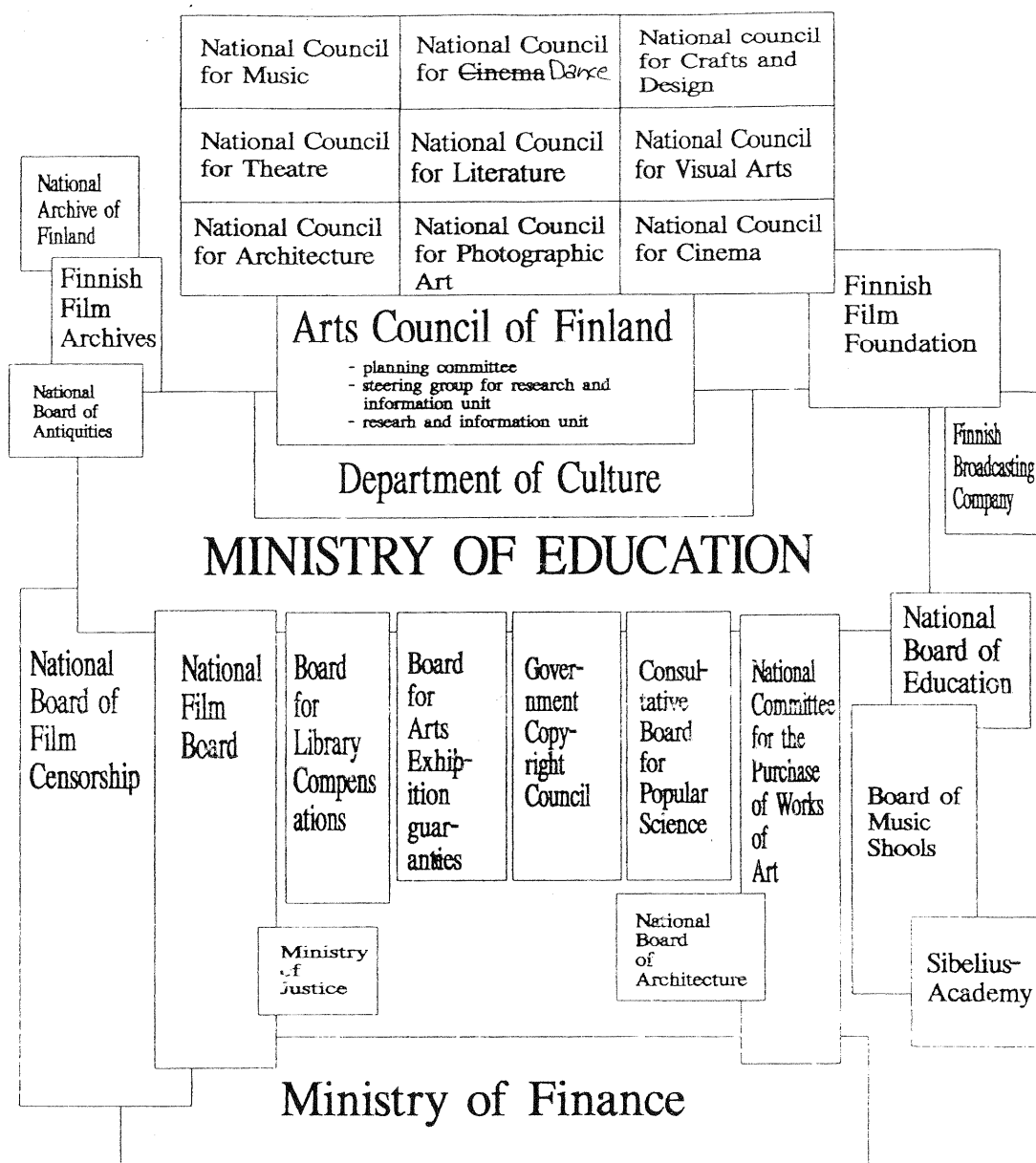
The present system provides a good representation for the recognised forms of art and their associations and institutions vis-a-vis public authorities.

