

About the WGGB

Formed in 1959 The Writers' Guild of Great Britain (now called the WGGB) is an affiliated trade union that represents professional writers in the UK. We organise in the following sectors, film, television, animation, theatre, radio, books and videogames and have national agreements covering television, radio, film and theatre. We have 2,183 members including 1080 film and TV screenwriters.

WGGB has a typical union structure, led by a General Secretary and elected Officers and Executive Council representing our organising sectors and UK regions.

We work collectively with trade unions and writer's organisations both here and abroad and are affiliated to Trade Union Congress (TUC), International Affiliation of Writers' Guilds, Performers' Alliance, British Copyright Council, European Writers' Council, Federation of Screenwriters in Europe, Filmmakers' Alliance, International Affiliation of Writers Guilds, Union Network International, and World Intellectual Property Organisation.

Change of staff at the WGGB

Bernie Corbett (former General Secretary) and Anne Hogben (Assistant General Secretary) both left the WGGB in 2017. On 10 July it was announced that Ellie Peers (former Assistant General Secretary) was elected as the new General Secretary. The WGGB is has undergone a staff restructure and appointed new union organisers. We still have a new Assistant General Secretary to appoint so are nearly there.

Brexit and the Creative Industries

We have continued to lobby and brief government alongside our sister unions in the entertainment industry, In July we held a cross party lobby of MP's and Peers to ensure that Brexit negotiators are aware of the importance of the creative industry to the UK economy and that our recommendations are implemented to ensure that we have a thriving industry post-Brexit.

What follows is the briefing we gave to MP's.

Funding & investment

The value of the Creative Industries is over £84 billion (*source DCMS January 2016*) to the British economy. Federation Entertainment Unions (FEU) reported that within the UK creative industries;

- 9% ACE arts organisations reported accessing Creative Europe funding.
- 46% of UK bids for European funding are accepted, second only to Germany
- The UK also receives 24% of all European Research Council grants.
- 1.5-2% of £258bn European Structural and Investment Funds for the period 2014-2020 will go to the cultural sector and in the period 2014-2020
- The European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) will invest £8.66bn across the UK – targeting disadvantaged areas.

In 2015 the culture sub programme supported 54 UK projects and the MEDIA programme supported 53 co-productions. Switzerland lost all access to funding schemes in 2014 after imposing restrictions on EU citizen mobility and while Norway pays into and can access schemes, they have no say in their development. US Foreign Direct Investment in film - about £1.2bn is invested by US producers/studios in UK film and high-end TV production each year. While this is probably secure in the short-term, given the long lead time on projects, and the current attractiveness of the low pound, investors could be deterred by no longer having easy access to the EU market and freedom of movement once the UK exits.

Recommendations:

- If access to EU funding for UK creative industries becomes unavailable, an amount equivalent to the UK's contributions to Creative Europe should be ring fenced by the UK Government for UK public

fundings in the creative industry including the Arts Councils, Creative England/Scotland/Wales and BFI. Such funding should be ring fenced for the type of projects previously funded by Creative Europe in the UK and should be contingent on delivering specific cultural, diversity and social outcomes.

- Creative tax reliefs have provided a major boost to the UK's film, television production, animation and theatre industries and the case for expansion of tax relief should be explored post-Brexit.
- Replace the MEDIA funding, with emphasis on enabling and distributing lower budget, culturally important films.
- Support for independent film distribution to replace lost EU funding and maintain reciprocal market access for the distribution of UK and EU film and TV productions and audio-visual services.
- Take advantage of the freedom from EU rules to support culturally British films: increase the tax relief to British films once state aid restrictions do not apply.
- Ensure that the European Convention on Cinematographic Co-Production applies to the UK post-Brexit.

Freedom of Movement – workers & goods

Within the creative industries co-productions, touring organisations, performances and one-off films invariably use workers from UK, EU and the rest of the world. Working within the EU we have become used to not having to applying for work permits or VISA's to work and travel or to pay tariffs to transport goods. There is massive concern across the industry about how this will work post-Brexit and the additional costs that bureaucracy will have on the creative activity. There are also fears that in the film sector important co-production agreements which allow international film producers to work together to create a film which can gain state protections and tax benefits from multiple countries at the same time could be compromised. Being outside of that framework, or the uncertainty of having to re-sign up to it could be damaging for the UK film industry.

Recommendations:

- Freedom of movement for workers and goods across the EU is essential for the entertainment industry. To minimise the administrative burdens post Brexit, entertainment unions are calling for a special EU wide working visa for workers in the entertainments industry.
- The right to remain for EU nationals currently working and residing in the UK without having to apply for additional work or residence permits, and reciprocal rights for UK nationals working and residing in the EU.
- Existing co-production agreements must be protected and if necessary the UK should re-sign up to the European Convention on Cinematographic Co-Production as a European non-member state.

