

Flemish Screenwriters Guild, Belgium 2013-14

General info

The Flemish Screenwriters Guild ('Vlaamse Scenaristengilde vzw') was founded in 2003. This year we have happily celebrated our 10th anniversary! At this moment we have 170 paying members, about 90 % of all Flemish speaking professional fiction Screenwriters in Belgium!

Members with a track record in screenwriting pay 125 € / year, Junior members pay 60 € / year. (We raised our fees)

Our board of directors (13 persons) meets once a month. The entire board consists of professional screenwriters with different backgrounds in film and/or t.v. and are all volunteers. Since October 2013 we have a staff member who is responsible for daily management of our guild and who is the spokesperson and central contact.

We have representatives to open up and maintain a friendly dialogue in different organisations including 2 Collecting Societies (SABAM and DeAuteurs/SACD); the Flemish Film Fund, the coordinating Flemish Authors Society, our Belgian Film Festivals (Ghent, Brussels, Ostend and the Short Film Festival in Leuven) and of course the F.S.E.

We are very active in the field of author rights. It is in our own interest to keep a good relationship with all of the Collecting Societies.

We set up meetings with colleagues, producers and directors. We invite international guest speakers and organise Master Classes in cooperation with the Flemish Film Fund. Our Writers Guild also organises public interviews with screenwriters of new Flemish feature films or television series. We always podcast these interviews and put them on our website.

Every year we present a Best Flemish Screenplay Award, voted for by our members.

Our website www.scenaristengilde.be is kept up to date religiously and on regular basis we distribute a newsletter to our members and to an ever growing database of industry professionals.

Some highlights of 2013-2014

This year we have celebrated our 10th anniversary. And although we've accomplished a lot, there's much work ahead of us to be done. (Look here for a fun overview of the 10 most important achievements of our first 10 years: <http://prezi.com/gmx9naokzqth/top-10-jaar-scenaristengilde/>)

Droit d'auteur

Our authors rights law was under attack last year. Not only do our collection societies have to reform and create one stop shops, international lobbying groups are trying to get ride of the fact that they have to pay the authors for their work (telecom/Cable/Netflix,...).

Together with the directors union, we succeeded in aligning our different collection societies, rallied together and managed to prevent drastic changes to the law. Nevertheless, we remain especially concerned by the current standard clause in the law which stipulates that when a contract with a production company is signed, the presumption is that the screenwriter has given all his exploitation rights to the company. Although this presumption is refutable, it often boils down to the screenwriter being left in the cold once the contract is signed, as he no longer has a say about his exploitation rights, and is thus no longer able to negotiate (e.g. when his work is exploited in new ways). We were wondering if this is a European trend, and whether we should tackle it as a European association.

As the new law now states, the collecting societies, broadcasters and producers have to try and agree on new terms on fair compensation,...

Acteursgilde / Unie der Regisseurs

We are very pleased to witness the Flemish audiovisual field become more and more organized and were very pleased with the rise of two extra professional unions last year...

The actors, as well as the directors, both united, and have been important partners in our strife to protect author rights in Belgium in autumn last year. As a result of proposed changes in the juridic regulations by the minister of economy, a strong cooperation between the professional guilds made it possible to defend the rights of the creative professions from strategic attacks by producers and broadcasters.

Structural Funding!

The professionalization of the guilds has positively influenced the VAF, who has agreed together with the media minister and the minister of culture, with the collective request for structural funding of the guilds! We will now receive structural funding coming from the media fund and the film fund for at least 3 years.

Advisory board

To increase our political power, work on image building and have a network of advisors in different professional fields, we have constituted an advisory board. Members of this board are professionally active in different fields, from communication over politics to broadcasting and producing. The first meeting of the board has been very inspiring. Amongst other ideas, the board has put emphasis on cooperation with other professionals to increase our influence, which we have been busy doing.

Structural sector meetings

Another result of the first meeting of our advisory board, are regular meetings with other guilds of the creative professions and independent production companies. Right now we are working hard to write a collective "manifest" which will be presented to the newly elected minister of culture.

UPDATE 25 september: We've just heard that there will be cutbacks in the cultural and media budget. Our Film Fund will receive 7,5% less money, and our public broadcaster up to 10%.