

# TELEPART

Mobility support platform for performing arts 2016



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# 1. Foreword

**An arts practitioner's** daily life is subject to the same ebb and flow as the entire globalising world. The breakdown of structures that were imagined to be permanent, digitalisation, economic standstill and a hyper-networked ever-shrinking reality mean a renegotiation of boundaries. Specific to the performing arts field is the fact that the physical encounter between people – the actual breathing of the same air – remains in the core of the industry's core.

Finland's geographic isolation means that its arts scene is in a weaker position compared to continental Europe. Domestic markets are limited, and high travel expenses are, from the organiser's perspective, a superfluous cost. How could the playing field be levelled between a Finnish practitioner and his Central European colleague? This question led to the TelepART Mobility Support Platform's pilot project being set in motion six months ago.

The aim was to create a simple and permanently open grant scheme, available through online application that encourages mutual interaction between performers and event organisers, and new grassroots initiatives. Essential to the design of the TelepART funding scheme are transparency in terms of its criteria, two-way exchange, quick processing, communication support offered by the Institute as well as the follow-up of events and the assessment of their impact. Besides launching a call for travel

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Aleksi Malmberg

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*Writer is the director in the Finnish Cultural Institute for the Benelux.*

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support for performers and event organisers, we have strengthened a programme between Finland and the Benelux countries for visiting arts professionals who have a decisive impact on performance programming.

This report is a first review of the impact of the TelepART Mobility Support Platform. The results are encouraging. In the first months the platform has made possible a total of forty-five performances for over fifty artists between Finland and the Benelux countries. Cultural interaction has increased. As yet, 8500 euros worth of TelepART Mobility Support has been allocated, which has allowed practitioners to increase their income from cultural export more than threefold through performance fees paid out by event organisers. 85% of performers who received TelepART funding estimate that their performance will generate new international invitations within the next year.

The TelepART model has been born at a time when the gatekeeper's role is kaleidoscopically spread across numerous venues of different sizes, festivals, individual artists and managers. The world



has become smaller and the turn-around time in decision-making has tightened. Alongside currently functioning support structures for the arts, we are in need of new structures to support emerging and semi-established practitioners internationally. I hope that the TelepART experiences may be used to strengthen a wider field than just the bridge between Finland and the Benelux countries.

The first steps have been taken, yet much work remains. For enabling the TelepART Platform, first and foremost thank you to the Finnish Cultural Foundation as well as the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, whose generous support has made it possible to develop this platform.

# Guest writers

” The light bureaucracy and ongoing application process makes the seizing of even surprising opportunities possible.”

Tuomo Tähtinen,  
Music Finland

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Tuomo Tähtinen

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*Writer is the executive director of Music Finland.*

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**Finnish music is** seen and heard in a rather diverse way around the world today. However, in a situation of growing competition the threshold for going international is high, as the building of an international career never happens on its own or without investments, and is not risk-free. The venues offering possibilities to perform take risks too. For them, every night brings uncertainty. The risk becomes especially high when new international artists are introduced to an audience. These financial realities are clearly seen in the results of the TelepART programme survey, which states travel costs as the highest threshold for attaching a foreign artist.

The importance of encountering people is highlighted in the music field not only in the context of a performance, but also in the activity taking place in the background. To the artist, international activity means both being presented to audiences, and

interacting with the surrounding world. Relationships built on tour often work as inspiration for new initiatives, as is clear from the replies of the questionnaire for performers. The significance of expanding talents and building an international network is not to be ignored, even though the true impact of these investments is not visible until years ahead.

An agile form of funding, such as TelepART, plays a big role in encouraging both artists and programmers to act. Its light bureaucracy and ongoing application process makes the seizing of even surprising opportunities possible. The results of the programme's pilot phase show that support tools tailored for the operational logics of a field can lead to substantial effects, both financially as well as in the long-term development of the field.

**Perhaps too easily,** we consider artists visiting other countries as a simple thing to organize. Naturally, artists are pleased to receive an invitation, and the programmer is certainly happy with gaining an international dimension to a local programme, but both parties are aware of the many obstacles to making an international invitation and performance possible. Any initiative supporting these kinds of collaborations is more than just a nice gesture towards artists and their host.

The creative quality of artists and their performances has a possibility for growth. Framing the artistic work within an international context and receiving audience feedback different from that of one's home country, stimulates the creative process and the creation itself. Travelling and being part of a global community of artists through international performance gives every local context a new dimension.

