

# *Somebody Wrote It*

**OUR JOB :  
SCREENWRITERS**

Illustrated by Titwane



A PUBLICATION OF THE FEDERATION  
OF SCREENWRITERS IN EUROPE - FSE

NOVEMBER 2017

# Foreword

**By Robert Taylor**

**President of the Federation  
of Screenwriters in Europe**

I'm delighted to welcome you to the FSE European Screenwriters Award. There cannot be a citizen of the European Union who does not watch films or television drama – all of it conceived, created and written by screenwriters.

We have the great pleasure to applaud the achievement of one of those screenwriters, selected by their peers, with our award, which is intended to honour a writer whose work has had a significant cultural impact and been extensively distributed in Europe and internationally.

FSE is immensely grateful to the many organisations who, by supporting the award, have been kind enough to endorse our ambition to improve the status of screenwriters.

**Our many stories are at the heart our culturally diverse Europe. Screenwriters tell those stories.**



*"Stories are at the heart of humanity and are the repository of our diverse cultural heritage. They are told, retold and reinterpreted for new times by storytellers. Screenwriters are the storytellers of our time."*

European Screenwriters Manifesto, 2006

## **The FSE European Screenwriters Award**

With a turnover of 110 billion euros and employing one million Europeans, the economic importance of the audio-visual industries of Europe is clear – as are their cultural importance. About 1,500 films for the cinema each year and an unknown volume of television drama (at least 35,000 hours a year) amuse, challenge and delight all Europeans.

Every single one of these films and television programmes is different from every other. Each is original. Each, before anyone else is involved, is **the work of an individual writer bringing craft and imagination to a blank page.**

It would seem logical, therefore, that these essential and uniquely skilled people would be highly regarded, well respected and well paid. In Europe this is generally not the case.

Hence the Federation of Screenwriters in Europe created the FSE European Screenwriters Award, being held for the second time on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2017 in Brussels and established to **honour the achievements of its recipient and draw attention to the importance of the profession of screenwriting, central to the audio-visual industries in Europe.**

## The situation of screenwriters

Screenwriters are usually freelance, working contract by contract. There is no guarantee that there will ever be another contract after the current one. This extraordinary instability is only partially ameliorated in Europe by some payments for the ongoing use of their work. **In a highly profitable and heavily subsidised industry, screenwriters' median income after tax in 2012 was €22,000.**

That this situation is unfair is obvious – but it is also extremely inefficient. Building an industry on such unstable ground makes little sense.

As freelancers, screenwriters are often prevented from collectively bargaining minimum rates of payment by the application of Competition law. Screenwriters in Ireland, the Netherlands and Spain have been actively prevented from collective bargaining by national Competition Authorities.

This puts screenwriters, like many other authors, in an extremely difficult situation when they try to negotiate their contract. They are faced with a profoundly unequal situation. The principle of contractual freedom becomes oppressive when it is used in a heavily subsidised industry to minimise payments to authors and to acquire maximum transfer of rights, the source of potential future income for both producer and author.

The cumulative impact of these many injustices is detrimental for the profession of screenwriter, a profession which is fundamental to the European audio-visual industries.

## The role of the European Union

In the context of this degree of what could be called market failure, we need **the support of our elected representatives at European level, where copyright is a competence, to legislate and regulate a fairer and more efficient way to pay screenwriters and other authors.**

This has been acknowledged by the European Commission in its proposals for copyright legislation, where authors contracts are addressed for the first time under the heading of copyright reform.

If collective bargaining is largely prevented by Competition law, then the principle of fair or equitable remuneration becomes the logical route to potentially effective solutions.

The idea that authors have a right to share in the economic life of what they create, a well-established principle in the law of many member states, at a level that creates a real possibility of adequate pay and a reasonable chance of a stable income, is surely both desirable and achievable at European level.

## Proposals for a European Digital Single Market

We believe that each of the many cultures of Europe should be facilitated in making their voice heard. European Union legislation and regulation, from the treaties down, builds on the idea of cultural diversity as a European strength.

