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Cake and shouting applause: The Make Arts Policy event is the freshest thing happened in Finnish culture policy since ages

According to the Make Arts Policy Summit yesterday, a few things seem to be clear:

1. Finnish politicians on average have very little to say concretely about culture politics.
2. There could be a jazz band also in the parliament that would play a warning melody when the politician's floor takes too much time or is not concrete.
3. 0,8 per cent of a cake is not enough for the Finnish art field since it wasn't even enough for the people who were present.

Yesterday the Make Arts Policy Summit organized at the city hall, married politics and performance in an exhilarating way.

The event produced by the **Baltic Circle theatre festival**, **Checkpoint Helsinki** and **Public Movement**, demanded politicians of ten parties to make concrete cultural political openings and to throw themselves into the situation.

And good that it was demanded! In Europe the economical recession has already caused rough cost cuts in culture budgets. In Britain a third of the Arts Council's funding for museums and galleries has been cut in four years. In Finland these kinds of cost cuts have not yet started but the Educational and Cultural Ministry have already been forced to make savings.

The general election will take place in the spring but the cultural political programmes of the parties have been yet tame – or already years old.

In the event of yesterday, the politicians performed the cultural political comments of their parties, ended up in a grilling by experts and got to dance and sing.

A member of the Finns Party **Juho Eerola** performed his view by singing and **Sauli Ahvenjärvi** from Christian Democrats performed a guitar cover from the evergreen *What a Wonderful World*.

The politicians had been asked to include performative elements to their floors but the culture people demanded for straight talk: the audience had been given blue papers that marked the demand for more concreteness. The blue papers swished in the air during the floors of Ahvenjärvi and Eerola but they were also shown for instance for **Päivi Lipponen** (The Social Democratic Party of Finland), **Päivi Storgård** (Swedish Folk Party) and **Timo Vuori** (National Coalition Party).

In general, the members of the parliament parties were careful in their comments. In the survey before the event Eerola from the Finns party hinted at the possibility to discontinue the grant system but he was very careful with the subject in the summit.

Timo Laaninen (Centre party of Finland) promised not to promise anything for the culture people. "We start from there that living for debts have to be stopped and that means also tightness in the art budgets".

Big round applause was given for **Silvia Modig** (Left Alliance) who demanded for basic income for artists and an increase in the artist's pension.

The biggest applause was however, given to the chairman of the Communist Party **Juha-Pekka Väisänen**, who demanded the state to transfer 200 millions euros from the armed forces to the appropriation of arts. During Väisänen's floor a huge cake was brought to the room from which he asked 0,8% - the same amount that is the part of arts and culture in the state's total budget - to be cut.

It seemed that the evening offered to many treats only otherwise than in the form of a cake. The Finnish culture politics has been anaemic for a long time and discussions have been mainly on the minister's cat painting.

Also without the cake and the songs the event would have been the freshest thing happening in the Finnish Culture Politics in a while. There was enthusiasm and energy in the hall. Maybe the cultural political discussion would also need a band that would force it to the right direction?

The evening ended with a performance where Finnish politicians and representatives of art institutions from the director of Helsinki Festival **Erik Söderblom** to the intendant of Kiasma **Marja Sakari** and the principal of the University of Arts **Tiina Rosenberg** danced a "hymn" as a symbolic gesture of the future of Finnish art politics.