Dachverband Tanz
Deutschland

Designing funding and jury procedures with a focus on discrimination-sensitive implementation and using the DIS-TANZ-SOLO support programme as a practical example

A reflection paper
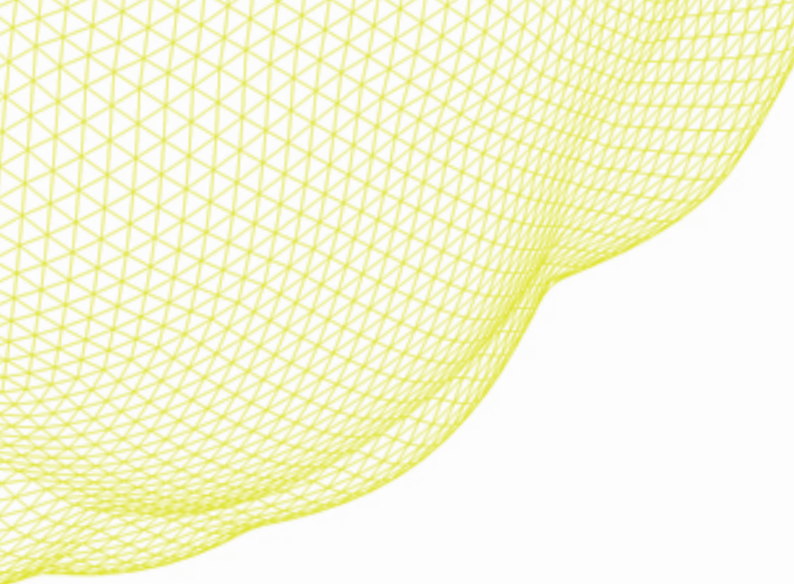
27.04.2023

CONTENT

INTRODUCTION

This publication brings together useful information and advice regarding the call for applications and jury work related to funding programmes. It offers an opportunity to reflect on jury procedures and receive direct suggestions for practice.

The starting point is the DIS-TANZ-SOLO support programme, which was developed by the Dachverband Tanz Deutschland (DTD) as part of the federal government's NEUSTART KULTUR aid programme during the first phase of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020. Together with jury members, it is the wish of the DTD to make the process transparent and open up the work status for discussion after three years of developing the call for applications and the programme.

The emergency situation triggered by the pandemic as well as the aspiration associated with the NEUSTART KULTUR aid programme to support practitioners from all areas of dance in the widest and most comprehensive way possible led in practice to various challenges. It was, for example, a challenge to execute and administer the support programme,

as a result of the very high number of applications (a total of 5,550 applications were submitted in both sub-programmes. Almost 4,358 projects were submitted in five application rounds of the DIS-TANZ-SOLO programme; 1,210 projects were submitted in four application rounds of the DIS-TANZ-IMPULS programme) and the time pressure under which the programme was established. In addition, the instruments and processes for the call for applications, selection procedures and jury work needed to be determined, which also meant reflecting applicants' diversity when implementing the programme: regional distribution, disciplines and dance styles, and paying special attention to dance artists who – as with dancers with disabilities – experienced great difficulty submitting applications due to structural exclusions and barriers.

Furthermore, current exclusions for marginalised groups (e.g. migrants and BIPoC – Black, indigenous and people of colour) in funding programmes were recognised, and particularly art forms under-represented to date, such as urban dance and pop, were actively invited to submit applications. Together with jury members, the DTD set itself a goal of

reducing these exclusions and barriers, which was also reflected in the composition of the jury. Other measures, listed below, were also taken up.

As mentioned above, this retrospective reflection is intended to make the process transparent and share orientational, basic recommendations for jury work both during and after the pandemic.

Information about the support programme

The DIS-TANZEN funding programme by the Dachverband Tanz Deutschland e. V. (DTD association) supports the preservation of artistic and dance education work in 2020–2023, the years impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. DIS-TANZEN is part of the NEUSTART KULTUR rescue programme instigated by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media during the coronavirus pandemic. DIS-TANZEN is divided into two funding areas: DIS-TANZ-SOLO is aimed at solo dance professionals while DIS-TANZ-IMPULS supports dance schools and dance education in cultural institutions. A particular focus is to develop and test new forms of artistic work as well as dance-education and distribution work. The aim of DIS-TANZEN is to strengthen individual dance practitioners in the future and allow innovative examples and models for the entire dance scene to emerge.

