

How to

[Guidelines to work in Sweden]



SWEDISH ARTIST
RESIDENCY NETWORK

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How to - Guidelines to work as an artist in Sweden

To be a new citizen and at the same time be an artist can be tricky. We have collected a startup information kit to guide you through everything you need to know if you want to work as an artist in Sweden. This interactive pdf contains clickable links that will take you to additional information and websites.

Find ways to reach out with your artwork

As every artist knows, the most valuable key to success in any field of work is getting contacts and networking. As every artist also knows, this is not an easy task, and it takes energy from what is in the core interest, namely, to work. But a work of art/film/play/text/choreography that is not engaging with the audience is not at its best potential.

To get started with networking and contacts, your best option is to speak with your host and get to know the local scene and the people that engage in it. What local galleries/theaters/workshops/dance stages/communities are there close to you can help you reach the next one. To show interest in other's work and engage in their work is always a way to get conversations started, and perhaps this is the best way in Sweden as the social culture is rather closed. Asking questions might be difficult because of language barriers, but it is a very good way of getting to know people and their interests – and after the focus will be with your work and your interests.

Get in contact with your community

Every municipality has a culture and arts secretary. It's always a good idea to contact your municipality and inform them that you are currently living in their municipality. In the best case scenario, the culture and arts secretary can guide you.

Every region has a regional culture developer who is responsible for the sector of the visual arts and design, dance, theater, handcraft. Get in contact with the regional culture developer (of your sector in the region you are living in and they will get you in contact with your community, help you with questions regarding regional funding and much more.

Professional associations for people in the arts and culture sector

Once you are a Swedish citizen you can join a professional association. Professional associations are national organizations whose members are individuals working in arts and culture and literature. The primary aim of such organizations is to promote the interests of its members in terms of policies in the arts and culture and to safeguard their trade union interests. There are organizations of this kind in the written word sector, in the music sector, in the visual arts and design sector and in dance, theater and film. These national organizations offer their members legal and financial advisory services, for example. They also collect information and publish guidelines regarding fees, monitor arts and business policies and copyright issues, organize collaboration and networking, and provide their members with inspiration. The organizations also tend to provide information to both members and non-members concerning application periods for grants and residencies in their members' areas.

Professional associations

VISUAL ARTS AND DESIGN

- [Konstnärernas riksorganisation](#)
- [Svenska tecknare](#)
- [Svenska Fotografers Förbund](#)
- [Centrum för fotografi](#)
- [Illustratörcentrum](#) – a contact service for assignments for illustrators, graphic designers, animators and people who make graphic novels.
- [Konstnärscentrum](#) – a contact service for artistic commissions, and promoting artistic activities and supporting artists in their professional roles.
- [Bildupphovsrätt](#) – a collecting society for copyright holders when their works are used in various contexts and for distribution of these funds to the copyright holders.
- [Swedish Curators' Association](#) - an association for curators.

DANCE, THEATRE AND PERFORMING ARTS

- [Danscentrum](#) – is the employer organization and collective voice of the independent dance field.
- [Dansalliansen](#) – provides freelance dancers with basic employment and offers competence development, matching and collaborations with other actors in the field
- [Teatercentrum](#) – is a trade and employer organization for the independent professional performing arts. A strong voice nationally, regionally and locally for independent performing arts in Sweden.

THE WRITTEN WORD

- [Sveriges författarförbund](#) – for authors and translators, advice on fees, legal aid, networks and grants.
- [Författarcentrum](#) – a contact service for assignments for authors, network meetings, etc.
- [Översättarcentrum](#) – a contact service, etc. for assignments for translators.
- [Journalistförbundet](#) – for journalists, advice concerning fees, legal aid, networks and grants.
- [Svenska PEN](#)

In Sweden, these associations and trade unions are all member organizations of KLYS: the Swedish Joint Committee for Artistic and Literary Professionals, which coordinates and promotes issues in areas including arts policies, and questions relating to taxes, the labor market, copyright and the media. KLYS also provides advisory services to its members regarding legislation and ongoing government commissions working on matters relating to the working conditions of people in the arts and culture sector. You can read more about [KLYS and find the professional association of your field.](#)

How to get funding/financial support

In this next section we will guide you through how to get residencies, project grants and stipends. This section is divided into different artforms.

VISUAL ARTS AND DESIGN

This sector comprises the following professions: artist, photographer, crafts-person, industrial designer, draftspeople and illustrators. People working in this sector may be salaried employees, freelancers or sole proprietors. People working in this sector may invoice for their work either by setting up a company or by using the services of an invoicing firm. Because this sector seldom offers employment security, many people working in these professions have a second profession in a different sector (referred to as a “bread and butter” job). Read more about this sector in the guide to artists on the website of the [Swedish Arts Grants committee.](#)



To get funding/financial support in Sweden, you need to write a project application, and this is much easier if you have a Swedish contact person or network/community to help you. Find a friend or a colleague to help you out.

