

## The impact of the institution of the City Writer in Tartu, Estonia

### Abstract

In 2015 the Estonian city of Tartu became a member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network as a City of Literature. One of the most noticeable initiatives triggered by this status has been the founding of the institution of the City Writer-in-residence. Authors whose registered place of residence is in Tartu can apply for the position, and the writer, who is appointed for a calendar year, receives a fee during this period. In addition to continued literary creation, the City Writer is expected to participate in the local literary life and contribute to the visibility of Tartu as “an internationally known literature-friendly city”. The first author to hold the position was the poet Kristiina Ehin in 2017, followed by the children’s author Mika Keränen in 2018. In addition, starting from Autumn 2017 an International Residency Programme has been introduced, offering a stipend of up to two months for foreign authors to stay and work in Tartu. The first stipend holder was Andrej Tomažin from Slovenia.

The presentation proposes to enquire how the institution of the City Writer has been contributing to the image of Tartu as a City of Literature, attempting to observe the effect from the local as well as the international points of view. The activities of the City Writer that have been occurring and reflected in actual city space, as well as their coverage in press and on the web are considered. The International Residency as an institution is too recent to allow making substantive conclusions, yet allows posing the question how the position of “an external observer” compares to the role of the local City Writer and how the authors’ various activities stemming from the broader aims of the City of Literature interact.

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**Mart Velsker** is Associate Professor in Estonian Literature at the University of Tartu. In 2000-2004 he was Lecturer in Estonian Language and Literature at the University of Helsinki and has given lectures at the universities of St. Petersburg, Vilnius, Oulu and Tampere, as well as the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre in Tallinn. His research interests include South Estonian literature and literary urban studies, as well as Estonian poetry and literary criticism of the past few decades. He is one of the authors of *Eesti kirjandushugu* (Estonian

*Literary History*, 2001); his most recent publication is “Cities within a Second City: The Case of Literary Tartu” (in *Literary Second Cities*; Palgrave Macmillan 2017).