That these treaty-level principles of the European Union would be in conflict with the ambition to create a Digital Single Market, a key objective of the current Commission, is not surprising.

We agree with our producer and broadcaster colleagues that the application of the principle of the digital single market to the cultural sector in general and the audio-visual in particular could be disastrous – not just from an economic perspective but, perhaps more importantly for us, **from the perspective of cultural diversity.**

As a result :

- we welcome the exclusion of the audio-visual from the Geo-blocking regulation ;
- we are concerned that the welcome principle of portability of digital cultural goods and services may undermine prices and stability in our multi-territorial market place for investment, production and distribution ;
- We agree that VOD services should include a quota of European product and are worried that the application of the country of origin principle to certain television services may destabilise the fragile, but well-functioning, market for audio-visual culture.

But our priority concern is with the twenty thousand or so working screenwriters who are the origin of so much of Europe's cultural expression.

## Addressing the problems of authors including screenwriters

Within the current draft Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market, two proposals exist which address aspects of the situation of European Authors. The so-called value gap proposal, which seems to be surprisingly controversial, would be of little value to screenwriters who, in the context of unequal contract negotiations, are not usually allowed to retain their online rights.

**This situation can only be addressed by legislation and regulation.** The Collective Management Organisations of audio-visual authors and of performers have argued for **the inclusion of an Unwaivable Right to Remuneration for the use of work online in the Directive.** Each Committee of the Parliament which has concluded its work to date has supported the idea.

The organisations of screenwriters and directors have also endorsed it. To us this is a simple, logical and practical approach to ensuring that authors are paid for the use of their work online, increasing the overall amount that they are paid for their creation, but also introducing more stability into their income by paying over time.

A second initiative in the draft Directive intended to benefit authors is **the “transparency triangle”, which gives authors access to financial information about the economic life of what they create, the opportunity to re-negotiate the original contract payment if the work performs exceptionally well and an arbitration possibility to address any conflicts which may arise.** These provisions may appear modest, but are welcomed by authors as providing an important base and a possibility to rebalance the position of

authors in ways that accord them more respect and potentially better payment for their creation. A very important aspect of the transparency provisions is the possibility of the provisions being addressed and managed collectively by organisations of authors and those with whom they negotiate. Leaving individual authors to try to implement these provisions on their own would revert to the unequal negotiation position that the proposals are intended to improve.

These two proposals – an unwaivable right to remuneration for online use and the transparency requirements – could make **a significant contribution to improving the circumstances of authors, including screenwriters.**

To try to reform the European Union copyright acquis for the digital age and not address the situation of the authors who are the creators of copyright, would be a regrettable failure.

## The importance of Europe's films and television programmes

Europe's films and television programmes are central to our contemporary cultures, hugely popular with audiences, and a key contributor to our reputation as open, free and democratic societies. They are important contributors to the constant societal debate through which we reach conclusions about our problems and their solutions. They are vital in projecting an understanding of Europe and its values across the globe.

But it would be mistaken not to point out the fault lines in this otherwise robust structure. There is a tension between the concept of the Single Market and the reality of cultural diversity, which is proving

difficult to address. The role of monopolistic and un-transparent platforms needs to be challenged and altered. The position of authors, acknowledged to be underpaid and exceptionally precarious in their work, weakens the overall structure.

## Screenwriting

Good screenwriting is an exceptional gift. Experience and craft are essential. But talent, even genius is necessary to take good storytelling to that exceptional place of tears, or laughter, or terror where an audience is carried along through recognition of a story they think they know to a revelation, a new understanding, that they did not expect.