RESIDENCIES, PROJECT GRANTS AND STIPENDS

Support for people working in the visual arts and design can be applied for at:

- [Konstnärsnämnden](#)
- [Kulturbryggan](#)
- [Konstnärscentrum](#)
- [Sveriges Författarfond](#)
- [Hasselblad Foundation](#)
- [Kulturrådet](#)
- [Byggnads Kulturstipendium](#)
- [Svenska Institutet i Paris](#)
- [Svenska Kyrkan](#)
- [Maria Bonnier Dahlins stiftelse](#)
- [Nordisk kulturkontakt](#)
- [Nordisk kulturfond](#)

DANCE, THEATER AND PERFORMING ARTS

This sector comprises the following professions: dancer, choreographer, performers, actors and circus artists. People working in this sector may be salaried employees by dance companies, theater institutions, freelancers or sole proprietors. People working in this sector may invoice for their work either by setting up a company or by using the services of an invoicing firm. Read more about this sector in the guide to artists on the website of the [Swedish Arts Grants committee](#). There are a few organizations in Sweden that strive to strengthen the production conditions for dance, Theatre and performing arts and help artists to develop their work from the idea stage to implementation, production and touring.

- [DansnätSverige](#) – Co-productions and touring
- [SITE](#)- Production House, residency and co-production
- [Riksteatern](#) – Production residency and co-production. Sweden biggest touring organization.

RESIDENCIES, PROJECT GRANTS AND STIPENDS

Support for people working in the dance field can be applied for at:

- [Konstnärsnämnden](#)
- [Kulturrådet – Scenkonst](#)
- [Carina Ari](#)
- [Scen och film](#)
- [Teaterstiftelsen](#)
- [Dramatiker](#)
- [Svenska Kyrkans kulturstipendier](#)
- [Nordisk kulturkontakt](#)
- [Nordisk kulturfond](#)

THE WRITTEN WORD

This sector comprises professions such as author, poet, journalist in the fields of press, radio and tv, translator, writer. People working in this sector may be salaried employees, freelancers or sole proprietors. Many authors, poets, translators and writers have their own companies. It is not unusual for people working in these professions to have a second profession alongside their main one. It is common for journalists to be freelancers taking assignments with different media, magazines and newspapers. It is also common to work for a staffing firm, and to then be “rented out” to different employers.

RESIDENCIES, PROJECT GRANTS AND STIPENDS

See the websites of the professional associations for specific grants and support. Other organizations that people working in the field of the written word often apply for support from include Support for people working in the visual arts and design can be applied for at:

- [Kulturrådet](#)
- [Sveriges författarfond](#)
- [Svenska akademien](#)

More information on the Swedish book sector can be obtained from the fact bank of the [Swedish Publishers- Association](#). More information on the Swedish book sector can be obtained from [Tidningsutgivarna \(TU\)](#).

Education programs

There are educational programs in the visual arts and design, Dance, Performing arts and in the field of the written word at college and university level, as well as at folk high school level. Read more about these different educational levels. Validation of degrees from educational institutions outside Sweden. If you have a degree from a school abroad, you may have it validated.

VISUAL ARTS AND DESIGN:

- [Kungl. Konsthögskolan Stockholm](#)
- [Konstfack](#)
- [Konsthögskolan i Malmö](#)
- [Konsthögskolan i Umeå](#)
- [Valand Högskolan för Konst och Design](#)
- [Gamleby Folkhögskola](#)
- [Nordens Fotoskola](#)
- [Fotoskolan Stockholm](#)
- [Gerlesborgsskolan](#)
- [Falkenbergs Konstskola](#)

DANCE AND PERFORMING ARTS, THEATER:

- [DOCH \(Dans och Cirkushögskolan\)](#)
- [Balettakademien Stockholm](#)
- [Balettakademien Göteborg](#)
- [Lunnevard Folkhögskola](#)
- [Kävesta Folkhögskola](#)
- [Åsa Folkhögskola](#)
- [Teaterhögskolan Malmö](#)
- [Stockholms dramatiska högskola](#)
- [Teaterhögskolan Göteborg](#)
- [Teaterhögskolan Luleå](#)

THE WRITTEN WORD AT:

- [Akademi Valand](#)
- [Biskops Arnö Folkhögskola](#)
- [Poppius](#)
- [Skurup Folkhögskola](#)
- [FOJO](#)

Self-employed, running a sole proprietorship or limited company?