So many artists from all the European countries with interesting, daring and visionary work are not performing outside of their own country, or even their own city or region. This is mainly due to programmers not travelling or not being able to travel, but also to a lack of a sufficient budget to cover all the travel costs. This is precisely what makes reading the results of the TelepART programme so fascinating – just a small financial aid can make the difference. The results and effects are clear and convincing. Needless to say, the foremost value of being able to perform abroad is artistic, and is important for audiences all over Europe. But just as remarkable is the economic effect that such an opportunity offers.

I have had the pleasure to work for artists and their creations in many international environments. I have witnessed the great value these international encounters bring to our art communities

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Hugo De Greef

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*Writer is the European Festival Association EFA's professional education initiative, The Festival Academy's general coordinator and acts as the co-director for the project Europe For Festivals | Festivals for Europe EFFE.*

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and for our audiences. These days, I am working with festivals – the most exquisite places for new and established works of art. I know they are all helped by efforts and programmes such as TelepART. During international meetings and training programs for the young generation of festival makers that I organize, I insist on the need to travel, the need to meet artists in other countries. But this young generation has to be supported to do so, and this support makes the difference!

## 2. TelepART – In brief

**The Finnish Cultural Institute for the Benelux** is a cultural institute located in Brussels that builds bridges for practitioners in the arts, sciences and culture within its area of operation in the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Finland. The Finnish Cultural Institute for the Benelux is an independent, non-profit organisation and one of seventeen Finnish cultural and scientific institutes.

In the spring of 2016, the Finnish Cultural Institute for the Benelux launched the TelepART Mobility Support Platform, which strengthens interaction between Finland and the Benelux countries in the performing arts field. With this platform, the Institute piloted a model for simple and effective international exchange, by supporting the mobility of emerging and semi-established performing artists between Finland and the Benelux countries. TelepART has two strands: mobility support for performing artists as well as support for visiting arts experts. This review only focuses on the first strand: the results of the artist mobility support.

The online TelepART call for applications is open to Finnish performing artists intending to travel to the Benelux region and vice versa. This low-threshold travel support may be granted for performance opportunities in the fields of music, theatre, dance, circus and performance art. The funding application is open to performing artists, entities that represent artists, and

event organisers in the Benelux countries and Finland.

The goal is to respond quickly and efficiently to performance opportunities offered to artists. The call for TelepART support is permanently open and the turnaround time for processing the application is not more than two weeks. Criteria for support are a mutual commitment from the organiser and the performer; artistic quality; the involvement of at least two countries from the area of operation as well as the presence of sufficient other funds. The event organiser must agree to reasonable performance fees, and TelepART funds may not exceed 50% of the total sum of the production's travel expenses and fees. Decisions are made at the Finnish Cultural Institute with the assistance of a changing panel of performing arts professionals.

Besides mobility support, the Institute promotes international exchange by coordinating a programme for visiting arts professionals, which enhances the expertise of decision-makers in the arts field and increases international networking. Central to the TelepART programme is the fact that communication support is provided by the Finnish Cultural Institute for the Benelux and that projects are closely followed up to

measure their impact.

Prior to the launch of the TelepART Platform, the Institute conducted a survey about the barriers to exchange in the Benelux region faced by the Finnish performing arts sectors. The summary of the results of this survey is found in chapter three of this report. Chapter four considers the results of the first six months of the pilot project and the project's impact.

The project has been supported by the Finnish Cultural Foundation as well as the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. The Finnish Cultural Foundation has supported the TelepART Mobility Support Platform with 22 500 euros; the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture has provided support to the value of 13

**”It would have been absolutely impossible without the TelepART funding!**

**Event organiser, Belgium**

000 euro towards the visiting arts professionals programme and the platform's development. The TelepART model for support has been designed and realised in partnership with organisations that export and provide information about the Finnish performing arts, namely, Music Finland, Thretre, Dance and Circus Info Finland as well as the Cirko Centre for New Circus. The electronic TelepART application form and template were produced by Gruppo Software.



SUHDE PERFORMANCE BY KATE & PASI  
Photo: Ray Palacios

# 3. From marketing to travel expenses

## REPORT ON THE OBSTACLES TO THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF FINNISH PERFORMING ARTS IN THE BENELUX REGION

**As part of the TelepART** project, the Institute conducted a study in the spring of 2016 considering the obstacles to the internationalization of Finnish performing arts in the Benelux region. The study was conducted in the form of a survey aimed at event organisers in the Benelux region. The study was completed by Sanni Tuuppa, a Cultural Management student (University of Applied Sciences), as part of her final thesis for her degree in Cultural Management from the Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences. This chapter summarizes the central results of the study.

