

EAIPA Research

Comparative Overview of Transition Programmes in Europe

Following is an overview of support structures that help performing artists either financially or through consultation and training sessions with their career transition. While there are generally three different support structures in Europe – Charities & Foundations, Benefit Schemes and Institutional Bursaries – these can only support a fraction of artists currently working in the sector, as funding for charities and foundations mostly relies on private donations, while benefit schemes so far only exist in Sweden and the Netherlands. Meanwhile, institutional bursaries are only open to those working at said institutions and are often subject to personal preference of the leading artistic team, with mostly limited funds at their discretion. The comparative analysis of the different foundations and benefit schemes therefore reveals that sufficient financial means for career transition can only be provided by the stable support of benefit schemes. Additionally, while most charities and benefit schemes cater to the needs of dancers, only a limited number of them support artists from other performing art disciplines. However, those most in need of a career transition are indeed dancers, since the average retirement age for this profession is at 35 years of age. Following is a short summary of the comparative overview.

Charities & Foundations: SSUDK in Switzerland & Stiftung Tanz in Germany

Being funded almost entirely by private donations, the Swiss SSUDK can offer artists counselling, coaching and career development sessions and gives advice on where to secure the financial means to cover the costs resulting from a career transition. If no other financial support is available, SSUDK is also able to step in and support select artists with a scholarship. This individual payment, however, is subject to the number of successful applicants and the annual donation amount (in 2023, individual payments of 5.000 Swiss francs were made to 10 artists). Also, to be eligible, artists must be at least 30 years old, have left their stage career no more than 2 years ago and been active as a professional performing artist for at least 10 years, with the last 5 of those based in German-speaking Switzerland, Tessin or Liechtenstein.

Similarly, the German Stiftung Tanz also relies on private donations, which are partly generated through charitable ballet galas and matinées, and mostly provides services that include counselling, coaching and psychological support for dancers, complemented by a financial support programme that awards tri-annual scholarships in March, June and October of each year. These one-time payments, usually ranging from 300 to 900 Euros, are also subject to the number of applicants and the annual donation amount. However, a 100 % success rate and the possibility to apply multiple times over the course of one's career transition make this particularly attractive to dancers (the last call saw 40 successful applicants). Additionally, eligibility criteria only ask for proof of a permanent German resident permit and 7 years of work experience as a professional dancer, of which at least 5 years must have been in Germany.

Benefit Schemes: ODN in the Netherlands & SOKstiftelsen in Sweden

Benefit schemes, on the other hand, provide a far more comprehensive support. In addition to career advice, coaching and training sessions, these structural frameworks offer long-term financial support, which can cover costs relating to housing and studying, or provide the initial budget for any entrepreneurial endeavour. As both the Foundation for Retraining Dancers Netherlands (Stichting Omscholing Dansers Nederland – ODN) and the Swedish SOKstiftelsen are based on collective labour agreements, these benefit schemes are thus stable support structures which generate their budget through premiums paid by employers and employees.

In the Netherlands, dancers working for the 35+ companies that come under the Collective Labour Agreement automatically pay premiums to ODN and are eligible to receive financial support after having paid 48 monthly premiums within a period of five years. The monthly premiums amount to 9,25 % of the gross monthly salary, including holiday allowance, of which 6,93 % are paid by the employer and the other 2,32 % by the dancer. Freelance dancers who do not work for a company can also join ODN but must pay both the employer and employee share of the premium. In turn, any commissioning company or choreographer is obliged to reimburse the employer's part of the premium. Additionally, the number of premiums can also be doubled when there is intermittent work (but for at least three months), while dancers are also given the opportunity to continue paying premiums when working abroad: Dancers working on short-term projects abroad can contribute through voluntary payment of the full premium, while dancers working abroad for long stretches of time can contribute after having paid 60 regular premiums. The amount of the financial support is finally determined by the individual need and grows according to the number of paid premiums: 48 premiums in 5 years: up to € 20.000 / 96 premiums in 10 years: up to € 55.000 / 115 premiums in 12 years: up to € 75.000. The aim is to support dancers with 70 % of the average gross income from the last 12 months in which they worked at least 50 %. Payments will be made either as a lump sum or in monthly instalments for a maximum period of four years.

In Sweden, there are about 50+ publicly funded performing arts institutions which are covered by the SOK agreement. These employers pay premiums based on wages for their employees: 26 % for dancers, chorus singers, soloist singers and musical theatre artists, and 2 % for musicians. In order to be eligible, however, artists must have been permanently or temporarily employed by one or more of the 50+ institutions for at least 18 months in the last five years, with a monthly income above SEK 6009, and be within a certain age range that varies for each art genre (dancers: 35-42 / singers & musical theatre artists: 45-56 / musicians: 55-64). After 48 premiums (72 for musicians), candidates are eligible for financial support, with full financial support being available after 192 premiums (264 premiums for musicians). The amount of the support is based on 90 % of the average gross income from the last 36 qualifying months (85 % for musicians aged 55-59, 75 % for musicians aged 59-65) and can be paid out monthly over 2 or 3 years (2 years for musicians) or as a reduced lump sum (reduced to the equal of 2 years' monthly instalments).

More information on the individual transition programmes can be found on the website of *IOTPD – International Organization for the Transition of Professional Dancers*, which counts 11 organisations from 10 different countries among its members, including Canada, France,

Germany, Korea, Japan Switzerland, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the USA and Poland.