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/ INSTITUTIONS

Subsidies for Dance: An Analysis of Grant Programmes of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage Run Between 2010 and 2025

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The article discusses the grant system in Polish dance from 2010–2025, and analyses the activities of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. The starting point for this analysis is 2010, when the Institute of Music and Dance was established, and the priority area of ‘Theatre and Dance’ was initiated. The analysis covers data on the number of grants and their amounts, the types of projects supported, and the geographical distribution of beneficiaries. Consideration is given to the evolution of the system – from the dominance of large festivals and public institutions within the ‘Theatre and Dance’ programme to the more diverse support provided by the ‘Dance’ programme, which was spun off in 2021. The conclusions suggest that the grant system has enabled significant development of Polish dance life, but remains burdened by problems of short-term funding, low grant amounts and concentration of funds. The article identifies both barriers and opportunities for further development, considering dance in the context of culture as a factor in social and regional development.

Keywords: financing of dance; cultural policy; grant programmes; dance

Introduction

2010 went down in the history of Polish dance as a breakthrough year. It was then that the Institute of Music and Dance was inaugurated – the first public institution in Poland whose main tasks included systemic support for the development of dance. At the same time, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage launched the ‘Theatre and Dance’ programme, under which public funds began to be allocated to the production of performances, festivals, educational activities and research projects related to this branch of the arts. As a result, for the first time in the history of the Third Republic, a grant system was created for dance, which for many decades had remained on the periphery of cultural policy (Głowacki, Hausner, Jakóbik et al., 2008; Gierat-Bieroń, 2015; Gierat-Bieroń, 2016).

The introduction of subsidy mechanisms has transformed the institutional and artistic landscape of dance in Poland. Thanks to these mechanisms, it has been possible to create conditions conducive to the development of individual careers of choreographers and dancers, initiate new festivals, and expand educational and promotional opportunities. However, alongside growing interest in individual programmes, systemic problems have also emerged, such as the short-term nature of funding, the lack of long-term strategies for supporting dance, and the concentration of resources in the largest cultural centres. An analysis of the years 2010-2025 allows us to capture both the dynamics of development and the limitations of this support model. This period saw a shift in priorities – from an initial focus on the development of the artistic scene, through support for documentation and research, to international and educational projects.

The aim of this article is to present the development of the grant system

supporting dance in Poland from 2010 to 2025, with particular emphasis on the evolution of programmes implemented by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (the Ministry). The analysis focuses on the nationwide, central dimension of cultural policy and does not cover local government activities or local support strategies. The article poses three research questions: what grant programmes were available for dance[1] in Poland between 2010 and 2025, and how did their assumptions change; what trends do the data on grants awarded reveal; what challenges and limitations are apparent in the current system of support for this field. The study is based on an analysis of publicly available data on the Ministry's grant programmes for 2010-2025 (competition results, programme documents, institutional reports). The material has been compiled and described in quantitative terms (number of applications, amount of grants, repeat beneficiaries) and qualitative terms, through the interpretation of emerging trends in the dance support system. The analysis does not attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of the programmes according to predetermined measures, but rather to describe and interpret the available data in order to capture the most important phenomena and changes in dance support policy. The results presented are descriptive and analytical in nature; they are not based on formal performance indicators but on the interpretation of trends noticeable in public data.

The institutional framework of the grant system

Public funding for dance in Poland is multi-layered and extends beyond grant mechanisms. A significant portion of state and local government funds consists of subsidies for cultural institutions operating in the field of dance,

such as Polski Teatr Tańca and Kielecki Teatr Tańca (Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, 2021). A separate category comprises artistic scholarships awarded by the Minister of Culture to individuals, as well as residency programmes supporting the development of artists and choreographers (NIMiT, 2025a). Local and regional grant programmes run by provincial and municipal authorities, which enable the financing of initiatives rooted in the local context, are also an important complement to the system (Hausner, 2019). Dance artists also seek funding from foreign sources, including European Union programmes such as Creative Europe and grants from international foundations and dance networks supporting mobility (Creative Europe Desk Poland, 2023).

This article focuses on grant programmes implemented by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage at the central level. These instruments were selected because they are the most structured, with full documentation of calls for applications and results, enabling analysis of long-term trends and revealing the key mechanisms shaping the dance environment in Poland.[2] However, it is important to be aware of this broader perspective, as ministerial grants are only one form of public support for dance – alongside permanent funding for institutions, scholarships, residencies, and local and foreign funding.