78 professional-level event organisers from the Benelux region responded to the survey and a complete set of answers was obtained from 49 of these. The majority of respondents, nearly two thirds, were Belgian. Approximately one third of respondents were from the Netherlands and about 7% from Luxembourg. The largest group, 65%, represented music, and roughly one third represented dance, theatre, circus and/or performance art. 15% represented another art form in addition to the aforementioned genres.

Of the respondents, 22 represented a performance venue, 19 festivals and 3 promotion/production houses. 12 respondents reported to representing another organisation, for example several of the aforementioned organisations at once. On average, the responses

reported 112 performances and 58300 spectators per year; but the margins were large. The respondents spanned from small venues with a seating capacity of 50, to festivals receiving as many as 250 000 visitors.

### International performances

**The survey mapped** the pursuit and interest of event organisers working in the Benelux region in programming international performances, and covers the year 2015. 'Programming' here meant the booking of performers and productions or their inclusion in the event's programme.

Those who responded to the survey organise on the whole about 2400 international performances in the Benelux region per year. The answers relating to the number of international performances varied from zero to 350 performances every year per event organiser. 36% of performances were programmed from neighbouring countries, 36% from elsewhere in Europe and 28% from outside Europe. The survey reveals that event organisers in the Benelux region are indeed interested in international performances, and over 95% of respondents report actively sourcing information about such productions.

More than four fifths of event organisers in the Benelux region

experienced travel and accommodation expenses as the biggest challenge when programming international events. The next biggest problem was said to be the marketing of these performances to a local audience (47%). A minority, about 18% of respondents, felt insufficiently informed about international performers and performances. Other challenges mentioned in the survey were the availability of productions, high fee standards, especially for performers from Nordic countries, as well as the event organiser's difficulty in finding content aligned to the event's artistic vision. Only 10% of respondents mentioned language barriers or poor artistic content as problems. Generally, event organisers in the Benelux region were satisfied with their current number of international performances or expressed the wish to programme more international performances. When asked from which geographic region they would be interested in programming performances, no less than 69% of respondents said Northern Europe. 65% mentioned being particularly interested in Southern Europe, 45% Eastern Europe and Russia and 37% North America. One third said to source performances from Africa, Asia or South America. Event organisers from the Benelux region seemed to show interest in performances from Nordic countries, but it is

possible that the role of the Finnish Cultural Institute for the Benelux as the conductor of the survey influenced these answers.

### Finnish performances

**Besides the barriers** to the programming of international performances, the survey also mapped the challenges experienced by Finnish performances in particular:

Event organisers from the Benelux countries experienced travel and accommodation expenses as the biggest challenge by far to the programming of Finnish performances (82%). Marketing to local audiences was felt to be the next most problematic barrier (44%), as well as a feeling of being insufficiently familiar with performers and productions (34%). In

addition, language barriers (14%), poor artistic quality (10%) and other reasons (altogether 10%) were named as obstacles. A few individual respondents made note of political reasons as an influence or did not experience any challenges at all. Other challenges that were mentioned were, amongst others, the nature of the artistic content, for example "a Scandinavian taste for minimalism, which is unfamiliar to audiences in the Netherlands", and high fee expectations.

