

# Music city profile: Aarhus

2024



MUSIC  
ESTONIA 

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# PREFACE

## **Context of this profile report**

This report is part of a trio of music policy profiles of three cities: Aarhus, Berlin and Ghent. They are written as additional case studies for a music policy analysis for the city of Tallinn, the capital of Estonia and a UNESCO City of Music from 2022.

The profiles are based on document analysis, including music or more broadly cultural strategies and various reports, and interviews with music sector representatives and city officials. The profiles describe broadly how the city as a political and administrative organisation interacts with the music life in the city, whether through policies and regulations, subsidies and other support, as urban planners and real estate managers or facilitators of local, regional, national or international collaboration. It is clear, however, that a comprehensive review of all the ways that these cities interact with their music life would easily fill a book in each case.

## **What is music policy?**

Most states or cities do not (yet) have explicit music policies. Therefore, the phrase “music policy” as used in these reports refers to a synthesis of all those ways the city impacts the music life in the city, whether through political strategies or administrative regulations, subsidies to organisations and projects, or activities carried out by the city itself. Therefore, even if the city never mentions music explicitly in any policy document, it would, in this view, still have a music policy – it would simply be a set of goals, resources and processes already in place, but not necessarily explicitly articulated within music context.

## **Descriptive and analytical approach**

The profiles are mostly descriptive and only moderately analytical. They mostly describe the ways the city governments have made retorical commitments, articulating in political strategies why the music ecosystem matters, what value it creates and how the government intends to empower it; and institutional commitments, setting up programmes, projects, committees, units or other structures and committing funding. The reports have not aimed to critically evaluate the implementation of the various policies described as this would exceed by far the capacity allocated. The reports themselves do not have a comparative component and do not reference each other. A separate brief comparative analysis was created for the City of Tallinn and Music Estonia.

# 1. AARHUS – A MUSIC CITY

Aarhus is a city and a municipality in the Central Denmark Region of Denmark. The second largest city in Denmark after the capital Copenhagen, Aarhus city has a population of approximately 237 000. The Aarhus City Council also serves as the government of the Aarhus Municipality with a population of ca 368 000.<sup>1</sup> Aarhus is one of Denmark's youngest cities, and 8000 Aarhus C is the first postal code to have an average age below 30. The city hosts a number of creative environments, where young artmakers and creative entrepreneurs can participate in networks and collaborative projects.<sup>2</sup>

Aarhus was the European Capital of Culture of 2017. An important project that placed culture more clearly at the centre of the city's policy-making and brought a wave of fresh ideas through a focus on rethinking the approach to culture and its role in the city. Even though, and maybe because, Aarhus has a very vibrant music life, some felt music was overlooked in 2017 and this spurred ideas about making a year of music, eventually leading to the Music City Aarhus 2022 initiative.

## 1.1. WHY IS AARHUS A MUSIC CITY?

There is a broad agreement – from the city's official documents to informal discussions with various stakeholders, from Aarhus and elsewhere, – that Aarhus is considered to be the music city of Denmark. The roots of this perception go back to the 1970s-1980s and perhaps even earlier when many of Denmark's most successful artists and well-known songs came from Aarhus. The city has been big enough to have the critical mass and infrastructure for a fully functioning music ecosystem. While it's clear that by today the "big" music industry is mostly residing in Copenhagen, which also has more venues, events, bigger audiences, etc., Aarhus still has an aura, a special "DNA", and a story around music that is felt by Aarhusians and others. It's tightly woven into how Aarhus and its inhabitants see themselves.

As a recent survey shows: 78% of Aarhusians strongly agree or agree that music has a great unifying force and is able to create social communities; and 68% strongly agree or agree that a broad and diverse music scene makes Aarhus a better place to live.<sup>3</sup>

*"Aarhus has always been home to a diverse music scene with venues, organisers, festivals, recording studios, industry players, orchestras and ensembles, rehearsal and production facilities and, not least, performing musicians and composers – from the top of the charts to the emerging talent and artistic niches that have always thrived in Aarhus".<sup>4</sup>*

This has been achieved not only because of the music community itself. There has also been the political will and strong organisations and enthusiasts who have created the framework conditions for music to live and thrive in Aarhus.<sup>5</sup> In principle, no Aarhus politician or civil servant needs convincing that music matters in Aarhus, even though what this means in practice can differ. Still, such a general receptiveness to the music theme can help music organisations and entrepreneurs build more convincing cases for sectoral development. The very fact of funding an organisation such as Promus, the music competence centre and network organisation in Aarhus (and beyond), providing municipal funding to four bigger venues, three of which have the regional venue status, funding the SPOT festival, Denmark's main music industry showcase festival and conference, and also providing project funding in various forms attests to some appreciation towards the city's music life by the municipality. Naturally, Aarhus benefits from the presence of the Royal Academy of Music, exerting gravity towards young music talent.

The discussions with music stakeholders also reflect a certain cooperative spirit in Aarhus, standing in contrast to Copenhagen, which is perceived as a much more competitive environment. It's likely due to being a smaller city and there is a generally felt need to work together so as not to let the music ecosystem run dry of talent and dissolve. The sense that a holistic view of the music ecosystem is needed also penetrates

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1 Statistics Denmark. (2024). Population figures. Available online: <https://www.dst.dk/en/Statistik/emner/borgere/befolkning/befolkningstal>.

2 Kultur og Borgerservice. (2021). City of Aarhus Cultural Strategy 2021-2024. Available online: [https://aarhus.dk/media/sh2ku0ke/kulturpolitikken\\_uk\\_version-1.pdf](https://aarhus.dk/media/sh2ku0ke/kulturpolitikken_uk_version-1.pdf).

3 Based on the data collected by Silverline Research, results presented in: Karlsson, C., U. (2023). Evaluering af music city aarhus 2022. Music City Aarhus 2022 Sekretariat. Available online: <https://promus.dk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Music-City-Aarhus-2022-afsluttende-rapport-31-marts-2023.pdf>.

4 Seismonaut (2023). A driving force in the Aarhus music scene. Introduction to Promus. Available online: <https://promus.dk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Promus-A-driving-force-in-the-Aarhus-music-scene.pdf>.

5 *Ibid.*

the city’s cultural strategy, reflected in the (not only music-specific) notion of the so-called growth layers – those working in the music that are only making their way toward a breakthrough (whatever that might mean). It’s a sober appreciation that if young and emerging artistic and entrepreneurial talent is not supported throughout the whole journey they will simply leave for Copenhagen early in their careers. This matters because a vibrant cultural life is among the most important reasons people want to live in Aarhus.

The initiative Music City Aarhus 2022 reflects a clear and renewed effort to make sure that the music life in Aarhus will always be more than a story from the past, but a living and vibrant present. A recent focus, strategically pursued by Promus, is on Aarhus as a centre for music production, including music for the audiovisual media sectors. The evolving project of the Sound City (*Lydbyen*) as part of the South Harbour district development is a good example of that.

*“The result is that today there is no other city on the Danish map that has music flowing through its veins in the same way as Aarhus. That’s why Aarhus can rightly be called Denmark’s music city”.*<sup>6</sup>

## 1.2. MUSIC LIFE AND ECOSYSTEM

Promus commissioned a Aarhus music industry mapping in 2016 and this gives a general indication of the music economy in terms of turnover and jobs. The primary music business,<sup>7</sup> including for example musicians, booking agencies and venues, in 2016 had a total turnover of ca DKK 1,8 bln (approximately €234 mln). Manufacturing musical gear, making instruments and selling them together make up more than half of this (figure 1). A new report based on the 2022 economic data confirms the ballpark, stating that in 2022, the “music life in Aarhus created a gross added value of a total of DKK 1,968 million”.<sup>8</sup>

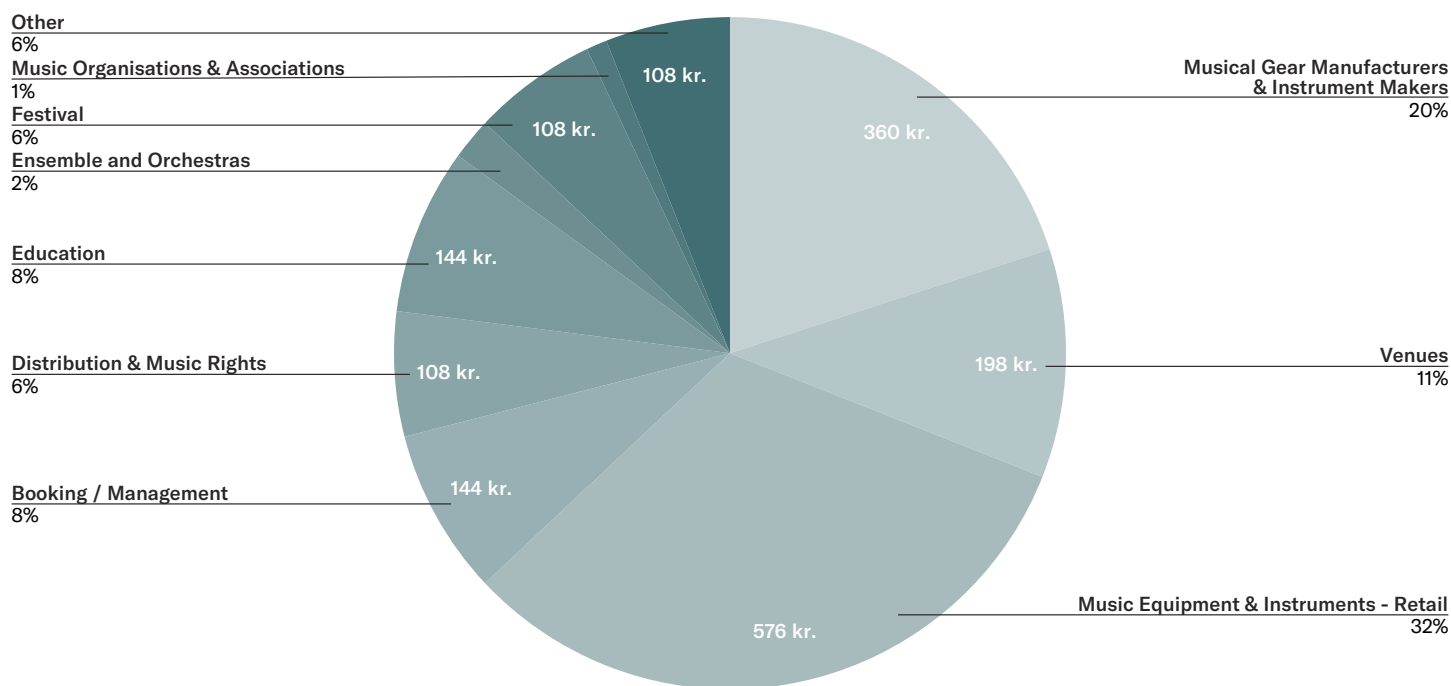


FIGURE 1. THE BREAKDOWN OF THE TOTAL TURNOVER OF AARHUS MUSIC BUSINESS IN 2016 (EPINION, 2016).

There were approximately 2500 musicians working in Aarhus in 2016 and this includes various forms of work, including teaching. The Aarhus music industry in 2016 supported 1156 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs 65,6% of which were one-person businesses and 34,4% of organisations and companies. This report helped to put music on the policy table not only as a cultural but also as a business sector, requiring appropriate support. A new survey is planned for the near future to update the picture.

6 *Ibid.*

7 Defined in the report as “Companies, organisations and private individuals, whose economic activities would not exist without the music.” Source: Epinion. (2016). Aarhus Music City. Music in Numbers. Available online: <https://promus.dk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Musikoekonomien-i-Aarhus-2016.pdf>.