It is worth noting that the system of supporting dance in Poland after 2010 was formed on the basis of grant instruments, which are one of the basic tools of the state's cultural policy (Barański, 2016). Grants are a form of redistribution of public funds, based on competition mechanisms and substantive evaluation of submitted projects (Fatyga, 2013-2014). Their aim is not only to provide funding for current artistic projects, but also to stimulate the development of new initiatives, strengthen the competencies of

the community and create conditions for building cultural infrastructure. In the case of dance, which for a long time remained on the fringes of the institutional system, the introduction of separate grant programmes was of particular importance, as it meant that this field was recognised as an area of art distinct from theatre or music, requiring specific support tools. An analysis of the institutional framework allows us to understand both the structure of this system and the logic of its operation, as well as to identify its strengths and limitations.

Since 2010, the dance funding system in Poland has relied on two key institutions: the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (the Ministry) and the Instytut Muzyki i Tańca (Institute of Music and Dance, the Institute) (since 2021, the National Institute of Music and Dance – see Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, 2010, Ministry of Culture, National Heritage and Sport, 2021). Despite differences in their scopes of competence and modes of operation, both entities have developed a coherent mechanism for supporting the dance community, albeit fraught with certain limitations.

The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, as the main public administration body responsible for cultural policy, was responsible for the distribution of funds under grant programmes. The ‘Theatre and Dance’ programme, in operation from 2010, was particularly important, as it enabled systemic funding of artistic activities in the field of dance for the first time (in 2021, it was split into two separate programmes: ‘Theatre’ and ‘Dance’). Until 2010, no such system for competitions had existed in Poland. In subsequent years, the programme evolved, adapting its priorities to the changing needs of the community. These changes included, for example, greater emphasis on research and documentation projects, as well as activities aimed at children and young people. It should be emphasised that

the rules for awarding grants in ministerial programmes were open, and both cultural institutions and non-governmental organisations could apply for funding. It is worth noting that the need to establish a separate programme for dance had already been raised by the dance community before. The proposal to split the 'Theatre and Dance' priority first appeared during the 1st Dance Congress in 2011, and was then re-articulated with greater force during the 2nd Dance Congress, as one of the key proposals of the community (Report from the 2nd Dance Congress, 2020). The decision to introduce a separate 'Dance' programme in 2021 was therefore a response to grassroots demands from dance artists and organisers, rather than merely an administrative recognition of its autonomy. The Institute of Music and Dance, established in 2010, was designed as a specialised institution supporting the development of music and dance in Poland. Unlike the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, whose role was primarily to distribute funds through grants, the Institute was also to focus on expert and strategic activities. Its activities focus on three core areas: research and documentation, information and programming. The Institute acts as a link between artists, cultural institutions and public administration, while also serving as a patron, animator and expert body in the area of cultural policy.

The grant system for dance is among the cultural policy instruments based on a competitive mode of distributing public funds. Its essence lies in combining elements of open enrolment, accessible to various entities, with mechanisms for selecting projects carried out by experts. This structure promotes pluralism in the portfolio of proposals and facilitates the emergence of new initiatives, but at the same time fosters high competitiveness and project-based activities (Hausner, Karwińska, Purchla, 2013). Another characteristic feature of the system is its institutional dispersion: on the one hand, there is central distribution of funds by the

Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, and on the other, there are specialised programmes run by the Institute. Such a model ensures diversity of support, but also poses the risk of a lack of a coherent strategy and duplication of certain solutions. An analysis of the institutional framework demonstrates, among other things, that we are dealing with a mechanism with great development potential, whose effectiveness depends on keeping a balance between flexibility and stability and on the skilful coordination of the activities of both institutions.

The development of the grant system – the ‘Theatre and Dance’ programme

The Theatre and Dance programme was launched in 2010 by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage as one of the priorities among the Minister’s subsidy programmes. Its introduction was a breakthrough for the dance community, which gained access for the first time to a funding mechanism dedicated to this field. The programme was addressed to a wide range of entities operating in the field of dance and theatre. In practice, the funds allocated under the programme were primarily used for the premieres of performances and the organisation of Poland’s most important dance and theatre festivals. From the perspective of the development of the grant system, the ‘Theatre and Dance’ programme introduced an important distinction into ministerial practice: dance was given a place among the arts institutionally supported by the state. Even though the scope of support was essentially limited to premieres and major festival events, its very existence provided a framework for building further mechanisms.