Within the scope of NEUSTART KULTUR, DIS-TANZ-SOLO provided solo dance artists with project funding during the pandemic while at the same time offering an opportunity to establish, at the national level, a simplified scholarship programme as a new funding instrument in the dance world.
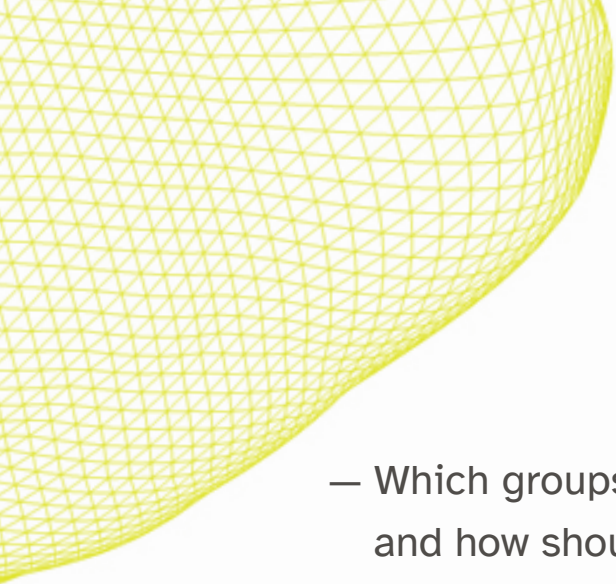
CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Conception

In designing the call for applications, the DTD and jury members asked themselves the following questions, in order to meet the task set by NEU-START KULTUR and at the same time make the most of the opportunity to implement, with others, innovative ideas on funding structures within the scope of this new support:

— Which artists / dance professionals should be addressed?

— Which themes and content should be covered?

— What direction should the funding take as an aid programme during the coronavirus pandemic?

— What does the funding architecture look like? Can different programme lines be offered within the programme (research and project funding, archiving, etc.)?

— Which artists have been largely excluded from funding programmes to date?

— Which groups should be supported in particular and how should they be addressed (e. g. marginalised groups or those with a specific need, such as graduates / career starters)?

— Who should double-check the call for applications to ensure the target group is reached?

— Where should the call for applications be published beyond the programme website (partner institutions, channels and people)?

These questions can serve as suggestions for formulating the text for the call for applications in a way that is as specific, accessible and addressee-oriented as possible. Furthermore, in answering the questions important foundations are laid for designing all areas of the funding programme:

— Determining the funding priorities

— Determining the target groups

— The resulting requirement of the application process
and jury work, e. g.

  » The content and design of the applications forms

  » Communication with the target group

  » How statistics are compiled during the selection
    process

— The evaluation as a reflection on the programme
and the goals set

Implementation and accessibility

The following measures were adopted in order to
design all the materials and information as accessibly
and applicant-friendly as possible:

— All the information and application forms
were available in German and English.

— All the information was set out in bullet points
to make it more comprehensible for people
without German or English as their first language.
Special attention was also paid to accessibility
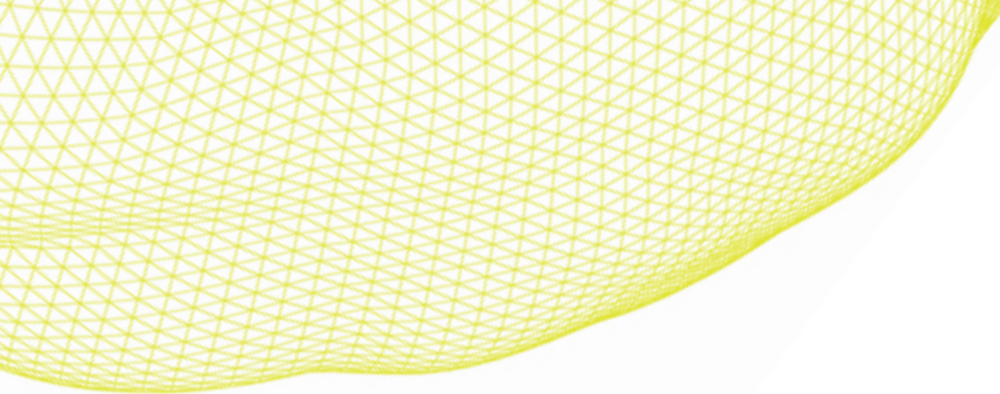for deaf people.