8 Silverlining Research (2024). Musikkens Værdi Og Betydning For Aarhus.

There is a directory of various music companies and organisations on the Promus website<sup>9</sup> providing an overview of the main venues, companies, organisations, etc. According to this, there are 30 organisers, festivals and associations, 11 management and booking agencies, 22 recording studios, 3 music publishers and a number of other companies based and working in Aarhus. There is no specific information about record labels. There are also 7 music education providers.

Importantly for the Aarhus but also generally the Danish music industry, Aarhus is the home of the main annual showcase event **SPOT Festival** which includes the music industry conference **SPOT+**. The event brings together about 1500 professional delegates of which 200-250 are international, and sells ca 7500 concert tickets. 250 concerts over two days take place in 24 different venues with a full conference programme happening in the morning and afternoon. The core team of SPOT is small – 5 people FTE for a full year, but for the event it grows to 20 people as well as involving approximately 1000 volunteers. SPOT also has an agreement with the Danish Musicians' Union and is paying artists according to the standard musician fee, a fairly rare commitment among the many international showcase festivals.

There are three **regional venues** in Aarhus which is a unique concentration (Copenhagen has two and all other places have only one). These are Radar, TRAIN and Voxhall for the ongoing period with Turkis switching places with Radar from the new period 2025 onwards.

**Radar** is a unique venue with a specific profile, focusing mainly on music performances, but really encompassing everything that has sound at the core. Besides regular concerts, the programme also includes performance art, sound installations, sound art and even a literature festival. The venue has one space with a 300-person capacity, which is highly flexible with a movable stage and an immersive sound system with 21 quadraphonic speakers.<sup>10</sup>

**TRAIN**'s profile is mainly rock, pop, metal, electronic and urban - with room for jazz, folk, roots and world. They present artists from big stars to emerging acts and collaborate widely across scenes, actors and municipal boundaries. As an organisation TRAIN also collaborates with other stages, organisers, festivals, organisations, schools and other educational institutions. The capacity of the venue for live concerts is 1000 for standing audiences and 270 for seated concerts.<sup>11</sup>

**Turkis** is a venue managed by the Association *det turkise telt* and has been a platform for the experimental music scene in Aarhus for more than 10 years. It is a volunteer-run organisation and in 2015 received a Danish Music Award for 'Best World Venue'.<sup>12</sup>

There are also fully independent initiatives that are (currently) not structurally funded by the municipality or the state. An example is **Volume Aarhus**. Founded in 2016 by a group of young organisers running street parties, Volume has evolved into a dynamic organisation running its own events, collaborating with others (i.e. SPOT) and serving as a crew for hire for producing music events. Volume's motto, as also stated in the website is: "Feel free to fuck up", reflecting a philosophy of experimentalism and the need to maintain a space to take creative and organisational risks. And indeed, they offer younger people opportunities to try out their ideas on a smaller stage.<sup>13</sup>

With regard to **music education**, Aarhus has a fairly comprehensive system. Public schools dedicate 48 000 hours annually to music instruction, equivalent to 25 full-time music teachers. Music is mandatory for students in grades 1-6 and becomes an elective for those in grades 7-9. Furthermore, all high schools in the city incorporate music into their curricula. Several public and private music schools offer music education for children and aspiring musicians can pursue advanced training at the Music Academy Pre-school. Aarhus is home to a campus of the Royal Academy of Music which enrolls over 400 students a year, and the Institute of Musicology at Aarhus University.<sup>14</sup>

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9 Can be found here: <https://promus.dk/musik-i-aarhus/>.

10 More info on the website: <https://radarlive.dk/>.

11 More info on the website: <https://train.dk/>.

12 Seismonaut (2023). A driving force in the Aarhus music scene. Introduction to Promus. More info on the website: <https://www.turkislive.com/>.

13 More info on the website: <https://www.aarhusvolume.dk/en/home>.

14 Epinion. (2016). Aarhus Music City. Music in Numbers.



# 2. MUSIC POLICY SYSTEM IN AARHUS

Music does not have a specific policy in Aarhus in principle, though there is a Music Council within the Cultural Administration deciding on the music-specific funding programmes, and there are specific initiatives such as the Music City Aarhus 2022 (see 3.1.). Aarhus municipality creates cultural strategies for four-year periods, mapping onto the political mandate of the City Council. The current strategy is for the period 2021-2024. These strategies are embedded in the broader agendas of the municipality and place culture in a wider context (see 2.2.1.). Culture has its own political and administrative leader, a councillor, and a department which also serves as the secretariat for three councils for making funding decisions – the Arts, Visual Arts and Music councils. The City Council also has a permanent committee for culture. A key organisation functioning as a link between the city government and the music sector in Aarhus is Promus – a competence centre focused on developing the music ecosystem in Aarhus (see 2.3.3.).

However, given that an important part of cultural policy in Denmark is designed and implemented on the national level, an overview requires at least some outline of the national cultural and music policy system.

Culture is in the competence of the Danish Ministry of Culture which can be likened to an *architect* of cultural policy, setting the broader vision, and creating the legal and institutional framework for achieving it.<sup>15</sup> The actual implementation is delegated to the ministry's agencies and many institutions, some at arm's length. For music policy, the most important national institution is the Danish Arts Foundation which operates a number of funding programmes directly to artists, creators, venues, festival organisers and others (see 2.3.5.). Many music stakeholders, including artists, professionals and infrastructure operators in Aarhus, also receive direct support from the Danish Arts Foundation and thus the national level plays an important role in the overall picture.

## 2.1. LEGAL BASIS AND DIVISION OF ROLES

Both national and municipal levels have a mandate to support culture. The division of the tasks, however, is not very clearly articulated and there is an ongoing discussion about it. After a comprehensive government reform between 2005 and 2012 cultural policy tasks were divided between the national and municipal levels with the regional level left with no real role to play. The municipalities, therefore, have a considerable degree of discretion (no legal restrictions) to shape their own policies. The most weighty issue is funding the big cultural institutions – who should do it to what degree? Cities have the freedom to shape policies, but also vastly different resources. For example, there is a massive ongoing reform in the museums sector.

Therefore, in order to understand the music policy of a city such as Aarhus, some overview of what support is available for the music ecosystem on the national level helps to set the context.

With regards to music, and culture more broadly, there are two laws that regulate cultural policy on the national level: the Music Law and the Danish Arts Foundation Law. In the major Local Government Reform between 2007 and 2012<sup>16</sup> cultural policy tasks were reorganised and those that were previously the responsibility of the counties were transferred to either national or municipal level. In addition to previous commitments, the state assumed the responsibility of subsidising a number of private cultural institutions of a “national character”, including subsidies to regional orchestras; also the responsibility to subsidise basic music courses, school concerts and local schools of music.<sup>17</sup> The municipality was given the “full political, administrative and financial responsibility to handle cultural institutions and activities with a natural local affiliation including libraries, museums, sport facilities, amateur activities etc.”<sup>18</sup> However, there is no law that would define the tasks of municipalities further in a general way.

15 Duelund, P., Valtysson, B., Bohlbro, L. (2012). Denmark. Council of Europe/ERICarts: “Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe”, 13th edition 2012. Available online: <https://www.culturalpolicies.net/database/search-by-country/country-profile/?id=10>.

16 The reform reorganised 275 municipalities and 14 counties into 98 municipalities and 5 regions. This included reallocating policy tasks.

17 The Ministry of the Interior and Health Department of Economics (2005). The Local Government Reform – In Brief, p 33. Available online: <https://www.regioner.dk/media/2845/the-local-government-reform-in-brief.pdf>.

18 Duelund, P., Valtysson, B., Bohlbro, L. (2012). Denmark, p 14.

## 2.1.1. DANISH ARTS FOUNDATION LAW

The law, first ratified in 2013, sets out the purpose, tasks and administration of the Danish Arts Foundation. The purpose is to promote art in Denmark and Danish art abroad (§1) and the scope specifies a list of cultural fields, including music (§2).<sup>19</sup> The tasks of the DAF include providing grants, guarantees, etc. (§3) that are allocated on the basis of an assessment of artistic quality and talent. This includes (1) accommodating all artistically significant genres and forms of expression within and between the art areas; (2) promoting the geographical spread of art throughout the country and; (3) catering to the production and dissemination of art to children and young people (§3 (3)). The DAF has been granted a full arm's length principle and the decision of its committees cannot be brought in front of any higher authority (§4). The selection process is done by specific committees and the law outlines all of them, the number of members, etc. (§6).

## 2.1.2. MUSIC LAW

The Music Law was adopted in 1976, making Denmark the first country in the world to have an actual music law. The law in its current form refers to the role of the Danish Arts Foundation as the main provider of support, lists the types of grants and outlines support areas such as music schools, regional venues and regional orchestras. The general grants are provided for:<sup>20</sup>

1. Composers
2. Awarding of musical works
3. The business of professional orchestras, choirs and ensembles
4. Concert activities, including school concerts and festivals
5. Music drama
6. Music education of an experimental nature or of national or regional interest as well as artistically working amateur choirs, amateur orchestras and ensembles and their organisations
7. Information, documentation and publication business and
8. Other activities that can promote musical life in Denmark and Danish music abroad.

## 2.1.3. CULTURAL AGREEMENTS WITH MUNICIPALITIES

A cultural agreement is a voluntary agreement between the Minister of Culture and a municipality or a group of cooperating municipalities. The municipalities in the agreement constitute a cultural region. The rationale of these agreements is to provide all citizens throughout the country access to high-quality and diverse cultural offers. This requires a coordinated effort across the political levels in the state and municipalities. The agreements must contribute to maintaining and expanding cultural policy dialogue and value debate across municipal boundaries, cultural actors, the Ministry of Culture and the arms-length bodies. The regions can enter into agreements within the competencies assigned to the regions in the field of culture.<sup>21</sup>

A cultural region is essentially a platform for coordinated cooperation between the state and municipalities, focusing on the development of art and cultural life. This is done through joint initiatives, by making visible a common cultural frame of reference, as well as strengthening learning and creating new cultural offers in collaboration with relevant partners, including cultural institutions. When added up, all the cultural regions create a network that covers the entire country.<sup>22</sup>

The regional agreements are not hugely impactful but serve a role. In general, eight to nine municipalities group together to make an agreement and get funding for certain projects. It is different from Aarhus which has its own agreement because of the size. The agreement includes some project funding, approximately DKK 200 000 a year, but the agreement also gives Aarhus the administration duty of government funds to museums, theatres, etc. (ca DKK 10 mln annually). Aarhus municipality administers these subsidies to different cultural institutions and later revises and evaluates them. This means that instead of two there is only one entity doing the auditing and evaluation.

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19 Kulturministeriet (2013). Lov om Statens Kunstfonds virksomhed. LBK nr. 458 af 08/05/2013. Retsinformation. Available online: <https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/lt/2013/458>.

20 Kulturministeriet (2014). Bekendtgørelse af lov om musik. LBK nr 32 af 14/01/2014. Retsinformation. Available online: <https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/lt/2014/32>.

21 Kulturministeriet (2023). Kulturaftaler med kommuner. Website available at: <https://slks.dk/omraader/kultursamarbejde/kulturaftaler-med-kommuner>.

22 *Ibid.*

## 2.2. MUSIC AND CULTURAL POLICIES

The City of Aarhus has been compiling cultural strategies for four-year periods since at least 2004. The strategy is transversal and does not address cultural sectors separately. There is no music strategy for Aarhus, but Promus in its recent report “2025 Ambition for the music environment in Aarhus” calls for a more articulate music strategy for the city.<sup>23</sup> Given that cities and municipalities are free to design their own cultural policy, there is a wide variety of approaches. Some allocate only minimal funding to culture, but Aarhus has designated culture as a core focus theme, driving many strategic goals, and therefore allocates also a lot more funding compared to many other cities. Also, the approach can differ. Some cities focus on building the infrastructure for international mega-events and then compete to attract them. Aarhus has clearly elaborated a more holistic approach with the so-called growth layers in focus.

