

Baltic Culture Fund Implementation Report

Period 2019 to 2021

By the Cultural Endowment of Estonia

April 9th 2021

The report gives an overview of the creation and set up of the Baltic Culture Fund (BCF) and main events during the first three years of the Fund administrated by the Cultural Endowment of Estonia (Eesti Kultuurkapital). The report specifies the amount and nature of the grants issued; the budget applied for and granted; the country specific details; the influences of the Covid-19 pandemic to the BCF activities; discussion issues as well as suggestions for the future.

About the Fund

The Baltic Culture Fund was established by the Baltic Ministers of Culture July 8th 2018 with the goal to promote cultural cooperation between the Baltic countries and strengthen the internationalization of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian culture through joint cultural projects and events.

The initiative for establishing the Fund came from the Baltic Assembly, a body comprised of the members of the Baltic Parliaments.

The need for the Fund was triggered by the success of the joint events organized by Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania during the centenary year of their independence (2018) in Paris, London and Venice. It was clear that together the Baltic States had better chances to attract international attention and put their distinctive culture on the World map.

In order to start the operation of the Fund quickly, it was necessary to manage it through the institutions that already existed. The Nordic culture support organizations that joined the creation of the Fund as experts referred to their experience on difficulties of creating one joint support institution for separate countries. Every country has its own juridical framework and the Nordic colleagues brought out the risk of time consuming unification process of juridical issues. On the suggestion from the Cultural Endowment of Estonia, it was decided that the Fund could be operated by the three local Cultural Endowments in rotation on three year basis. Estonia opted to be first.

The BCF rotation order is as follows:

- Estonia – the Cultural Endowment of Estonia (Eesti Kultuurkapital) (Lead State period 01.01.2019-31.12.21) – Suur-Karja 23, 10148 Tallinn ESTONIA
- Latvia – the State Culture Capital Foundation (Valsts kultūrkapitāla fonds) (Lead State period 01.01.2022-31.12.2024) – K.Valdemara iela 20, Riga LV-1010 LATVIA
- Lithuania – the Lithuanian Council for Culture (Lietuvos kultūros taryba) (Lead State period 01.01.2025-31.12.2027) – Naugarduko g. 10, 01309 Vilnius LITHUANIA

Together with the Baltic partners the Cultural Endowment of Estonia created the BCF Statute, set up a homepage for the Fund and created application documents. The call for 2019 grants

was opened in January 2019. Grants are awarded annually. The first deadline for applications was May 20th, in 2020 and 2021 the deadline was February 20th.

Baltic Culture Fund supports professional events and projects in architecture, visual art, design, literature, music, performing arts, libraries, museums and archives. The Fund also welcomes interdisciplinary projects.

BCF especially supports new and one-off cultural events outside the Baltic countries, such as concerts, exhibitions, festivals, performances, international events with a Baltic focus, and showcases and forums promoting the internationalization of culture.

Each Baltic country contributes 100,000 euros to the Fund annually. BCF also accepts donations.

The grants are 25,000–100,000 euros per project, with at least 20% of self-financing. Only legal persons from Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania will be eligible for support. The lead partner for each project must bring in partners from all three Baltic countries.

Project applications are assessed by Expert Committee of six representatives from various cultural domains appointed for a period of three years. Each country is represented by two Committee members appointed by the Supervisory Board of the national Cultural Endowment.

The experts for 2019 to 2021 period have been:
Lithuania:

- Elona Bajorinienė theatre critic, former head of Vilnius European Capital of Culture 2009, former head of International theatre festival Sirenos, current Dean of Faculty of Theatre and Film at Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre
- Lolita Jablonskienė contemporary art critic and curator, current Head of National Gallery of Art

Latvia:

- Maris Jekabsons restorer, Chairman of SCCF Cultural Heritage branch
- Aiva Rozenberga advisor to the President of Latvia

Estonia:

- Kai Lobjakas art historian, director of the Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design (ETDM)
- Ragnar Siil expert on cultural policy and creative industries, founder of Creativity Lab

The working language of the Fund is English.