— All the information and application forms were made available on the website a good few weeks before the application deadline, to allow applicants enough time to develop their project and prepare their application.

— Comprehensive FAQ catalogues were made available in German and English and expanded on an ongoing basis.

— There was a separate application form for graduates with adapted requirements.

— From the fourth application round onwards, a short application video could also be uploaded alongside the written application.

— A form of address appropriate to the target group was used in order to explicitly reach people submitting applications for the first time, e.g. dancers or graduates.

— There was cooperation with local and regional dance networks and dance offices in order to provide a nationwide consultation service.

Barrier-free access to the process

Owing to structural disadvantages in training and professional life, it can be difficult for deaf and disabled people to meet certain formal requirements. Various measures were adopted in order to design the application procedure in a way that was as barrier-free and discrimination-sensitive as possible:

— An adapted application form required less project evidence to be submitted than in the regular application and proving freelance income of at least 50 % was dropped.

— All the information about the application process was available in plain language.

— All the information about the application process was available as a video in German sign language.

— A contact person was appointed to deal with questions about barrier-free access and help with the submission of applications by deaf and disabled applicants.

— Access to all the information and advice was governed by the two-sense principle (the two-senses principle is applied when all the information is provided in at least two of the following three human senses: sound, sight and touch), and during the three to four-week call for applications there were (online) information events, an advice hotline and the chance to submit questions by email.

In planning and implementing measures relating to barrier-free access, the DTD consulted experts in the field, e.g. yomma GmbH on information in German sign language and plain language. With regard to barrier-free access and anti-discrimination, the DTD sees itself as an organisation that is learning, reflecting regularly on its approach in this respect, and developing it further. Additional information is available on the homepages provided in the list of links at the end of this document.

Diversity criteria

The application form requested information about:

— Gender (male, female, non-binary)

— Age

— Town or city / federal state

— Professional title (person is applying as a dancer / choreographer / dance educator / dramaturg / producer, etc.)

— Whether the person has already applied / been funded (details of the funding period and amount)

This way, jury members had the opportunity to filter applications based on these categories and thus take account of diversity criteria in the decision-making process.
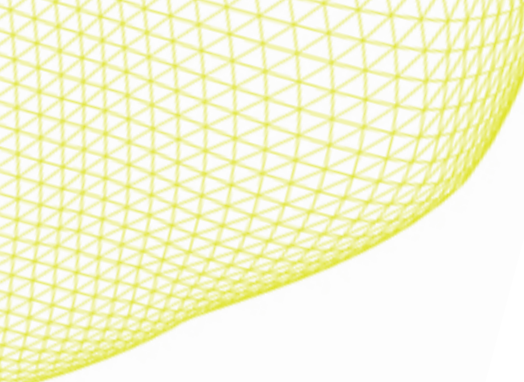
Data and data protection

At the same time, considerations about the design of the application form were influenced by the question of which information was genuinely and essentially needed, and, with an eye on privacy, where information can be waived.

To protect applicants' data sufficiently, some details were requested in the further processing stage purely in order to determine their essential fundability, e.g. proof of solo self-employment via evidence of membership of the Künstlersozialkasse (artists' social security fund) or a tax assessment. In the formal assessment, these documents were viewed and checked by DTD staff only.

Following the internal (formal) assessment, the application documents were then made available to jury members via a password-protected application portal. Work lists, forms or documents were also sent in a password-protected email. Jury members made a written commitment to maintaining silence and protecting data secrecy within the scope of their jury work.

