
Analysis of Cultural Policies and Strategies in the Context of Public Support for Contemporary Dance



Blanka Marková with Kateřina Rundová,
Barbora Laierová, Diana Hodulíková
and Helena Mustakallio

Abstract: The Czech Republic is currently debating the role of culture in society in the context of the post-pandemic situation and the integration of refugees from Ukraine. Culture plays an undeniable role in these processes, with social, urban, environmental and economic impacts and an acknowledged positive impact on well-being and health. In particular, dance and movement arts can be beneficial not only in the integration of refugees but also in the recovery from various health issues or in the slowing down of diseases. Dance and movement help to orient oneself in space, are part of a healthy lifestyle, slow down ageing and are tools for communication. Cultural policies and strategies at many levels are used to support the development of artistic, cultural and creative activities. National cultural policy should provide a framework for developing strategic documents at regional and local level. This paper aims to analyse and reflect

on cultural policies and strategies in the context of supporting contemporary dance, new circuses and residencies. Research and reflection on cultural policies and strategies should answer a number of questions: do current cultural policies and strategies reflect contemporary dance, new circuses and residencies? Do dance-sector representatives use the advocacy power of professional associations? Is the support for contemporary dance, new circuses and residencies in cultural policies and strategies related to the participation of artists/dancers in developing these documents? This research is based on two research projects conducted in 2022.

Keywords: Dance research, cultural policy, impact, well-being, advocacy, regional development

Introduction

In today's society, socio-cultural aspects are becoming more critical for economic development at various spatial levels – national, regional and local. Cities are “products of culture as well as producers and consumers of it”, as the introduction to the *City Cultures Reader* states.¹ Moreover, the eminent British geographer and urban planner Peter Hall claims that culture has become crucial in the transition from the production economy to the information economy and from the information economy to the cultural economy. He considers culture “a magical substitute for all closed factories, as well as a tool that will create a new urban image”.² Moreover, culture creates an image and a unique marketing advantage that is the “unique selling proposition” of the city. Therefore, culture as a tool can be a crucial factor in attracting skilled labour and tourists: “The current knowledge-based economy emphasises the need for high-quality human resources in the region and their ability to generate innovation creatively. Attracting and retaining these human resources in the region is based on offering high-quality parameters of soft factors that are essential from the point of view of regional development and competitiveness.”³ Culture has become an inseparable part of the marketing of cities, municipalities and regions. Destinations try to distinguish themselves through their unique monuments, architecture, traditions and festivals. In this sense, the image of cities has become crucial for attracting investment, highly qualified residents or media interest: “The presence of culture in industrial and shrinking cities significantly helps to improve the negative image.”⁴ Some authors name the phenomenon of using culture to improve or create a new territorial image as “re-imagining”.⁵

Culture itself is associated with identity, values, education, family traditions and way of life. With different demographic backgrounds come various lifestyles, for example wearing different clothes, eating in specific restaurants (McDonald's versus raw food), or listening to different music. These are the ways in which people express their identity. Thus, consumerism, especially in today's era of IT technologies and social networks, has become a tool for individuals to express their individuality, even if it is using the same brands of smartphone or sneakers.

¹ Malcolm Miles, Tim Hall and Iain Borden (eds.), *The City Cultures Reader*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2003).

² Peter Hall, “Creative cities and economic development”, *Urban Studies* 37, no. 4 (2000): 640.

³ Ondřej Slach, Petr Rumpel and Jaroslav Koutský, *Profilace měkkých faktorů regionálního rozvoje* (Ostrava: Accendo-Centrum pro vědu a výzkum, 2013), 6.

⁴ Benno Brandstetter, Thilo Lang and Anne Pfeifer, “Umgang mit der schrumpfenden Stadt – ein Debattenüberblick”, *Berliner Debatte Initial* 16, no. 6 (2005): 55–68.

⁵ Lauren Andres, “Alternative initiatives, cultural intermediaries and urban regeneration: The case of La Friche (Marseille)”, *European Planning Studies* 19, no. 5 (2011): 795–811.