An analysis of data relating to the ‘Theatre and Dance’ programme shows a clear disproportion between theatre and dance in terms of the number of

applications submitted. Between 250 and 300 applications were registered annually, but the share of dance projects remained marginal for a long time. In the first years of the programme's operation, the number of dance applications was limited to a few per year, and only in subsequent years did it begin to gradually increase, reaching a level of several applications per year.

Data on the 'Theatre and Dance' programme for 2011–2020 confirm the marginal, albeit gradually increasing, presence of dance projects under this priority. Each year, between 200 and almost 340 applications were submitted to the programme, the vast majority of which were in the theatre domain. Each year, approximately 90–110 entities received grants. In the field of dance, between 9 and 19 projects per year received funding. The lowest figures were recorded at the beginning of the programme (2011: 10 projects) and in the middle of the decade (2015-2016: 10 projects each). The highest level of support was in 2014, when 19 dance projects obtained funding. Compared to the total number of applications to the programme, the share of dance was relatively small, accounting for only a few per cent of all applications. This disproportion revealed the need to create a separate support instrument that would allow the criteria and priorities to be adequately adapted to the specific nature of the art of dance. The creation of a separate 'Dance' programme in 2021 was therefore a response to many years of experience, which showed that when the two fields are combined, dance remains in the shadow of theatre and its potential cannot be fully developed within the framework of a joint competition.

An analysis of the amount of funding allocated confirms that throughout the decade, funding for dance remained at a relatively low level compared to other fields. In the first years of the 'Theatre and Dance' programme, the

budget allocated to dance projects amounted to just over PLN 1 million per year (which was related to the number of applications submitted and grants awarded), and was therefore only sufficient to support a few premieres and several large festivals. It was not until the middle of the decade that there was a marked increase, after which the amounts exceeded PLN 1.5 million and, in the best years, even approached PLN 2 million. It is therefore clear that, although dance was gradually gaining importance in the ministry's grant policy, its share in the total budget remained limited. Stabilisation at a level slightly below two million zlotys per year was evidence of the recognition of dance as an important area of the arts, but it also emphasised its secondary position vis-à-vis theatre, which absorbed most of the available funds. For this reason, the establishment of a separate 'Dance' programme in 2021 was a necessary step to free this field from having to compete with theatre, and to create more transparent and fair rules for the distribution of funds.

Examination of the data presented in Table 1 reveals a distinct continuity of support for several key dance institutions and festivals in Poland. Most often, funding under the 'Theatre and Dance' programme was awarded to large and recognisable events with an established position in the community. In their case, grants were awarded almost annually throughout the 2011–2020 period analysed, confirming their position in the national dance landscape. The second group consisted of entities that regularly, albeit with some interruptions, appeared among the beneficiaries. These projects, although not necessarily present every year, were an important reference point for various trends in dance – from experimental explorations to classical ballet. The examples of beneficiaries cited in this analysis were selected based on their repeated presence in the results of competitions and their significance for shaping the national dance landscape. Both projects with the largest

budgets and with a long-term presence in the grant system, as well as initiatives representing various regions of Poland, were taken into account.

Table 1. Selected entities receiving grants under the 'Theatre and Dance' programme in 2011-2020

Entity / Project	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**
The Body/Mind Foundation / The Body/Mind Festival	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Lublin Culture Centre / International Dance Theatre Meetings	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Cracovia Danza Court Balet / Cracovia Danza Court Dance Festival				x	x	x	x	x	x	x
The Art and Modernity Foundation / Rozdroże Festival	x	x	x	x	x					
Klub Żak / Gdansk Dance Festival	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Podlaskie Dance Association / Kalejdoskop Festival		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Lodz Grand Theatre / Lodz Ballet Festival			x		x		x	x	x	

Source: Author's own analysis

An analysis of data from 2011–2020 indicates that support for dance under the 'Theatre and Dance' programme was selective and concentrated around a handful of major festivals and institutions. Throughout the entire period under review, there was relative stability – each year, funding was awarded to several to a dozen or so dance projects, with a clear predominance of well-

established cyclical projects. This group primarily included the largest and most recognisable events (such as those named in the table above).