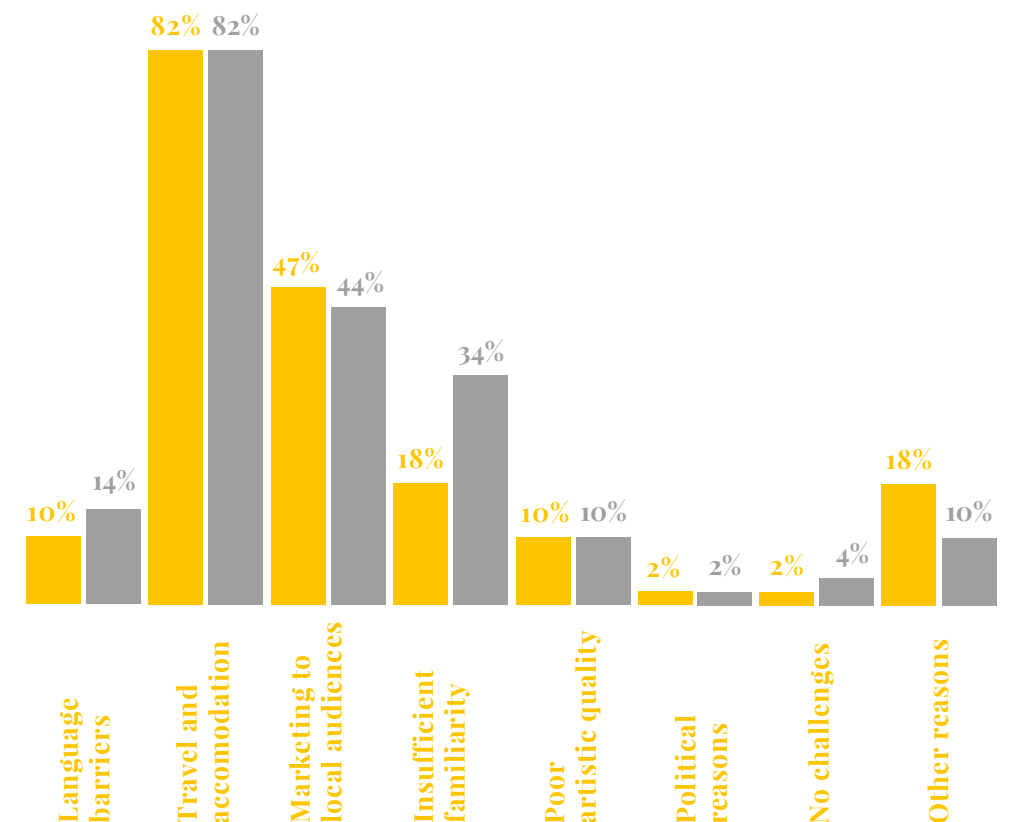
In comparing the challenges to programming Finnish and international performances, travel and accommodation expenses rose to the top in both cases. Marketing to local audiences was also experienced as problematic. Generally, however, the marketing of international performances was thought to be slightly more challenging than Finnish

performances in particular:

In comparing the challenges to programming Finnish performances and international performances in general, 34% of respondents highlighted a sense of being unfamiliar with Finnish performers and performances. This sense of feeling unfamiliar was only mentioned by 17% of respondents when asked about international performances in general. Of fifty event organisers from the Benelux countries, twenty had visited Finland in search of new performances, and five had visited a performing arts event, such as the Cirko Festival.

The original thesis, on which the results of this report are based, can be accessed via the Theseus portal at <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:amk-2016091114166>.