**There are so many great European films and television programmes because there are so many great screenwriters. At our award ceremony we honour one exceptional writer, a great storyteller who consistently captures the imagination of audiences and elicits the admiration of their peers.**



The following portraits were made by French illustrator Titwane, author, along with Raynal Pellicer, of 3 fascinating books on French Police departments (La Martinière Ed.) : *Brigade des Mineurs, immersion au cœur de la Brigade de Protection des Mineurs* (2017), *Brigade Criminelle, immersion au cœur du 36 quai des Orfèvres* (2015) et *Enquêtes Générales, immersion au cœur de la Brigade de Répression du Banditisme* (2013). He regularly collaborates with French magazines and newspapers and illustrates books for adults and children. He made animated travel diaries for the TV program « Ce soir on dîne ailleurs » broadcasted on TF1 in 2011.

[titwane.fr](http://titwane.fr)

# Somebody Wrote It

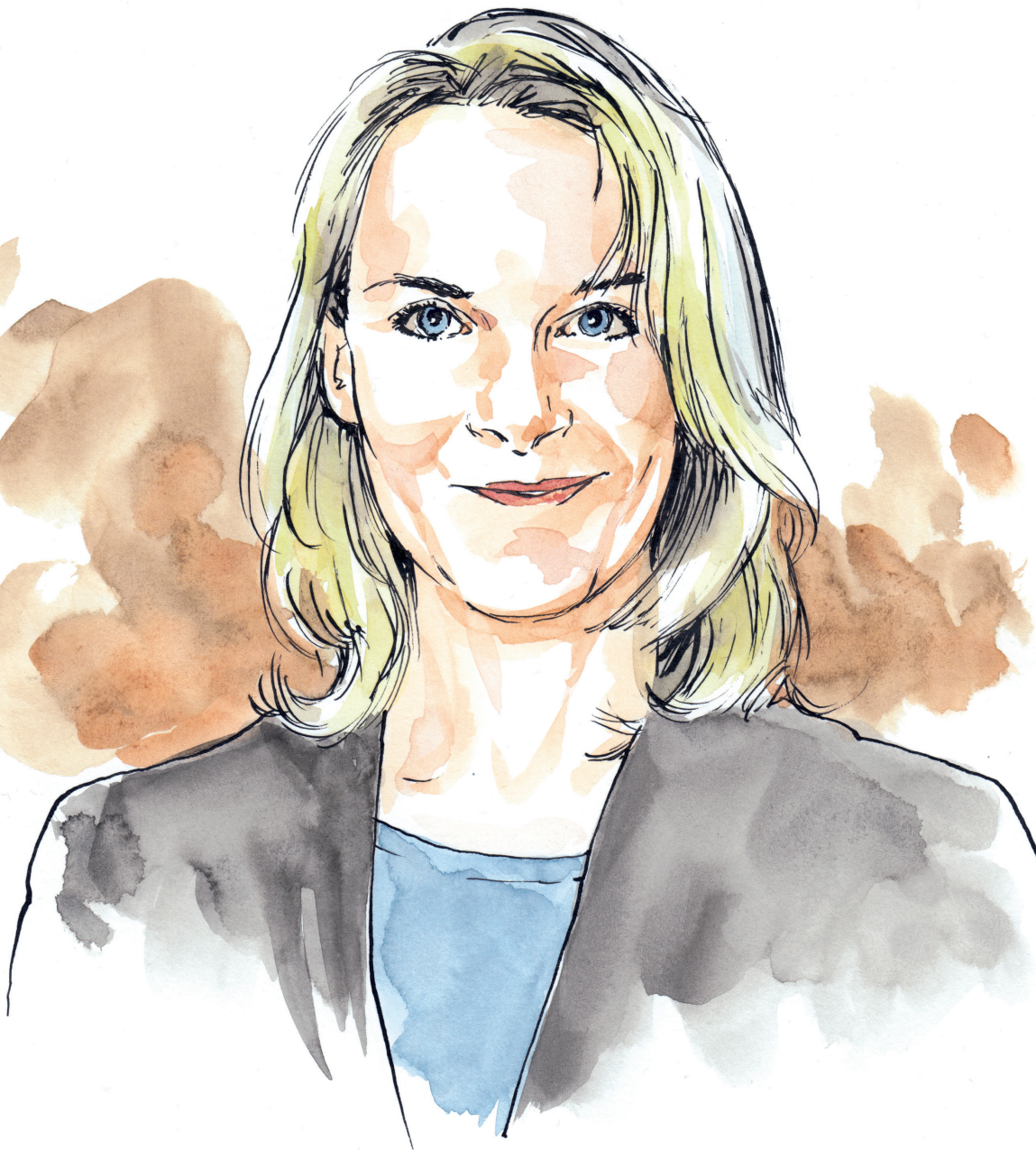
In 2015 the Federation of Screenwriters in Europe started a series of illustrated portraits to present some European screenwriters.

