

Speech by Signe Kivi, Rector of the Estonia Academy of Arts

Good morning, dear colleagues! I'm glad to participate in this discussion, but first let me introduce myself and the background of today's topic in Estonia.

My name is Signe Kivi, I have the education of textile artist, I graduated from the Estonian Academy of Arts 27 years ago and today I'm the rector of the same university.

Meanwhile I have been a freelance artist and an entrepreneur, the president of Estonian Artists Association, professor and head of the textile department of the Estonian Academy of Arts, the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Estonia for three and half years, and a member of the parliament.

I was a member of the government during the period, when Estonia adopted its architectural policy, started to work out the design policy (as well as) the act of creative associations and creative persons. This all was supported by creative people. However, the importance of creative industries and the need for its mapping was first initiated by the former rector of the academy of arts.

The first mapping of the Estonian creative industries was completed in 2006 and it is constantly improved. As regards „Research of European creative industries ordered by the European Commission the opinion of Estonia is as follows: Estonia supports harmonisation of the statistical base being the basis for development of creative industries on European level. Based on its experience, Estonia confirms the correctness of conclusions of the research ordered by the European Commission and asks the Commission to take rapid and concrete steps for further development and promotion of creative industries within the framework of the Lisbon strategy.

I would mention just few keywords of this Estonian report:

The volume of Estonian creative industries is

- 20 thousand employees; i.e 3% of the entire labour force.
- The field includes over 2300 companies, i.e 6% of the general number of operating business companies;
- The proportion of creative industries in GDP is about 3%

Compared to other countries, the latter parameter is average.

Today we concentrate on fashion industry, and it could be an interesting fact that in the Estonian Academy of Arts fashion design has been taught on professional level for 60 years and during that period over 200 fashion designers have been educated. Fashion is a very popular speciality, every year over 15 applicants are competing for one place. Probably a certain role here has been the interest and skills of handicraft of Estonian women, as in the Soviet time we sew fashionable clothes at home ourselves. New trends

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and lines reached us from the free world a bit later and mainly through the journal Siluett (Shiloutte), distributed in superlarge numbers all over the Soviet Union.

Let me now come back to the present time:

We can be proud that in 2007 such a small country as Estonia has unproportionally much fashion industry based on original creation, when looking to the market, and all creative employees of that sector have acquired their education in the Estonian Academy of Arts.

In recent years the local fashion industry has gone through enormous development. Here a good example is the largest company in the field, Baltika Grupp Ltd. and its trademark Monton. It is a new and contemporary trademark, which quality-price ratio is not less than that of other well-known European trademarks of the same price class. Baltika Group also operates three other trademarks in six countries – in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Ukraine and Russia and has altogether 122 shops in six markets, where new fashion clothes are offered every week.

With the example of this company we can say that the ambitious plan of our government to bring Estonia into five richest European countries in the next 15 years is not a utopia at all. Because Estonia, which has been repeatedly called the Baltic Tiger, is currently the global leader for its number of Internet connections and mobile phones. Again, I would like to remind that also Skype was invented with the participation of Estonian engineer.

But let's go back to creativity and our topic.

I think that obligation of the university is first and foremost provision of high-quality and competitive education – its keywords are creation and creativity together with study and research activities. With the Estonian Minister of Education and Research' Act from February 2007, the EAA was accredited by an international expert committee as an institution, most of its' curricula were accredited by the same document.

The Estonian Academy of Arts has recently started to educate our students to think of themselves as designer-managers and is working towards Design Management course in cooperation with Tallinn Technical University. The Department of Fashion Design also has a student company HULA, which has its own shop in the old town of Tallinn and which aims to teach our MA students to not only design but also to manage the company.

I would like to end with the idea repeated many times by me and my colleagues, that on design specialities we teach too much design and too little ethics, psychology, economy and ecological thinking responsibility. The latter is extremely important in fashion industry calling to buy more and more things. I am happy that in Estonia the Doctoral student of fashion Reet Aus has called up to create only as necessary, not to create the need. Her collections are made 100% of recycled materials, saving the environment and in socially responsible way – using the local labour force and paying fair wages to people. This is the topic, which would need more serious attention in the context of creative industries and it is my proposal to the round table.