The application ultimately comprised
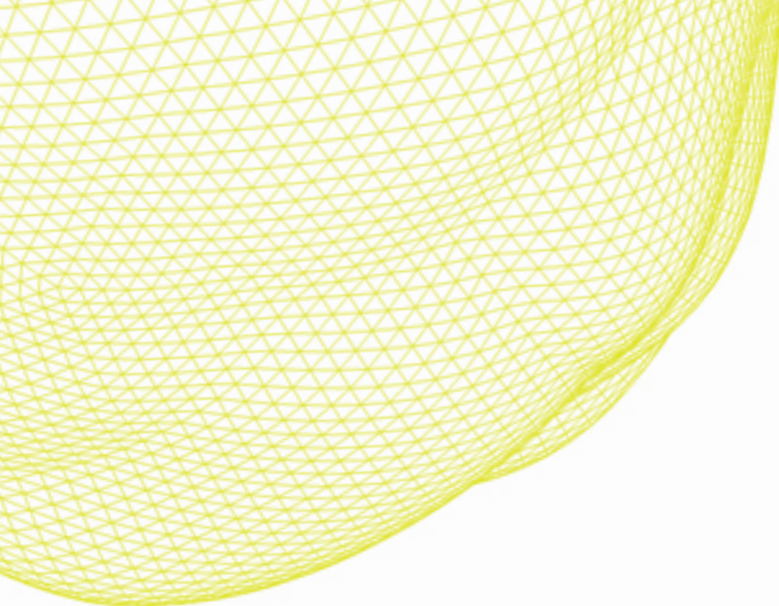the following information and documents:

— Personal details

— Professional title / artistic positions

— Applicant's CV

— Applicant's link / homepage

— Project content in three keywords

— Name and short project description (500 characters)

— Detailed project description (3,000 characters)

— Where applicable, a supplementary application video
(max. 3 minutes)

— Evidence of participation in two to four projects
within the last three calendar years

JURY PROCESS

Jury composition

The following questions should be considered when forming the jury:

— Which specialist and / or artistic expertise, which also means which different dance forms, should be represented?

— Is there a discernible age mix in the composition of the jury? Are young positions also being considered?

— Is there gender diversity?

— Does the jury include representatives of regional structures as well as people with an overview of the federal (and where appropriate the international) context?

— Are marginalised groups (e. g. dancers with disabilities / neurodivergent artists, immigrants, BIPoC) represented?

— Is there a focus on a particular group and is it represented directly (not indirectly) on the jury?

— Do jury members need training or input in advance in the form of guidelines or further training?

— In the case of multiple application rounds, should the jury be composed of experienced and new members alike? Can people funded in previous application rounds also be new members?

Sample citation from the jury guidelines for DIS-TANZ-SOLO, as a means of self-description:

»The composition of the jury reflects a range of diverse perspectives: the composition takes account of the diversity criteria with regard to artistic, anti-racist, scientific and institutional positions, as well as gender, age, the regional and nationwide distribution of jury members and the representation of marginalised groups. This should also be reflected in the decisions.«

The necessary time investment involved and the possibilities for financial compensation should be communicated transparently when recruiting jury members. If should thus be stated, in response to enquiries, whether the jury work is voluntary or whether expense allowances and/or attendance fees can be paid. Before receiving any enquiries, it should also be checked whether any potential barriers may arise for jury members, e.g. due to timetabling or the use of digital tools such as databases, for example whether applications uploaded to the database can be read by a blind person using a screen reader. This preliminary check is important so that barriers can be discussed with the jury and, if necessary, removed before its work begins. Suggestions for jury members can come from associations and interest groups. Recommendations can also be made by institutions. In the case of multiple application rounds, artists who have already been funded can also be asked.

