



FSE member's report

The Finnish Dramatists' Union (2010)

The Finnish Dramatists' Union represents professional Finnish writers who write for the stage, film, television, radio or multimedia. At the end of 2010, the Union comprised of 497 members, including both Finnish and Swedish speaking individuals.

In 2010, the Union continued to protect the professional, copyright and financial interests of its individual members, and handle the rights of properties owned by other controlling bodies such as estates. In addition to negotiating and issuing contracts, the union develops codes of practice in co-operation with theatres, television channels and producers. The union also continued to work closely with various artistic, copyright and public affairs organisations in order to further the aims of professional writers.

Finnish film year 2010

Finnish cinema going grew in 2010, with a total of 7.4 million cinema visits recorded for a population of 5.4 million. This was the highest number of visits since 2003, and an 8 % increase to the 2009 figures.

Domestic films did particularly well, with the top two most watched films both made in Finland. Domestic films gathered over two million viewers for the first time since modern records have been kept (1969), and accounted for a total of 27 % of all cinema visits, the highest in the history of Finnish cinema. A total of 23 Finnish films premiered in 2010, nine of which were documentary films.

It is worth noting that many of the films which did well both at the box office and at the prestigious Jussi Awards were films that had originally had difficulties finding financiers' backing.

Käsikirjoittajien Kilta

Since 2009, the Finnish Dramatists' Union has been the parent organisation of the Finnish screenwriters' guild Käsikirjoittajien Kilta, which actively promotes issues important to screenwriters and organises seminars and other events. The Union funds the guild's operations in addition to providing support in other ways.

In 2010, the guild continued to build better networks for screenwriters within the Finnish film industry. The guild's website was launched in early 2010, increasing its visibility and accelerating the growth of its membership base. At the end of 2010, the number of its members had risen to almost one hundred.

Seminars

During the year, the guild organised three major seminars.

In February, a two-day event concentrating on screenwriting grants was held, with representatives from three major Finnish grants organisations discussing their film grants and answering questions submitted by guild members.

In September, a seminar titled "Increase screenwriters' pay!" was held, with focus in contracts, contract negotiations and the question whether there is a need for a screenwriters' agency that would handle negotiations on behalf of writers. The seminar was attended by approximately thirty individuals.

In October, the guild together with the Finnish Documentary Guild organised a one-day seminar concentrating on the dramaturgy of documentary films. In addition to presenting lectures on the subject, the event functioned as an opportunity for screenwriters and documentary film makers to come together and network. The seminar was attended by twelve screenwriters and twelve documentary makers.

Additionally, in November guild members could attend the American screenwriter Martin Wheeler's lecture titled "Writing for Hollywood" held at the Aalto University School of Art and Design.

Reading circles

During the year, the guild organised five reading circles, where professional actors read out in-progress screenplays, allowing writers to hear how their dialogue works, and to gather feedback from other participants. As in previous years, reading circles were organised together with the Association of Finnish Film Directors.

Awards: Kultainen Venla and the guild's own Colleague Award

In 2010, the two main Finnish television award ceremonies, Venla Award and Kultainen TV, merged, forming Kultainen Venla ("Golden Venla"). Following the merge, award categories for Best Screenplay and Best Director were removed. Consequently, the screenwriters' guild announced a boycott of the awards ceremony, gaining the interest of the media, bringing the issue into public discussion, and increasing the guild's own visibility.

One of the guild's goals for 2011 is to have the Best Screenplay and Best Director categories reintroduced into next year's Kultainen Venla award ceremony.

In December 2010, during the Domestic Film Week, the guild awarded its first Colleague Award for the best screenplay of the year. The guild members voted Pekko Pesonen's *Napapiirin sankarit* (*Lapland Odyssey*) as the winner. In the future, the award will be chosen annually by a jury composed of culture experts. The Colleague Award was launched in order to have a Finnish

screenwriting award which is given by an institution other than a network of profit driven production companies.

The Finnish Broadcasting Corporation's short film script competition

Since 2007, the Finnish Broadcasting Corporation (YLE) together with the Finnish Film Foundation has organised a competition which annually produces four 28-minute-long television films from the texts of young, promising writers. The guild has criticised the competition procedure, as writers may only take part in the competition with a finished screenplay, therefore effectively creating a system where young writers create screenplays for free, with YLE cherry picking only the works that it finds the most suitable for its programming.

Following the guild's criticism, YLE is currently considering changes to the competition.