On the national level, culture as a theme is addressed in the coalition agreements, but beyond that, there is no general cultural strategy. The reason might be the specific positioning of the Ministry of Culture as the *architect*, defining the legal framework and through that providing broad goals for cultural policy, but beyond that delegating the implementation largely to the Danish Arts Foundation which has arm’s length status, its own mission and goals and is outsourcing decision making to independent expert committees. The more detailed a national cultural strategy would be, the more it would potentially constrain the DAF and its committees’ discretion.

However, somewhat paradoxically, there are national level strategies for certain cultural sectors, including music. These 4-year action plans for music provide a few focus themes and background information about the budget spent on subsidies to music institutions and projects. While the exact causality and direction of decision-making and prioritising is not described in detail publicly, the music action plan seems to mostly bring together and describe the funding decisions already made by DAF through its committees, framing them in a more clear and comprehensive music plan. New projects and increased funding to existing initiatives are highlighted and all of the spending is given a somewhat more coherent rationale in the framework of basic infrastructure and the focus themes.

### 2.2.1. CITY OF AARHUS CULTURAL STRATEGY 2021-2024

The city’s cultural strategy for the years 2021-2024 “Aarhus - Culture in our Heart, our Eyes on the World” is understandably influenced by the perspective of coming out of the pandemic. The theme of a restart from 2022 is highlighted in the strategy and the event to lead this process was the “Music City Aarhus 2022”, an important platform for the music ecosystem to again profile themselves in the city’s cultural and also business landscape.<sup>24</sup>

The strategy notes that the Capital of Culture year 2017, the beginning of the previous cultural strategy, was an important impetus to underline the importance of culture in the city life and policies, including a “vision of Aarhus as an international city where culture sets an agenda”. This focus has been borne out well in actions and continues to animate the current strategy.

The Cultural Strategy is set to contribute to achieving the five broader targets the City of Aarhus has set to make Aarhus a great city for everybody:

1. A city where everybody is needed
2. A growing city with a strong business sector
3. A sustainable city with good urban and local environments
4. A city with communities and citizen participation
5. A city where everybody is healthy and thriving

Achieving those targets is organised into six themes:

- **A strong foundation** – Aarhus should be an interesting and relevant city in which to develop and practise one’s artistic work. This is a prerequisite for the other themes in the cultural strategy.
- **Culture is welfare** – “Culture is all about people – about what we share and what we create together. A diverse art and cultural landscape support the realisation of the good life by creating quality of life, joy of life, and reflections on the good life – throughout life”. This value-driven position needs to be reflected in the way the city deals with urban development, health, and economic development in Aarhus.

23 Promus (2023). 2025 Ambition for musikmiljøet i Aarhus. Available online: <https://promus.dk/rapporter-og-perspektiver/>.

24 This chapter summarises the strategy based on: Kultur og Borgerservice. (2021). City of Aarhus Cultural Strategy 2021-2024.

- **Formation and education** – “Art moves us and creates space and language for that which can be difficult to understand. Children’s and young people’s encounters with art and their own creative development are therefore the cornerstone of formation and of the good life of children and young people”. This involves themes of providing quality education, an ecosystem for developing careers as well as initiatives for young cultural entrepreneurs.
- **Open arms – open mind** – “Aarhus is a city that celebrates diversity. Art both challenges and strengthens democracy, but only if it is free and accessible, and everybody has the opportunity to both experience and create”. This theme touches upon creating positive communities in the city where all citizens can feel welcome, bringing art from institutions to other contexts to get closer to people; and making sure the city’s cultural life reflects the diversity of its inhabitants.
- **Global perspective and action** – “As the European Capital of Culture 2017, Aarhus left its mark internationally as a strong city of culture, placing the value of international collaboration on the agenda”. The strategy underlines the importance of developing and maintaining international partnerships and networks, providing excellent hospitality to all, no matter how long or short their stay, and organising capacity building for cultural actors to be more active and engaged in international and European projects.
- **Climate** – Aarhus wants to be 100% CO2 neutral by 2030. Achieving this requires incorporating the goals into people’s everyday lives and working together. The Cultural Strategy, therefore, must interact with the city’s other policies and be realised through partnerships, including international ones. Sustainability themes will also be worked into the subsidy agreements with cultural institutions.

From the perspective of music policy-making, the first theme “**A strong foundation**” merits a closer look. The foundation, in this context, means strong institutions, professional artists, and independent cultural players who have chosen to work in Aarhus. The City of Aarhus has made cultural and political efforts to create and maintain this environment over the past decades and, as the strategy notes, is now in a strong position. This is not a reason for complacency, though.

An important concept that runs through the strategy as well as discussions with Aarhus music actors and policy makers is the so-called **growth layers**. This refers to a dynamic understanding of how a cultural sector, such as a music ecosystem, lives and grows and which factors help it to develop. Growth layers refer to those artists and professionals who are on their paths towards or in earlier stages of a professional career but are not sufficiently established or accomplished yet. This trajectory has many aspects to it and all of these need to be addressed through a holistic policy if Aarhus is to be successful in its goal of being a good place for independent artists and professionals to make their home. It is unrealistic to have those considered the big stars today in place, while there is no sustainable environment for the grassroots that would give rise to the big stars of tomorrow as well. These aspects start from music education opportunities, whether formal or informal, including available spaces to rehearse, work and also perform even if you’re not yet pulling in a large enough audience viable for a promoter on purely commercial terms. Also, structures that provide advice and knowledge and help build connections are important.

A small country with a big capital city such as Copenhagen would naturally gravitate towards a very centred distribution of talent and sector infrastructure. If Aarhus wants to keep the vibrancy of its music life, nurturing the growth layers is a key task. Everyone has to contribute, including the bigger players as this cannot be self-sustainable. Having a long history of vibrant music can do the disservice that politicians and the general public start to take it all for granted, as if it happens all on its own. But it doesn’t. An inconsiderate urban planning, lack of support or simply no places to work can quickly drive cultural life out of the city.

The theme of “Strong foundation” addresses this through several aspects. Cultural production needs **specific spaces** and this has been a policy concern in Aarhus for a number of years. This includes making good use of vacant spaces, whether for shorter or longer periods and also considering whether the current use of existing facilities is effective.

With regard to **knowledge and networks**, the Art Centres, including Promus, play an important role in providing advice and support, whilst also facilitating networking for professionals in the city. The established and city-funded **institutions** also have their obligations to be open to working with independent artists and professionals in the city.

Finally, a strong cultural life is also seen as an important prerequisite for a strong business sector. For this, a collaborative body “Business and Culture Forum Aarhus” (*Erhverv Aarhus*, see 2.3.4.) was set up with the task of promoting partnerships and strengthening collaboration between culture, business, and the city.

In summary, the cultural strategy of Aarhus builds on an already-established tradition of having a holistic view of how to nurture cultural ecosystems in ways that value and support independent operators while giving the space to create; and embedding culture in the centre of the broader

picture of what is the city's ultimate goal – supporting the “realisation of the good life by creating quality of life, joy of life, and reflections on the good life – throughout life”.<sup>25</sup>

The strategy is accompanied by a rolling action plan, reviewed every year by the Aarhus Municipality's cultural committee<sup>26</sup> (see 2.6.). The strategy themes are also the basis of and worked into the subsidy agreements between the Aarhus municipality and the supported institutions.

## 2.2.2. THE AMBITION FOR A MUSIC STRATEGY IN AARHUS

There is no music strategy on the municipal level in Aarhus, but music has been featured through concrete initiatives, such as Music City Aarhus 2022. Promus, the Aarhus music network and one of the city-funded arts centres, feels that there is a need and also a strong basis for a more comprehensive music strategy. In the 2023 document “2025 Ambition for the music environment in Aarhus”, a strong music strategy is one of the three main themes outlined:<sup>27</sup>

1. **A stronger brand** – Aarhus must position itself nationally and internationally as a top-class music city in Northern Europe. This will be achieved by building on the success of Music City Aarhus. To build on the current strengths, positioning Aarhus as a music city should be seen as part of a place-making strategy, where Aarhus as a city and municipality should reap the benefits of the city's localised and unique music culture.

This means also addressing current issues, such as

- a. supporting music organisers and making dealing with the city administration simpler and easier;
  - b. strengthening the support to venues to help them persist in the face of increasing crises or living costs, etc.;
  - c. making maximum use of the international opportunities presented by being a member of the Music Cities Network and prioritise partnerships in European cooperation projects;
  - d. focusing on the marketing of Aarhus as a music city through a stronger collaboration with VisitAarhus;
  - e. move further from the centre with concerts and other events. Existing good examples for inspiration: Elværket in Åbyhøj draws full houses, and in Hjortshøj a new venue has opened with Viruphuset.
2. **An ambitious music strategy** – Aarhus Municipality needs an ambitious music strategy that will bring the city's unique music environment into play as a lever for societal challenges and welfare tasks – in health, youth, elderly, crime prevention, urban development, etc. Also, increasing the exchange between the music industry and the business community will lead to innovation and business development on both sides.
  3. **Denmark's hotspot for the music industry** – Lydhavnen will be Denmark's absolute hotspot for the music industry in the form of audio production and business development through the production of music for film, TV, commercials, games & animation.

In summary, an environment like Lydhavnen, combined with an ambitious music strategy, will help make the framework conditions in Aarhus highly attractive for performing musicians, managers, publishers and other industry professionals - both in terms of attracting and retaining talent and the industry's professional elite. This in turn can strengthen the brand of Aarhus as a music city, but only if there is a comprehensive policy approach to embed the city's music life in various policy areas so as to really make use of the full potential a thriving music life can offer.

## 2.2.3. NATIONAL LEVEL: CULTURE IN THE COALITION AGREEMENT OF THE DANISH GOVERNMENT

The coalition agreement of the current government in office since 2022 addresses culture only very generally. It emphasises culture as a source of a cohesive society with a shared identity and experiences. Access to culture in the broadest sense – including music festivals, fine art museums, football matches

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, p 27.

<sup>26</sup> Kultur og Borgerservice. (2021). Handleplan – kulturpolitik 2021-24. Available online: <https://kulturogborgerservice.aarhus.dk/media/04mjzhspl/handleplan-til-kulturpolitikken-2021-2024.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> Promus (2023). 2025 Ambition for musikmiljøet i Aarhus. Available online: <https://promus.dk/rapporter-og-perspektiver/>.

and more – must be widely available and not confined to the urban centres or the privileges of the few. Culture is also seen as business and a valuable component of the Danish economy with the creative industries accounting for an increasing share of Danish exports. A rich and vibrant cultural life is seen as a “locomotive” for other industries, most notably tourism, hotel and restaurant industries.<sup>28</sup>

The main challenge according to the agreement is that large parts of the cultural sector suffer from outdated legislation and silted-up structures. To counter this, the government has committed to formulating a unified and ambitious cultural policy that will elevate the position of art and culture in society and set benchmarks for the individual areas of art and culture, including for artistic freedom, cultural heritage, quality, audience, talent development and export.<sup>29</sup>

## 2.2.4. NATIONAL MUSIC POLICY – MUSIC ACTION PLAN 2023-2026

There is no expansive national cultural strategy, but the Ministry of Culture has been drawing up music action plans (*musikhandlingsplan*) for four-year periods at least since 2004.<sup>30</sup> The most recent is the Music Action Plan 2023-2026. This plan commits a total of DKK 224,7 mln (ca EUR 29,2 mln) to the music sector. That is a 42% increase compared to the previous 2019-2022 period (DKK 158 mln), adding another DKK 66 mln to the budget.<sup>31</sup> (See 2.5. for more information on the budget).

