

Guide to fees for visual artists

by BBK Bundesverband Bildender Künstlerinnen und Künstler (BBK Bundesverband, Federal Association of Visual Artists)

Summary

Visual artists in Germany are usually freelance, (sole) self-employed proprietors and, unlike employees, must use their fees to cover operating costs, social security, administrative tasks, etc. The BBK's Leitfaden Honorare (Guide to Fees) provides recommendations for a minimum fee threshold (last updated 2022) that takes these professional conditions into account.¹

The well-founded guide can be used by visual artists in their negotiations for appropriate remuneration for their services. At the same time, it is intended to serve as a guideline for political and administrative decision-makers so that they can adapt public funding guidelines accordingly at the federal, state and municipal levels. Its application in the publicly funded arts sector is intended to also help achieve appropriate remuneration in the privately funded cultural sector. The Leitfaden Honorare guideline does not apply to galleries or to the art trade.

The core point of the recommendation

- The BBK Bundesverband recommends that, from 2023 onwards, visual artists apply a net fee rate of 70 euros per hour in their calculations and invoices for time-based artistic services.
- This hourly rate can be used to establish an economic calculation approach that takes into account both project-/commission-related and other costs.

Key project-/commission-related areas of activity for visual artists

Artistic services may include artistic presentations, art on buildings/art in public spaces, artistic design, cultural education, artistic mediation, artistic teaching, consulting, committee/expert and jury work, artistic curation, artistic direction, artistic research.

Projects/commissions in these areas of activity are usually implemented in four phases:

- Preparation
- Project management
- Implementation
- Mediation

The BBK Bundesverband recommends that the fee rate of 70 euros per hour be applied uniformly for all the above activities in all project phases.

What does this fee cover in addition to the project-related activity?

Visual artists are usually (sole) self-employed proprietors and must act entrepreneurially. Income from self-employment must ideally cover the following:

Operating costs

This comprises studio/workplace costs including technical infrastructure, working materials, public relations, professional travel (e.g. to art fairs, further education courses), administration, professional memberships, fees, taxes, and insurance.

In the calculation, the BBK Bundesverband assumes average annual operating costs of 16,000 euros.

¹ The Leitfaden Honorare fee guideline is a further development of the Leitlinie Ausstellungsvergütung (Guideline on Exhibition Fees) published by the BBK Bundesverband in 2021, www.bbk-bundesverband.de/beruf-kunst/ausstellungsverguetung

Invested working time

Working time that is not specifically project-related, but which must be "invested" so that artists can pursue their profession and thus exist in economic terms – e.g. acquisition (public relations work, website maintenance, contact maintenance, visits to events, researching funding programmes and competitions, applications), administrative work, further training, time for experimentation.

The BBK Bundesverband assumes that 40% of the total artistic activities of (sole) self-employed artists constitute "invested time". The compensation for this already invested time is included in the recommended fee rate of 70 euros.

Profit and reserves

An economic fee rate must be calculated in such a way that profit can be achieved so that self-employed persons will have a reserve to protect themselves against entrepreneurial risks, loss of income, and unforeseeable events. The recommended fee rate includes a (common) flat rate of 15%.

Income tax

The respective income tax payable.

Social security

Contributions to the artists' social security fund (Künstlersozialversicherung), health, long-term care and pension insurance, retirement provisions, unemployment and occupational accident insurance.

Personal living expenses

These include costs for housing, groceries, clothing, leisure activities, recreational leave etc.

Reference values used to calculate the fee rate

As there is no current scheme that fits the visual arts profession, the fee recommendation was developed on the basis of various sources. Sample reference values include:

- average gross salary of a full-time employee (49,200 euros per year in Germany in 2021) and consideration of the specific professional conditions of (sole) self-employed proprietors (calculation of costs not related to a specific project-/commission),
- fee recommendations for related professions and industries (design, illustration, art history etc.),
- estimates from the Collective Wage Agreement for the Public Service (TVöD in Germany).

Principles on which the fee recommendation is based

- The fee rate is economically justifiable and represents a minimum threshold; it does not affect the possibility of agreeing on a higher rate.
- Criteria for a higher rate may include professional experience, name recognition, inflation and price increases, particularly high proportionate operating costs, specific services that are harmful to health, rush fees.
- The amount is a net amount; it may be necessary to add VAT.
- In certain cases, a flat rate (per performance, per day etc.) may be more appropriate.
- Material costs that cannot be quantified in terms of time must be invoiced separately.
- Exhibition fees should be negotiated separately (see BBK Leitlinie Ausstellungsvergütung 2021 (2021 BBK Guideline on Exhibition Fees); www.bbk-bundesverband.de/beruf-kunst/ausstellungsverguetung).
- Cancellation fees must be agreed separately.
- Copyright claims remain unaffected by the above and must be asserted separately if necessary.

Guide to fees for visual artists, last updated December 2022

BBK Bundesverband Bildender Künstlerinnen und Künstler (Federal Association of Visual Artists)
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The **BBK Bundesverband** has been representing the professional interests of freelance visual artists vis-a-vis the political and administrative sectors in Germany since 1972. It acts as a politically independent point of contact for the federal government, the federal states in cross-state matters, the members of the German Bundestag and the committees of the European Union.

The BBK Bundesverband observes and analyses the social situation in its sector and develops strategies to improve the economic situation, social security and the cultural policy framework. It advocates for the freedom of art and culture and a democratic and tolerant society as well as taking a stand on current cultural policy issues.

The BBK Bundesverband is the umbrella organisation of the BBK state associations, which, together with their regional associations, represents more than 10,000 visual artists. The Association is a solidarity group and lobby for all visual artists in Germany and cooperates closely with other artists' associations and cultural policy stakeholders in civil society.

This summary has been translated in cooperation with **Internationale Gesellschaft der Bildenden Künste (IGBK)**. IGBK unites Germany's three most important supra-regional artist associations on the basis of equality, so that they can act together internationally: BBK Bundesverband, Deutscher Künstlerbund (German Artists' Association) and Verband der Gemeinschaften der Künstlerinnen und Kunstfördernden (GEDOK - Federation of Women Artists and Patrons of the Arts).

Additional information on fees for visual artists and discussions in Germany and Europe may be found here:

- Initiative Ausstellungsvergütung (information in German) > [link](#)
- BBK Bundesverband, Ausstellungsvergütung (information in German) > [link](#)
- ver.di, Fachgruppe Bildende Kunst, Ausstellungsvergütung (information in German) > [link](#)
- Internationale Gesellschaft der Bildenden Künste/IGBK, Exhibition Remuneration Right in Europe 2018 > [link](#)
- IAA Europe, Fair Pay for Artists 2021 > [link](#)

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