The principle of "time guarantee" and continuity has been implemented in the case of long-term grants to individual artists.

Financing of long term projects have been, instead, difficult in the present system. This is mainly due to the fact that money comes from the lottery and football pools and cannot be extended over longer period than a year. (Though, exceptions to this principle have been made recently.).

The proposal for new organisational design of the Arts Council might be a key to resolve the problems in the present system.

THE QUASI-GOVERNMENTAL BODIES OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND THEIR ORGANISATIONAL INTERLOCKS



Legend: The interlock caused by statutory rules of representation are indicated as an overlap of boxes.

**THE DECISION MAKING POWER OF ARTS COUNCILS**  
in terms of decisions concerning the allocation of fiscal resources

**The appropriation for supporting art in the state budget for 1993:**

APPROPRIATION	FIM
Salaries (administration)	4 330 000
Subsidies to theatres and orchestras for operating costs	14 400 000
Artists' grants	35 100 000
Library compensations (delivered as grants to writers and translators)	14 000 000
National lottery revenues for supporting art	599 200 000
Subsidies to institutions for obtaining, building and re-constructing facilities	11 240 000
Building and re-constructing	2 500 000
Building and furnishing the National Opera House	115 450 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>796 220 000</b>

**The arts councils' independent power of decision covered following items in 1993:**

Following appropriations in the national lottery revenue pool:

Year of gaining the decision-making power	Appropriation	FIM
1981	Project grants and state prizes to artists working in the field of children's culture	700 000
1992	Travel grants to artists and art experts	500 000
1978	Quality support for cinema production	1 500 000
1993	Regional cinema centers	1 584 000
1993	Supporting cinema	1 000 000
1993	Support for publication of literature	700 000
1993	Promoting creative writing and reading	700 000
1993	Exhibitions of visual art (painting, sculpture and graphics)	1 924 000
1991	Short-term experimental projects in professional theaters	650 000
1990	Support for dramatists	700 000
1991	Visits of theater directors	200 000
1993	Architecture exhibitions and publications	1 400 000
1993	Promotion of music (creation)	498 000
1993	Promotion of music (performance)	4 216 000
1986	Quality support for crafts and design	170 000
1991	National crafts and design exhibitions	150 000
1993	Dance groups	330 000
1991	Experimentary dance projects	678 400
1993	Technical facilities for dance theaters and -groups	100 000
1993	Regional centers of photographic art	800 000
1987	Quality support for photographic art	270 000
	<b>Total</b>	<b>18 770 400</b>



Artists' grants not including long term (15-year) grants,  
i.e. short term artists' grants (1-, 3- ja 5-year grants)  
and project grants to artists 35 100 000 - 6 840 000 28 260 000