Nordic Donation

In January 2019, Helle Engslund Krarup, the Chief of Staff of the Secretary General's Office of the Nordic Council of Ministers and Kertu Saks, the Chairwoman of the Cultural Endowment of Estonia signed an agreement for a contribution of 750,000 Danish krone or 100,000 euros to the Baltic Culture Fund to organize joint cultural events from the Baltic States in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

This was a generous gift initiated by the Nordic experts that helped to launch BCF.

BCF grants from 2019 to 2021

From 2019 to 2021, BCF issued 23 grants as follows:

2019

Nr	Applicant/coordinator	Partners	Project	Grant Sum in euros
1	Estonian Contemporary Art Development Center	Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art; Lithuanian Art Centre Rupert	Contemporary art project „Baltic Showcase“ in Performa Art Festival in New York	60 000
2	Association of Independent Dance in Estonia	Lithuanian Dance Information Centre; Latvian Dance Information Centre	Baltic Dance international presentation in Tanzmesse Germany and CINARS in Canada	55 000
3	Latvian Kim? Contemporary Art Centre	Tallinn Art Hall; Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius	Baltic countries will be presented at Kino International, Berlin	55 000
4	BAL bureau from Estonia	Blind Carbon Copy from Latvia; Bendri Reikalai from Lithuania.	“From Roots to Routes” contemporary art from the Baltic countries in Marseille	50 000
5	State Youth Theatre Lithuania	New Theatre Institute of Latvia; Vaba Lava in Estonia	Performing arts project “Baltic Transfer”. Events in Warsaw and Berlin	50 000
6	The Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music	Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre; Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre	12 music students from the Baltic countries get an opportunity to complete their studies at the Karajan Academy and perform a concert at the world-famous Berliner Philharmonie	30 000
Grants from the Nordic Donation				
7	Music Information Centre Lithuania	Music Estonia; the Latvian Music Information Centre	Creating a joint stand for the Baltic countries at the World Music Expo WOMEX 2019 in Tampere (Finland).	50 000
8	Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art	Narva Art Residency; Vilnius Academy of Arts	Introducing contemporary art from the Baltic countries at the „Today is Our Tomorrow“ international art festival in Helsinki	25 000
9	The Lithuanian Composers' Union	Latvian Composers' Union; Estonian Composers' Union	Introducing contemporary music from the Baltic countries in Sweden and Iceland	25 000
Total				400 000

2020

Nr	Applicant/coordinator	Partners	Project	Grant Sum in euros
1	Estonian Foundation NUKU	Lithuanian Vilnius Theatre Lele; ASSITEJ Latvian National Centre	Organizing a theatre festival „Baltic Visual Theatre Showcase“ in Tallinn in order to open a gateway to	55 000

			international arena for the local theatre markets	
2	Estonian MTÜ NID	Lithuanian Design Forum; NGO Latvian Design Centre	Project "Tactile Baltics" will bring the Baltic design under one roof and make it internationally visible at London Design Festival	50 000
3	VSIA Rīga cirks	Lithuanian Arts Printing House; Estonian Contemporary Circus Development Center	Increasing the capacity of Baltic contemporary circus artists to tour internationally with the project "Baltic Circus on the Road". The events will be organized in the UK (Bristol), Germany (Berlin), Sweden (Göteborg) but also in the three Baltic States.	45 000
4	Lithuanian Writers Union	Estonian and Latvian Writers Unions	The Baltic authors will compile a "Baltic Review", a publication that will be presented in Frankfurt Book Fair in Germany	40 000
5	Academia Gustaviana Society from Estonia	Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art; Galerija Meno Parkas from Lithuania	Bringing contemporary Baltic visual art and performing arts to international audiences on the Baltic Art festival "High Voltage" in Manhattan, New York	35 000
6	Latvian Urban Institute	Estonian Linnalabor and NGO Lasnaidee; Lithuanian Performance Design Association and European Humanities University	"The Baltic Stories: Culture. Place. Identity", recognizes and popularizes new culture driven development projects from the Baltic States in Helsinki (Finland)	25 000
7	Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art	Lithuanian MO Museum; Estonian Kai Art Centre	Performing arts project "Portable Landscapes", program of talks, discussions and performances from the Baltic region in Stockholm, Paris and Berlin	25 000
8	NGO Estonian Centre for Architecture	Lithuanian Centre for Art; Education "Rupert" and Latvian Architect's Office NRJA	Creating a networking platform for Estonian, Lithuanian and Latvian architects for "Baltic Cooperation in Venice Architecture Biennale 2020"	25 000
Total				300 000