The music action plan strengthens **basic infrastructure** and adds three focus topics:<sup>32</sup>

1. **talent development** – ensuring that children and young people have the opportunity to both experience music of high artistic quality and have the opportunity to try their hand as performers of the music themselves. Several existing and new initiatives are funded;
2. **gender equality in the music industry** – launching a study to further map the current state and funding several initiatives tackling girls’ and women’s needs and opportunities;
3. **international development** – developing the untapped potential of Danish artists and creators. Increased funding to Music Export Denmark and other initiatives.

## 2.3. INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE

Aarhus is governed by the City Council of 31 elected members and a magistrate, consisting of the mayor, five councillors or aldermen, each responsible for a department, and three other members of the magistrate who do not have administrative responsibility. The electoral term is four years. The Aarhus City Council is the city’s highest decision-making authority and makes the final decision in cases – the so-called recommendations – from the Magistrate. The city council can refer cases for further consideration in one of the six permanent committees, including the culture committee. The mayor is the chairman of both the City Council and the Magistrate. The councillors and their departments are responsible for implementing the decisions made by the City Council.<sup>33</sup>

### 2.3.1. CULTURE AND CITIZEN SERVICES

In the Aarhus municipality, culture falls under the purview of the **Culture and Civic Services** (*Kultur og Borgerservice*) unit, currently led by the councillor Rabih Azad-Ahmad. More specifically, culture is overseen by the **Cultural Administration** of the Culture and Civic Services, consisting of a secretariat – the Culture Secretariat – and five decentralised institutions: Children’s Culture House, Aarhus Music School, Film City Aarhus, Aarhus Literature Center, Youth Culture House.<sup>34</sup> In addition, there are four **Art Centers**, centres of competence, knowledge and services, providing advice and help with everything from applications, networks, possible business partners and general information about their field.

28 Statsministeriet. (2022). Regeringsgrundlag 2022. Ansvar for Danmark. <https://www.stm.dk/statsministeriet/publikationer/regeringsgrundlag-2022/>, p. 50.

29 *Ibid*, p 51.

30 The earliest available is for the period 2004-2007 and can be found at: [https://kum.dk/fileadmin/kum/5\\_Publikationer/2003/Liv\\_i\\_musikken\\_-\\_Kulturministeriets\\_musikhandlingsplan\\_2004-2007.pdf](https://kum.dk/fileadmin/kum/5_Publikationer/2003/Liv_i_musikken_-_Kulturministeriets_musikhandlingsplan_2004-2007.pdf).

31 Søndag Aften (05.06.2023). Musikhandlingsplan med penge i. Available online: <https://soendagaften.dk/2023/06/musikhandlingsplan-med-penge-i/>.

32 Kulturministeriet. Musikhandlingsplan 2023-2026. Available online: [https://kum.dk/fileadmin/kum/1\\_Nyheder\\_og\\_presse/2023/KUM-Musikhandlingsplan-2023\\_TG.pdf](https://kum.dk/fileadmin/kum/1_Nyheder_og_presse/2023/KUM-Musikhandlingsplan-2023_TG.pdf).

33 Aarhus Kommune (n.d.). Sådan styres Aarhus. Website: <https://aarhus.dk/demokrati/politik/byraadet/saadan-styres-aarhus/saadan-styres-aarhus#magistratsstyre-88>.

34 Kultur og Borgerservice. (n.d.). Kulturforvaltningen. Website: <https://kulturogborgerservice.aarhus.dk/organisation/kulturforvaltningen>.

One of those four is **Promus**, the network for music and the office for the Music City concept.<sup>35</sup>

The **Culture Secretariat** administers grants to the self-governing cultural institutions in Aarhus Municipality and administers a set of support programmes and serves as the secretariat for three decision-making councils: the Arts Council, the Visual Arts Council and the Music Council. The Culture Secretariat's tasks also include preparing drafts for city council regulations, serving the councillor, preparing drafts for cultural policy and implementing other projects in the cultural field.<sup>36</sup>

## 2.3.2. ARTS AND MUSIC COUNCILS

The city supports cultural life through many support programmes (referred to as pools or *puljet*). The evaluation, selection and decision-making process for funding is organised in largely the same fashion as on the national level – through councils of experts from the field. In fact, Aarhus was one of the frontrunners in establishing truly arm's length councils, setting them up already 25 years ago. This was then later picked up by the national government. Establishing councils for advisory functions is normal, but only a few cities have arts councils with a full mandate to decide on project funding.

There are three councils: the Arts Council, the Visual Arts Council and the Music Council. The Arts Council is an interdisciplinary body, including among its six members also one member from each of the other councils, and decides on more general programmes, such as cultural development and basic subsidy programmes. The Arts Council also advises the City Council and the administration in arts matters, is included in specific tasks with regards to cultural policy-making, and conducts evaluations of selected cultural institutions in Aarhus Municipality once during the election period.<sup>37</sup>

The **Music Council** has four members and its tasks include:

- processing applications for the music and fee support programmes;
- appointing a board member to certain music organisations, such as Radar, Voxhall and Promus;
- preparing artistic statements in relation to certain applications for the city's cultural events programme at the request of the Cultural Administration;
- participating in the Arts Council's evaluation of the major cultural institutions,
- acting as an advisor to the City Council and the administration in music-related matters;
- participating in concrete tasks in connection with the implementation of Aarhus Municipality's cultural policy.

The period for serving as a member of a council is four years and is open to application. The councillor decides, having first sought advice from the current arts council, Cultural Department and the Cultural Committee of the City Council. The Cultural Administration serves as the secretariat for all these councils.<sup>38</sup>

## 2.3.3. PROMUS

*"Promus is the community and networking centre for the music industry and musicians in Denmark. Located in Aarhus, our main focus is on the city's rich emerging music talent as well as to support, motivate, and help new businesses get a foothold within the music business".<sup>39</sup>*

Promus was founded in 2010 following political decisions in 2009 to create platforms supporting so-called free agents. The rationale was to maintain what had been the case also in history – Aarhus as the music city of Denmark. This includes making sure that young artists stay in Aarhus, rather than moving to Copenhagen the first chance they get.

Promus is a centre for knowledge, innovation, networking, and production and is the first of its kind in Denmark. Promus serves as a bridge between the established music business and the emerging talent, but also between the music ecosystem and the city administration and other relevant partners. The purpose of the foundation is to support the development of the Aarhus rhythmic music scene and promote it through collaboration with stakeholders locally, nationally, internationally and within other art forms. Promus, a non-profit association, is considered one of the four art centres of the Aarhus municipality. It is working closely with and receiving

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35 *Ibid.*

36 *Ibid.*

37 Aarhus Kommune. (n.d.). Kunstrådet. Website: <https://aarhus.dk/demokrati/politik/raad-og-naevn/kultur-og-frivillighed/kunstraadet>.

38 Aarhus Kommune. (n.d.). Musikrådet. Website: <https://aarhus.dk/demokrati/politik/raad-og-naevn/kultur-og-frivillighed/musikraadet>.

39 Promus website: <https://promus.dk/english/>.

an operating subsidy from Aarhus Municipality but is independent and not directed by the city.<sup>40</sup>

The core focus on competence and network development among Aarhus artists and music entrepreneurs are pursued through offering:<sup>41</sup>

- a network base for the city's music scene
- courses and workshops
- consultancy on all aspects of the music industry, contracts etc.
- a mentoring program for the emerging talents

Promus is driven by the need to be agile and versatile to adapt to the ever-changing music industry and wider trends. It also must have a holistic approach to its development agenda – as noted in the 2023 profile, “Promus creates ripples in the water”.<sup>42</sup> A good example of a comprehensive and multifaceted initiative was the Music City Aarhus 2022 – in 2021, Promus was appointed by Aarhus Municipality to be the secretariat and project manager for this project (see 3.1).

Besides the various one-off initiatives and projects, the most important regular activities of Promus are:

Mentoring programme – the goal of the programme is to equip emerging artists with the tools to work professionally and provide access to a professional network. The mentoring programme is aimed at bands, artists, projects and companies who live in Aarhus or who run their project from Aarhus (see more in 3.3.).

Competency development – over the past 10 years, Promus has organised a Publishing Academy, which was developed in collaboration with Koda and Musikforlæggerne i Danmark. The program is focused on all aspects of work with music rights. It is now been complemented by a new program – the Promus Sync Academy, an international programme focused on the marketing and licensing of music for film, TV, advertising, media, games, etc.

SPOT+ – Promus produces SPOT+, the conference part of the SPOT festival. SPOT+ is aimed at both Danish and international industry professionals who meet once a year to discuss issues that concern the industry. Produced in collaboration with SPOT Festival, MXD – Danish Music Export and a wide range of organisations and partners, SPOT+ is attended by more than 1400 Danish and international industry professionals annually, making it one of the most important networking events for the Danish music industry.

International relations – developing the Aarhusian music ecosystem into an internationally competitive or at least viable one requires a well-developed international network of experts and potential business partners. Strengthening the Aarhus music community's international relations is part of Promus' vision and the reason it has played a major role in developing Music Cities Network. Through such an international platform, it provides access to a large network of music actors for both Promus and the Danish music scene.

## 2.3.4. BUSINESS AND CULTURE FORUM AARHUS

Business and Culture Forum Aarhus (EKFA) is a joint platform between stakeholders from the business and cultural sectors as well as the Aarhus Municipality. According to the website, the aim of the platform is to promote business-based partnerships and strengthen cooperation between culture, business and the public sector. The forum identifies and makes visible possibilities for collaboration, networking, co-creation and development of competencies, contributing experience, knowledge and inspiration.<sup>43</sup>

The rationale rests on the widely acknowledged importance of culture, next to business, as an essential driving force for development in Aarhus. A rich and diverse cultural life is a prerequisite for creating a society where it is attractive to live and work. An exciting city attracts exciting people, and exciting people create exciting workplaces.<sup>44</sup>

EKFA was formed in 2019 in the wake of the publication of the 2017 Capital of Culture initiative's evaluation in 2018. The idea behind the forum was to use the momentum from the 2017 initiative to create a strong network between business, culture and politics to further strengthen internal collaboration and to create and manage more events. EKFA became closely

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40 Seismonaut (2023). A driving force in the Aarhus music scene. Introduction to Promus.

41 See more info on Promus website: <https://promus.dk/english/>.

42 Seismonaut (2023). A driving force in the Aarhus music scene. Introduction to Promus.

43 Erhverv (n.d.). Erhvervs- og Kulturforum Aarhus. Website: <https://erhvervaarhus.dk/indsatser/erhverv-og-kultur/>.

44 *Ibid.*



connected with the Music City Aarhus 2022 project, serving as an advisory body.<sup>45</sup>

The secretariat for the forum is provided by Erhverv Aarhus, the city's largest business network with 1400 contacts in 500 member companies. Erhverv Aarhus works purposefully to ensure good framework conditions for the local business community and offers networking, knowledge and influence, having a voice at all political levels.<sup>46</sup>

## 2.3.5. DANISH ARTS FOUNDATION

While not based nor working for the Aarhus municipality, the Danish Arts Foundation has an important role in the music ecosystem of the whole country, including Aarhus. The various kinds of support provided also enable Aarhus' music ecosystem to thrive. Therefore, an overview of the profile of DAF is included.

