

Report from Norway to the General Assembly of the FSE 2015

Writers' Guild of Norway was founded in December 1938, and is an independent writers' organization whose purpose is to protect the artistic and financial interests of writers for film, television, radio and theatre. More information about our guild can be found also in the English versions on our web site www.dramatiker.no.

To be eligible for membership, an author must have written and had staged a public performance of at least one (or two if adaptations) full-length or several shorter original works or adaptations of drama for the theatre, film, television or radio. To qualify for membership, the performance must be professional and the work must be of professional quality. The applicant must have written the work in the Norwegian or Sami language him- or herself.

For the time being, the guild currently organizes 339 writers, and 26 candidate members, who is anyone who has completed publicly approved higher education as a playwright or screenwriter, or have some, but not sufficient productions. There is a steady rise in the number of members.

The organization is basically funded as a part of the collective remuneration writers receive from public libraries, other collective remunerations and the membership fee.

The membership fee is currently around € 160 for full members, around € 100 for candidate members and free for retired members.

Some important issues:

NRK

The Norwegian public broadcaster NRK wants to put all internal productions online, for free to the public, arguing that the public has already paid for this through the annual licence fee (of around € 300 each household). NRK are demanding eternally rights to publish on their own platforms, known and unknown, no geographic limits and a one off payments, higher than the present. Extra payments only at remake sales and sales to other broadcasters. This is presented as non-negotiable and we have no frame agreement any longer since these demands are rejected.

Private broadcasters

The other, private broadcasters do not claim eternally rights, but we are together with other rights holders negotiating with them to secure third party rights. We want to avoid that such rights are cleared individually, which makes the pressure of waiving rights more difficult to handle on all levels.



Exclusive rights management

To ease the unbalance in the individual negotiations, we are considering to ask the members to transfer some of their rights to the guild exclusively, so they cannot waive these rights, or be pressured to do so in their individual contracts, like the actors' union and the film workers' and directors' union. This might however put the guild in a tricky position, where we are refusing our members work, if it is not on our terms, and the actual members must take the bill.

Possible membership in the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions

We have a growing concern of the weakness in negotiating power, both individually and collective. At the same time our adversaries, both in film, TV and theatre have been joining the major confederations of employers' organizations, which increases to unbalanced relationship further.

The Guild will therefore explore the possibility and to what extent it will help us, to join the most influenced confederation of unions in Norway, the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (Landsorganisasjonen i Norge – LO) , where also the Norwegian Musicians' Union (MFO) are members. They are interested to make stronger contact with artists' organizations as they want to establish a sector of culture organizations and a specific focus on self-employment, which is a big and growing sector in the Norwegian labour market.

In addition, our members will have access to favourable offers as LO-member, like discounts of bank- and insurance agreements, private lawyer assistance, travel discounts etc.

