

## **Important news, Clarinval attacks the Art Work Allowance!**

**Dear members, visual artists and art workers,**

After hearings in the Flemish and Federal parliaments, it is by now already clear that the artwork certificate and artwork commission will continue to exist as provided by law. There will be an evaluation in 2027, which was expected anyhow. But what about the art work allowance?

This week you could read in De Tijd and Le Soir that Minister Clarinval wants to abolish Chapter 12 of the unemployment benefits legislation. It is precisely this chapter that concerns the art work allowance. But what Clarinval precisely intends to do in concrete terms is not yet entirely clear. No one from the cultural sector or advocacy groups has been able to look at the programme act that is supposed to guide this negotiation process.

It is noteworthy that the deputy prime minister and minister of Work, Economy and Agriculture is reverting the previously approved laws on the reformed artists' statute, as he was involved in both its foundation and implementation.

The working conditions of art workers are based on irregular periods of employment with periods of invisible and unpaid work in between. The Working In The Arts reform and necessary adjustments to the Art Work Allowance has already been an important step in recognising art as work. More so, it was worked out in collaboration with the sector. Thanks to the WITA reform, all measures and social gains were tailored to the specific needs of the sector and the art worker.

**Anyway, for clarity, we'll list some certainties and points of interest.**

About 11,000 people moved from the old into the new artist status on January 1st 2024. By the end of 2024, 3,500 new art work certificates were issued. Not all of these people are entitled to the art work benefits. Press reports speak of 8,000 art workers with art work benefits.

What is certain is that the government aims to limit the art work benefits over time, just like will be the case for the other unemployment benefits. Therefore, the art work benefits would only be valid for 2 years.

At the moment, an art worker can and must renew the application every 3 years. Will the benefits really be limited in time or will there be political support for renewing every 2 years? Pushing it back to 2 years and the uncertainty about the specifics undermines the current system and tilts towards a total dismantling.

The entry conditions for the Art Work Allowance have become stricter since the WITA reform. Artists must now apply for an Artwork Certificate and/or renew it every five years, creating increasing administrative tasks. The number of working days required

to qualify for the benefit has increased, although the threshold at renewal is lower than before. This flexible renewal is positive for those working in the sector, as every artist's career has difficult stress periods of reflection or reinvention at times.

Under current legislation, it was permitted to become self-employed in a secondary occupation once one receives the art work allowance. This is a significant step forward compared to the past. The current artist status provides opportunities for growth and professionalisation. But will artists still be able to do this in the future, and what about the artists who have already made the leap in the meantime?

The Art Work Allowance is not regressive and does not decrease over time. In any case, the daily amount and non-reimbursable days are not a privileged treatment. In fact, if an artist becomes more successful and earns more, some of his earnings will be disregarded when calculating his daily amount because there are only 78 working days in a quarter. Besides, the maximum daily amount does not exceed the highest unemployment benefit. More so, if an artist has had a good quarter, non-reimbursable days are charged 9 to 10 months later through the cumulated calculation. This calculation prevents one from combining benefits with high earnings.

Thus, the artist status is clearly based on social protection but also contribution! Therefore, this attack cannot and should not be accepted! All these measures were put in place after investing a lot of time and resources. Simply undoing all this is nothing more than a political stance, and has nothing to do with cutting costs!

**What do we really want as advocates for visual artists and art workers?**

**That a significant delegation of artists can join the negotiating table! Preferably for the preservation of the artwork legislation as it is currently put in place. If alternative measures have to be taken, we first want to be clearly informed so that we can evaluate this with you, our supporters. Because...**

**... WITHOUT ARTISTS NO ART.**

**NICC CALLS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROTEST**

**NEXT MONDAY 31 MARCH**

**AT 10 A.M. ON THE MUNTPLEIN IN BRUSSELS.**