### Challenges to the programming of Finnish and international performances

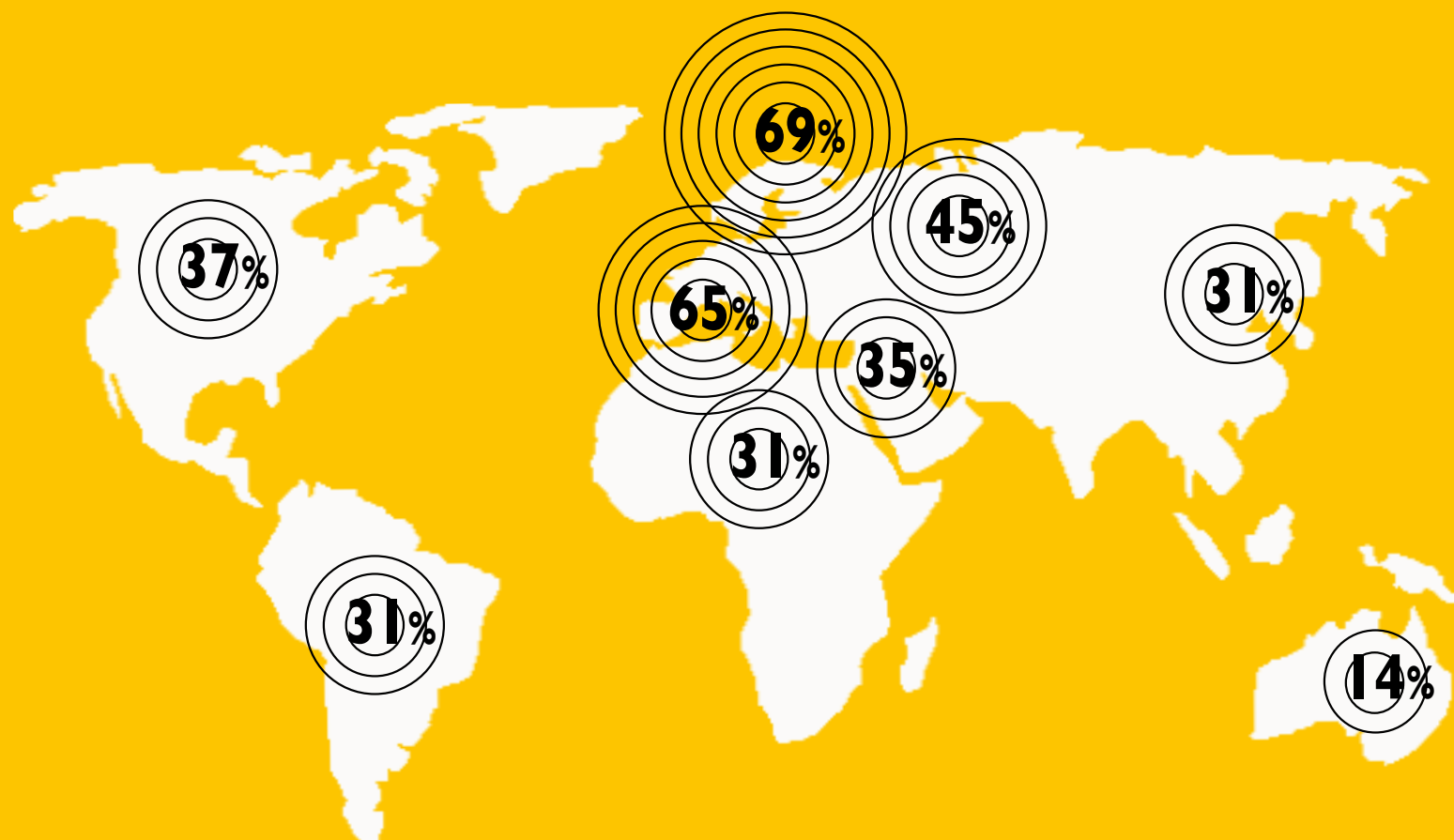
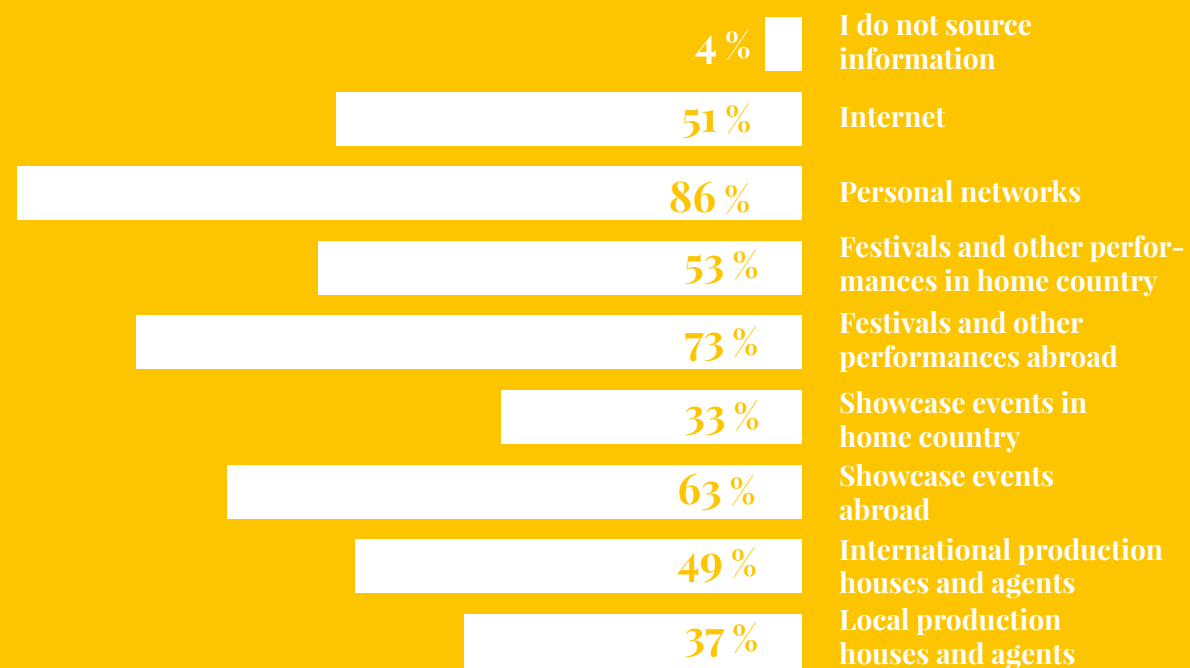


# Key figures

Out of all the TelepART performances in the Benelux region



Where do event organisers source information about international performances?