2021

Nr	Applicant/coordinator	Partners	Project	Grant Sum in euros
1	Estonian NGO Festival AFEKT	Latvian Festival Arena; Lithuanian Festival Gaida	The project "Baltic Contemporary Music Festival in Germany" will organize the participation of the Baltic musicians in the festival in	75 000

			Germany with 4 concerts of contemporary music of Baltic composers	
2	Latvian Rigas Starptautiska Biennale	Estonian Temnikova and Kasela Gallery and Lithuanian Art Centre Rupert	“The Parcours of the Blossoming”, a project that promotes Baltic contemporary art, provides joint educational activities, increases artistic engagement between the Baltic States in Berlin, London, Moscow and Paris	70 000
3	New Theatre Institute of Latvia	Lithuanian Dance Information Center and Kanuti Gildi SAAL/MTÜ Teine Tants	“Baltic Take Over“. This is a curated program of performative works from a collaborative process in Helsinki	65 000
4	Lithuanian Contemporary Art Centre	Latvian Contemporary Art Centre Kim?; Estonian Centre for Contemporary Art	Project “The 14th Baltic Triennial Reader” is publishing a visual arts Reader and organizing an international promotional campaign of the Baltic literature in Berlin, Minsk, Riga, Tallinn, Vilnius and Warsaw	30 000
5	Centre for School Improvement from Lithuania	Latvian section of IBBY; Estonian Children`s Literature Centre	Provide a platform for Baltic children literature authors for co-creation. The project is “Diversity of Human Rights Literature for Children from Baltic Authors” and the events will take place during the Book Fairs in the UK, Frankfurt and Bologna.	30 000
6	Latvian Centre for Contemporary Ceramics	Estonian Union of Ceramic Artists; Lithuanian Artists` Association	Collaboration on organizing a large-scale Baltic contemporary ceramics exhibitions abroad (Poland, Korea). The project is called “Safe Horizons. Baltic Contemporary Ceramics Exhibition”	30 000
Total				300 000

The number of BCF applications, applied budgets and allocated grants, country activity and coordinator countries from 2019 to 2021

From 2019 to 2021, the number of applications and the sums applied for and granted were as follows:

Year	Number of applications	Applied sums in total in euros	Allocated grants in total in euros
2019	33	2 002 118	400 000
2020	20	1 158 076	300 000
2021	29	1 564 188	300 000
Total	82	4 724 382	1 000 000

From 2019 to 2021, the country activity in applying was as follows:

Country	Number of applications			Total
	Year			
	2019	2020	2021	
Estonia	12	5	9	26
Latvia	10	10	11	31
Lithuania	11	5	9	25

From 2019 to 2021, the financed BCF project applicant/coordinator countries were as follows:

Year	Country		
	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
2019	3	3	3
2020	4	3	1
2021	1	3	2
Total	8	9	6

As it appears, the Baltic countries have been similarly active to apply. Lithuania a little less and this is also the reason for funding less Lithuanian projects.