Many people working in the arts and culture sector in Sweden are freelance artists. “Having your own company” can mean various things, as there are different company forms. The way you organize your work and income depends on what suits you the best. Let us explain.

SELF-EMPLOYMENT IS AN OPTION FOR PEOPLE WHO:

- want to work for different employers on a project basis, from time to time, but who do not want to set up a company of their own.
- want to do paid work outside their salaried employment from time to time.
- are receiving some type of benefit that might be withdrawn if they set up a company of their own.

As self-employed, you use the services of an invoicing firm (For example [Frilans Finans](#) and [Cool company](#).) that serves more or less as your employer in the sense that they take care of the administrative side of your assignments, for a fixed commission. You are still personally responsible for finding your clients and your assignments. When you have completed the assignment, you are no longer employed by that client, and you invoice them using the invoicing firm.

When you use an invoicing service, you carry out the assignment yourself, but the contracting parties are your client and the invoicing firm. It is important that your clients know that their legal partner is the invoicing firm,

although you will be carrying out the assignment. For this reason, you must first contact the invoicing firm and calculate the final cost, before you and your client agree on the amount of your payment. Once your assignment is completed, you will send the invoicing information to the invoicing firm, who will then invoice your client. Your client will pay the invoicing firm who, in turn, will pay your salary to you after deducting their commission, any expenses they have had, your employers' fees and your withholding tax. They pay your employers' fees and tax to the Swedish tax authorities. Information on being self-employed from [Konstnärsnämnden](#).

SOLE PROPRIETORSHIP (SWE: ENSKILD FIRMA)

This is the most common company form for people in the arts and culture sector. In contrast to a limited company (see below), a sole proprietorship is not a legal entity. For this reason, and again in contrast to a limited company, a sole proprietorship does not have an official "corporate identity number". Instead, your own personal identity number serves as the company's identity, which means that as the sole proprietor you bear personal responsibility for all the liabilities of the company, such as debts and agreements entered into. The advantages of a sole proprietorship are that it is easy to administer and inexpensive to establish. One disadvantage may be that it can be difficult to keep the company's finances separate from your own. From a taxation point of view, a sole proprietorship and a limited company are equivalent in principle, although some VAT and taxation rules are specific to sole proprietorships. You can read more about different types of companies on the website of the [Swedish Arts Grants](#).

WHAT IS A LIMITED COMPANY (SWE: AKTIEBOLAG/AB)?

It has become increasingly common in recent years for people working in the arts and culture sector to set up a limited company. A limited company is a legal entity with a corporate identity number ("organisationsnummer") of its own. A limited company can have one or more owners. Each owner's personal responsibility is limited, so that in principle all you stand to lose is the share capital you have invested in setting up the company. There is a clear line of demarcation between the owner and the company. If you are a working owner of a limited company you are regarded as an employee of the company, and can be paid a salary. As a shareholder you can also be paid dividends on your shares. To be officially established, a limited company must be registered with the Swedish Companies Registration Office ("Bolagsverket"). Different rules apply to small and medium size enterprises as opposed to larger corporations. The advantage of having a limited company is that it is easy to keep the company's finances separate from your own. This makes it easier when it comes to paying taxes, since you are an employee of your company. The company can also pay for tax-exempt memorial gifts and can give its employees a certain amount annually to spend on health and wellness. One disadvantage of a limited company is that it is more administratively demanding.

Every limited company has to submit an annual report to the Swedish Companies Registration Office. You can read more about different types of companies on the website of the [Swedish Arts Grants](#).

WHAT IS A COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION?

A cooperative association comprises at least three (legal or physical) entities, who are members of the association. A cooperative association promotes the financial interests of its members while not operating at a profit. Examples of advantages to members may include employment security, low-cost rental studios, better prices or lower costs.

WHAT IS A NON-PROFIT ASSOCIATION?

A non-profit association can be registered with the Swedish Companies Registration Office if it carries out business activities. In the arts and culture sector, the most common types of non-profit associations include theater and music groups in which the actors, musicians, etc., are employed by the association. While there is no civil law legislation that covers non-profit associations, there is what is “good association practice”, with which non-profit associations are expected to comply. You can read more about non-profit associations on the website of the [Swedish tax authority](#).

Swedish Public Employment Service

Looking for a job within your field? You can register with the [Public Employment Service](#) on your first day of unemployment on the Swedish Public Employment Service website using electronic identification. As an artist with an education or longer experience in a cultural or media profession, you can get help from [AF-Kultur](#) who are experts in your industry.

What is an unemployment benefit fund?

