

Report from Norway to the General Assembly of the FSE 2016

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. The guild is considering these rules.

For the time being, the guild currently organizes 346 writers, and 33 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 € 166 for full members, around € 110 for candidate members and free for retired members.

Some important issues:

Development in the copy right field in Norway

There has been some major development factors in the copy right field. The Norwegian Supreme Court decided in March that one of the major cable distributors to NOT retransmit in the legal sense, with a strict formal and technical reasoning. However, the Court conform that it is at joint responsibility for both the broadcasters and the distributors that all relevant rights are cleared.

However, just after Court's decision, the government presented a proposition for a new copy right law, which took into account the Court's decision in a positive way. Further, the proposition establish strengthening measures for all original right holders, as the weak party in the individual negotiation situations.

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. This unclear situation has lasted for almost two years.

Private broadcasters

We are in a tricky situation, since the Norwegian union for directors and film workers has waived all rights according to the Norwegian copyright law (!) to the broadcasters, for an undisclosed remuneration, and undecided distribution among the right holders, also unknown how these decisions will be made. We fear this will in practice result in a ban for all writers (*berufsverbot*) that refuse to waive all rights through such bad contracts.

Membership in the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions

Our adversaries, both in film, TV and theatre have been joining the major confederations of employers' organizations. This means that the whole negotiating picture has changed. To cope with this situation and to strengthen our negotiating power, the guild has the most influenced confederation of unions in Norway, the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (Landsorganisasjonen i Norge – LO), where also among others the Norwegian Musicians' Union (MFO) are members. There is a push among organizations in the cultural field in this direction, and we are now engaged in both the establishment of a sector of culture organizations inside LO and also an equivalent sector on self-employment.