Danish Arts Foundation (*Statens Kunstfond*) is the main fund in Denmark for arts and culture. DAF was founded in 1964 and organises the distribution of the Danish government's funds through the work of 16 committees and more than 60 programmes (or "pools"). The mission of the DAF is to support the development of innovative ideas and high-quality art experiences, make art experiences a part of every citizen's everyday life, and ensure that Danish art can be spread abroad and pave the way for even more talented Danish artists.<sup>47</sup> DAF distributes approximately DKK 500-600 mln (ca EUR 65-78 mln) every year. In 2022 the budget was DKK 580 mln and it was used to support approximately 6000 initiatives throughout the country and internationally.<sup>48</sup>

There are two committees for music: one for music scholarships and another for music projects. In 2023, a total of DKK 273 369 005 (ca EUR 35,5 mln) was allocated to music projects through 11 different programmes.<sup>49</sup> This does not include the regional venues support which is granted at the beginning of a four year period. The programmes include:<sup>50</sup>

- Amateur music
- Publications and other music distribution
- Festivals
- Commissions for new music
- Fee support for rhythmic venues
- International visiting programs and networking activities
- Children and young people
- Cross-aesthetic projects for music and performing arts
- Work grants for music
- Publishing music and realisation of sound art
- Transport support for orchestras/ensembles

(See 2.5. for the DAF music budget overview).

All of the DAF programmes naturally also support the Aarhus music ecosystem, but for the municipality of Aarhus, it's the **regional venues support programme** that has a direct overlap with the city music policy (see 2.4.1.).

For the 2025-2028 period, the DAF has distributed DKK 38 million (ca EUR 4,9 mln) to 19 regional venues. Three venues from Aarhus are among the recipients: Train, Turkis and VoxHall. While many venues receive the support for several periods, there is also some change. In Aarhus, Radar was not renewed for the next period, while Turkis is a newcomer.<sup>51</sup>

Other important support programmes for the venues are the **fee support for rhythmic venues**,<sup>52</sup> providing subsidies to music venues and music associations to cover the expenses of musicians' fees; and **network and genre venues**, a new subsidy programme providing three-year operating support to venues having heightened focus and function as either networking platforms or certain

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45 Karlsson, C., U. (2023). Evaluering af music city aarhus 2022. Music City Aarhus 2022 Secretariat.

46 Erhverv (n.d.). Om Erhverv Aarhus. Website: <https://erhvervaarhus.dk/om-os/>.

47 Danish Arts Foundation website: <https://www.kunst.dk/om-os/vores-formaal>.

48 Danish Arts Foundation. (2024). Årsberetning 2023. Available online: <https://www.kunst.dk/om-os/forskning-og-publikationer/aarsberetninger/aarsberetning-2023>.

49 Calculations based on Staten Kunstfond (2023). Årsberetning 2023. Årsregnskab, pages 3-4. Available at the annual report 2023 website: <https://www.kunst.dk/om-os/forskning-og-publikationer/aarsberetninger/aarsberetning-2023>.

50 An overview of all DAF programmes can be found on their website: <https://www.kunst.dk/for-ansoegere/soeg-tilskud>.

51 Bundgaard, R., S. (05.06.2024) Her er de regionale spillesteder - og dem vi siger farvel til. Gaffa. Available: <https://gaffa.dk/nyheder-fra-gaffa/2024/juni/her-er-de-regionale-spillesteder-og-dem-vi-siger-farvel-til/>.

52 Statens Kunstfond. Honorarstøtte til rytmiske spillesteder. Website: <https://www.kunst.dk/for-ansoegere/soeg-tilskud/honorarstoette-til-rytmiske-spillesteder>.

genres. In the first period 2022-2024, network and genre venues must mediate and develop the rhythmic music scene locally, regionally and, in the case of genre venues, also nationally.<sup>53</sup> In the first period, 14 venues were granted the support.<sup>54</sup> These three programmes are mutually exclusive.

## 2.4. THE ROLE OF THE CITY IN THE MUSIC LIFE

### 2.4.1. SUPPORTER OF ORGANISATIONS AND PROJECTS

Aarhus municipality has many funding programmes, including a specific programme for music projects with more than DKK 2 mln budget (see 2.5.3) as well as the artist fee support with more than DKK 1 mln.

Music programme – the purpose of the programme is to promote the production of high-quality music in Aarhus Municipality as well as to develop an environment conducive to producing music and upskilling the musical growth layer in Aarhus Municipality.

Support can be applied for:<sup>55</sup>

- music projects (including idea development, planning, preparation, production and implementation of projects).
- music initiatives which contribute to the continued development of professional cultural life in Aarhus Municipality.
- initiatives which upskill the musical growth layer.
- one-year music programs and activity programs.

There are two funding rounds in a year. In 2024, a total of 280 applications were submitted and 153 received some funding, giving a success rate of more than 50%. DKK 11,2 mln was applied for in total and DKK 2,3 mln was allocated (ca €1,5 mln and €297 245 respectively).

Artist fee support – the programme is organised in collaboration with the Danish Arts Foundation with both the municipality and the DAF providing half of the support. The venue has to apply to both rounds separately. In 2024, 13 venues got the fee support from the Aarhus municipality.

Regional venue support – The regional venues (*regionale spillesteder*) are rhythmic music (*rytmisk musik*)<sup>56</sup> venues in Denmark that play a leading and versatile role in the regional music life. They are expected to contribute to a sustainable and viable music ecosystem on local, regional and national levels through their own distinct identity as well as inter-regional cooperation. In addition to presenting a diverse concert season, the general tasks include working with audiences and various target groups, especially children and youth, playing a role in talent development and serving as the regional networking platform for the artists and professionals.<sup>57</sup>

The regional venues are funded by both the municipalities and the Danish Arts Foundation. To be eligible for the regional venue status and funding from the DAF, the applicant must also receive annually a substantial municipal operating grant (approximately DKK 1 mln or more annually) during the full agreement period. They have to provide a declaration of municipal co-financing for the entire period, containing a statement from the venue's municipality about the venue's role in relation to the municipality's policy, ambitions and development.<sup>58</sup>

The operational subsidies for venues in Aarhus for the current period ending in 2024 are granted to four venues: Radar, Train, Turkis, Voxhall and the three latter have also received the regional venue status and funding for the period 2025-2028;

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53 Statens Kunstfond. Netværks- og genrespillesteder 2022-2024. Website: <https://www.kunst.dk/for-ansoegere/soeg-tilskud/netvaerks-og-genrespillesteder-2022-2024>. Also Kulturministeriet. Netværks- og genrespillesteder. Website: <https://slks.dk/ngs>.

54 Kulturministeriet. 14 spillesteder er nu blevet et netværks- eller genrespillested – derudover får vega særlig opgave. Press release, available online: <https://kum.dk/aktuelt/nyheder/14-spillesteder-er-nu-blevet-et-netvaerks-eller-genrespillested-derudover-faar-vega-saerlig-opgave#:~:text=I%20slutningen%20af%20C3%A5ret%20udpeges,og%20udviklingen%20af%20smalle%20genrer>.

55 Aarhus Kommune (n.d.). Musikpuljen. Website: <https://aarhus.dk/forening/tilskud-stoette-og-puljer/stoette-til-kunst-og-kultur/musikpuljen#hvem-kan-soege--fo>.

56 Rhythmic music, or *rytmisk musik*, is a term for music that is often used to refer to the distinction between classical music and modern genres that arose in the 20th century. Essentially, rhythmic music is almost all other kinds of music than European classical music. The term arose in Denmark in the 1970s and is used in some other Nordic countries as well as in Estonia. See more: Christensen, Ulf Jørgen: rhythmic music in Den Store Danske on lex.dk. Retrieved 10 July 2024 from [https://denstoredanske.lex.dk/rytmisk\\_musik](https://denstoredanske.lex.dk/rytmisk_musik).

57 Statens Kunstfond. Regionale spillesteder 2025-2028. Website: <https://www.kunst.dk/for-ansoegere/soeg-tilskud/regionale-spillesteder-2025-2028>.

58 *Ibid.*

Institutional subsidy – essentially an operational grant from the municipality. In addition to the regional venues, other recipients include Aarhus Jazz Orchestra, SPOT Festival, music association Mono, providing rehearsal, studio, concert and networking spaces, and Promus.

Initiative programme – the programme supports concerts, theatre performances, exhibitions and similar cultural events held in Aarhus Municipality. Events are supported with a fixed amount of DKK 5000 per project. One applicant can obtain support for a maximum of two events within each calendar year. There is one round per year and in 2024 DKK 400 000 was awarded to 80 projects, chosen from a total of 112 applicants. While the results are not sorted by sectors, there are clearly music projects among the pool.<sup>59</sup>

There are other support programmes that might benefit music actors occasionally. For example, the Aarhus Events programme, which aims at supporting big events that would enhance Aarhus' city brand as well, mostly supports sports and other events, but in the past, the festival NorthSide has also been among the beneficiaries.<sup>60</sup>

The programme for multi-year basic subsidy aims to “create a multi-year development platform for art for artists or cultural institutions and thereby promote the production of high-quality art in Aarhus and develop the producing art environment”. There are only one or a few beneficiaries every year from that programme, among them Ensemble Hermes received a subsidy of DKK 750 000 in total for a three year period of 2023-2025.<sup>61</sup>

## 2.4.2. ORGANISER OF EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Aarhus Municipality, while mandated to do so, opts to facilitate events rather than directly organise them. The municipality believes in providing the necessary framework and support for external organisers who are better equipped for event execution. Unlike some Danish cities with large event departments, Aarhus Municipality's events department primarily functions as a facilitator. The Cultural Department is less involved, with the events department – **Aarhus Events** – taking the lead in partnering with organisers.

Aarhus Events offers an easy-to-use website offering a toolbox for event organisers which includes all the practical information, such as general advice and development of events, guidance with permits and approvals, flexible planning across Aarhus Municipality, an overview of the many facilities in Aarhus, help with contacts, advice on city marketing platforms and guidance and information about applying for support from the Event support programme.<sup>62</sup> Aarhus Events also runs a separate website for organisers.<sup>63</sup> There is an events strategy for 2020-2025<sup>64</sup> and the city runs a network for event organisers which includes network meetings<sup>65</sup>.

## 2.4.3. MANAGER OF ORGANISATIONS, SPACES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

As mentioned above, the Aarhus Cultural Department includes five decentralised institutions: Children's Culture House, Aarhus Music School, Film City Aarhus, Aarhus Literature Center, and Youth Culture House - UKH.

Musikhuset Aarhus – Musikhuset is the largest music house in the Nordics with over a million visitors annually. The building has six halls and eleven stages and hosts more than 1500 annual events. In addition, the Musikhuset is home to the Aarhus Symphony Orchestra, the Jutland Opera, the Jutland Music Conservatory and the Filuren Theatre.<sup>66</sup>

The Musikhuset is owned and managed by the Aarhus municipality. Built in the 1980s, the significant investment was seen as controversial by some, but currently, the Musikhuset is a profitable unit, managed by an administration under the Culture and Civic Services and consisting of approximately 50 permanent employees and 70 temporary and part-time employees.

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59 Aarhus Kommune (n.d.). Initiativpuljen. Website: <https://aarhus.dk/forening/tilskud-stoette-og-puljer/stoette-til-kunst-og-kultur/initiativpuljen/#hvem-kan-soege-initiativpuljen--e2>.

60 Aarhus Kommune (n.d.). Eventpuljen. Available on the website: <https://aarhus.dk/forening/tilskud-stoette-og-puljer/stoette-til-kunst-og-kultur/eventpuljen>.

61 Aarhus Kommune (n.d.). Flerårigt Basistilskud. Available on the website: <https://aarhus.dk/forening/tilskud-stoette-og-puljer/stoette-til-kunst-og-kultur/fleraarigt-basistilskud>.