The series continues in 2017. Let us introduce you to six accomplished screenwriters from Austria, Belgium, Italy, The Netherlands, and Sweden.

The films and TV series they wrote have been successful at national and international level.

# *Agnes Pluch*

AUSTRIA



Agnes Pluch is an Austrian screenwriter. She has written many feature length films for television and cinema including *Die Auslöschung* for which she got the Thomas Pluch Preis and *Ikarus* which won the Max Ophüls Award for Best Script. She has also collaborated on several German-Austrian TV series.

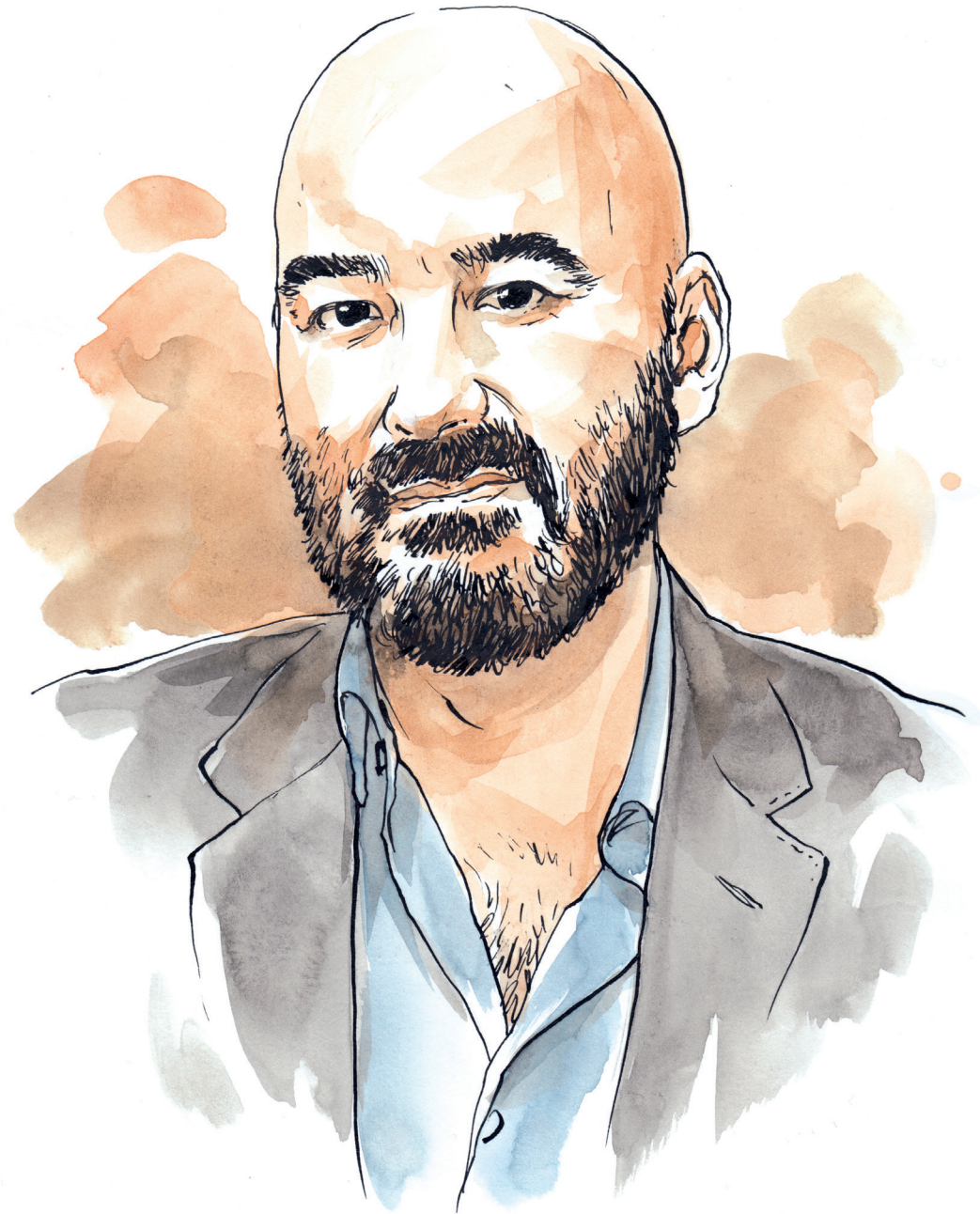


# Nicola Guaglianone

ITALY

Among Nicola Guaglianone's nineteen credits as writer are television series, films such as *Lo chiamavano Jeeg Robot* (*They call me Jeeg*), a big success in Italy, and *Indivisibili* (*Indivisible*) for which he won a David di Donatello for best original screenplay.

He has recently worked on *Suburra*, the first Netflix production in Italy.



Sanne Nuyens and Bert van Dael are Belgian screenwriters. Together they wrote several awarded short films. They recently co-created and wrote *Hotel Beau Séjour*, a ten part crime series that was picked up by Arte and Netflix. The series won the audience award at Séries Mania Festival in France.