Appropriations to Regional Arts Councils for promoting art 23 400 000

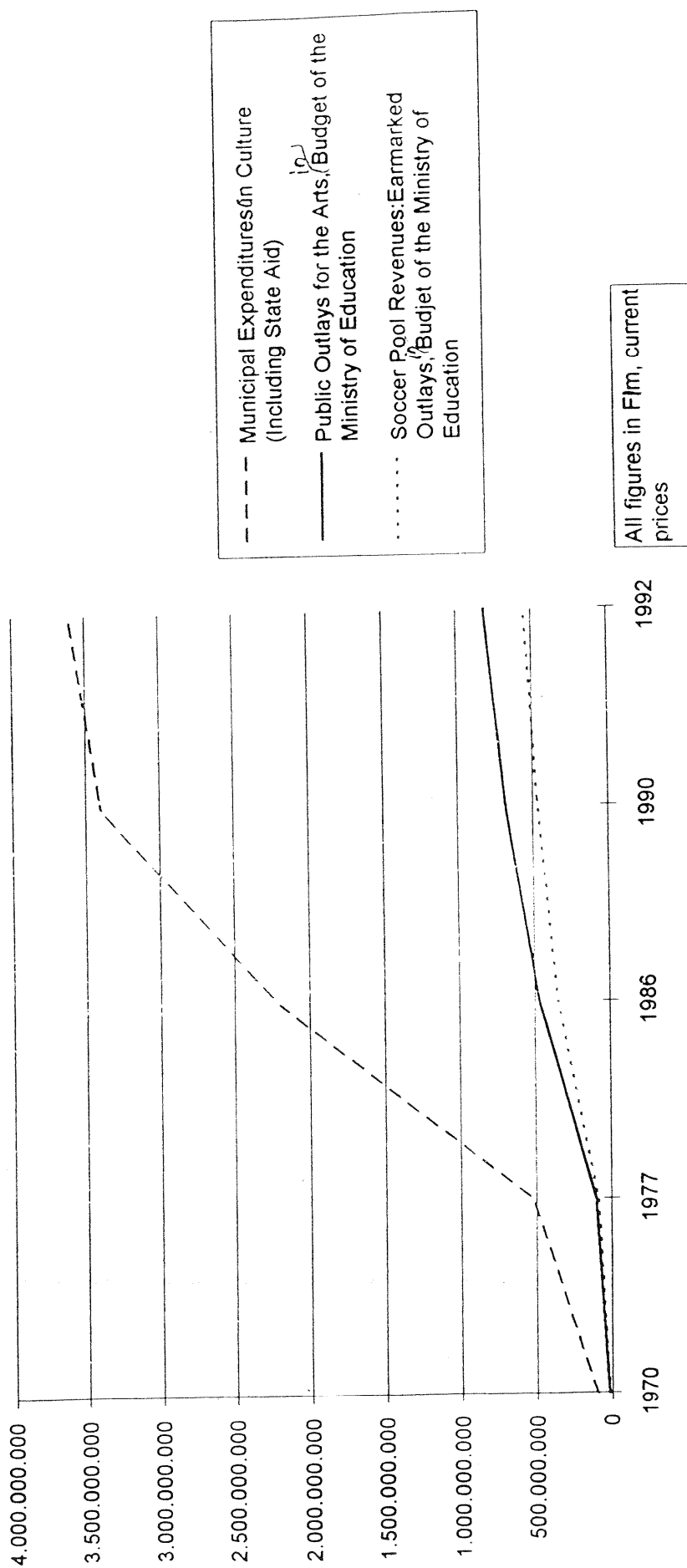
Appropriation to the administration of the Arts Council of Finland,  
National Arts Councils and Regional Arts Councils and to research  
and information, not including salaries for artist professors  
6 572 000 - 2 544 401 4 028 000