The decade saw a clear trend towards a stabilisation of the selection of beneficiaries – projects once awarded a grant gained an advantage over new initiatives, which strengthened the position of several festivals that constitute the pillars of Polish dance life. This made it possible to structure a calendar of events that recurred every year or every two years, providing the community and the public with a sense of continuity. This model also narrowed the opportunities for supporting smaller projects – both local and experimental – which often required significantly lower financial outlays than large international festivals. In practice, the structure of the programmes favoured projects with higher budgets and more complex organisational structures, while small-scale initiatives struggled to obtain funding. As a result, many valuable but smaller projects were unable to compete with large, established entities. This solution led to a concentration of funds around recognised brands and limited the diversification of the offers, hindering the development of more dispersed and grassroots dance practices. It is worth noting, however, that many of these mechanisms – such as the consolidation of the position of regular beneficiaries, preference for large festivals, and limited opportunities for small initiatives – are not exclusive to dance. Similar trends can be observed in other priorities of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, especially in the ‘Theatre’ programme, which also focuses on supporting large-scale festival events and recurring projects. However, the singularity of dance lies in the fact that, as a field with weaker institutional roots, it is more strongly affected by the effects of such a policy of resource distribution.

Another characteristic feature of the period under analysis was the

dominance of festivals. It was large events, often international in scope, that were the main beneficiaries, which reflected the ministry's priority of building the visibility of dance and presenting the most prestigious projects. Premiere productions were financed on a smaller scale than festivals. The preference for festivals resulted not only from their artistic significance but also from their promotional appeal and relatively low investment risk. Guaranteeing the visibility and prestige of the funded activities, large events, attracting renowned artists and a wide audience, were a 'safe investment' for grantors. This type of strategy focused primarily on the short-term staging of performances and attracting audiences through high-profile events, and less often on long-term educational and animation activities that could steadily build an audience for dance and develop local communities.

These trends reveal both the strengths and weaknesses of the system. On the one hand, the 'Theatre and Dance' programme has helped to consolidate the position of several key institutions and festivals, which still form the core of the Polish dance scene today. On the other hand, however, the concentration of funds around regular beneficiaries has revealed structural constraints: a lack of space for new initiatives, difficulties in obtaining funding for smaller entities, and limited contribution to the development of a more dispersed dance ecosystem.

Typologies of the projects supported – an analysis of the 'Dance' programme

The separation of the 'Dance' programme in 2021 was a natural segue of previous experiences of the 'Theatre and Dance' priority. The new ministerial programme was designed as a tool to strengthen the

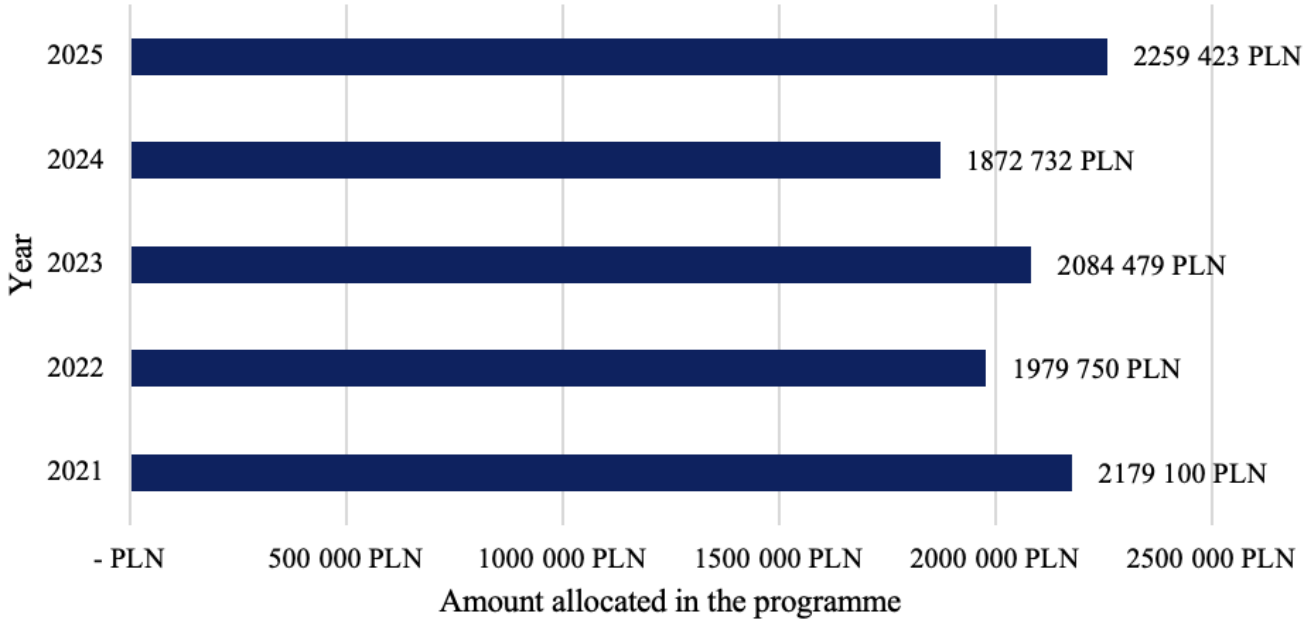
development of the dance community, enabling the co-funding of premieres, festival events and other artistic and educational projects (Portal Samorządowy, 2020). The inclusion of ‘Dance’ in the Ministry’s catalogue of independent programme priorities can be viewed as confirmation of the growing importance of this field in national cultural policy.