The role of culture in the development of society

First, culture draws attention to and responds to current events and problems. Artists in particular are positively credited for impacting the process of regeneration and gentrification of urban areas.⁶ Second, there is a visible relationship between culture and social aspects. The following are the main functions of culture:

- socialisation (integrating a person into society, creating relationships)
- humanising (creation of social values)
- educational
- relaxing
- accumulative (preserves the ideas and creations of previous generations)
- integrative (creates and preserves social order).

Dance is a specific medium. It differs from other artistic genres primarily in its abstract expression, which is dependent on physical performance. It is not surprising that, in recent decades, this inspiring form of art has attracted interest from academics who, in addition to studying its artistic side, deal with the effects of dance on social togetherness and cohesion.⁷ "In many multicultural countries, dance has become a 'national' symbol of a minority or ethnic group and an expression of belonging to a community."⁸

The possible impacts of dance on society

Dance, a global phenomenon, has been part of humanity for thousands of years. Although the character of dance depends on local culture, its general global feature is the networking of communities. To synchronise their movements, dancers must use non-verbal signals to communicate with each other. By rhythmical movement, they can express their perception of the world. Thus, dance goes beyond the medium of art and can also be perceived as a communication and community tool. This inspiring medium encourages creativity and critical thinking and strengthens social cohesion. It can stimulate emotions and support mutual social bonding between individual dancers. It conveys individual messages between the performers and the audience through its expressive form.

According to studies, dance has positive social and emotional impacts on diverse demographic groups. It has a positive impact on the socio-emotional development of pre-schoolers⁹ and on the emotional and motoric parameters and quality of life of the

⁶ Stuart Cameron and Jon Coaffee, "Art, gentrification and regeneration – From artist as pioneer to public arts", *European Journal of Housing Policy* 5, no. 1 (2005): 39–58.

⁷ José Alípio Garcia Gouvêa, Mateus Dias Antunes, Flávio Bortolozzi, et al., "Impact of Senior Dance on emotional and motor parameters and quality of life of the elderly", *Revista da Rede de Enfermagem do Nordeste* 18, no. 1 (2017): 51. <https://doi:10.15253/2175-6783.2017000100008>.

⁸ Lucie Burešová, "Výzkum tance: k problematice současných metod a přístupů", *Živá hudba* 4 (2013): 126.

⁹ Rekha S. Rajan and Margaret Aker, "The impact of an in-school dance program on at-risk preschoolers'

elderly,¹⁰ including social and emotional well-being.¹¹ According to Jill Green,¹² community dance is based on accessibility to everyone, so it does not matter if a dancer makes a wrong move during a class. Community dance classes aim to connect the community through movement, enabling socially excluded groups to engage in society, strengthen their position and thus create new contacts and friendships.¹³

There is evidence that physical activity, such as dancing, is linked to cognitive perception. For example, dance trains attention by the dancer's memorising sequences of movement and dance patterns. Individual research studies prove that dance has measurable impacts on society, including preventing pathological phenomena, strengthening communities, impacting seniors' mental well-being and building individual participants' self-confidence. In addition, dancing also supports the formation of muscles, improves posture and aids in the proper functioning of the cardiovascular and nervous systems.¹⁴

To sum up, dance has indisputably positive effects on the development of society. Thus, it is essential to support artists involved in this field. Nevertheless, purposeful support depends on first knowing their needs. This is why we have assessed the needs of professionals working in contemporary dance and analysed the context of seven selected national, regional and local cultural strategies.

Methodologies

Two strands of research have been used to assess the data: a quantitative survey and a qualitative comparative study.

First, the quantitative survey aimed to reflect on the situation of the Czech artistic dance scene. A questionnaire was distributed via e-mail to the members of the Vize tance dance association, published on the Vize tance Facebook profile and posted on the online cultural portal culturenet.cz. Further dissemination took place via the so-called snowball method. Based on the data from this survey, the conditions in dance and

social-emotional development", *Journal of Dance Education* [online] (9 July 2020): 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15290824.2020.1766689>.