**Total sum decided upon by arts councils 74 458 000**

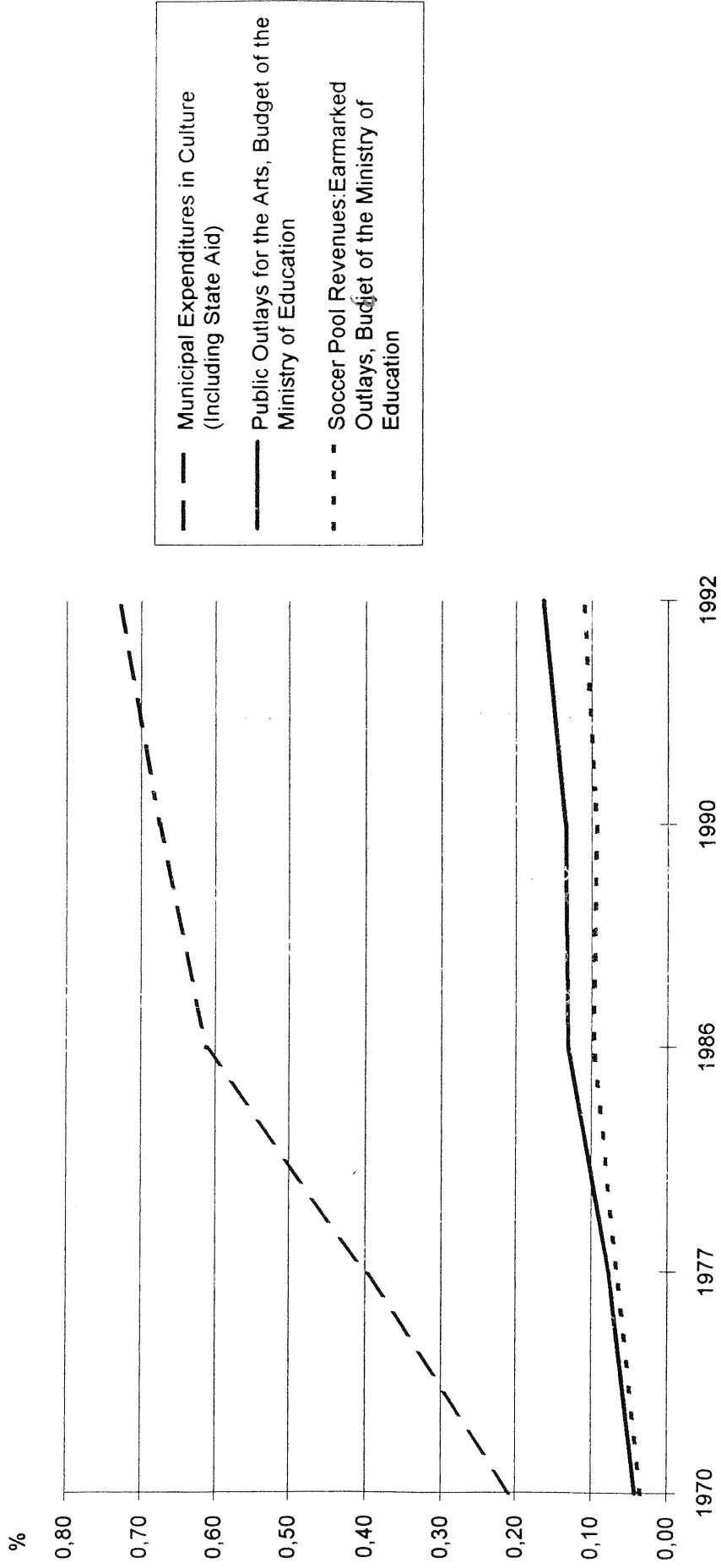
The share of this from the total appropriation for supporting art **9.4 %**

In previous year 1992 the share of fiscal resources allocated by arts councils was approximately 7 %.

Main components of the public financing of the arts and culture in Finland in 1970-1992 (in FIM, current prices)



Main components of the public financing of the arts and culture in Finland in 1970-1992 relative to GDP



Data for Appendix 3A. (in FIM, current prices)

	1970	1977	1986	1990	1992
Municipal Expenditures in Culture (Including State Aid)	93.455.000	518.672.000	2.190.840.000	3.396.364.000	3.612.964.000
Public Outlays for the Arts, Budget of the Ministry of Education	18.863.000	98.726.200	467.083.713	674.718.532	809.117.284
Soccer Pool Revenues:Earmarked Outlays, Budget of the Ministry of Education	15.260.000	85.200.000	346.000.000	466.200.000	545.910.000

Data for Appendix 3B.

	1970	1977	1986	1990	1992
Municipal Expenditures in Culture (Including State Aid)	0,21	0,40	0,61	0,68	0,73
Public Outlays for the Arts, Budget of the Ministry of Education	0,04	0,08	0,13	0,13	0,16
Soccer Pool Revenues:Earmarked Outlays, Budget of the Ministry of Education	0,03	0,07	0,10	0,09	0,11

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