## *Sanne Nuyens & Bert van Dael*

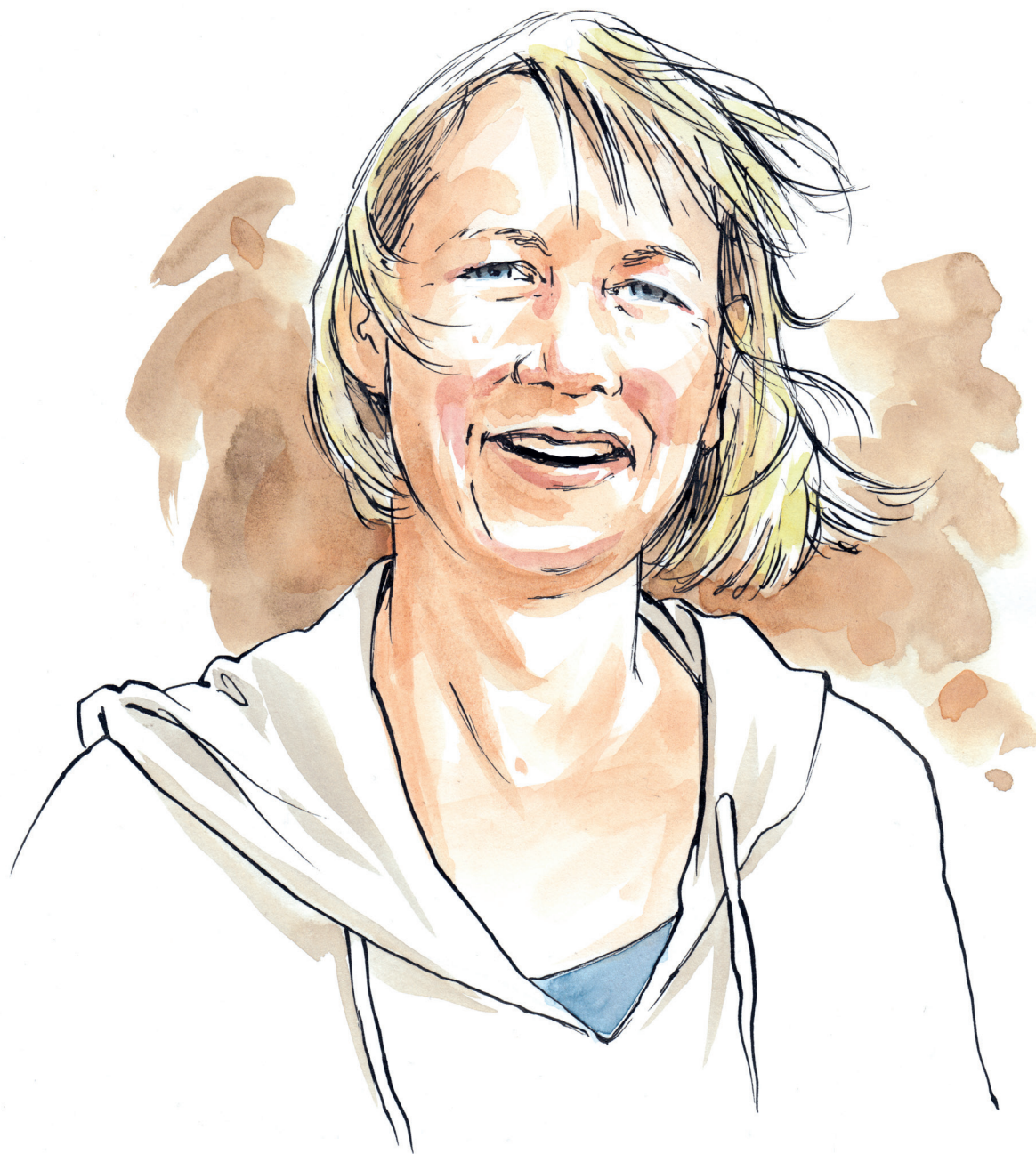
BELGIUM



# Camilla Alghren

SWEDEN

Camilla Alghren is best known as a writer of the TV series *Bron* (*The Bridge*) but is also writer on *Gåsmamman* with Martin Asphaug, based on the Dutch Series *Penzoa*. She is in development as head writer with *Störst av Allt* (*Quicksand*), from the novel by Malin Persson Giolito, for Netflix in Sweden.





## *Jean van de Velde*

NETHERLAND

Jean van de Velde's twenty-five writing credits include two Golden Calf awards (Netherlands Film Festival) for best script *Lek* (*Leak* - 2000) and *Bram Fischer* (*An Act Of Defiance* - 2017).

He has also written extensively for television, including the Emmy Award Winner Drama *All Stars* (2000).