¹⁰ Gouvêa, Antunes, Bortolozzi, et al., "Impact of Senior Dance on emotional and motor parameters and quality of life of the elderly", 51.

¹¹ Louise Douse, Rachel Farrer and Imogen Aujla, "The impact of an intergenerational dance project on older adults' social and emotional well-being", *Frontiers in Psychology* 11 (2020): 561126. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.561126>.

¹² Jill Green, "Power, service, and reflexivity in a community dance project", *Research in Dance Education* 1, no. 1 (2000): 53–67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14647890050006587>.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Ernesto Martins Candeias, "Fatores destacáveis na satisfação com a vida em idosos portugueses: (Estudo de caso num centro de dia em Castelo Branco)", *International Journal of Developmental and Educational Psychology. Revista INFAD de Psicologia* 2, no. 1 (2016): 17–28. <https://doi.org/10.17060/ijodaep.2014.n1.v2.420>.

movement art and measures for the development of dance can be optimised to meet the real needs of the end users. Ninety-two respondents answered the questionnaire, of whom 74 were women and 18 were men. A relatively minor sample of responses (n = 92) was caused by various overlapping factors, such as the fragmentation of the dance field. The questionnaire was available from 1 April 2022 to 31 May 2022 on the professional website <https://my.surveio.com>. It was launched towards the end of the COVID-19 pandemic and shortly after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, thus during the onset of the economic crisis. In total, the survey consisted of 14 questions. Most of these were of the closed-question form. Nevertheless, two required an open answer. Generally, the respondents could select their answer from a range of pre-set options. However, in several cases, the respondents were also allowed to add their answers.

The second part of the research involved a general overview of cultural framework documents in the Czech Republic. The general analysis was conducted using seven documents:

- Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030
- State Cultural Policy 2021–2025+
- Strategy for Development and Support of Cultural and Creative Industries
- Strategy for the Development of Culture, Cultural Heritage and Cultural and Creative Industries of the Hradec Králové Region 2022–2030
- Cultural Policy of the City of Prague
- Concepts of Cultural Development of the Statutory City of Ostrava – 2030
- Culture Development Programme of the City of Pilsen 2020–2030.

This qualitative part of the research creates a legal overview of artistic situations in the Czech Republic. Influential factors in developing strategies were the COVID-19 pandemic and cultural mega-events such as ECOC 2015. The documents were analysed in terms of their content and approach to dance as a specific genre of art, new circus as a part of contemporary dance, and residencies as a supportive activity to networking and artist mobility.

The general conclusion has been drawn from the quantitative survey results and the qualitative analysis of strategic documents.

Results of the research on the needs of professionals working in contemporary dance art

The first part of the survey focused on demographic aspects, such as gender, age, place of work and economic background. The second part dealt with dance's strengths and weaknesses, as well as the potential for the development of dance and movement art. The third part of the survey focused on the future development of dance based on the respondents' personal experiences.

Questions 1 and 2: Demographic characteristics

Eighteen men and 74 women participated in the research and none of the respondents identified himself/herself as non-binary. The age groups were represented as follows: 18–25 years (16 respondents), 26–35 years (31), 36–50 years (40 respondents), 51–62 years (4) and active seniors (1). The most represented age group was 36–50 years, with a total of 40 respondents, making up 43.48% of the respondents.

Question 3

Question 3 was directed at the current status of the respondents. Most of the respondents identified themselves as freelancers active in the dance sector.

Table 1 Working status of respondents

Working status	Number of respondents	Percentage
Student	13	14.13
Employee	18	19.57
Freelancer	32	34.78
Mix	23	25
Others	6	6.52

Question 4

The fourth question focused on the role of the respondents, their job position, with 26.09% of the respondents indicating a combination of several roles and functions.

