

# Jury Note on Applications Submitted by 16 February 2026

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## 1. General Remarks

Funding applications for individual projects scheduled to be presented within the first half of 2027 were accepted until the deadline of 16 February 2025. Receiving the applications, the Kuratorium employed its established, two-part decision procedure: After making a pre-selection (longlist), we had interviews with previously selected artists and finally arrived at our approvals for funding by deliberating over several days.

In total, we received 170 applications concerning individual projects and 18 applications for re-run funding. 88 applications (approx. 47%) were selected for the longlist; 81 of them concerned individual projects, while 7 were for re-runs.

57 artist interviews of about 40–50 minutes each were conducted. The difference between the number of longlisted applications and the number of interviews is due to the fact that not all re-applications and re-run applications require interviews. In a few cases of the present round, however, we invited some of the artists who had already introduced their proposals in person for another interview to allow our new members Martin Pesl and Melika Ramić to meet them and discuss open questions.

Once a week, the interviews were held via Zoom – a service we provided to artists on residencies outside of Vienna or collectives whose team members were scattered over more than one location. While the need for such digital meetings has decreased in recent years, we will continue to offer them in the future – also to facilitate attendance in case of illness or care duties.

29 projects and 4 re-runs were approved for funding, equalling funding rates of 17.1% for individual projects and 22.2% for re-runs. The average funding amount is € 34,961 for individual projects and € 14,500 for re-runs.

Compared to the previous funding round, this means a slightly higher funding rate for individual projects and a lower one for re-runs. In both instances, this marks a shift back towards the rates achieved a year ago:

### Funding rate for individual projects:

- submission date February 2025: 19.1%
- submission date September 2025: 16.1%
- submission date February 2026: 17.1%

### Funding rate for re-runs:

- submission date February 2025: 21.4%

- submission date September 2025: 27.2%
- submission date February 2026: 22.2%

The average amounts approved show similar movement, albeit in the opposite direction: The average amount approved for individual projects has decreased, while the average amount for re-runs has increased. In both instances, this marks a shift back towards the amounts achieved a year ago:

Average amount approved for funding individual projects:

- submission date February 2025: € 34,266
- submission date September 2025: € 38,089
- submission date February 2026: € 34,961

Average amount approved for re-reruns:

- submission date February 2025: € 15,667
- submission date September 2025: € 9,667
- submission date February 2026: € 14,500

The number of applications submitted has hardly changed in comparison to the previous funding period. In September 2025, 173 applications for individual projects and 22 re-run applications were submitted. The current round has seen 170 applications for individual projects and 18 re-run applications.

The overall amount approved for funding (individual projects plus re-runs) shows only minor variation:

- submission date February 2025: € 1,075,000
- submission date September 2025: € 1,124,000
- submission date February 2026: € 1,070,000

The overall amount submitted (individual projects plus re-runs) totals € 6,226,582. This number is slightly below the overall amount of € 6,336,445 submitted in September 2025, the highest to date.

## **2. Observations and Outlook**

At first glance, the total number of projects remains the same as in last year's February round: Rather than 30 individual projects and 3 re-runs, we have now approved 29 individual projects and 4 re-runs for funding. A closer look is required to discern that, slowly but consistently, times are getting harder. The budget at our disposal was dispersed among a higher number of applicants (170 as compared to 157 in the spring of 2025).

But we have good news as well: While only 92% of the requested sums were approved for funding a year ago, this share is at 94% for the current period. The basic situation is unchanged, however: The Kuratorium has again faced a large number of high-quality applications, and again we were unable to grant our approval to many artists we value highly. A continuously growing number of applications means a rise in funding-worthy projects and artists. Since, at the same time, the available funds fail to match this rise, these funding-worthy but unfunded projects continue to pile up. It has thus become customary for promising proposals to be re-submitted two or three times before being approved for funding. The

current period saw 115 new applications (16 approved) and 55 re-applications (13 approved) concerning new productions.

This increase in applications and simultaneous non-increase in funds combined with our desire to fund as many different artists as possible forces us to implement funding hiatuses for individual artists. In this, we are continuing a practice established by previous curatorial constellations: If a certain artist or artist group has had their project funded in a previous round, the Kuratorium tends to wait until the production has been brought to production before deciding on funding for a new project. While this is by no means a rule carved in stone – it is legitimate to submit applications anytime, and interviews may already be conducted about a new project in this case –, the practice has proven a helpful way of arriving at fair decisions for a large number of promising proposals.