An analysis of financial data concerning the ‘Dance’ programme reveals its stable presence in the grant support system since its establishment in 2021. As shown in the chart below, in the programme’s first year, the total amount of grants awarded was PLN 2,179,100, placing the programme among the most important instruments for financing culture from the very beginning. In subsequent years, the amount of funding remained at a similar level – PLN 1,979,750 was allocated in 2022, and slightly more, PLN 2,084,479 in 2023. In 2024, there was a decrease to PLN 1,872,732 – then an increase again to PLN 2,259,423 in 2025. However, it should be noted that maintaining the programme’s nominal budget at a relatively constant level while inflation is rising actually means a decrease in the real value of the funds allocated. In practice, this translates into a decrease in the potential for financing projects – with the same grant amounts, the costs of production and event organisation increase, limiting the scale of activities that can be implemented under the programme.

Such a pattern of change testifies to the relative stability of the programme’s budget, which has remained between PLN 1.8 and 2.2 million per year over its five-year perspective. These are not large sums, especially when compared to expenditure in other areas of the arts, but they do allow for the implementation of several dozen projects of national significance each year. It should be noted that this funding covers premiere productions and festivals predominantly. However, focusing funds on projects with the widest

appeal helps build the visibility of dance in Polish cultural life.

Chart 1. Funds awarded for financing projects under the ‘Dance’ programme in 2021–2025