The map indicates the interest of event organisers in the Benelux region in programming international performances by geographic region.

In addition to these, 6% answered "none on the list", and 6% answered "some other region".

# 4. TelepART - First results

The TelepART online call for applications was opened on 10 May 2016. However, this support model for exchange in the performing arts sectors was already in use in a discretionary fashion from the early spring, with the purpose to gather experiences for the public launch of the call. This chapter summarizes the results of the received and granted TelepART applications up until the end of August 2016. All funding recipients submitted a financial report and narrative evaluation after their performance. In the period of six months, the Finnish Cultural Institute for the Benelux received applications for TelepART support for a total of 16 350 euro. The total awarded support was 8461 euro, and on average, approximately 470 euros of TelepART funding was awarded per performance or tour.

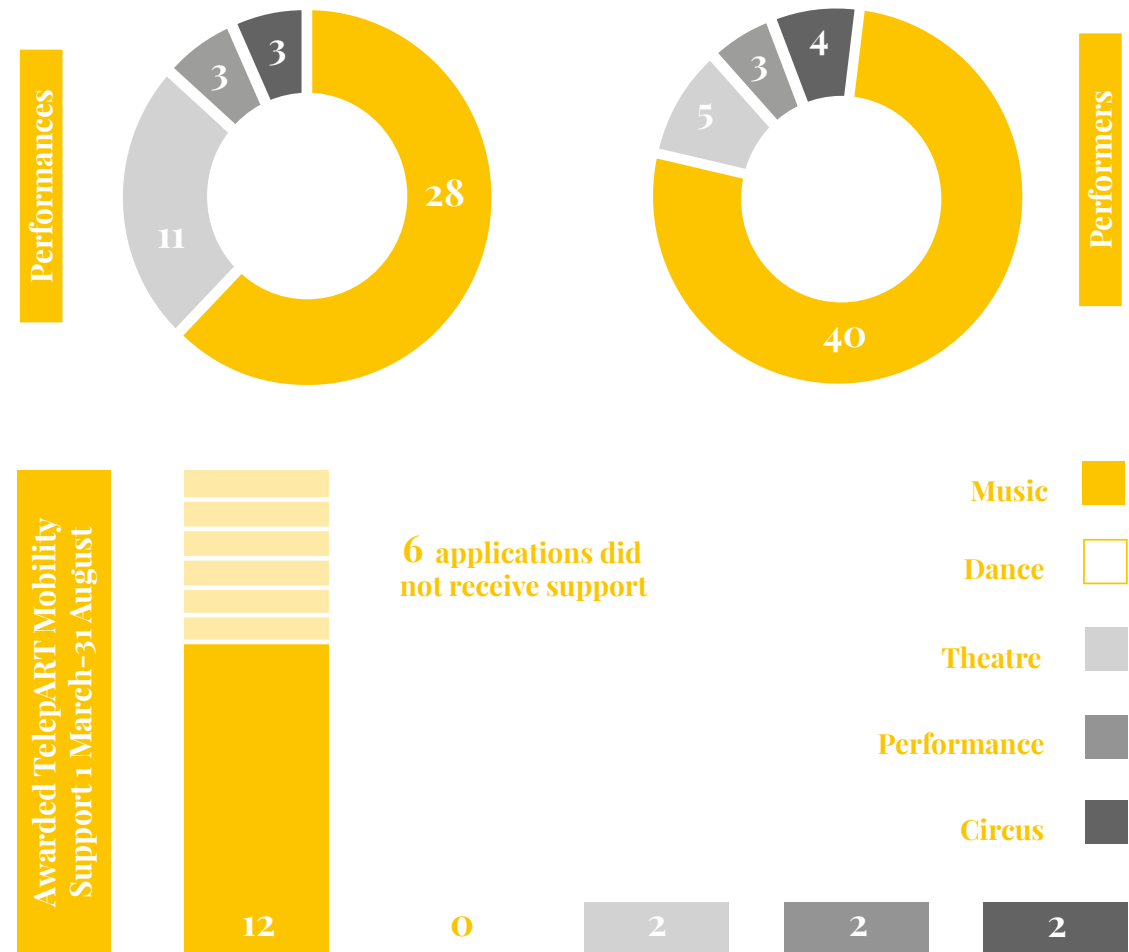
During the first half of the year from 1 March to 31 August 2016, a total of 18 projects received TelepART support, of which 13 performances were completed in that same period. During that time, 45 performances took place within the framework of these projects and a total of 52 artists benefited from TelepART support. On average there were 2,9 artists per funded project.