Members of an unemployment benefit fund can receive compensation for part of their income loss if they become unemployed. What unemployment benefit fund you can join depends on what area you work in or what your profession is. You can find a list of all the unemployment benefit funds in Sweden at: Sveriges a-kassor. The unemployment benefit funds to which most people in the arts and culture sector are:

- [Unionens A-kassa](#) – If you work in the areas of theater, film, radio, music, or the non-profit sector.
- [Akademikernas A-kassa](#) – If you are an academic or belong to the trade union DIK.
- [Journalisternas A-kassa](#) – If you work in media.
- [Musikernas A-kassa](#) – If you work in the music sector.
- [Alfa-kassan](#) – Open to anyone
- [Småföretagarnas A-kassa \(SmåA\)](#) – For small businesses (an SME).

WHY SHOULD I JOIN AN UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT FUND?

Anyone can unexpectedly become unemployed, and the labor market is subject to sudden changes. If you find yourself unemployed, being a member of an unemployment benefit fund may be decisive, since it is difficult to make ends meet when you don't have an income. If you receive financial support while you are unemployed you have more security while you are looking for a new job.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO BELONG TO AN UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT FUND?

The cost of belonging to an unemployment benefit fund (your dues) differs from fund to fund. Generally, your dues are not related to your income. Instead, every member of the fund pays the same amount in dues. Dues usually range from SEK 90–125 per month; a small sum compared to the value of membership. You can read more about what the unemployment benefit funds cover here: <https://www.a-kassa.se/vanliga-frågor/vad-kostar-a-kassa>

HOW MUCH SUPPORT CAN I RECEIVE FROM MY UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT FUND?

How much support you can get from your unemployment benefit fund will depend on your income. There is both a floor and a ceiling for what you can receive. If you earn more than the ceiling of your fund, you may also want to take out a loss of income insurance policy. Such policies are available to members of a trade union. You can read more about the ceiling of your fund below, and you can contact your union to see what loss of income insurance they can offer: <https://www.a-kassa.se/vanliga-frågor/ersättning-a-kassa>

IF I HAVE A SOLE PROPRIETORSHIP, CAN I JOIN AN UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT FUND?

If you have a small business of the kind known as a "sole proprietorship", you can join an unemployment benefit fund. This will make you eligible for unemployment benefits if you find it necessary to register your company as dormant for some period of time. Normally there is a time limit for keeping your company dormant, and you can usually only do so once in any five year period. You will also be eligible for unemployment benefits as a member of a trade union if you close down your sole proprietorship. It is not possible to receive support from your unemployment benefit fund (be part-time unemployed) at the same time as you have a small business open. This is to prevent people with not very profitable small businesses from supplementing their income with unemployment benefits.

What is a trade union?

A trade union is an organization that represents the interests of employees in a certain sector in relation to the employers or the employers' association. A trade union can, for instance, help an employee to negotiate his or her salary

or find information regarding the regulations regarding employment, dismissal, or the work environment. Two of the main areas in which your trade union can support you are:

- Insurance. The most common type of insurance is loss of income insurance. This serves as extra unemployment insurance, guaranteeing a higher sum than unemployment benefit alone. So if you become unexpectedly unemployed, you will receive more money per month than if you just have your unemployment benefit. Other types of insurance usually available through your trade union include life, accident and health insurance, as well as extra insurance in case you are long-term sick listed or if you experience a serious injury.
- Legal aid and legal protection. Most trade unions offer legal aid in case of a dispute between you and your employer. Such legal aid may include support and advisory service, as well as legal assistance if your case should go to court. The unemployment benefit fund of the trade union [Unionen \(Arts and culture section\)](#).

TRADE UNIONS FOR PEOPLE WORKING IN THE AREAS OF: THE WRITTEN WORD, MUSIC, THEATER AND FILMS AND VISUAL ARTS AND DESIGN:

- [Unionen](#) – For people working in: theater, film, radio, music and the non-profit sector.
- [DIK](#) – For people working in the areas of culture, communication, and the creative sector
- [Sveriges författarförbund](#) – For writers of fiction and non-fiction for adults and children and young people, as well as for translators in this sector.
- [Musikerförbundet](#) – For professional musicians and artists.
- [Teaterförbundet/för scen och film](#) – For people working in the theater, dance, performing arts and film sectors.

Information regarding pensions

Your pension is the income you will live on once you have retired from active work. You save up for your pension during your professional lifetime, and contributions to your pension can come from various places: your state pension, your occupational pension, and your individual pension savings. Every year you work you are automatically earning pension points for the future. For most people, your pension will be higher the longer you wait to retire. Sweden has a flexible pension age, but you cannot start taking your state pension before the age of 61. Employees working under a collectively-bargained agreement are legally entitled to employment, security under the law on secure employment (LAS), and have the right to continue working until they turn 67. You can read more about pensions on the website of the [Swedish pension authority](#).

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