Jury work

The following section covers the specific implementation and work steps of the jury work.
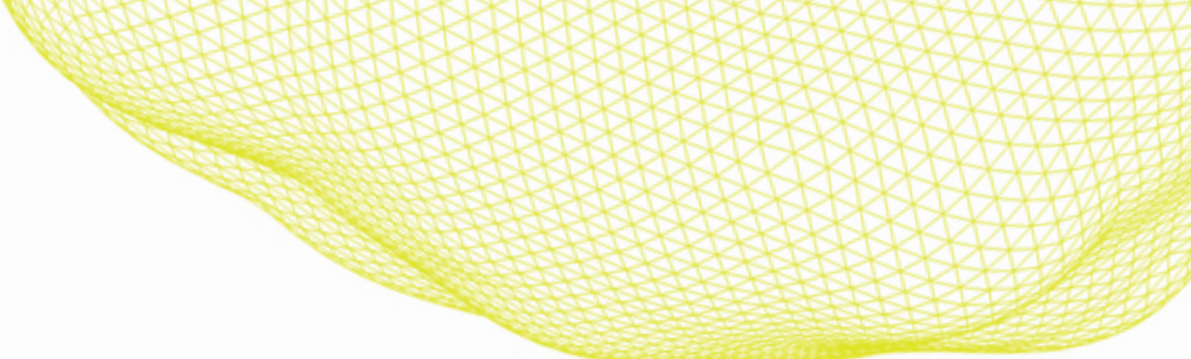
Preparation

ADMINISTRATION

— The framework conditions and privacy agreement are to be recorded in the contract.

— The funding institution initially checks that applications meet the formal criteria (e. g. evidence of self-employment).

— The jury's work table, which includes core data and is used for the pre-assessment, is then created (see below).

— The work table is sent out encrypted.

— Additionally, a tool facilitating a dialogue among jury members on specific applications or questions during the individual readings or a discussion list is created (e. g. cloud-based documents, email or chat channels).

— Do jury members require any further training for their jury work? Are jury members sensitive to social dominance relations, repression mechanisms and one's own privileges? Are training sessions needed before the jury work starts, e.g. in the areas of anti-racism, ableism or classism? How can members be sensitised to the psychological effects of jury work?

— Do jury members need training in the technology, databank, etc. used?

— An information event or video offering an intro-duction to the technology used should be arranged / made available where necessary.

— Are jury members equipped with the necessary technology to view applications and carry out their jury activities or do they need support with procuring or loaning an item?

— At least two preliminary meetings of the jury are recommended:

1. As an introduction to the objectives of the programme as well as to the process and technology before the viewing of applications begins, and

2. As an opportunity to engage in a dialogue on the process and to discuss individual applications ahead of the jury session

Key questions and jury guidelines

The jury guidelines should include the following information:

— General information: jury members, composition, number of applications

— Criteria concerning the call for applications

— Course of the process

— Abstention criteria, e.g. if a jury members knows an applicant

— Sensitisation to perception effects: halo effect, similarity effect, etc.

Example: Key questions for reading applications in the DIS-TANZ-SOLO programme

Does the project meet the objectives of the DIS-TANZ-SOLO programme?

How is the quality of the project description to be assessed?

Does the project convey that the applicant can use the funding to develop or reflect on their own artistic work?

Does the application convey that that the applicant's project makes use of new or innovative ways of working in order to be able to work during the coronavirus pandemic and thus be able to respond to current and future developments?

Can the project be realised given the current pandemic-related requirements and within the time period stated?

Example: Procedures and decision making

The reading process has diversified with the increasing number of applications in order to do justice to submissions even in the event of a high number of entries. The approximately 1,000 applications submitted for each funding round were divided up among the jury members, so that three jury members read and assessed an application in each case. To ensure a differentiated assessment, the combination of jury members was rotated after every 30 to 50 applications.

The jury members viewed each application alone in each case and submitted a preliminary vote independently of each other, so as not to influence each other:

