



Writers Guild of Ireland report to the general assembly of the Federation of Screenwriters in Europe

Brussels 24th and 25th November 2017

Collective bargaining (not)

Our long campaign to be allowed to collectively bargain finally came to a negative conclusion.

In June 2017 the Irish Parliament passed the [Competition \(Amendment\) Act 2017](#). This gave a limited capacity to registered trade unions to negotiate on behalf of certain limited group of free-lancers. We, and all other creators, are excluded.

Eccentrically at the same time we have been engaging with the main public service broadcaster (RTE) in a set of price negotiations relating to a number of ancillary payments (for those shows where the writers have not been bought out by contract) in respect of sales, an additional omnibus showing of our long running series, and four different online uses. (This negotiation is definitely in contravention of Competition law.) The sums involved are tiny, but an important issue has been the relationship between rates paid for broadcast repeats and online uses. We accepted modest rates of payment for online use but insisted, to a reluctant broadcaster, on a fixed five-year cut-off when the whole thing has to be renegotiated.

Gender parity in funding

Our major campaign this year however has been on under-representation of women in screenwriting, especially in feature film. This has been a background concern of the Guild for some time (limited to publishing statistics and so on) but a variety of circumstances brought the issue to the fore over the last couple of years. Our state funding agency, the Irish Film Board, has been convinced to commit to achieving parity of funding for women writers, directors and producers

(within an unachievable three-year period now amended to the slogan “50/50 by 2020”). The guilds main role has been to try to increase the volume of applications for funding by women writers. Our focus has been across the board but with an emphasis on bringing women who had been produced in the past back into the profession.

Consultation meetings, Information meetings, pitching training meetings and so on have taken a considerable amount of time and resources.



(consultation meeting, Galway Film Fleadh, 2016)

Bullying and Harassment

This issue has become important in Ireland as elsewhere with specific accusations being made, especially in the arts, and many organisations have responded. The WGI has offered a confidential counselling service to members and supported an information package with other organisations.

Film Development schemes

Like many countries Ireland has a “writer only” development funding scheme as well as providing funds to producers. The funding agency, the Irish Film Baord, have consulted us about splitting this scheme in two – one for inexperienced writers (who will be offered additional workshopping and so on) and one for experienced writers with existing credits. We think, subject to the details, it’s a good idea.

Other ongoing work

Other campaigns over the year have included work aimed at trying to increase the volume of fiction produced by the main state broadcaster, agreeing credit guidelines with our producers' organisations (the IAWG guidelines copied and pasted), and continuing the tortuous process of establishing our own Collective Management Organisation.

The usual activities of advice and information for members continues apace, our annual award (the ZeBBies) celebrated ten years.

The Writers Guild of Ireland has 424 members (of whom 122 are Associate).

Thomas McLaughlin
Chair

David Kavanagh
Executive