Table 2 Respondents' role in the dance sector

Role in the dance sector	Number of respondents	Percentage
Dancer, performer	19	20.65
Choreographer	6	6.52
Technical profession	0	0
Culture manager	20	21.74
Journalist	5	5.43
Marketing, PR	0	0
Production work	5	5.43
Lighting designer	0	0
Teacher, lecturer	5	5.43
Stage designer	0	0
Multiple positions	24	26.09
Others	8	8.7

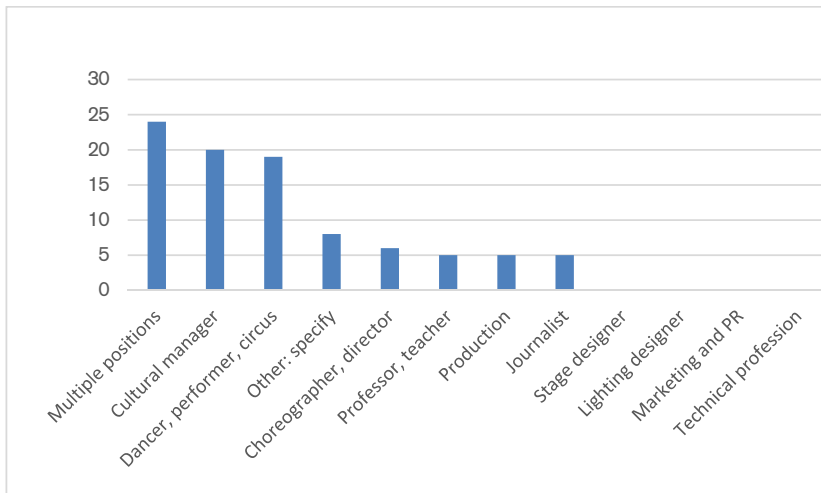


Figure 1 Respondents' role in the dance sector

Question 5

The fifth question asked about the respondents' place of activity: 59.78% of the respondents are active in the capital city, Prague; 36.96% work in the regions of the Czech Republic; and 3.26% of the respondents work abroad.

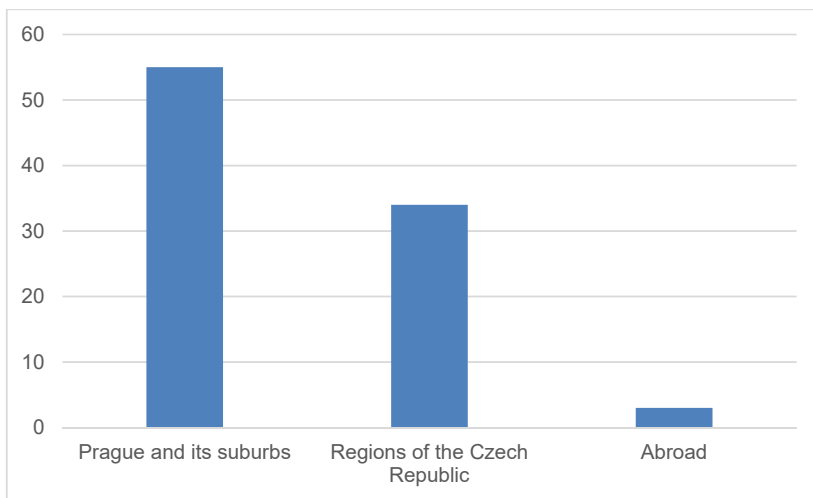


Figure 2 Place of activity of the respondents

Question 6

In the sixth question, 48.91% of the respondents answered that they belonged to some professional umbrella dance association, and 51.09% said they did not.

