



## Petition

To: the Governing Mayor of Berlin Kai Wegner, Finance Senator Stefan Evers, Culture Senator Joe Chialo

### Protect Berlin's Culture in the Budget Crisis

At an information event on 19 September 2024, you explained to representatives of all cultural sectors the budgetary emergency facing the state of Berlin and the necessary and drastic savings requirements in 2025 and 2026, including for the cultural budget. A savings volume of 110 to 150 million euros or more for 2025 and a similar sum again for 2026 are on the cards.

As an association of opera houses, concert halls, theatres, revues and cabarets in Berlin (Bühnenverein Landesverband Berlin), we are therefore calling on the Senate to focus on the social and economic importance of culture in the upcoming consultations on consolidating the overall state budget. The savings achieved in the cultural sector – the city's smallest budget category – would be blatantly disproportionate to the immense damage that will be felt for decades to come.

We appeal to you: Don't cut Berlin's culture. Berlin lives from culture. Culture forms society and creates quality of life. It is Berlin's decisive location factor. It shapes Berlin's image, especially in comparison with other German and international metropolises.

The Bühnenverein stands in solidarity with all areas of culture in Berlin. We will not allow ourselves to be driven into distribution battles between cultural sectors. Berlin needs the diversity of culture, Berlin benefits from the reciprocal impulses of the various cultural sectors. This makes the city rich and fit for the future. Every euro spent on culture is an investment that pays off many times over, socially and economically.

#### Why is this important?

Budget cuts of this magnitude would be tantamount to a clear cut for culture in Berlin:

- The institutionally funded opera houses, concert halls and theatres would be forced to largely suspend production and performance operations that have already been planned and contractually agreed. With high fixed costs for staff and building maintenance, the only budgetary leeway is in the artistic programme. The impact on the city's cultural programme would be drastic - the 29 member companies of the Bühnenverein alone reach around 3 million visitors a year.
- Theatres organised under private law would be threatened with insolvency.
- Cuts to project-related funding would affect the most vulnerable areas of the independent scene and the performing arts, literature, visual arts, dance and cultural education.
- Important organisations in the independent scene, clubs, literature and the visual arts would be threatened with closure due to a lack of cooperation funding.
- The 'cultural workplace' would be directly and extensively threatened by redundancies and the professional demise of many. After all, 8.2% of the labour force in Berlin alone works in the cultural sector.



- The cultural offering would be a fraction of what it is now. This would mean the disappearance of spaces for social interaction and encounters, social dialogue, cultural and political education, places for leisure and cultural enjoyment.
- The indirect profitability associated with the cultural sector would fall massively. Economic sectors such as the hotel and catering industry, tourism, local transport, retail etc. would suffer severe losses.
- The high international presence of Berlin culture through guest performances and co-operations all over the world would be lost. The international cultural scene, which comes to Berlin through many festivals and co-operations, would stay away from the city - the diversity, excellence, strength and innovative capacity of culture in Berlin would be weakened or disappear. Berlin's international appeal, which attracts many to our city and makes it such an attractive place to live, would fade.

The cuts that are being discussed are not the way to set the course for the future of culture in terms of budgetary policy. With these plans, Berlin's culture would hit the wall with full force.

Bühnenverein Landesverband Berlin

For the Executive Board: Thomas Fehrle, Christina Schulz, Karin Bares and Tobias Veit

24 September 2024

Link to the original petition, in German language: <https://weact.campact.de/petitions/graben-sie-der-kultur-berlins-nicht-das-wasser-ab-berlin-lebt-von-der-kultur>