0 = No funding

»The application should not be funded in my view«

1 = Basically good approach but not necessarily worthy of funding

»The application does not necessarily need to be funded in my view«

2 = Good approach, entirely worthy of funding

»The application could be funded in my view but it is not one of my favourites«

3 = Worthy of funding

»The application could be funded in my view«

4 = Highly worthy of funding

»The application has been put together very well and should be funded«

5 = Definitely fund

»The application should definitely be funded in my view«

The DTD entered the preliminary votes into a table for the jury session, arranging the applications based on how well they had been assessed, from very good to less good, and thus providing an initial picture of the jury's assessment.
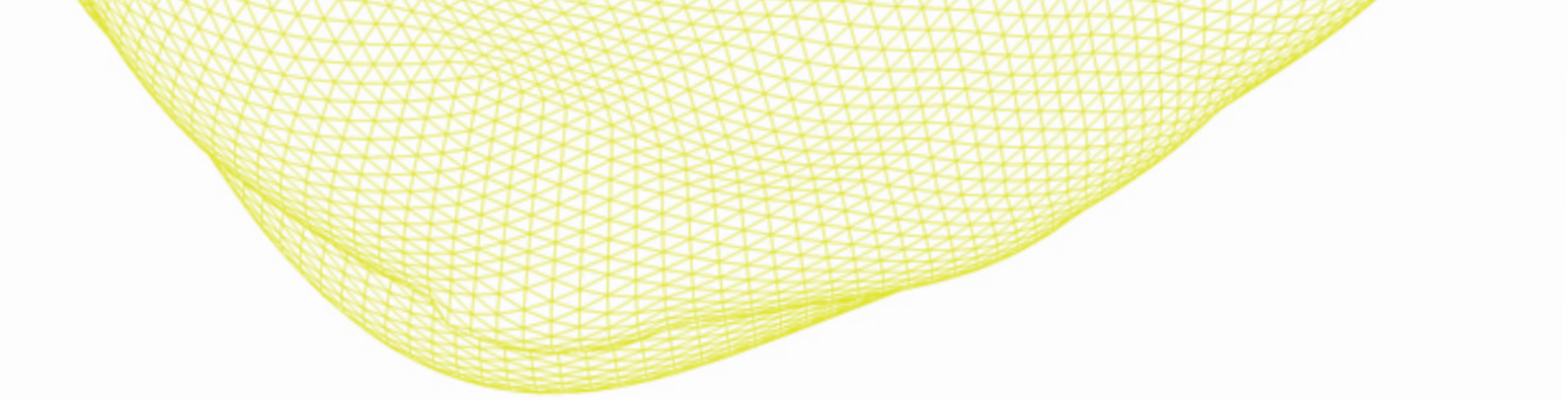
In addition to information about age, professional title, etc., using colour coding in the list so that the assessment table could be filtered based on multiple applications or funding that has already been allocated, for example, was also helpful.

The at least two-day digital session was hosted by DTD staff who did not register a vote. Applications that had been pre-assessed unambiguously positively were discussed first in the session followed by those that had been categorised as less good.

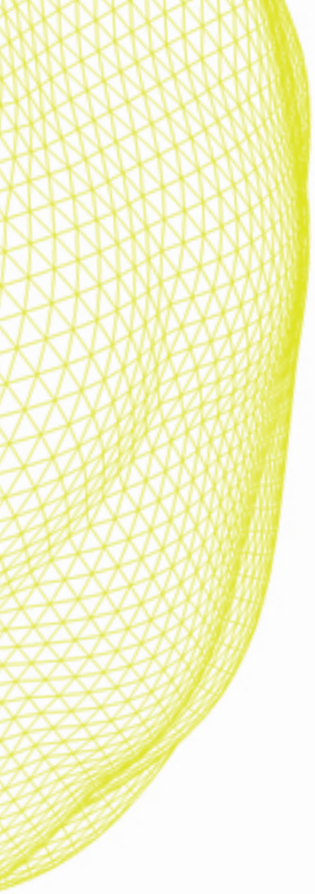**Reflection and sensitisation**

It should be permanently considered during the jury work process whether the selection reflects the diversity criteria set:

— Are all disciplines being taken into account, thus reflecting the diversity of the field?

— Is the internationality of the scene being represented?

— Are cases with a particular difficulty being considered (e. g. international artists with regard to their residence status)?

— Are all age groups being reflected (from graduates to the over 60s)?

— Does the selection reflect the regional distribution of the applicants?

— Are all focus groups being taken into account?

— Are applicants with experience of marginalisation being considered (e. g. people with disabilities, deaf people, people who have experienced racism)?

The following and other questions can be used to reflect on subjective observation errors and to sensitise oneself to them:

— Where are there similarity errors, i.e. when an assessor reads and evaluates applications more positively as a result of biographical parallels (or vice versa, when an application is assessed less favourably because the discipline / biography is unfamiliar to the assessor)?