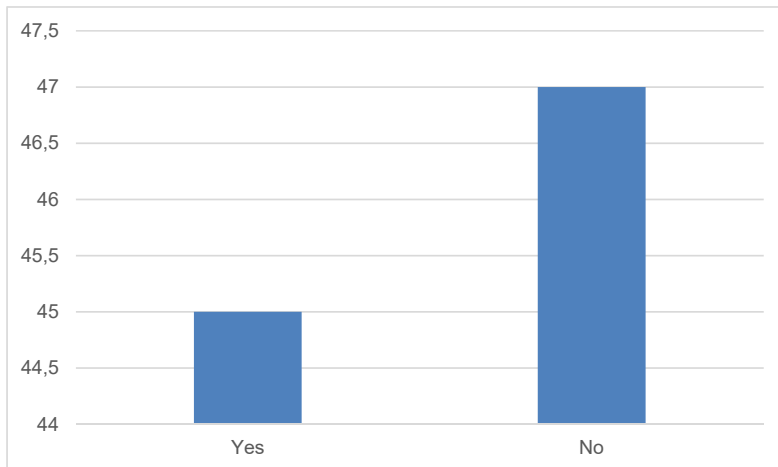


Figure 3 Participation in umbrella associations

Question 7

According to the answers to question 7, the respondents are most commonly involved in the umbrella organisation *Vize tance* (17.39%), followed by the network *Nová síť* (10.87%). Other respondents mentioned, for example, *Trans Europe Halles* or *ITI*.

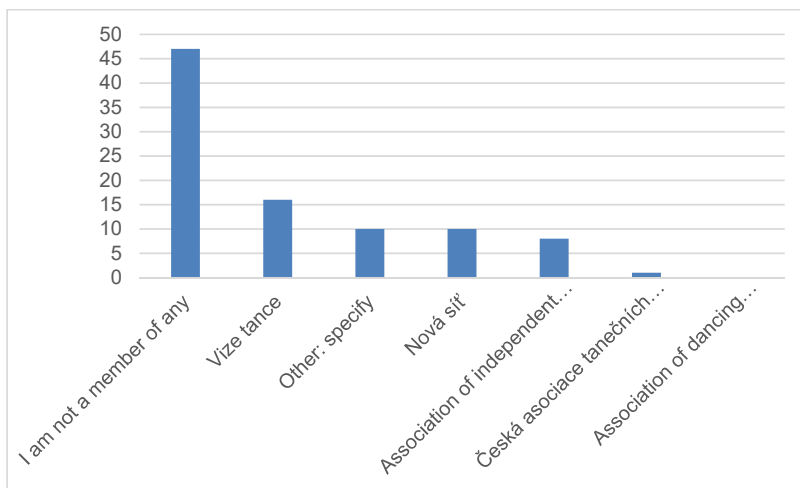


Figure 4 Membership in umbrella associations

Question 8

This question revealed the fact that 77% of respondents are not involved at all in the creation of any policies and strategies. Some respondents indicated that if they are involved in policy-making, it is, for example, through commenting on documents, external consultations, or positions on grant committees.

Question 9

A significant majority of respondents depend on Czech grants (63%), ticket sales (7.6%) and scholarships (6.5%). Only 2.2% of respondents obtain funding from European grants. Among other financial-specific sources, respondents mentioned a pay grade as an employee, income as a self-employed person, or work in another field through which they subsidise the dance profession and culture. Other sources mentioned include income from ticket sales (8 respondents), financial support from family (1), subscription and advertising (1) and work in another field (5).

