

# Summary

The previous Minister of Education Culture and Science, Van Engelshoven, asked the Council for Culture to issue an advisory report on transgressive behaviour in the cultural and creative sector. The purpose of this request was to gain a better understanding of what is being done to ‘prevent, identify and stop’ transgressive behaviour and to ‘provide timely and appropriate support for the victims’. To this end, the Council has consulted policy documents, studied scientific literature, and spoken to a large number of stakeholders in the culture and media sector.

## **Based on this research, it has arrived at the following observations:**

- Transgressive behaviour comprises not only sexual harassment, but also other forms of unacceptable behaviour which have the intent and/or effect of violating the dignity of an individual and/or creating a hostile work environment. This encompasses all kinds of bullying, intimidation, racism and discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, religious belief, gender or other personal characteristics.
- A number of risk factors within the culture and media sector make it especially susceptible to transgressive behaviour. First, it is a sector in which many people want to work but which only has limited job opportunities. This creates a situation in which people in positions such as casting director, curator, arts lecturer or artistic director effectively fulfil the role of gatekeeper: someone with the power to grant or deny access to the field. This results in an imbalance of power that can give rise to unsafe situations. Second, the industry tends to work with long-term freelance employment arrangements, which lead to job insecurity. This too can give rise to situations in which boundaries are easily crossed. Third, romantic notions of the artist who has to suffer to achieve great art still persist and are compounded by the industry’s focus on a performance culture that drives artists to raise the bar higher and higher for themselves and to pay too little heed to their own bodies.
- Lack of inclusion within the sector is a persistent problem, which also leads to insecurity. Many gatekeepers consciously or unconsciously apply a standard frame of reference that excludes artists from marginalized groups. As a result, these artists are frequently stereotyped and encounter prejudice, which they experience in the form of micro-aggressions.
- When it comes to transgressive behaviour, there is a culture of silence within the culture and media sector. Prompted by shame and fear, people working in the sector who have fallen prey to unacceptable behaviour tended not to report it. Even bystanders who have witnessed such behaviour tend not to intervene. This perpetuates the unsafe work situation.

- Arts education poses additional risks. Students are expected to expose their vulnerable side and be prepared to bare themselves to others, both emotionally and physically. Programmes of arts education are often taught by staff who only work limited hours, and who are not always trained teachers. These teachers often come directly from the profession, a factor which can increase competition among students and leave them little room to fail.
- There is no lack of structures focused on social safety within the sector, but many victims do not know where to find these structures or have little confidence in them. Protocols, hotlines and confidential counsellors only fulfil a useful purpose if all employees are familiar with them and have access to them.

**Based on this analysis, the Council has arrived at a series of recommendations.**

### **Recommendations for institutions:**

#### **Open the conversation**

The Council advocates a cultural shift throughout the culture and media sector. People working at all levels of the industry need to become more aware of their own boundaries and each other's boundaries. That starts with having a good conversation about safety, and what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. This creates an open culture in which employees feel free to hold each other responsible for their behaviour. Executives need to create a culture of frank and full communication. They should invite their employees to attend training sessions where they can learn these conversational techniques.

#### **Broaden the frame of reference**

Transgressive behaviour in the form of discrimination and racism is facilitated because study programmes and institutions still too often operate according to a limited, Western frame of reference. If greater attention is paid to other perspectives and traditions, the culture and media sector as a whole will become a safer place for diverse creatives.

#### **Improve the employment status of workers in the sector**

Many people working in the culture and media sector do so on the basis of flexible employment contracts. A sole trader working on a freelance basis is vulnerable and therefore more at risk of experiencing transgressive behaviour. It is therefore essential to make fair pay a policy priority and to guarantee the right to a safe working environment for everyone, including sole traders.

## **Recommendations for arts education:**

### **Make a teaching qualification compulsory**

Teaching staff in arts education should not only have relevant experience in the arts discipline they are teaching, but should also have formal training in didactic skills. A teaching qualification should therefore be made compulsory for everyone who works in arts education, including teachers who only work a limited number of hours. This could take the form of an additional course.

## **Recommendations for government:**

### **Provide structural support for the Mores hotline**

Mores has quickly developed into the central hotline for reporting inappropriate behaviour. Further professionalization is now needed. Structural support is required to raise the profile of the Mores hotline and to safeguard its independence.

### **Carry out research**

There is a lack of data on transgressive behaviour in the culture and media sector. The need for structural and ongoing research is substantial. A knowledge centre therefore needs to be set up to monitor developments in transgressive behaviour and to ensure the provision of information on this issue, both inside and outside the sector.