62 Aarhus Events website: <https://aarhusevents.dk/>.

63 Can be found here: <https://arrangoer.aarhus.dk/>.

64 Can be found on the website: [https://aarhusevents.dk/media/1fhwcnw/eventstrategi-2020-2025-aarhus-kommune\\_layout-opdateret-januar-2024.pdf](https://aarhusevents.dk/media/1fhwcnw/eventstrategi-2020-2025-aarhus-kommune_layout-opdateret-januar-2024.pdf).

65 More info: <https://aarhusevents.dk/til-eventarrangoerer-i-aarhus/eventnetvaerk>.

66 Kultur og borgerservice. (n.d.). Musikhuset Aarhus. Website: <https://kulturogborgerservice.aarhus.dk/organisation/musikhuset-aarhus>.

Aarhus Symphony Orchestra – one of the regional symphony orchestras, performing weekly in the Musikhus and also collaborates with Musikhuset, Den Jyske Opera, Smukfest and many more. Each year, the orchestra plays free school concerts for 10,000 children and free concerts for the elderly at community centres.<sup>67</sup> Although Aarhus Symphony Orchestra is a municipal institution, they also have a framework agreement with the Ministry of Culture. (See 2.5. for a budget overview).

## 2.4.4. URBAN PLANNER

Aarhus municipality has a comprehensive urban development plan, made available in a dedicated web environment.<sup>68</sup> Among the many themes, culture is understood only very broadly as: “cultural environments worthy of preservation”, meaning a “geographically defined area which, by its prominence, reflects significant features of societal development”, [...] consisting of buildings, facilities, road and street structure, special spatial contexts or residential structure, etc. [and] it must contain a cultural-historical narrative, for example about an event, an era...”<sup>69</sup>

The kind of cultural infrastructure and urban planning referred to in the cultural strategy, other reports and discussions, is nowhere to be seen in this very general plan. However, according to interviews, informally the significance of culture as an aspect of urban planning is growing. Experts from cultural sectors are increasingly included in urban planning processes. This reflects the growing acknowledgement of how important a vibrant cultural life is for the broader quality of life in a city and how this needs to also be planned for in urban development. Also, in the implementation plan of the Aarhus cultural strategy 2021 – 2024, the municipality has committed to ensuring that an overview of empty municipal buildings/spaces that can (temporarily) be used by art and cultural actors is drawn up across the municipality’s departments and that focus will be put on on the temporary use of locations for art and cultural activities, including setting aside DKK 500 000 annually for a funding programme for this purpose.<sup>70</sup>

### **Sydhavnskvarteret**

This development can be seen from the comprehensive urban planning project of the South Harbor, or *Sydhavnskvarteret*. A neighbourhood in central Aarhus is set to become a district where “art and culture, together with a thriving business community, drive the development of a socially sustainable district with room for the city’s socially disadvantaged and with room for movement”. The development plan designates eight sub-strategies, which together must realise the vision for the future Sydhavn quarter and these include one for Art and cultural production in the urban space.<sup>71</sup>

The plan acknowledges that urban planning has become an increasingly complex challenge and an intricate set of urban development tools and a holistic strategy for urban development is needed. One, that takes into account all the conditions – physical as well as non-physical. Some of the elements of the plan and the ongoing process include:

1. A multi-year participatory process with the involvement of those actively involved in the district and the city at large – the citizens, stakeholders, politicians, urban planners and other professional experts in the form of an advisory board.
2. A newly thought-out bidding strategy that obliges future developers to address important business, social and cultural-political agendas in Aarhus Municipality to an extent never seen before.
3. An open call for interested parties bidding for a future location in the district.
4. Setting up a District Association with the objectives of creating activities in the district in accordance with political visions and wishes; giving advice and recommendations to aldermen, committees and the City Council; and developing a permanent organisational and financing model for the District Association.<sup>72</sup>

67 Kultur og borgerservice. (n.d.). Aarhus Symfoniorkester. Website: <https://kulturogborgerservice.aarhus.dk/organisation/aarhus-symfoniorkester>.

68 Website: <https://aarhus.viewer.dkplan.niras.dk/plan/2#/94171>.

69 Aarhus Kommune (n.d.). Kulturmiljøer. Website: <https://aarhus.viewer.dkplan.niras.dk/plan/2#/96467>.

70 Kultur og borgerservice (2021). Handleplanen for kulturpolitik 2021-24. Available online: <https://kulturogborgerservice.aarhus.dk/media/04mjzshp/handleplan-til-kulturpolitikken-2021-2024.pdf>.

71 The whole section is based on: Aarhus Kommune Teknik og Miljø. (2020). Sydhavnskvarteret Aarhus C. Bydelsplan nord for jærgergårdsgade. Available online: [https://sydhavnskvarteret.dk/media/xjrbqsje/20200114\\_bydelsplan\\_sydhavnskvarteret\\_nord-for-jaergergaardsgade\\_interaktiv.pdf](https://sydhavnskvarteret.dk/media/xjrbqsje/20200114_bydelsplan_sydhavnskvarteret_nord-for-jaergergaardsgade_interaktiv.pdf).

72 The website for the District Association: <https://sydhavnskvarteret.dk/livet-i-kvarteret/bydelsforening>.

5. Setting up a City Life Office (Bylivskontoret) for the district with the aim of coordinating between the district’s actors, such as businesses, educational institutions, creative professionals and artists, to organise urban life events, initiatives and projects that contribute to building relationships and a foundation for a good community in the district.
6. Creating a funding programme for urban life to ensure that various (for now) temporary activities can continue, thus animating and creating visibility and attention to the district. This programme supported 7 projects with a total of DKK 775 000 in 2023.<sup>73</sup>

The district will have five so-called power-hubs including one for “Sound”, housing *Lydbyen*, a centre for music production as well as a new venue that will taken over by one of the regional venues is Aarhus, TRAIN<sup>74</sup>. These hubs are meant to be a concentration of people and facilities within the same industry area and professional community, built on the principle of shared space seen as the foundation of cooperation (see more in 3.2. for *Lydbyen*).

The South Harbour district is developed by real estate developer A. Enggaard together with the pension fund PKA. A. Enggaard will also act as the landlord, renting out the premises to all the tenants, including *Lydbyen*. The cultural institutions: *Lydbyen*, The Academy of Arts and the platform for Arts will receive a reduced, or so-called non-commercial market, rent rate. That was one of the conditions from the Aarhus City to the developer to obtain building rights.

## 2.5. MUSIC BUDGET

Given the importance of both national and municipal funding to the music ecosystem both in Aarhus and elsewhere in Denmark, the following sections provide a basic overview of both. According to Statistics Denmark, the overall public funding for culture is approximately DKK 27,3 bln (ca €3,5 bln) with municipalities contributing 42,3% of it (see table 1).<sup>75</sup> No further data about the specific ratio in Aarhus municipality could be established.

	DKK mln		EUR mln
Total state funding	15 737 kr.	57.73%	€2 046
Municipalities funding	11 525 kr.	42.27%	€1 498
<b>TOTAL PUBLIC FUNDING FOR CULTURE</b>	<b>27 262 kr.</b>		<b>€3 544</b>

TABLE 1. PUBLIC FUNDING FOR CULTURE.

The state funding is further divided into funding from the Ministry of Culture, from other ministries and from the Lotto Funds with the Ministry of Culture providing the bulk of it: DKK 13,6 bln making up 86,7%. (See Table 2).

	DKK mln		EUR mln
National Budget (State Budget) - Ministry of Culture	13 643 kr.	86.69%	€1 774
National Budget (State Budget) - other ministries	430 kr.	2.73%	€56
Lotto Funds	1 665 kr.	10.58%	€216
<b>TOTAL STATE FUNDING</b>	<b>15 737 kr.</b>		<b>€2 046</b>

TABLE 2. STATE FUNDING FOR CULTURE.

With regard to the budget for music, there are several perspectives on this on the national level. First, the Music Action Plan 2023-2026 earmarks DKK 244,7 mln (ca €29,2 mln) for music. This includes direct allocations from the state budget (Financial Law, *Finanslov*), existing subsidy schemes overseen by the Danish Arts Foundation as well as funding for projects and initiatives. The Danish Arts Foundation annual report provides a more expansive overview with DKK 273,3 mln allocated for music only in 2023. This includes scholarships, operating and project grants that are not included in the music action plan, such as support for ensembles, festivals, concerts, amateur music, music education, various music organisations, etc. Finally, the Financial Law provides the total sum of expenditure on music in 2023 as DKK 327 mln (ca €42,6 mln). Nearly

<sup>73</sup> More information on the programme: <https://sydhavnskvarteret.dk/livet-i-kvarteret/bylivspulje-for-sydhavnskvarteret-2023>.

<sup>74</sup> See more information about the plans of TRAIN here: <https://train.dk/sydhavnen>.

<sup>75</sup> Statistics Denmark (2023). Funding and payments in the cultural field. <https://www.dst.dk/en/Statistik/emner/kultur-og-fritid/kulturomraadets-uddannelse-oekonomi-og-beskaeftigelse/kulturomraadets-bevillinger-og-udbetalinger>.

half of that (DKK 161,1 mln) is allocated directly to regional orchestras (with Aarhus Symphony Orchestra receiving ca DKK 60 mln (€8 mln) annually from the state). The rest includes regional venue support (DKK 51 mln), music schools (DKK 91,7 mln), and Miscellaneous grants for music purposes (DKK 23,8 mln).<sup>76</sup>

The Aarhus music ecosystem naturally benefits from most of these national funding schemes, but a detailed breakdown is not available.

There are further funds available for the Aarhus municipality through cultural framework agreements between the Ministry of Culture and groups of municipalities. The agreement for the Aarhus Cultural Region for 2023 is DKK 145,8 mln of which Aarhus municipality receives nearly half (DKK 68,9 mln, or ca €9 mln).<sup>77</sup> There is no further information on the breakdown of these subsidies, but at least in the past, for music, it only included funding for music schools.<sup>78</sup>

## 2.5.1. MUSIC ACTION PLAN 2023-2026 BUDGET

As mentioned in 2.2.2. the total budget earmarked for music in the action plan is DKK 244,7 mln (ca €29,2 mln) for the entire 2023-2026 period. The budget can be generally, though not precisely, organised in the four main areas: basic infrastructure and three focus themes (figure 1 and table 4). Implementation of the plan is delegated to the Danish Arts Foundation and many of the existing schemes, such as regional venue support, artist fee support, etc. also benefit Aarhus music venues and other music actors. Otherwise, no information on the regional breakdown is provided in the plan.

