Today at the Eduards Smiļģis Theatre Museum of the Latvian Academy of Culture Egils Levits, President of Latvia, met with representatives of contemporary culture non-governmental organisations to discuss the role of contemporary art NGOs in culture processes, as well as common challenges in the culture sector.

The discussion also touched upon topics related to the crisis caused by COVID-19 and the shortcomings it has exposed in the social security and tax system for people working in culture.

The President of Latvia emphasised: “The role of culture in the existence of the state was reinforced in the preamble to the Constitution in 2014. This presents certain obligations for the state. Culture creates significant added value to society. I believe that Latvians tend to cherish this value brought to them personally and society as whole more highly than people in many other European countries do. Culture has an immense role in the attractiveness of the state and living in it.

This immaterial value of culture must also definitely be taken into account when creating the state budget.”

In discussing the social security issue, both parties agreed on the need for further dialogue with the Ministry of Finance regarding issues specific to those working in culture. Likewise, the need to increase funding for projects of the State Culture Capital Foundation was also discussed, as these cater to the public interest to live in a modern, cultural state, as well as the independence and quality of culture organisations.

During the discussion, President Levits expressed his support for culture media, noting that “culture media are not a one-time project, they need to be viewed as institutions, which can undergo changes in management and content, but their functioning and operation must be constant and funded in a democratic state”.

President of Latvia: The State’s Responsibility to Culture Derives from the Constitution

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Egils Levits
The various definitions of contemporary culture were also discussed, and the need to link traditional and contemporary culture in the education process was also highlighted. The non-governmental organisations highly appreciated the project “School Bag”, which was launched ahead of the centennial and has now been included in the National Development Plan and will become part of the education process, familiarising schoolchildren with the work of museums and various culture spaces in Latvia.

The importance of the contemporary element in modern museums was also discussed, expressing the idea that traditional museums ought to link their stories with modern day processes, as well as the notion that historical events ought to be presented in contemporary form or by creating museums, which aim to depict contemporary art itself.

The discussion was attended by Solvita Krese, Director of the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art and Chairperson of the Board of the Association of Non-Governmental Contemporary Art Organisations (LKNVOA), Maija Pavlova, Head of the Ģertrūde Street Theatre and member of the board of the LKNVOA, Kristaps Puķītis, CEO of “Dirty Deal Audio” and member of the board of the LKNVOA, Ineta Zelča Simansone, Head of Think Tank “Creative Museum”, Anna Sīle, Head of “Dirty Deal Teatro”, Ojārs Feldbergs, representative of Association “Pedvāle”, Ina Ločmele, Chairpersons of the Board of the Choreographers' Association, Agnese Zeltiņa, Producer of “Kino Raksti”, Elīna Kalniņa, Curator of the Cēsis exhibition “Sirdsapziņas ugunskurs”, as well as Dace Vilsone, State Secretary of the Ministry of Culture.