The fields of applications to BCF from 2019 to 2021 and total budgets by grants

Many of the proposals have been interdisciplinary as the Fund welcomes this approach. The applicants had to mark the main field of their project in the application and these were as follows:

Field	Year			Total
	2019	2020	2021	
Visual arts	13	4	11	28
Music	8	5	8	21
Performing arts	8	6	5	19
Architecture	1	2	1	4
Design	1	1	2	4
Literature	1	1	1	3
Museums and archives	1	1	1	3
Libraries	0	0	0	0

As seen from the table, the professionals in certain fields have seen considerably more possibilities for Baltic cooperation. From the field of libraries, there were no applications at all. Perhaps these possibilities should be better communicated in future or perhaps as libraries work mostly in their specific languages, this cooperation is actually also difficult to pursue.

The fields financed by the year and by the total budget have been as follows:

Field	Year					
	2019		2020		2021	
	Number of projects financed	Total budget for projects in euros	Number of projects financed	Total budget for projects in euros	Number of projects financed	Total budget for projects in euros
Visual arts	4	190 000	1	35 000	3	130 000
Music/sound arts	3	105 000	-	-	1	75 000
Performing arts	2	105 000	3	125 000	1	65 000
Architecture	-	-	2	50 000	-	-
Design	-	-	1	50 000	-	-
Literature	-	-	1	40 000	1	30 000
Museums and archives	-	-	-	-	-	-
Libraries	-	-	-	-	-	-

Ranking of total funding in euros by fields from 2019 to 2021 was as follows:

Field	Total amount in euros
Visual arts	355 000
Performing arts	295 000
Music/sound arts	180 000
Literature	70 000
Architecture	50 000
Design	50 000

As the BCF projects are of scale, the projects usually last several years. In general BCF projects are 1 to 2 year projects. There is no limit set on the project duration.

Finalized projects, project changes and postponements

Covid-19 pandemic has influenced the activities and progress of the projects greatly. Majority of projects has had to postpone activities and end dates. In some cases, there has also been a need to change budgets.

Reports

Only two projects have ended their activities by today and their final reports are approved. These have been:

1. Lithuanian Music Information Centres` project that helped to create a joint stand for the Baltic countries at the World Music Expo WOMEX 2019 in Tampere (Finland). WOMEX 2019 attracted almost 2700 music professionals of various genres from 92 countries. Estonia was represented by two performers – Cätlin Mägi, who's music combines vocals and Jew's harp, both manipulated electronically; and Mari Kalkun, a Võro language singer, instrumentalist and composer. From Latvia, the ten-vocalist ensemble *Saucējas* presented a repertoire of local archaic polyphonic songs. Lithuania was represented by

singer Indrė Jurgelevičiūtė – part of the international group *Merope* – playing the traditional Lithuanian instrument kanklės.

2. MTÜ Bal bureau project “Roots to Routes” from 2019 was finished despite the difficult circumstances - restrictions imposed as a result of the pandemic. The program was fully implemented and achieved the goals of promoting Baltic art abroad and creating links between organizations, artists and curators from the Baltic States and the South of France, bridging the North-South divide. The project's activities were able to gather a large number of visitors (around 10,000 people in total), especially the local people of Marseilles.

Project changes and postponements

From the total 23 projects funded between 2019 to 2021 BCF received 19 project change requests, 4 of which have been budget change requests and 15 project activity postponement requests. Majority of projects were postponed to the end of 2021 or 2022 but there is also a project with a new end date of 28.02.2024.

Discussion issues and suggestions for the future

Estonia has completed the three application rounds that were the responsibility of the Cultural Endowment of Estonia in the order of rotation.

BCF has to appoint a new Committee for 2022 when Latvia will take the lead. BCF Statute <https://kulka.ee/programmes/baltic-culture-fund/statute> says: “6.1. Grant decisions will be made by a 6-member Expert Committee, appointed for a three-year period. Decisions made by the Expert Committee will be confirmed by the Supervisory Board of the Cultural Endowment.” The new Expert Committee has to be elected by the Latvian State Culture Capital Foundation. The procedure is specified in the BCF Establishment Agreement <https://meedia.kulka.ee/files/Establishment%20Agreement.pdf>.

Several discussion issues will have to be decided between the Ministries of Culture of the three Baltic countries and the local Cultural Endowments as regards forwarding the management of BCF to Latvia.