— Does the application have a single (dramatic) event or feature as its highlight so that other criteria are not considered alongside it (halo effect)?

— Sequence effects: which applications are read when? (Where necessary, change the order in which applications are read, or re-read the first application at the end).

— In projects involving work with marginalised groups, applicants should reflect their own power-critical position in their applications or involve experts in the field.

— In projects involving work with marginalised groups, applicants should state their own position clearly, e.g. whether this personal experience of marginalisation or whether the existence of a privileged position has initiated the project; in the latter case, it is important for the jury to check whether and how far the project results in an appropriation of marginalised knowledge. Possible questions for this could be:

» How will it be ensured that perspectives on marginalisation provided by people with personal experience of it are reflected in the project without it resulting in an appropriation of marginalised knowledge? Is the person enabling a marginalised person to have paid work, for example as a co-director or adviser?

» Is it only the applicant who benefits from the project (financially and professionally) or are they actively and consciously ensuring that marginalised people will benefit financially and professionally from the project, too?

Conclusion

The jury's work in the funding programme ends with the publication of the results as well as a jury statement.

Feedback may be offered depending on procedures and resources. This should be taken into account in the process from the outset, decisions should be recorded accordingly or feedback should be provided via an external party who is not a member of the jury.

Programme design in the long term may include:

— Interviews with funding recipients

— The publication of project reports

— Discourse formats

— Events or performances promoting the visibility of funding recipients

The DTD has implemented the following formats:

— Blog: Exisdance (German only)

The *Exisdance* blog provides funding recipients with a platform to present their DIS-TANZEN projects and share the results..

— Podcast: VOICES OF DANCE – the Dachverband Tanz Deutschland podcast (Series 1, English and German episodes available)

The first series of the VOICES OF DANCE podcast invites DIS-TANZEN funding recipients to talk about their projects and to report on the work of a dance artist during the pandemic.
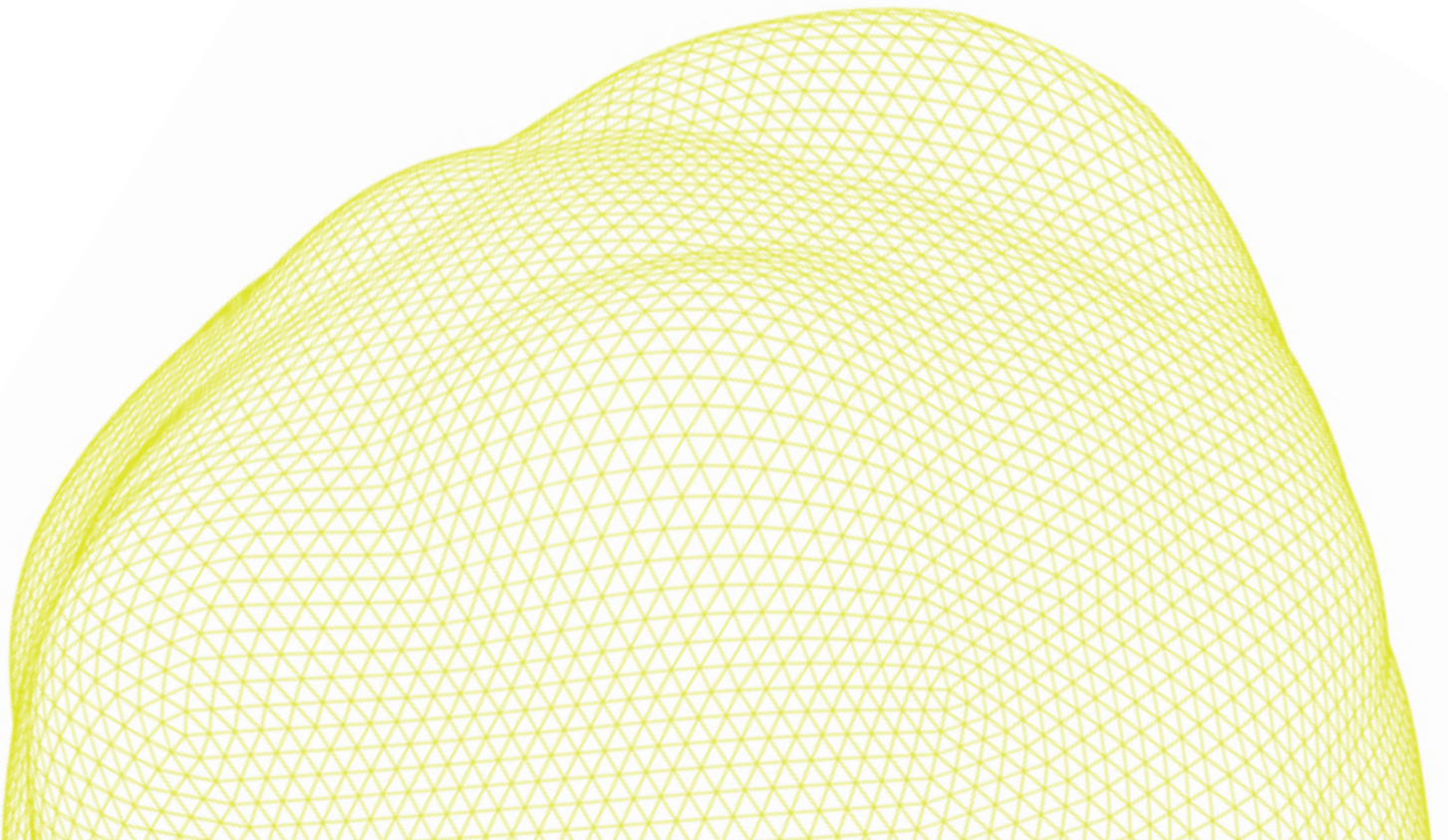
— Festival: DIS-TANZEN Festival (8–10 July 2022)

