

Statement on the compilation of jury lists by the Commissioner for Culture and Media¹

The Kunstfonds Foundation has also been asked by the BKM to submit the names of the current jury members for all its funding programmes. [1]

We, current and former jury members of the Kunstfonds Foundation, wish to express our dismay at the political interference by the Commissioner for Culture and Media.

Against the backdrop of recent events surrounding the Berlinale, the Bookshop Prize and the allocation of the Capital City Culture Fund, we no longer have any confidence in the intentions behind, or the handling of, the lists of current jury members requested by the BKM. [2] The application of the Haber procedure in the cultural sector has shaken our fundamental understanding of democratic cultural funding.

We expressly reject any attempt to exert influence and the resulting damage to our work and our reputation as an independent jury. According to Article 5(3) of the Basic Law, art and science, research and teaching are free. However, it is with great concern that we observe increasing attacks and attempts at intimidation by politicians against freedom of expression and artistic freedom.

As jury members, we strive tirelessly to meet the great challenge of addressing a broad spectrum of artistic positions. Due to the fear of a constitutional review, cultural practitioners are increasingly being intimidated, censoring themselves or not applying at all. Not because their artistic practice would violate the democratic order, but because the boundaries of discourse have already shifted due to political pressure.

The control and instrumentalisation of art is a damning indictment of society. A democracy that cannot tolerate the spectrum of free artistic expression is not a liberal democracy. Decisions on funding from the Kunstfonds Foundation are made by artists, art association directors and gallery owners. They are elected as jury members by the Foundation Board of the Kunstfonds and act as autonomous, expert representatives from the field of contemporary art. The BKM has no decision-making authority regarding the awarding of grants. The grant recipients and funded projects are selected solely by the juries and subsequently published.

We regard the fact that the Commissioner for Culture and Media records the names of jury members in 'disclosable, detailed lists' [2] as an attack on the independence of this process and an undermining of it!

We demand:

1. An end to the use of the Haber procedure across the entire field of cultural funding.
2. A commitment by the BKM to Article 5(3) of the Basic Law and a clear separation of personnel as a sign that there is no political interference in the work of independent juries on the part of the BKM.
3. A full investigation into the scope, use and dissemination of the compiled lists of names, as well as their deletion.
4. The disclosure of all queries made to the Office for the Protection of the Constitution in the context of cultural funding.

We stand in solidarity with the jury of the Capital City Culture Fund, the affected bookshops, the Berlinale team, Berlinale Director Tricia Tuttle and all artists who feel unsettled. We endorse the statements issued by the Board of Trustees of the Fund for the Performing Arts, the Federal Association of Directors [3] and all the juries concerned.

We stand in solidarity because we know:

The breaches that politicians are making in democratic structures today will be exploited by anti-democratic forces tomorrow.

What affects one of us today will affect us all tomorrow.

¹ (This statement was translated with DeepL for informative purposes only - original text might slightly differ)

Signed by:

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[1] <https://www.kunstfonds.de/aktuelles/details/stellungnahme-des-vorstands-und-des-stiftungsrates-der-stiftung-kunstfonds-zur-abfrage-von-jurylisten-durch-den-bundeskulturbeauftragten-fuer-kultur-und-medien>

[2] <https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/wolfram-weimer-laesst-jurymitglieder-in-listen-erfassen-a-d25bff33-1b5a-4670-8a2c-6ee3405dca1c>

[3] https://www.regieverband.de/aktuelles/2026-03_zur-causa-weimer-und-dem-haber-verfahren