Issues to discuss regarding the BCF management transfer to Latvia

Before we can communicate the transfer of the BCF management to Latvia, it needs to be discussed when exactly the Latvian State Culture Capital Foundation opens the 2022 application round and when will be the deadline. We need to know the Latvian contact when we close Estonian managing period and communicate the results so that we can tell the 2022 applicants to whom to turn to and when.

In Estonia, the application was open all year round with the deadline of February 20th (in 2020 and 2021).

During the implementation, several issues have risen about possible changes to the BCF rules and Statute.

The BCF Expert Committee has suggested possible changes of the Statute in order to make decision making clearer.

3. The Statute is rather lenient on stating some of the criteria. It states: „The allocation of the grants is limited to between €25,000 and €100,000", but it does not say that the project cannot ask for more and some of the applicants have asked more.
4. It also says that the co-financing should be 20% of the total project budget but does not say that if this is not the case the application will not be looked through.
5. The Statute says that BCF supports “events” but the Covid situation has proved organizing events difficult. Could this be changed so that also a book or a symphony etc could be supported?
6. What about the requirement that the project outcomes have to take place mainly abroad? Covid has proved also this requirement difficult to fulfill. Should this be changed?
7. Should all the fields mentioned in the BCF Statute as the supported fields remain or are the changes necessary? For instance, from the field of libraries, we did not receive any applications at all as explained above.

The possible changes to the BCF Statute will have to be discussed and decided upon by the three Ministries of Culture. This will have to be done also by the end of 2021, so that the next application round will have a new Statute before the call opens.

Suggestions for the future

By Estonian law (and we suspect it is the same in all the Baltic countries), the institution that has granted financing will also have to be the institution that decides upon the changes in the project and the accepting of the report. For the projects financed during Estonian management period, this institution will have to be the Supervisory Board of the Cultural Endowment of Estonia. So - from 2022, when the applicant that was granted financing during the Estonian management period, wishes to change the project or report the end of it, they will have to send their requests and documents to the Cultural Endowment of Estonia. We will look these through and forward to the new Expert Committee and they will send their decision to our Supervisory Board for final approving. As the projects funded with Estonian decisions will run until 2024, this will mean a lot of sending documents back and forth for the coming years.

In order to avoid overlapping managing between the Baltic countries due to the issue described above, **we suggest investigating the possibilities of creating BCF institution that will work as one legal umbrella body that will issue the grants.** We suggest consulting on that matter again with our Nordic colleagues from the Nordic Culture supporting countries who helped to set up BCF originally and who have established successfully such umbrella institutions.

Conclusions

We have witnessed strong culture cooperation aspirations in the Baltic countries during these three years and the amount of the applications to BCF was much higher than expected. The rules of BCF are demanding as these projects have to have scale and the events organized have to take place abroad. BCF received 82 proposals for projects in performing arts, visual arts,

music, literature, architecture, design and museum fields. The Baltic culture professionals applied for 4,7 million euros to cooperate. Only 1 million euros in total were granted.

Covid-19 pandemic influenced strongly the timetables of the projects as it hindered the possibilities for international work due to the difficulties in travelling and other restrictions, but not one on the projects has given up and quit. Many have had to change or postpone the activities but they are still hopeful that the aims of the projects will be fulfilled.

It is too early to make any conclusions on the funding impact of the BCF as the majority of the final reports of the projects have not been written yet due to postponements and Covid. These conclusions will be done in future.

In spite of the pandemic, we regard the first three years of the BCF implementation as successful.

xxx

Last but not least! Cultural Endowment of Estonia wishes to thank all the Baltic colleagues for fruitful and friendly cooperation during these first three years and we are looking forward to working with you and developing the BCF in the future!

Kertu Saks, *PhD*

Chairwoman of the Cultural Endowment of Estonia

+372 6999 150

+372 51 55 251

Eesti Kultuurkapital

Suur-Karja 23, 10148 Tallinn

www.kulka.ee