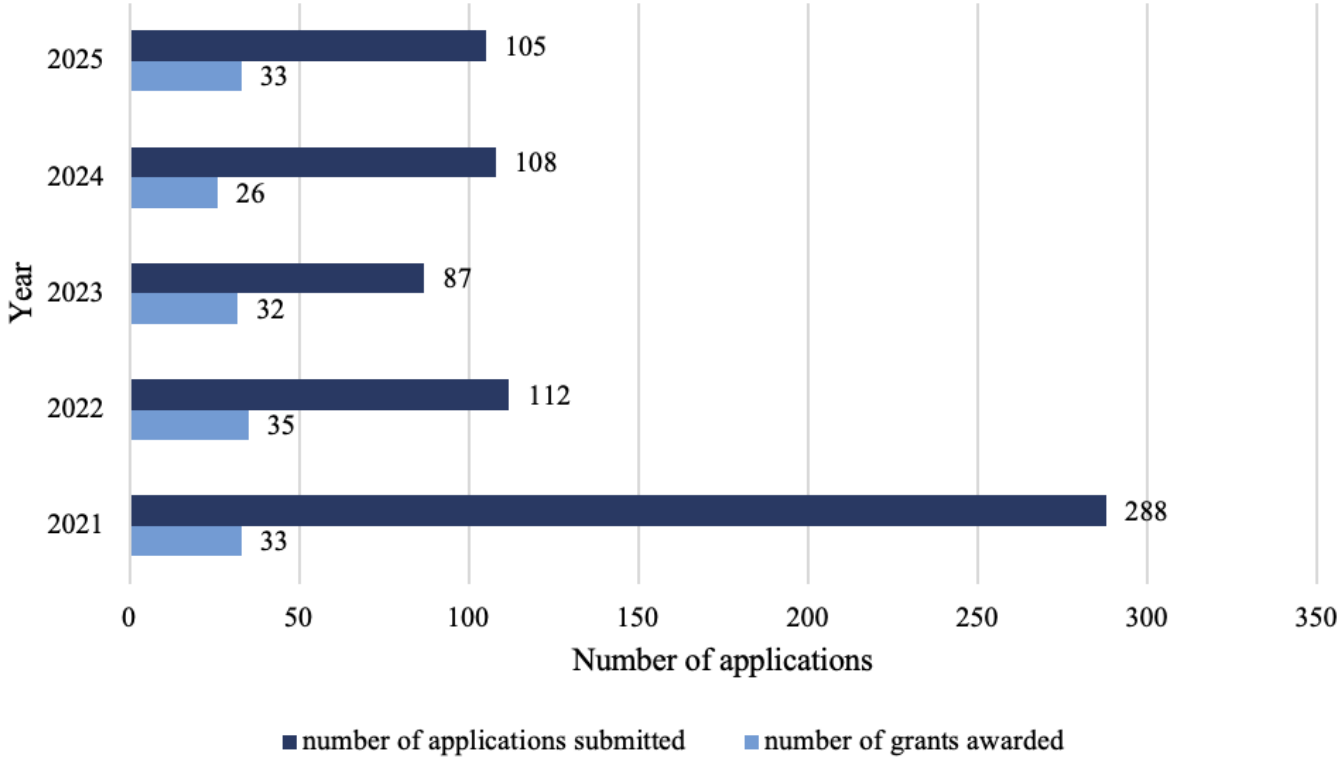


Source: Author’s own analysis

In the long term, the ‘Dance’ programme proves that public funds allocated to this art form are relatively immune to political or economic fluctuations – apart from minor annual adjustments, the level of funding remains stable. However, one could hardly call it complete stability: even entities that receive regular support operate in conditions of uncertainty and short budget cycles, which is not conducive to long-term planning. This mechanism, therefore, ensures repeatability rather than permanence, and its ‘systemic’ nature is based more on the regularity of procedures than on financial guarantees. Stability here is relative: the programme’s annual budget ranges from PLN 1.8 to 2.2 million, indicating that it funds the implementation of a limited number of projects. From the perspective of the development of the culture financing system, maintaining stable but relatively low outlays raises the question of the balance between the

availability of funds and their concentration on prestigious projects. On the one hand, this gives the dance community (in particular, entities organising large events involving internationally renowned companies) predictability and a certain margin of security; on the other hand, it limits the potential for diversifying activities and supporting innovative forms of creativity. In this sense, the 'Dance' programme is an important but still incomplete element of systemic support for culture.

Chart 2. Number of applications submitted and of grants awarded under the 'Dance' programme in 2021–2025



Source: Author's own analysis

An analysis of the number of applications submitted and grants awarded provides a better understanding of the patterns of change in the 'Dance' programme in 2021-2025. The year 2021 stands out most, with 288 applications submitted – almost three times as many as in subsequent years. It can be concluded that the high level of interest was due to this being the

first call for applications after the programme was separated as an independent priority, and the dance community, which had previously benefited from the joint ‘Theatre and Dance’ programme, saw it as an opportunity for new support. Despite the large number of applications, only 33 projects received funding, which translates into a success rate of approximately 11%.

As the chart above demonstrates, the number of applications stabilised in the following years, with 87 to 112 submitted annually between 2022 and 2025. With a relatively constant number of projects receiving funding (26-35 per year), the success rate increased to approximately 25-30%. This means that although the programme’s budget did not increase significantly, the likelihood of each applicant receiving support increased. On the one hand, this has improved the system’s sense of stability and predictability, but on the other hand, it shows that the programme remains highly selective – only a limited number of projects receive funding, and a large proportion of initiatives still remain outside the scope of grants.

Table 2. Selected entities receiving grants under the ‘Dance’ programme in 2021–2025

Entity / Project	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**
Cracovia Danza Court Balet / Cracovia Danza Court Dance Festival	x	x	x	x	
Lublin Culture Centre / International Dance Theatre Meetings	x	x	x	x	x
The Body/Mind Foundation / The Body/Mind Festival	x	x	x	x	x
Klub Żak / Gdansk Dance Festival	x	x	x	x	x
Podlaskie Dance Association / Kalejdoskop Festival	x	x	x	x	x
Mościce Art Centre / Scena Otwarta International Dance Theatres Festival	x	x	x	x	x
B'cause Foundation / premiere performances	x	x			x
Performa Foundation / ‘Memory of the City’ – modern dance festival		x	x	x	
Kielce Dance Theatre / premiere performances	x	x			x
Nowa Huta Cultural Centre / Kraków Dance Festival	x	x	x	x	x
Opera na Zamku in Szczecin / premiere performances	x	x	x		
Opera Śląska / premiere performances	x	x	x		
Polish Dance Theatre / premieres and ‘Granice Natury – Granice Kultury’ festival	x	x	x	x	x
Kultura u Źródeł Association / Olga Sawicka International Dance Festival in Lądek Zdrój	x	x	x	x	x
Jan Kochanowski Theatre in Opole / Opolska Scena Tańca		x	x	x	x