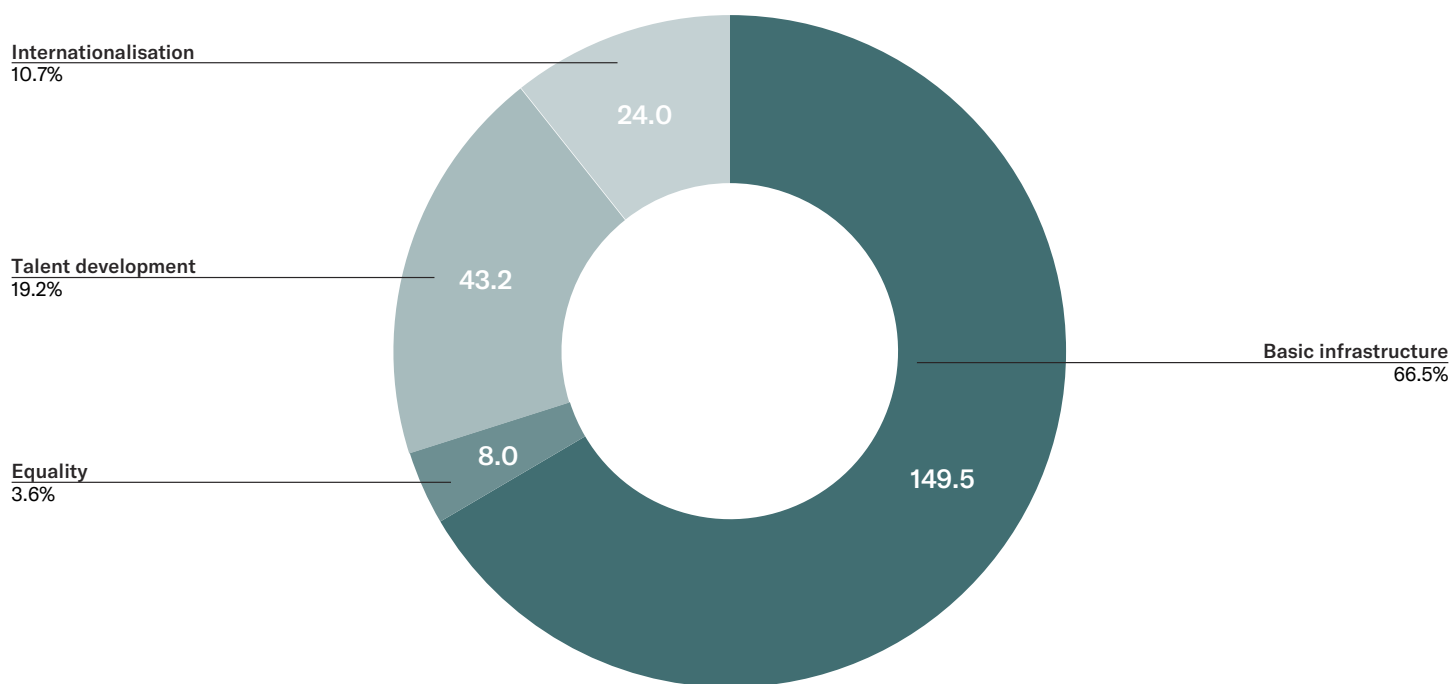


FIGURE 1. BREAKDOWN OF THE MUSIC ACTION PLAN 2023-2026 IN THE MAIN FOCUS AREAS IN DKK MLN.<sup>79</sup>

76 Finansministeriet. (2023). Finanslov for finansåret 2023. Tekst og anmærkninger § 21. Kulturministeriet. Available online: <https://fm.dk/udgivelser/2022/august/forslag-til-finanslov-for-finansaaret-2023/>, pages 89-94.

77 *Ibid*, p 45.

78 Kulturministeriet. (2009). Kulturpengene 2009. Offentlige udgifter til kultur 2009, p 25. Available online: [https://kum.dk/fileadmin/kum/5\\_Publikationer/2009/Kulturpengene\\_2009\\_endelig\\_version.pdf](https://kum.dk/fileadmin/kum/5_Publikationer/2009/Kulturpengene_2009_endelig_version.pdf).

79 Own categorisation and calculation based on the plan: Kulturministeriet. Musikhandlingsplan 2023-2026, pages 14-18.

	DKK mln					EUR mln
<b>Basic infrastructure</b>	<b>23-26</b>		<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>		<b>23-26</b>
Regional orchestras support	11.9		4.1	2.6		1.5
The House of Song (Sangens Hus)*	18.2		7.1	7.1		1.4
Fee support to music venues*	40.4		10.1	10.1		5.3
Regional venues support*	32.1		8.0	8.0		4.2
The national transport support scheme*	20.9		5.2	5.2		2.7
Work grants for composers and songwriters	8.0		2.0	2.0		1.0
The Danish Rock Academy**	18.0		4.5	4.5		2.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>149.5</b>	<b>66.5%</b>	<b>41.1</b>	<b>39.6</b>		<b>18.5</b>
<b>Equality</b>						
Project grant for MXD (gender balance)	3.0		3.0	0.0		0.4
Musiklifet's talent report**	1.0		1.0	0.0		0.1
SheCanPlay**	4.0		1.0	1.0		0.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>3.7%</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>		<b>1.0</b>
<b>Internationalisation</b>						
Music Export Denmark	20.0		5.0	5.0		2.6
Internationalisation of Danish music**	4.0		1.0	1.0		0.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>24.0</b>	<b>11.0%</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>6.0</b>		<b>3.1</b>
<b>Talent development</b>						
"Orchestra Master" (OrkesterMester)	10.0		2.5	2.5		1.3
"Live Music in School" (Levende Musik i Skolen)	10.0		2.5	2.5		1.3
"Power for Children" (Strøm til Børn)	3.2		0.8	0.8		0.4
The Young Artistic Elite (Den Unge Kunstneriske Elite)	4.0		1.0	1.0		0.5
Turning Tables**	6.0		3.0	3.0		0.8
Band Academy**	4.0		1.0	1.0		0.5
Conductor promotion (DIRIGENTLØFT)**	6.0		1.5	1.5		0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>43.2</b>	<b>19.9%</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>10.3</b>		<b>5.6</b>
<b>The music action plan in total</b>	<b>224.7</b>		<b>64.4</b>	<b>56.9</b>		<b>28.3</b>

\* Increased budget \*\* New initiative

TABLE 3. THE DETAILED BREAKDOWN OF THE MUSIC ACTION PLAN BUDGET.<sup>80</sup>

## 2.5.2. DANISH ARTS FOUNDATION MUSIC BUDGET

The DAF budget for 2023 in their annual report provides a detailed breakdown of funding programmes and activities. There is a regional – but not municipal – breakdown of numbers of applications, success rates, funding applied and received, etc.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

	DKK mln		€ mln
<b>Project Support Committee for Music</b>	<b>254 334 883 kr.</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>€33 063 535</b>
Operating grants	148 012 497 kr.	54%	€19 241 625
Project grants	103 879 385 kr.	38%	€13 504 320
Administration	484 000 kr.	0%	€62 920
Other	1 959 001 kr.	1%	€254 670
<b>Scholarship Committee for Music</b>	<b>19 034 122 kr.</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>€2 474 436</b>
Scholarships (work grants)	13 830 000 kr.	5%	€1 797 900
Commissioning works - composer fees	5 204 122 kr.	2%	€676 536
<b>Total for music committees</b>	<b>273 369 005 kr.</b>		<b>€35 537 971</b>

TABLE 4. DANISH ARTS FOUNDATION MUSIC BUDGET 2023.<sup>81</sup>

### 2.5.3. AARHUS CULTURAL AND MUSIC BUDGET

According to the budget statement 2024-2027, the expenses of the City of Aarhus are budgeted at approximately DKK 24.1 bln (€3,2 bln) for 2024. The chapter on “Leisure and Culture” is DKK 775 mln (€103,8 mln), about 3% of the entire budget. “Culture”, in turn, has a budget of ca DKK 160 mln (€21,4 mln), close to 21% of the “Leisure and Culture” share.<sup>82</sup>

The Aarhus municipality’s music budget for 2024 is DKK 36,5 mln (€4,7 mln). This contains four support schemes, operational subsidies to 8 organisations as well as a subsidy to the Aarhus Symphony Orchestra (table 5; see 2.4 for more information on the programmes). Operational subsidies are granted to four venues: Radar, Train, Turkis, Voxhall and the three latter have also received the regional venue status and funding for the period 2025-2028; others include Aarhus Jazz Orchestra, SPOT Festival, music association Mono, providing rehearsal, studio, concert and networking spaces, and Promus, the Aarhus Music City office. These operational grants are mostly between DKK 1,2 and 1,8 mln per organisation, only the Aarhus Jazz Orchestra receives close to DKK 2,2 mln annually.

	DKK		EUR
Support programmes	3 854 182 kr.	10.6%	€501 044
<i>Artist fee support programme for venues</i>	<b>1 140 813 kr.</b>	<b>3.1%</b>	<b>€148 306</b>
<i>Music support programme</i>	<b>2 252 328 kr.</b>	<b>6.2%</b>	<b>€292 803</b>
<i>Alternative Musikskoler</i>	<b>212 767 kr.</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>€27 660</b>
<i>Elektronisk musik</i>	<b>248 274 kr.</b>	<b>0.7%</b>	<b>€32 276</b>
Operational subsidies	12 651 139 kr.	34.7%	€1 644 648
Aarhus Symphony Orchestra	20 000 000 kr.	54.8%	€2 600 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>36 505 321 kr.</b>		<b>€4 745 692</b>

TABLE 5. AARHUS MUNICIPALITY MUSIC BUDGET SUMMARY.<sup>83</sup>

The Aarhus Symphony Orchestra receives subsidies from the municipality, from the state and has also its own financing. The latest annual report from 2021 provides the following breakdown:

81 Own categorisation based on Statens Kunstfond (2023). Årsberetning 2023. Årsregnskab, pages 3-4.

82 Aarhus Kommune. (2023). Budgetredegørelse 2024-2027. Available online: <https://aarhus.dk/media/ghxnjbi2/budgetredegørelsen-enderligt-budget-2024docx.pdf>.

83 Based on the information received from the Cultural Administration of the Aarhus municipality.



	DKK		EUR
State	23 862 000 kr.	45.7%	€3 102 060
Municipality	22 458 000 kr.	43.0%	€2 919 540
Own financing	5 915 000 kr.	11.3%	€768 950
<b>Total</b>	<b>52 235 000 kr.</b>		<b>€6 790 550</b>

TABLE 6. AARHUS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA BUDGET 2021.<sup>84</sup>

## 2.6. MUSIC POLICY MAKING PROCESS

Every four years the elected Aarhus City Council will publish a coalition agreement which contains high-level policy agendas and themes for the Aarhus municipality. For the same period, the Councillor for Culture and Civic Services and the Cultural Department will create and publish a **cultural strategy**. The making of the current 2021-2024 strategy included a participatory event – the Cultural-Political Community Meeting, or *Kulturpolitisk Forsamlingshus* with 130 people from many fields.

*“During this debate, major agendas were tabled. [...] Despite the unusual circumstances [of COVID pandemic], this present Cultural Strategy is based on a firm foundation of dialogue with and input from many players – including the professional cultural life, growth layers, youth environments, business community, and citizens in every part of the municipality. In addition to this, the evaluation from the Arts Councils focusing on artistic environments, constitutes a significant contribution”.*<sup>85</sup>

The strategy was followed by an action plan which clarifies how the municipality will aim to achieve the goals and which actions will be taken. With regard to participatory practices, the action plan commits to holding dialogue meetings between cultural actors and the municipality at least twice a year, with the possibility of setting up subgroups in relation to special themes. These dialogue meetings should function as a joint development space, where, among other things, concrete initiatives are developed during the period.<sup>86</sup> Finally, once a year, Aarhus Municipality’s cultural committee is presented with a status of the action plan. The main ways to shape policy implementation from the municipality’s side are the framework agreements with institutions receiving multi-year operational subsidies. These agreements specify how the beneficiaries are expected to contribute to the overall policy goals. Still, according to the sector actors, the agreements with the municipalities are fairly flexible with minimal prescriptions done by the municipality. Another set of instruments is shaping and fine-tuning the funding programmes. A review of the municipality’s cultural funding programmes is also mentioned in the action plan with a view to simplifying the structure and adapting the purpose of the programmes so that they support the current needs better.<sup>87</sup>

In general, during the period there is a fair amount of more or less informal communication between the city administration and the sector organisations. This naturally differs from one to the other. Those venues and other music organisations that have framework agreements will have formal annual review meetings. Promus is in touch with the city officials regularly. The music sector stakeholders interviewed felt that while there is always room for improvement the dialogue with the municipality is generally strong and useful.

<sup>84</sup> Aarhus Symphony Orchestra (2021). Årsregnskab for 2021. Available online: <https://www.aarhussymfoni.dk/orkestret/regnskaber-rapporter-og-projekter/>.

<sup>85</sup> Kultur og Borgerservice. (2021). City of Aarhus Cultural Strategy 2021-2024.