The festival by and for DIS-TANZEN programme funding recipients offered an opportunity to present the resulting projects, findings and experiences in a range of formats (workshops, discussion rounds, videos, performances, lectures, etc.) after two years of pandemic. More than 200 participants from both sub-programmes came together in Berlin and exchanged information, ideas and experiences during approximately 70 themed contributions created exclusively by funding recipients.

OUTLOOK

Over the past three years, the Dachverband Tanz Deutschland has continued to develop its funding and jury procedures further and is striving for permanent reflection and improvement at all levels, in dialogue with the dance scene. As a result of the requirement relating to the aspirations of coronavirus assistance programmes to provide the broadest possible support, and owing to the funding that was made available, the DTD has been able to dedicate itself and pay particular attention to these themes. In addition to its function as a support measure, the DIS-TANZ-SOLO funding programme also constituted a pilot project for the first nationwide scholarship programme for dance projects, an innovative funding instrument for creative dance artists in all areas of dance. A reflection on access barriers for young dance artists and career starters, for example, led to a specific funding programme for dance graduates in DIS-TANZ-START.

It is very much the concern of the DTD to move these processes forward in the future, even in the absence of broad-based rescue programmes, and to promote them at the level of cultural policy. In this respect, this reflection paper is intended to provide a record of the interim status as well as a foundation for the ongoing discourse on the design of discrimination-sensitive funding and jury procedures, and the reduction of barriers.

FURTHER MATERIAL

Reflection and evaluation relating to NEUSTART programmes in other disciplines:

Fonds Darstellende Künste:
WIE, WER UND WARUM? Vergabeverfahren
in der Förderung der Freien Darstellenden Künste
(German only)

Fonds Soziokultur: Menschen machen Kultur –
Evaluation des Sonderprogramms Neustart Kultur
des Fonds Soziokultur (German only)

Information on Diversity Arts Culture's discrimination-sensitive programme work:

Diversity Arts Culture: Access Rider –
What is an access document?

Diversity Arts Culture: Empowerment Compass –
Navigating Discrimination in the Cultural Industry

Diversity Arts Culture: Access Rider – Leichte Sprache
(German only)

Yomma, a company producing information material in German sign language:

Home – yomma (German only)

Website of the Dachverband Tanz Deutschland, the agency executing the programme, and the homepage of the DIS-TANZEN programme:

Website Dachverband Tanz Deutschland

Website DIS-TANZEN