# The Federation of Screenwriters in Europe

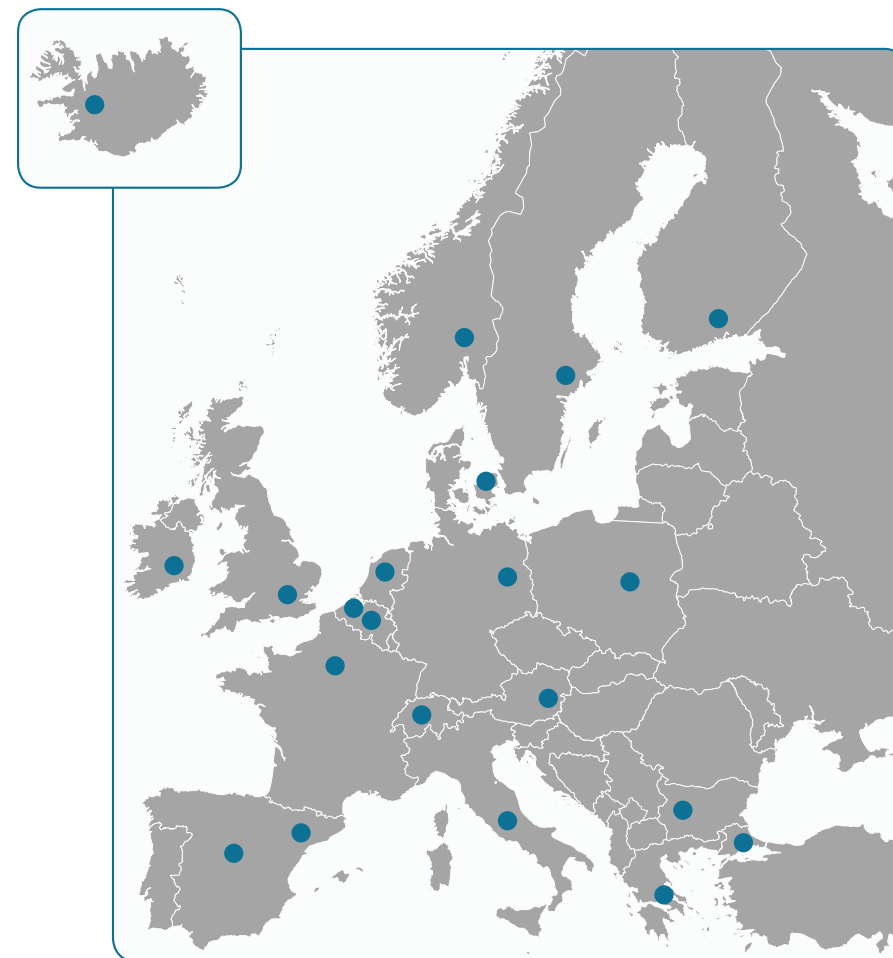
The Federation of Screenwriters in Europe (FSE) brings together 24 screenwriters' organisations from 19 European countries including 16 member states of the European Union. Established in 2001 in Athens, the FSE seeks to create a European community of writers for film and television, to provide practical assistance to its members and to represent their interests at the institutions of the European Union.

## Partner members

- FRANCE / SACD
- UK / ALCS
- SPAIN / DAMA
- US / WGA E
- SPAIN / SGAE
- US / WGA W

## Member guilds

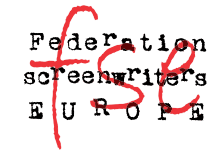
- AUSTRIA  
Drehbuchverband  
Austria
- BELGIUM  
ASA / Association  
des scénaristes  
de l'audiovisuel
- BELGIUM  
Scenaristengilde
- BULGARIA  
BAFTR
- DENMARK  
Danske Dramatikere
- FINLAND  
Sunklo / Suomen  
Näytelmäkirjailijat  
ja Käsikirjoittajat ry
- FRANCE  
La Guilde française  
des Scénaristes
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VDD / Verband  
Deutscher  