For one year now, applicants have been asked to mark their project's genre on the application form. Regrettably, we must admit that these genre attributions do not always make sense to us. Remembering the time when the Kuratorium was in charge of genre attributions, we are, of course, aware that this can be a tricky task and that the lines are often blurred. However, it is not helpful to simply choose 'performance' when in doubt or to put 'dance/choreography' or 'musical theatre' rather than 'project for young audiences' when submitting a dance or musical theatre project for children or youths. The Kuratorium undertakes to regard each genre to an extent corresponding to its share in the overall number of applications. The comparatively low outcome of 5 'drama', 5 'dance/choreography' and 3 'projects for young audiences' submissions approved is hence the result of seemingly random genre attributions.

Despite the general scarcity of funds, the Kuratorium sets great store in the avoidance of artist (self-)exploitation (see also '5. Minimum Fees'). We therefore carefully read the submitted calculations – a fact that appeared to surprise many artists during our interviews. The calculation tool as provided by IG Freie Theaterarbeit and others helps make the numbers artists work with transparent. It visualises the number of workdays scheduled for each project member and shows how minimum fees are observed. Even though its use in the application process is mandatory, we noticed that many artists were not aware of its importance in addition to the regular income/expenses sheet that is also required.

Further, speaking of budgets, we also noticed that many artists choose to no longer rely on subsidies from the Federal Ministry of Housing, Arts, Culture, Media and Sport, requesting from the federal government amounts so small that they can likely complete their projects even without them. It remains to be seen how such an accumulation of smaller requests will affect the Ministry's funding culture. At the same time, we are also detecting an influx of groups traditionally based in other provinces or even countries applying for additional funding in Vienna. We attribute this at least in part to the precarious financial situations in regions like Styria, to name but one, where the intended elimination of the 'ORF-Landesabgabe' sparks fears of radical cuts in cultural funding.

Applicants seemed duly familiar with the circumstances of brut Wien facing a season without a permanent venue under the new artistic direction of Tomasz Kireńczuk. We found that most submissions aspiring to cooperate with brut were nicely tailored to Kireńczuk's overall concept for this interlude. TEATA in der Gumpendorfer, in turn, is confident that the renovation of its building will be finished by the first quarter of 2027, which is exactly the period relevant for the current funding round. The surprising news that TEATA director Sara Ostertag has been appointed as the future artistic director of Schauspielhaus Wien in late April of 2026 has not figured into the submissions and interviews of the current round.

One final note: Not only do we as members of the Kuratorium regard it as a key part of our job to go see the applying artists' works in Vienna, funded or not, whenever possible – it is also our great pleasure. While we follow the co-producing institutions' schedules proactively, we rely on artists' announcements to learn about any events beyond those houses. As a general rule, the sooner we learn about a performance the better the chances of at least one of us three attending.

### **3. Minimum Fees**

In its 'Code of Ethics', the City of Vienna's Cultural Department commits to the principles of fair pay and advises applicants to implement them in their work. The Kuratorium examines the submitted budget plans accordingly. While adhering to minimum fees is not mandatory to be approved for funding, we still believe it is an important tool to achieve fair working conditions and counteract tendencies of self-exploitation and underpayment.

Once again, IG Freie Theaterarbeit's suggested minimum fees as adapted in early 2024 based on inflation were the basis for applications in the current funding period: Beginners: min. € 194 per 8-hour work/rehearsal day; artists with 5+ years of professional experience: min. € 227. A minimum of € 390 is suggested as remuneration for the first and second shows, followed by € 223 per show starting with the third show. The approved minimum fees relate to the 'employers' gross amount' in the case of employees and the 'employee's gross amount' in the case of self-employed persons. Institutions that provide permanent employment may apply for subsidies from IG Netz to help pay social security duties.

A Microsoft Excel tool provided for download on the website of IG Freie Theaterarbeit helps calculate and break down fees/salaries. Artists invited for an interview with the Kuratorium will be asked for this tool by e-mail. Calculations may also be done using individual tools as long as the Kuratorium is able to see where the numbers come from and who gets what for how much work over what period. During our interviews, we ask artists about their handling of minimum fees and fair pay – if only to raise awareness for this important issue.

On the one hand, we get the impression from the interviews that artists generally welcome the guidelines for minimum fees and fair pay. On the other hand, we often hear applicants worry that high numbers in calculated budgets may lower their chances of being approved for funding. Occasionally, this results in failure to include the necessary scope of rehearsals in the budget; in other instances, project initiators and artistic directors calculate their own fees too low to make productions possible and guarantee that their employees receive fair payment. While we appreciate this kind of dilemma, we would like to emphasise the importance of realistic production budgets.