<sup>86</sup> Kultur og borgerservice. (2021). Handleplanen for kulturpolitik 2021-24.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

# 3. THEMES IN FOCUS

## 3.1. MUSIC CITY AARHUS 2022

Music City Aarhus 2022 was an initiative that was conceived in the wake of the 2017 Capital of Culture by a broad-based group of stakeholders from the Aarhus music ecosystem. The project eventually brought onboard the Aarhus municipality, providing important seed funding and galvanising other supporters and partners, as well as the city's business community through what became the Business and Culture Forum Aarhus. The project was realised successfully in spite of the intervening COVID pandemic and was largely received well by the music stakeholders as well as citizens generally. The pandemic added a new focus theme to the initiative which was now also about a restart of the city's music and more broadly cultural life.<sup>88</sup>

### 3.1.1. MAIN GOALS

The main goals of the initiative are captured in the Music City Aarhus 2022's manifest according to which Music City Aarhus 2022 will:

- reboot music and cultural life for the city's citizens, businesses and the city's many music players after the Covid-19 crisis.
- build on the legacy of Aarhus City of Culture 2017 and create new shared cultural experiences for the city's citizens that will become part of the common musical and cultural frame of reference of the future.
- strengthen the city's cultural identity, communities and cohesion.
- strengthen and expand collaboration across culture and business.
- support a sustainable Aarhus music scene that points to the future.

### 3.1.2. PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE

The first plans were already laid down in a workshop in 2018 including many music stakeholders and identifying the main focus themes. Promus, leading the initiative, presented the idea to the newly founded Business and Culture Forum Aarhus which was created in order to continue the momentum of the 2017 Capital of Culture and the Music City Aarhus 2022 seemed a promising format to pursue this goal. Aarhus municipality joined and provided the first funding of DKK 5 mln which laid the groundwork for many other partners and a budget that finally added up to more than DKK 18,1 mln (ca €2,3 mln).

A new association was founded in 2020 with the participation of more than 160 music sector representatives. The association was administratively and legally anchored to Promus which served as the secretariat. The structure includes the team, headed by Jesper Mardahl, the director of Promus and eventually four other part-time colleagues, a steering group of previously five and currently four members, and two curation groups, serving as the expert bodies for funding decisions.<sup>89</sup> Consultations and discussions with music sector stakeholders continued also in 2021.

### 3.1.3. IMPLEMENTATION

The Music City Aarhus 2022 association identified three focus areas for the project:

1. Strengthening the city's growth layer and talent development
2. Strengthening collaborative projects between established players
3. Larger events in cooperation with the business community

The first two were implemented mainly through setting up **two funding programmes**:

- Growth teams and talent development
- New collaborations between established players

Ultimately, the two programmes received 188 applications, 98 and 90 respectively, and the

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<sup>88</sup> This whole chapter is based on: Karlsson, C., U. (2023). Evaluering af music city aarhus 2022. Music City Aarhus 2022 Secretariat. Available online: <https://promus.dk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Music-City-Aarhus-2022-afsluttende-rapport-31.-marts-2023.pdf>.

<sup>89</sup> More information on the association Music City Aarhus 2022 can be found on their website: <https://musiccityaarhus2022.dk/>.

curation groups chose to support a total of 76 projects, 48 and 28 respectively.

While initially, the role of the secretariat was mostly to administer the project and not get too involved in producing events and projects itself, the short time to prepare coupled with the disruption of the COVID pandemic caused some changes. Finally, there were more than 15 projects and initiatives that were produced. In addition to preparatory, opening and ending concerts of the whole year, some examples include:

- Special programs in collaboration with existing festivals, such as “Back on the SPOT”, Gnags’ Aarhus History: Aarhus Festival’s unofficial opening; and the Life is Live Festival.
- Urban City Volume/ LEC featured both a producer camp and a showcase during SPOT Festival 2022. The project became part of Link-Up Euro Connection, an international project under the Music Cities Network umbrella.
- Danish Church Aid and SPOT Festival – free concerts specifically targeted at the city’s vulnerable citizens.
- Concerts at the People’s Houses – the Municipal Department of Health and Care was interested in the special health-promoting potential of culture and chose to allocate funding for concerts at the city’s 37 People’s Centres. This led to an open call in autumn 2022 with 88 applications.
- Klub 22 – A handful of emerging players joined forces and received support from both Music City Aarhus 2022 and from the Kirsten and Gunnar Foundation’s special grants. The project transformed the old canteen of the County Hospital into a contemporary music venue with the ambition to create a safe space with a focus on re-presentation and inclusion, where the focus should be on the music and atmosphere rather than the consumption of alcohol. Club 22 contributed to a wide range of events throughout 2022 and succeeded in creating an inspiring space for concerts and parties in the old County Hospital.<sup>90</sup>
- Gigakor in Mindeparken – gathering almost 400 children from all parts of the city’s schools to sing a specially composed song for the Queen at the big celebration in Mindeparken, accompanied by the Aarhus Jazz Orchestra.
- The city soundtrack – 10 landmark signs placed at locations with special historical significance for the city’s music life in all genres and an accompanying seven-part podcast.
- Music debate series in collaboration with m. Dokk1 (three events) – The three debates each highlighted a current topic within the music scene and had an overall theme of identity and representation in music culture.

### 3.1.4. EVALUATION

A fairly comprehensive evaluation was conducted to better understand whether the initiative met the set goals, how it was perceived and experienced by the music stakeholders as well as ordinary citizens and capture the key learnings for future occasions. Many music actors were surveyed, some key stakeholders were interviewed, and a general citizen survey was also conducted.

The feedback was in general very positive and for a large number of stakeholders, Music City Aarhus 2022 meant new opportunities for both collaborations and finances. According to the evaluation, the Music City Aarhus 2022 initiative has generally strengthened the narrative of Aarhus as a music city and reinforced the self-understanding of being a music city among music players, businesses, politicians and citizens. While the overall narrative did not reach everyone it potentially could nor was perceived uniformly impactful by all, the initiative did fulfil its main goals.

There are many learnings, specifically with regard to alignment between expectations and implementation. The short timeline and intervening pandemic played a crucial role in shaping the final outcomes of the initiative. However, the initiative was certainly felt by a large share of Aarhus’ population – as many as 55% of the citizens surveyed had heard of one or more of the events that were part of Music City Aarhus 2022, and of those, one in four also attended one or more events. This is a good outcome by any account.

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<sup>90</sup> See more previous events: <https://klub22.com/Previous-Events>.

Furthermore, the lessons learnt from Music City Aarhus 2022 will not only benefit the local music community but will also benefit other music cities, positioning Aarhus even more strongly as a thought leader among the network of music cities – as one of the cities leading the way in creating an attractive city using music as a tool.<sup>91</sup>

## 3.2. LYDBYEN

*Lydbyen*, or Sound City, is a new music production hub embedded in the larger district development project of *Sydhavns kvarteret* (see 2.4.4.). The Sound City will be a three-storey music production and recording studio complex. It's a hub for the music community with everyone from technicians, producers, songwriters, music publishers, management and record companies gathered in one building.<sup>92</sup> The new hub will offer 20 individual studios, access to shared recording facilities, a large social area with a kitchen and lounge, plus five attractive office leases with shared meeting rooms. *Lydbyen* will be ready for occupancy in 2026 and a team is being assembled.

The Sound City concept was initiated and is being led by *Lydhavnen*, a collective of professional sound studios, producers, engineers and artists in Aarhus, founded in 2012. The idea for a hub of independent studios that share a number of facilities, including a recording room was in place from the very beginning.<sup>93</sup>

In sync with the wider philosophy of the district development project that sharing facilities is the foundation of cooperation, the Sound City will also have a large number of sharing facilities such as workshop areas, sound studios and workshops. In addition to the physical surroundings, *Lydbyen* will have an active professional community across genres and technical disciplines.

Also Promus, in collaboration with the city's and *Lydbyen*'s stakeholders, has developed an ambition for the next few years to work towards an incubator that aims to create business development in the music and sound industry, and strengthen the city's music production environment.<sup>94</sup>

The perspective and value as seen from the music stakeholders is captured in the district development plan:<sup>95</sup>

*"In the Sydhavns kvarteret, we don't have to invent an environment. It already exists. There is great potential that can be developed with the new physical framework in Lydbyen. Lydbyen provides the opportunity for people within the music community to naturally run into each other in everyday life, so that our network and cooperation is strengthened. That makes really good sense."*

**Anders Boll**, Lydhavnen. August 2019

*"The producing music environment in Aarhus has become stronger in recent years, i.a. because we sit physically close to each other and collaborate crosswise. Sitting close to each other means something, and in Lydbyen we get the opportunity to strengthen the close collaboration and the synergy we have - both within the sound and music environment and in the collaboration we have with other creative industries - film, architecture, sound art, theatre etc."*

**Marie Højlund**, composer, sound artist, assistant professor v. Aarhus University v. Audio Design, musician and singer in the band Nephew. August 2019

*"With Lydbyen, we are creating a completely unique platform for learning, development, production, growth and dissemination of music's many expressions - to the delight of musicians, citizens, cultural industries and entrepreneurs in both Aarhus, nationally and internationally. Lydbyen will be a place that lives both day, evening and night, and that offers a framework for collaboration in sound and music, and a fantastic experience for audience."*

**Carsten V. Nielsen**, director and venue manager of TRAIN. August 2019

91 Seismonaut (2023). A driving force in the Aarhus music scene. Introduction to Promus.

92 *Ibid.*

93 Lydbyen website: <https://lydbyen.dk/>.

94 Seismonaut (2023). A driving force in the Aarhus music scene. Introduction to Promus.

95 Aarhus Kommune Teknik og Miljø. (2020). Sydhavns kvarteret Aarhus C. Bydelsplan nord for jægergårdsgade.

## 3.3. PROMUS – MENTORING AND COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT

### **Mentoring programme**

In close collaboration with a number of partners, Promus provides access to counselling, competency development and networking for both emerging and the established music scene. Promus offers counselling and skills development for young artists in the making through a mentoring programme where Promus pairs an experienced industry professional with the talent.

The goal of the mentoring programme is to equip the budding artist to work professionally with music and provide access to a network to draw on. Most importantly, each individual programme creates ripples in the water. Both for the talented artist and for everyone who works behind the scenes behind the artist, such as co-writers, management, booking, publishing and labels. They will also draw on the experiences from the mentoring programme, and they will bring those experiences with them into other projects. In this way, an individual mentoring programme can help strengthen an entire community.

The offer is popular. So far, 42 artists and groups have made use of it.

A mentoring programme at Promus includes a number of activities, including:

- One-on-one mentoring with a selected mentor
- Strategic counselling in competency development and songwriting
- Discussions on how the artist sets goals for future projects
- Access to a network of managers and venues
- A series of mentoring sessions.

The mentoring programme is aimed at bands, artists, projects and companies who live in Aarhus or who run their project from Aarhus. To become part of a mentoring programme, applicants must fill out an application and are then invited to an interview to discuss the possibility of being assigned a mentor.

### **Competency development**

It's not just the growth team that needs a sounding board, counselling and strengthened competencies. Industry professionals also face professional questions and challenges when presented with new trends and business models. In order to promote continuous professionalisation and knowledge sharing among the professional players, Promus has for a number of years produced the Promus Publishing Academy, which was developed in collaboration with Koda and Musikforlæggerne i Danmark.

The programme focuses on all aspects of work with music rights, and during the 10 years that the programme has been running, virtually everyone from the new generation of industry professionals who deal with the field professionally has attended the Promus Publishing Academy. The next project is called Promus Sync Academy and is an international programme focused on the marketing of music for film, TV, advertising, media, games, etc.

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