Drehbuchautoren
- GREECE  
ESE / Scriptwriters  
Guild of Greece
- ICELAND  
FLH : / Félag leikskálda  
og handritshöfunda
- IRELAND  
WGI / Writers  
Guild of Ireland
- ITALY  
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- SPAIN  
FAGA / Forum de  
Asociaciones de  
Guionistas del  
Audiovisual. FAGA  
includes 4 regional  
guilds: A.GA.G - EDAV  
-EHGEP - GAC / SiGC
- SWEDEN  
Sveriges  
Dramatikerförbund
- SWITZERLAND  
SCENARIO
- THE NETHERLANDS  
Network  
Scenarioschrijvers
- UNITED KINGDOM  
WGGB / Writers' Guild  
of Great Britain



# FSE EUROPEAN SCREENWRITERS AWARD

23 NOV 2017  
BRUSSELS

An event organised by  
**Federation of Screenwriters in Europe**



In cooperation with

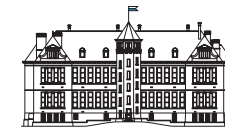
**de Scenaristengilde**

**ASA - Association des Scénaristes de l'Audiovisuel**

**BSCG - Belgian Screen Composers Guild**

Kindly hosted by

**the Representation of the Free State of Bavaria to the EU**



With the support of



Dramatikerförbundet





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