One of the criteria for TelepART support was that the funding recipient would receive a reasonable performance fee. Of the funded projects, performance fees made up 28 300 euros of the overall costs, thus making the average fee for one performer 216 euros per performance. Travel, accommodation and freight costs amounted to 15 200 euros, and other expenses

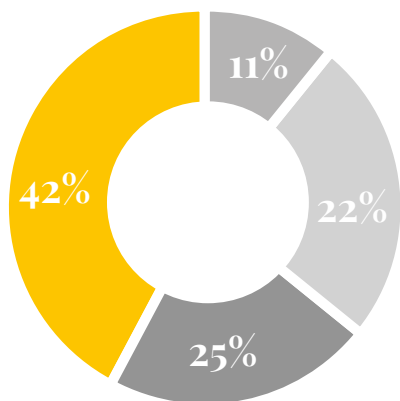
3750 euros. TelepART funds covered approximately 55% of the funding recipients' travel expenses and approximately a fifth (18%) of the production's overall cost.

Every TelepART mobility support recipient had extensive prior performance experience in their home country. Half of the performers had performed in the country of destination at least once. One fourth had performed in the destination country more than six times and one fourth not at all.

Half of the completed TelepART projects were once-off performances, the other half had tours of at least two performances. The most widely touring production with TelepART funding had eight performances.

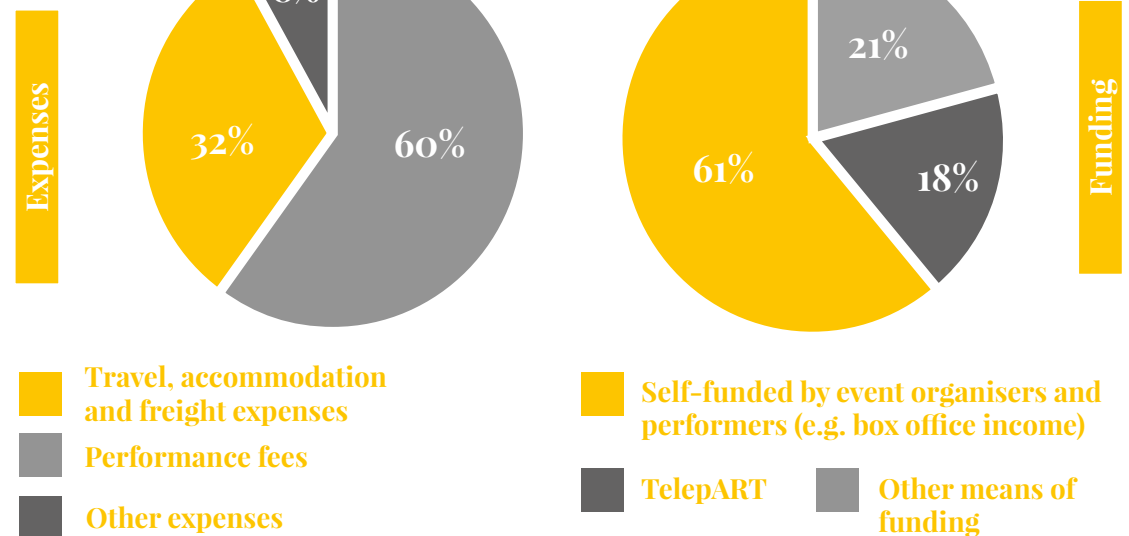
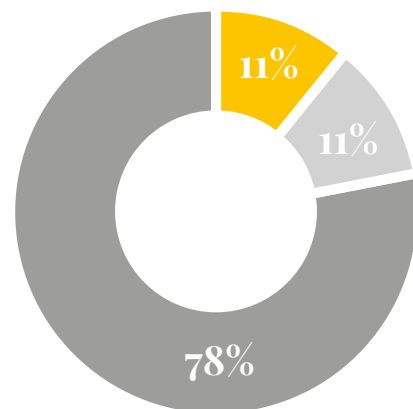


Country of performance



Belgium Finland Luxembourg The Netherlands

Performer's country of origin



# Summary

## Assessing the success of the performances

**Of the applicants** who received a positive response to their TelepART applications, five were event organisers and 13 performers or performers' representatives. After each completed project, the Institute sent a post-performance evaluation form to both the performer as well as the event organiser, regardless of which party had made the application for support. 13 (100%) Of the performers and 8 of the event organisers (36%) had completed the evaluation form in time for the publication of this report.

