

CITY FULL OF MUSIC – TALLINN AS INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED UNESCO CITY OF MUSIC

Music plays an important role in Estonian history, both culturally as well as politically, and much of this is linked with Tallinn, which has become one of the most acclaimed music centres in Europe and around the world. Many world-famous composers, conductors, musicians and music collectives originate from Tallinn, and it hosts numerous music events and festivals of international scale. Thus, it was only natural next step for Tallinn to be included from 2022 in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network as a City of Music.

UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) was launched in 2004 to enhance cooperation between cities that identify creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable development. As of 2022, the UCCN consists of 295 cities from 90 countries across the world. Together with design, crafts and folk arts, and gastronomy, the music cities category is among the largest with 59 designated locations.

Tallinn and music are inseparable, music can be found at every corner. According to Statistics Estonia, before pandemics, more than 83.2% of Tallinn's inhabitants participated in cultural activities in the past 12 months, and impressive 53.6% of people have visited concerts during a period of one year.¹ In 2019, 497 concert organisers produced 2,384 concerts with total of 0.7 million visits.² Estonia is one of the few countries in the world where musical education is a compulsory part of general education. There are more than 20 concert halls in Tallinn, plus additional venues for music performances, including churches, schools, community centres, museums, libraries, etc.

Music is not only important in terms of the cultural, educational and social impact, but also in terms of its economic contribution. In 2020, Tallinn carried out a music sector mapping study³, according to which the music sector has a significant role in employment and economic turnover. There are in total 1,692 organisations and companies in the music sector registered in the city with the total employment of 2,329 people. The music sector's total annual turnover (based on 2018 data) was over 151 million Euros and profits over 9.7 million Euros. Tallinn accounts for approximately 70% of total music sector volume in Estonia.

¹ Statistikaamet (2018), Participation in cultural activities. [https://andmed.stat.ee/et/stat/sotsiaalelu_kultuur_kultuurielus-osaletamine/KUT021] 27.02.2022

² Statistikaamet (2020), Concerts arranged by Estonian concert organisers 2019. [https://andmed.stat.ee/et/stat/sotsiaalelu_kultuur_muusika/KU113] 27.02.2022

³ Eesti Konjunktuuriinstituut (2020), Tallinna muusikavaldkonna kaardistamine. [<https://uuringud.tallinn.ee/uuring/vaata/2020/Tallinna-muusikavaldkonna-kaardistamine-2020>] 27.02. 2022

According to European Commission data, the cultural tourism accounts for 40% of the overall tourism in Europe.⁴ The title of the UNESCO City of Music allows Tallinn to position itself as a key tourism destination with a diverse, unique and high-quality cultural offer. It hosts world-class music festivals with large international appeal, including Tallinn Music Week, Tallinn International Festival Jazzkaar, Birgitta Festival, Estonian Music Days, Nargen Festival, etc.

As a UNESCO City of Music, Tallinn aims to offer world-class opportunities to create and enjoy music in all its diversity. To achieve this vision, Tallinn adopted the strategic action plan for 2022-2025⁵ with six thematic programs:

- Program *NEXT GENERATION MUSIC* aims to bring more young people to music in all its different expressions, raise awareness and allow talented young musicians to pursue their careers in music.
- Program *MUSICAL TALLINN* aims to make music more accessible for all regardless of age, location, nationality, or other conditions; and to introduce music into city landscape.
- Program *CLASSICAL SOUNDS* aims to create better conditions for classical musicians and collectives, and support capacity development and international mobility for artists.
- Program *FUTURE OF MUSIC* aims to strengthen music industry throughout the entire value chain and its capacity to innovate in the technologically changing environment.
- Program *TANDEM CREATIVE CITIES* aims to create bilateral and multilateral collaborations with other cities within the UNESCO Creative Cities Network and to encourage international exchange.
- Program *CREATIVE IMPACT* aims to connect music sector development with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals and to initiate international discussion on the role of music in inclusive and sustainable cities.

Becoming a UNESCO City of Music is not a short-term project or image building campaign, but long-term strategic commitment to streamline culture and music as catalysts for city development. Music has a power to bring people together and touch their souls. In today's world, this is needed more than ever before.

Tallinn, March-April 2022

Ragnar Siil,
Estonian Business School, junior researcher
Project manager for Tallinn UNESCO City of Music application

⁴ European Commission (2022), Cultural tourism.
[https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/cultural_en] 27.02.2022

⁵ Tallinn (2021), Tallinn Music Strategy 2022-2025.
[<https://www.tallinn.ee/est/muusikalinn/Muusikalinna-strateegia-2022-2025>] 27.02.2022