Source: Author’s own analysis

The data for 2021–2025, presented in Table 2, show that the separation of

the ‘Dance’ programme has enabled the expansion of the catalogue of supported projects. The list includes entities that received funding under the ‘Dance’ programme at least three times between 2021 and 2025, thereby demonstrating a sustained presence in the grant system. This selection allows us to identify both the institutions with the greatest budgetary significance and the organisations that benefit from support on a regular basis and shape the national dance landscape. An effort was made to take into account the diversity of operating models – from large public institutions to non-governmental organisations – and a representation of different regions of Poland. The list reveals the dominance of well-established festival projects, but at the same time, repertoire institutions and professional ensembles staging premieres and performance cycles are gaining an increasing share in the system. While in the previous decade the main beneficiaries were almost exclusively festivals, the new programme clearly demonstrates a shift towards combining presentation and production functions, which supports both the promotion of dance and the development of new repertoire.

Compared to the 2011–2020 period, decentralisation is also evident: beneficiaries regularly include sites outside the largest metropolitan areas, such as Tarnów (Scena Otwarta), Opole (Opolska Scena Tańca), Lądek-Zdrój (Olga Sawicka International Dance Festival) and Kraków/Nowa Huta (Kraków Dance Festival). This dispersion indicates that the programme serves not only as an instrument for the arts, but also for regions, enabling the development of local ecosystems and supporting the process of decentralisation of cultural life in Poland. Support for institutions outside the main centres confirms that the programme has room for activities that respond to the needs of local communities while maintaining a high artistic standard.

The table also shows that once new initiatives, such as the Kraków Dance Festival or the Opolska Scena Tańca (Opole Dance Scene), have been included in the programme, they can count on continued support in subsequent editions. This is a qualitative change compared to the previous decade, when the ‘Theatre and Dance’ mechanism primarily rewarded entities with a long tradition and a strong position in the arts. The new programme, therefore, allows for a more flexible response to changes in the environment and opens the possibility of institutionalising initiatives that have been established relatively recently but have already developed a recognisable profile. The overall picture points to a duality in the system: on the one hand, continued support for the most prestigious festivals, which are the pillars of Polish dance life, and on the other, consistent funding for premieres and institutional projects that expand the repertoire and support the development of professional companies. A mechanism constructed in this way combines the function of stabilisation with the potential to open up to new initiatives and support regional diversity. However, it should be noted that the scarcity of available funds limits the effectiveness of this two-pronged model. The ‘Dance’ programme’s budget allows for the co-financing of only a few dozen projects per year, which, given the number of applications submitted, represents a small fraction of the community’s needs. As a result, the two-pronged system, although conceptually sound, cannot fulfil its function to the full: the insufficient number of projects supported perpetuates the shortage of resources both in the large festival segment and in the area of repertoire production, limiting the possibilities for the long-term development of the artistic infrastructure for dance.

Challenges and opportunities of grant-based support

A review of grant programmes implemented between 2010 and 2025 shows that the dance support system in Poland – while it has undoubtedly developed compared to previous decades – remains an area fraught with tensions and challenges. The problem most often raised is the short-term nature of funding, which is particularly characteristic of the ‘Theatre and Dance’ programme. However, it should be emphasised that the insufficient funds allocated to dance programmes remain a problem of a more structural nature.[3] Despite favourable institutional changes, the budgets of both the ‘Theatre and Dance’ and the later ‘Dance’ programmes remain relatively low compared to other fields of art (e.g. in 2024, PLN 18,333,731 was allocated to the ‘Music’ programme, PLN 9,453,970 to the ‘Theatre’ programme, and PLN 1,794,500 to ‘Dance’). In practice, this means that even well-designed initiatives receive insufficient support to realise their artistic and organisational potential fully. As a result, the grant system does not so much complement institutional funding mechanisms as it largely replaces them. This situation also leads to excessive pressure on project implementers, who are forced to operate guided by the logic of economic efficiency – achieving the best possible results with minimal expenditure. Instead of promoting the stable development of the community, grants often force intensification of work and competition for resources, which, in the long term, can lead to burnout and limit the community’s capacity for innovation and cooperation. In this context, it would be desirable to gradually shift the emphasis from the economics of efficiency to those of ergonomics, taking into account the human and organisational potential of the cultural sector.