The purpose of assessing the projects was to map the success of the performance, its impact on the performer's artistic activities as well as the effectiveness of the TelepART support model and its impact in terms of making the performance possible.

All respondents reported that the performance(s) had been achieved as planned. The smallest estimated audience for a performance was 60 people and the largest 4400 people. In total the completed performances drew an estimated audience of 8500 spectators.

The performers and event organisers rated the success of their performance on a scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). Both performers and event organisers were pleased with the success of their performance, with the average score for

both parties being 4,5.

The majority of the performers who were awarded TelepART support (85%) felt that the opportunity to perform internationally had benefited their performance experience and 92% felt that the performance had widened their international professional network. Of the performers, 85% estimated that the TelepART performance would lead to new performance opportunities within the following year.

## Feedback

**Nearly all performers** (92%) and event organisers (100%) were of the opinion that TelepART support made their performance possible. Many of the performers said that the event organiser had not been willing to pay travel expenses, at least not in full. The TelepART mobility support thus responded to an actual need. The majority (94%) felt that the application process for the TelepART support was clear and easy. In the open comments sections, TelepART was described as a quick, efficient and necessary support platform. Suggestions for the further development of the TelepART platform that were highlighted in the TelepART evaluation forms, were related to practical improvements, such as increasing word limits on the application form as well as sending a confirmation message upon receipt of the application. These wishes will be taken into consideration and put into practice where applicable.

**“This was our first time performing in Luxembourg.**

**The support of TelepART was really important for us.”**

**Performer, Finland**

**“It was quick, efficient, and necessary”**

**Event organiser, Belgium**

**“I hope TelepART will continue its great work!”**

**Performer, Finland**

45

**performances were made possible with the support.**

95%

**said the support contributed to making the project possible.**

75%

**of all applications received a positive response.**

**The starting point** for the TelepART Mobility Support Platform was, on one hand, to respond to concrete challenges relating to international exchange faced by Finnish performing artists, and on the other hand to bring the products of arts practitioners from the Benelux region closer to the Finnish arts scene. The platform started with a survey conducted by the Institute, which mapped the programming challenges of international, and especially Finnish performing artists, within the Benelux region. The survey targeted event organisers in the Benelux region.

The survey revealed that travel and accommodation expenses, marketing to local audiences as well as insufficient familiarity with performers and performances are at this time, felt to be the greatest challenges to the programming of international content.

In the spring of 2016, the call for applications was opened for TelepART Mobility Support for Finnish performing artists intending to travel to the Benelux region and vice versa. During the first half of the year, 24 projects applied for support, of which 18 were awarded either the full sum or part of the applied for funds. In total, 75% of applications received a positive response. The applications were evaluated at the Finnish Cultural Institute for the Benelux with the assistance of experts in the performing arts field.

The total sum of awarded funding was 8500 euros in the first half of the year, with which 45 performan-

ces by altogether 52 artists from Finland and the Benelux region were made possible. 67% of applications came from Finland, and the most represented art form was music (67%). Musical genres included popular music, folk music, classical music as well as jazz. Most of the performances, 42%, took place in Belgium.

On average, TelepART Mobility Support covered approximately a fifth of the production's total expenditure. 95% of performers and event organisers who responded to the request for feedback believed the support was significant, and felt that it contributed to making the project possible. The support focused particularly on travel, accommodation and freight costs, which were found to be the biggest practical challenge to programming international performances.

The role of the Finnish Cultural Institute for the Benelux as producer of the study may have partly influenced the responses. Music was the predominant genre of the projects. However, our objective is that in the future different genres of performing arts can benefit as much as possible from the possibilities presented by TelepART. The first survey mapping the challenges to international programming as well as the assessment of the TelepART results, clearly show that there is a call for a structural platform of this kind. The first months of TelepART were able to create new cultural exchange, and raise nearly 30 000 euros of export income in the form of performance fees as well as facilitate nearly fifty performances.



# The TelepART project is executed in co-operation with

Music Finland

Dance Info Finland

Theatre Info Finland

CircusInfo Finland and

Cirko – Center For New Circus

and was supported by

the Finnish Cultural Foundation and

the Finnish Ministry of Education  
and Culture.