### **4. Themes and Aesthetics**

As in previous funding rounds, a major point of reference for submitted projects continues to be life and living together in increasingly fragile and precarious circumstances. The range of themes includes: violence especially against non-male identified persons; aspects of shame; conspiracy theories, fake news and AI-generated realities; the climate catastrophe and ecologic change – the latter being a potential reason for the surprising number of proposals dealing with the Danube as a venue or theme. Other noticeable thematic clusters concern

football, witches and the (re-)discovery and artistic tackling of customs and traditions from artists' own cultures of origin. Yet other projects propose different forms of community and relation to the world by turning towards practices of hope, slowing down or listening. Furthermore, many projects seek ways of employing the theatre space as an arrangement not just to be observed but to experimentally explore all kinds of presence. The term 'immersion' has been much used in this context – and while it is not quite apt to describe all kinds of audience participation, its omnipresence points to the desire to organise ways of sharing beyond the typical concept of art appreciation by watching and listening.

To conclude, we still observe artist's ambition to reach non-regular theatregoers. While this is a noble endeavour, we find that there are many projects that are either too low-threshold in nature or overly ambitious, meaning they offer either too little or too much, thus hampering audience development rather than fostering it. On a positive note, children's and youth theatre fearlessly continues its search for age-appropriate means and formats of depicting complex, difficult issues.

## **5. Selection Criteria**

In addition to the artistic quality of the submitted projects, the Kuratorium generally attempts to consider all genres (drama, performance, dance/choreography, puppet and object theatre, musical theatre, theatre for young audiences, contemporary circus) as well as trans-disciplinary, trans-cultural, gender-specific, inter-cultural and inclusive approaches. Special attention is paid to proposals that boost the repertoire of the central venues of the independent scene and/or exploit new venues and (public) spaces. Our ongoing objectives further include expanding the range of Vienna's performance art and addressing new audiences.

We consider it relevant if artists are interested in tackling the city of Vienna from various perspectives and positions, engaging with its people, its societal, political, historical and/or cultural circumstances and involving its resident artists. In other words, the city should be an important pillar of the artistic work supported by the Kuratorium. Moreover, we set great store in a diversity of generations, trying to create a good blend of established and emerging artists.

As the case may be, it is also desirable for artists to network on local, national and international levels in the way of residencies, co-productions, guest performances, funding etc., and to invest in proficient production management. Co-production funds contributed by institutions and support funds from other territorial authorities or the like serve to show the Kuratorium that the project enjoys both wide artistic interest and a professional financial basis.

## **6. Facts & Figures**

### **6.1.1 Project funding requested**

Applications submitted: 170

Total amount requested: € 5,943,363

Divided into:

New applications: 115

Re-applications: 55

Genres:

Drama: 49  
Performance: 48  
Dance/choreography: 31  
Projects for young audiences: 15  
Musical theatre: 14  
Contemporary circus: 9  
Puppet and object theatre: 4

Highest/lowest amount requested: € 70,000/€ 4,800

Average amount requested: € 34,961

**6.1.2 Project funding approved**

Applications approved: 29

Funding rate: 17.1%

Total amount approved: € 1,012,000

Divided into:

New applications: 16

Re-applications: 13

Genres:

Performance: 13  
Dance/choreography: 5  
Drama: 5  
Projects for young audiences: 3  
Musical theatre: 1  
Puppet and object theatre: 1  
Contemporary circus: 1

Highest/lowest amount approved: € 62,000/€ 5,000

Average amount approved: € 34,897

A total of approx. 94% of amounts requested has been approved for funding.

**6.2.1 Re-run funding requested**

Applications submitted: 18

Total amount requested: € 273,219

Genres:

Drama: 5  
Projects for young audiences: 4  
Performance: 6  
Dance/choreography: 2  
Contemporary circus: 1

Highest/lowest amount requested: € 38,000/€ 5,700

Average amount requested: € 15,179

### **6.2.2 Re-run funding approved**

Applications approved: 4

Funding rate: 22.2%

Total amount approved for funding: 58,000

#### Genres:

Drama: 2

Dance/choreography: 1

Projects for young audiences: 1

Highest/lowest amount approved: € 20,000/€ 9,000

Average amount approved: € 14,500

A total of approx. 88% of amounts requested has been approved for funding.