Another phenomenon is the concentration of funding on a few regular beneficiaries, mainly large public institutions and internationally renowned festivals. Data from individual programmes show that entities such as Centrum Kultury in Lublin, Kielecki Teatr Tańca, Fundacja Ciało/Umysł and Klub Żak received funding very frequently. On the one hand, this ensured the continuity of the most important events in the country, which was essential for building the recognition of Polish dance in the public and international spheres. On the other hand, however, it led to limited access to funds for new initiatives and smaller non-governmental organisations, which found it difficult to break through the competition posed by strong, recognisable brands. This mechanism could perpetuate existing hierarchies in the field of dance, while reducing the chances of obtaining support for experimental, niche or grassroots activities.

The conclusions formulated during the Third Dance Congress in 2023 confirm that the dance community continues to demand greater stability in the funding system (3rd Dance Congress, 19–21 March 2023. Report, 2023). The most frequently raised demands included: the need for multi-year grants and long-term planning, improving social security for people working in culture, and developing hybrid funding models combining public funds with philanthropy and private partnerships. Attention was also drawn to the importance of permanent venues for dance and infrastructure conducive to continuous work, which shows that systemic challenges go beyond the logic of grants and also concern the material conditions of the sector’s functioning. In the context of the broader debate on culture and development, grant programmes for dance can serve not only as a tool to support artists, but also as a catalyst for social and regional development, contributing to the strengthening of local communities, building social capital, and increasing the accessibility of culture. It is the skilful use of this

dual function – artistic and social – that holds the greatest potential for the further evolution of the system.

Conclusions

The analysis shows that the system of grant support for dance in Poland in 2010–2025 underwent a significant evolution – from marginalisation of this area within the broad programme ‘Theatre and Dance’ to the spin-off of the autonomous priority ‘Dance.’ The new programme has enabled a gradual increase in the proportion of dance initiatives, including primarily premieres and productions staged in repertory institutions, as well as the inclusion of smaller regional centres in the system. Thus, the support began to serve not only an interventionist function, but also a developmental one.

From the perspective of culture understood as a development factor, grant mechanisms in the field of dance prove to have a twofold function. On the one hand, they enable the sustenance of existing institutions and events of key importance to the community’s identity – such as well-established festivals or repertory dance theatres – and thus have a stabilising effect, ensuring continuity of operation and the preservation of established standards. On the other hand, the separation of the ‘Dance’ programme opens up opportunities for new initiatives that introduce innovative artistic forms, broaden the audience and involve various social groups in educational and animation activities.

In the broader perspective, however, the analysed system remains underfunded considering the scale of the tasks it is expected to fulfil. Despite their effectiveness in stimulating artistic activity, grant programmes often take over functions that should be carried out within the framework of

permanent institutional funding. As a result, the grant mechanism acts not as a supplement but as a substitute for systemic care for dance, leading to organisational overload and overexploitation of the community. The further development of cultural policy, therefore, requires not only maintaining but also increasing public spending on dance and a gradual shift in emphasis from economic efficiency to the ergonomics of artistic work and long-term stability.

Thus, the question of the sustainability and consistency of this model is still of key importance. There is still a risk that short-term financial mechanisms will perpetuate the project-based nature of activities, and that the concentration of funds on the largest entities will exacerbate inequalities in access to support. The lack of long-term guarantees for independent artists may result in their marginalisation and hinder artistic diversity, which is one of the foundations of the dynamic development of the field of dance. For this reason, the future direction of policy should aim to develop institutional solutions that balance the need for stability with the need of openness to new entities, forms and practices.

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Footnotes

1. The author construes the term ‘dance’ in accordance with the broad interpretation, as stated in calls for applications of the Ministry, rather than limited to a specific phenomenon or trend.
2. The term ‘dance community’ in this and subsequent paragraphs is used in a general sense. In this article, the author does not focus on distinguishing between specific interest groups within this community, treating them as a single group that is a potential beneficiary of grant funds.
3. The Announcement of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage on recruitment for government programmes in the field of culture and national heritage protection for 2025, to be implemented by 16 December 2024, you can find data on the amounts allocated to individual programmes – the differences between the amount allocated to the ‘Dance’ programme and programmes such as ‘Music’ or ‘Theatre’ are significant.

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