Intellectual Property

Intellectual property developments at European level including the draft Digital Single Market Directive and the draft Copyright Reform Directive, have a significant bearing on writers and other copyright holders, particularly regarding issues such as territoriality of licensing and remuneration.

Recommendations

- European directives that protect and improve the rights of writers and other rights holders should be incorporated into UK law post-Brexit.

Cultural Diversity

EU rules currently oblige TV broadcasters to invest 20% of their revenues into making or commissioning original content and to spend at least 50% of their time showing European works, including material made in their own country.

As the UK places more emphasis on trade talks with non-EU countries, there is a risk that cultural goods and services could be traded in a way which is currently protected by the cultural exceptions which apply in trade talks between the EU and other partners. (source Equity)

Recommendations:

- The UK Government should have due regard for international standards including the UNESCO treaty on cultural diversity and ILO conventions on labour standards when negotiating future trade deals.
- UK Government must ensure that UK content continues to fall within the definition of European works for the purposes of European broadcasting quotas post Brexit.

Now the negotiations have begun we will continue to lobby both here and in Europe.

BBC & BBC Studios

BBC Studios are now an independent company and no longer funded by the BBC licence fee, they are part of WGGB/PMA/BBC TV forum, which is a negotiating body setting out the terms screenwriters are contracted on at the BBC.

There are proposals for a new channel called BBC Scotland (6pm-12midnight), the budget is only £30 million, and at least £10 million will be used for daily news. There is a real lack of commissioning for writers based in Scotland with most commissioning south of the border. We are working with BBC Scotland to schedule scripted into their programming, because of the budgetary limitations this will probably be achieved with co-productions. We hope that the new channel will create more opportunities for writers in Scotland, assuming it gets the green light by Ofcom the industry regulator early next year.

All BBC programmes now must go out to tender, so far, no scripted content has gone out to companies outside of the BBC, but it is early days. Currently low budget soap *Doctors* is out for tender so the situation may change. The IP is owned by the BBC so all writers contracted will remain on BBC/WGGB negotiated terms.

We have negotiated two new television agreements with the BBC since last year, the latest agreement *Script Agreement for Television and Online* now includes pension provision for children's animation writers, 100% SUA for children's writers, provision for payment for writers writing online and provisions for BBC Studios to work for other broadcasters.

ITV

We recently signed off on a 2% increase in minimum fees and finalised the bullying and harassment policy for freelance writers. In the forthcoming ITV/WGGB/PMA Forum meeting in November we are looking to finally sort out the outdated extract use clause and payments for the new ITV Hub+ SVOD service. Earlier this year, we finally agreed the lump sum payments for digital use via Writers' Digital Payments, for the period 2012 – 2018.

Pact – television

Negotiations to create a new tripartite television agreement continue with Pact, the trade body for independent cinema and television producers in the UK. Currently we are concentrating on SVOD provision.

Pact – film

The good news is that we have finally met with Pact WGGB to update our film agreement and a further meeting is scheduled. Less welcome is that Pact brought a lawyer into the room and so far, we have not seen sight of the proposed new film contract template as the lawyer is putting it past other media lawyers and film funders before presenting it to us. I suspect that these negotiations will be lengthy.

Equality & diversity

Last year I was enthusiastic about the long-awaited Project Diamond which equality monitors freelancers working in television, this is the first industry wide monitoring in television in the UK. In June, we alongside sister unions BECTU (crew) and NUJ (journalists) decided to boycott the project. As a union we support equality monitoring to expose discriminatory practices in our industry so are not discouraging our members from filling out the monitoring forms, but instead are not actively supporting the project and

have spoken out publicly against it. The reason behind the boycott is that broadcasters have said that they cannot share programme level data with us or the other unions, even if they may want to the project has been set up so they can't. This lack of transparency will lead to absolutely no change to the discriminatory practices suffered by our members, so we are campaigning for this to change and the boycott is just one part of that campaign.

WGGB has commissioned research into gender bias in film and television which will include programme level data and we are planning to publish this early next year, this report will springboard the campaign for 50/50 male/female screenwriters in TV and film.

Bullying & Harassment

We are continuing to negotiate with major broadcasters to expand existing bullying & harassment policies to include freelancers. This work was already in hand pre-Weinstein as we were already aware that there is a serious issue of widespread bullying across the creative industry (see Federation of Entertainment Unions [Creating Without Conflict](#) campaign).

Ellie Peers

WGGB General Secretary