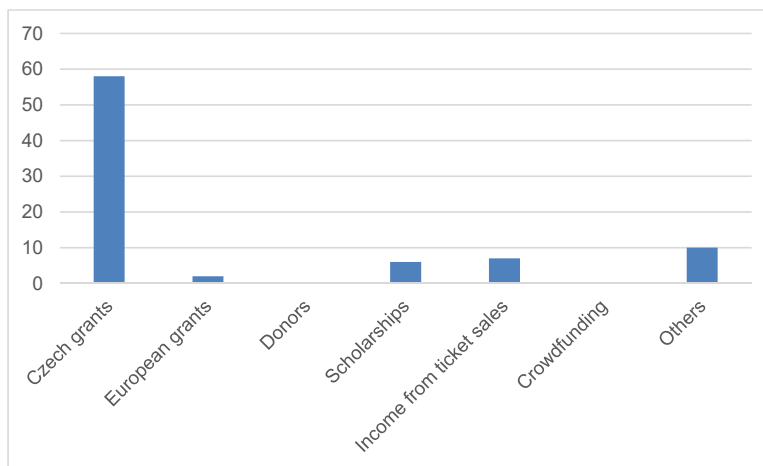


Figure 5 Main sources of finance for the dance sector

Question 10

The responses to the tenth question indicate that, from the perspective of 32% of respondents, lack of funding is the primary barrier to the development of dance. On the other hand, only 5.4% of respondents think that the problem is weak advocacy. Other negative factors that affect the progressive development of dance are low interest on the part of the audience (14.1%), fragmentation of the field and difficulty of communication (13%), or too much pressure on the product (10.9%). The previous data show that underfunding of the field is a significant barrier to the development of dance.

Question 11

As mentioned in question 9, a significant majority of respondents are financially dependent on Czech grants. Not surprisingly, most respondents see adjusting the Czech grant system (21%) as the most effective tool for change and for guaranteeing social security for male and female artists (18%).

Question 12

Changes to the grant system and to artists' social status might be the main tools for positive change. In addition, statistical analysis also points to the potential development of the field through systematic and strategic advocacy (12%), strong personalities such as ambassadors (12%), audience development projects (9.8%) and quality PR and marketing (9.8%).

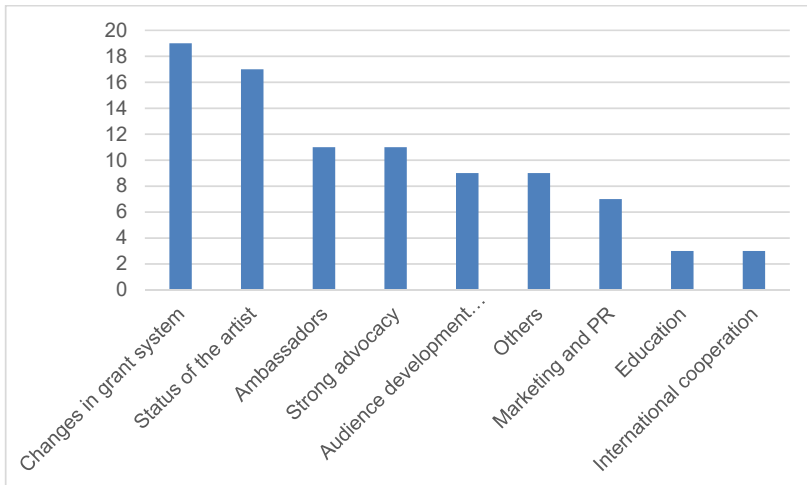


Figure 6 Main tools for positive change in the dance sector

Question 13

The aim of question 13 was to determine who the respondents perceived as a strong personality of dance – as an ambassador. The most frequently cited name was Yvona Kreuzmannová (15.2%), followed by the Ponec Theatre (10.8%) and the non-governmental, non-profit organisation Tanec Praha (10.8%). A relatively frequent answer was “I do not know”, thus without the possibility of identifying an ambassador (14.1%). Other relatively frequent answers included Marie Kinsky, the organisation Vize tance, the Laterna Magica Theatre and the contemporary dance company 420 People.

Question 14

Based on the open question 14, the vision of the dance field is imagined by the respondents in various ways:

“More interdisciplinarity, audience development and engagement with the environmental and social challenges of our time.”

(male, 26–35 years old, freelance, working in Prague and the surrounding area)

“Greater emphasis on dancers’ second career, better education in non-dance disciplines and deeper inclusion of folk dance in the awareness of dancers and the public.”

(female, 18–25 years old, employed, and active in the regions of the Czech Republic)

“Hopefully, finally, collaboration across styles and organisations.”

(male, 26–35 years old, entrepreneur, working in Prague and the surrounding area)

“Strong dance in the regions, revision of the dance education at HAMU, existing status of the artist, better communication and less fragmentation in the industry, interdisciplinary cooperation, awakening activity from private sponsors, creation of new spaces for creation and performance.”

