

IRISH PLAYWRIGHTS AND SCREENWRITERS GUILD

**REPORT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FEDERATION OF
SCREENWRITERS IN EUROPE**

28th March 2009

The IPSG now has more than 450 members, of whom 150 are associate members. We have financial support from two state agencies as well as membership fees. We employ one fulltime and two part-time employees.

We are members of the International Affiliation of Writers Guilds and are affiliated to Ireland's largest trade union.

The IPSG held our second annual ZeBBie awards this year. The awards are based on making the best scripts of the year, in radio, television, theatre and film, available to our members who read and vote (all online). The award is strictly for the scripts so it does not matter if the readers and voters have seen the production or not.

A ceremony is held to announce and celebrate the winners. You can see a rather basic three minute video of this year's ceremony here <http://www.script.ie/zebbies-2008.php>

The system has some other benefits. Because we have to collect a complete list of all productions in the year as the basis for the nominating procedure we have a very useful basis for analysing the scale and the trends in writing for performance (radio, film, theatre and television).

We are in the process of producing the second ZeBBies report right now, based on these figures.

What we can see is that there are about 300 persons each year who are paid for writing for television, film theatre or radio in Ireland, with the largest group being the one writing for television.

Some things that we did not know are that there are many of those who earn money in one year who will not earn anything in the next year (about one third) and indeed that there are a significant percentage who will be paid in one year and who will never be paid in the industry for writing ever again (perhaps forty to fifty persons).

We also discovered that while the representation of women in the profession is a little more than 40% in total this is heavily skewed in favour of television and long running series in particular and that women are very badly represented in writing for feature film.

Average income from writing for all those contracted in the year is just over €14,000 per annum. If the better paid writers of series television are excluded from this calculation the average income from writing drops to €11,000.

Trends in the second year repeated what we had seen in the first year but recent months have seen a very severe drop in the amount of work being made available to writers in Ireland in the context of the current economic recession, which is particularly deep in Ireland.

The major campaigning issue in Ireland for writers is the right to negotiate rates. For a number of years we have been struggling with a decision of the Irish Competition Authority that insists that, as writers are not employees and are independent contractors, we are not entitled to “set prices”.

Last year we did make some progress towards a possible solution. The largest Irish trade union got a concession from government that promised a change in the competition law that might have provided a solution. Recent economic problems have meant that this issue is now considered too unimportant and we are not sure what the prospects are for a solution to this issue although it will obviously continue to be the primary focus of our work in the coming year.

The Guild continues to represent its members in contract and dispute issues at the national broadcaster, the Irish language broadcaster and with independent producers and to provide contract advice to individuals. We have been involved in negotiations for online catch-up services on the national broadcaster but we do not have a role at present in respect of basic rates of pay.

Audrey O'Reilly, Chairperson.

David Kavanagh, Chief Executive.