(female, 36–50 years old, freelance, active in Prague and the surrounding area)

“An open field, communicating with audiences of geographically and demographically diverse segments, with recognition and sufficient support from public administration reflecting the needs of the field, with a quality base for education and continuous development of professionals, including secondary education, with a renewed regulatory framework (status of the artist, insurance, etc.) and suitable conditions for the development of individuals and the field in the 21st century in the context of foreign cooperation and cultural dialogue.”

(female, 26–35 years old, freelance, working in the regions of the Czech Republic)

According to most respondents, the emphasis should be placed on interdisciplinarity, audience development, education and communication.

Conclusions of the survey among dance artists, managers and journalists

- The survey shows the underestimation of dance as a profession (26.09% of the respondents indicated a combination of several roles and functions), thus the underestimation of the status of the dance artist.
- Representatives of the dance sector do not participate in developing legislative and strategic documents at the regional and local level.

- More than half of the respondents are not members of any network or association.
- From the respondents' answers, underfunding of the sector emerges as a primary barrier. The lack of attention and interest in dance itself, especially in the regions, continues to hinder the development of dance.
- The respondents are dependent on the Czech grant system.

The authors of the research wanted to find out how the lack of development of legislative and strategic documents at the local and regional level is actually mirrored in existing cultural strategic documents. This is why we examined a number of Czech strategic documents during the second half of 2022.

Results of the analysis of national, regional and local cultural strategy documents

Another approach to the dance field evaluation is to analyse existing cultural strategies. How is the dance field actually mirrored in existing cultural strategic documents? We chose documents dealing with the culture sector from the national, regional and local levels to obtain an overall view of the dance sector from all Czech government levels. We analysed seven documents (listed above under "Methodologies"):

Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030

The Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 defines culture. It contains a summary of the impacts of culture on social, economic and territorial development. It states the connection of culture with other sectors, mainly tourism, education and marginal immigration policy. It is necessary to actively support the abilities of local governments to effectively combine state support for culture with local conditions so that resources and attention are appropriately distributed in favour of cultural production at the local level.

State Cultural Policy 2021–2025+

Dance is mentioned as one of the cultural sectors most affected by the COVID pandemic, together with theatre, dance, music, film and visual arts. Artists are among the pillars of Czech society and create a cultural heritage for future generations (p. 26), so the Ministry of Culture should support the creation of quality cultural policies at the level of regions and large cities as part of a systematic effort to increase the importance of culture. A vital tool for making culture more accessible is working with the audience and increasing the possibilities for active participation in cultural content creation. Some of the main initiatives of the State Cultural Policy involve increasing the security of artists and ensuring they can develop their second careers. The Ministry will therefore submit a legislative proposal introducing the status of male and female artists. The Ministry

will further develop systematic tools to support networking, skills development and the internationalisation of Czech culture (residential stays, scholarships and presentations at international festivals should be the primary tools)

Interdisciplinary cooperative projects of living art and cultural heritage should support local culture to make culture available in the Czech Republic.

Strategy for Development and Support of Cultural and Creative Industries

The most significant cultural impact in comparison to the economic value usually contains the so-called cultural and artistic core, which mainly consists of visual and performing arts and cultural heritage (p. 22), where “we find performing arts that are mainly market-oriented” (p. 23). At the same time, in scenic art, advertising and design, outputs can be found that are so unique and valuable that they can compete in the global market (p. 33).

Dance is understood mainly as not for profit but is essential for the development of cultural and creative industries (CCI): “They thus represent a space where creative people can foster creativity and connect with each other. Networking within the entire sector is one of the most critical prerequisites for its development.”

Strategy for the Development of Culture, Cultural Heritage and Cultural and Creative Industries of the Hradec Králové Region 2022–2030

Dance is not mentioned in this strategic document, which only speaks about residences as “a tool for strengthening the inter-regional and inter-disciplinary mobility of actors and creating international partnerships”.

Cultural Policy of the City of Prague

We do not find any specific measure to support contemporary dance in the Czech capital city. From the Cultural Policy of the City of Prague we learn that “some culture genres are more saturated (drama) than others (dance, new circus, movement theatre), especially in infrastructure (p. 17). Cultural policy should seek ways to saturate and support everyone.”

Concepts of Cultural Development of the Statutory City of Ostrava – 2030

Dance is mentioned only in the context of research about students’ cultural preferences. Regarding these, it can be stated that students find classical music, opera, ballet, dance performances and other categories (circus, performance, etc.) to be the least interesting. In these areas of culture, it is necessary to look for measures to bring them closer to students and increase student interest in them.

Culture Development Programme of the City of Pilsen 2020–2030

The task of the strategic document of Pilsen is to stabilise financial support and ensure the international dimension and sustainability of the positive impacts of ECOC 2015, thanks to which culture redefines the brand of the city of Pilsen and makes visible its cultural heritage and current artistic production (performing arts, visual arts, design and fashion). There is no explicit mention of dance.

The research confirms the strong reflection of the dance sector in cultural policies at the national level. On the other hand, there is little evidence of support for dance at the regional and local level.

Summary

Dance has indisputably positive effects on the development of society, the health and well-being of individuals and the image of localities and regions. Thus, it is essential to support artists and incorporate art into everyday life. Nevertheless, purposeful support of the arts depends on knowing the needs of the artist. Our research into the status of the dance artist in Czech Republic shows these results: the underfunding of the sector emerges as a primary barrier for its progress, with many respondents citing their financial dependence on the Czech grant system. The lack of attention and interest in dance itself, especially in the regions, continues to hinder the development of dance.

Research on cultural policies should answer the question about the reflection of contemporary dance, new circuses and residencies in cultural strategic documents. We can confirm the strong voice of the dance sector in state cultural policies, which may be connected with the active participation of dance umbrella associations and ambassadors in creating these documents at the government level. But individual representatives of the dance sector do not participate in developing legislative and strategic documents and more than half of the respondents do not belong to any network or association. This may lead to a lack of attention and interest in dance itself, especially in the regions.

The Ministry of Culture will (according to national strategic documents) support the creation of regional and local cultural policies, so representatives of the dance sector should participate in the creation of these strategic documents to support and foster contemporary dance at the regional and local level in the Czech Republic, and at the same time make evidence-based arguments about the positive impacts of dance on the development of society.

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Mgr. Blanka Marková, Ph.D. is an independent expert in the management of cultural and creative industries. After completing her Ph.D. in Political and Cultural Geography at the University of Ostrava and a number of internships abroad, she has worked with the Arts Institute, The Prague Institute of Planning and Development, and has participated in the development of cultural strategies for many Czech cities. She is the author of a number of scientific articles and expert studies. She is currently working as a strategic consultant for the professional organisation Vize tance and as a project developer of Brno's candidacy for the title of European Capital of Culture 2028.

MgA. Kateřina Rundová is a graphic designer and a graduate of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. She has many years of experience in cultural production. She currently works at the Department of Culture of the Statutory City of Brno and is involved in the preparation of Brno's candidacy for the title of European Capital of Culture 2028.

PhDr. MgA. Helena Mustakallio (Jonášová) is a finance and grants manager working for several cultural institutions. In recent years, she has focused mainly on projects with an international orientation. She is primarily interested in the taxation of artistic activities and in international cultural networking and diplomacy. Since 2017 she has taught at the Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts. In addition, she works as tax consultant.

BA. Barbora Laierová is a student of Janáček Academy of Performing Arts. She has many years of experience in cultural production. She currently works at the Duncan Centre Conservatory in Prague, at the professional organisation Vize tance and is involved in the preparation of Brno's candidacy for the title of European Capital of Culture 2028.

Ing. arch. Diana Hodulíková graduated from the Faculty of Architecture, Brno University of Technology. She was a member of the student chamber of the Council of Universities. Currently, she is on a UNICEF mission in Ethiopia to support national efforts to ensure the realisation of the rights of children and women while establishing strong relations with the government of Ethiopia, bilaterals, donors, development partners, and civil society. Culture plays a key role in this process.