



FSE Annual General Assembly meeting Oct 12-13 2018

Land report - Finland

Finnish Playwrights and Screenwriters Guild (SUNKLO) has been in active operation since 1921. Today the Guild comprises of 444 members who work as professional scriptwriters for stage, film, television, radio and new media.

SUNKLO protects the professional, copyright and financial interests of its individual members. In addition to negotiating and issuing contracts, SUNKLO develops codes of practice in co-operation with theatres, television channels and producers. It also works closely with various artistic, copyright and public affairs organisations in order to further the aims of professional writers.

What's new?

1. Working with public broadcaster

We've been negotiating a new contract with YLE, our public broadcaster, that began a new way of developing series a few years ago without a contract with writers. Some projects are still old-fashioned in-house productions. But Yle has also started a new way of producing series with indie companies. In that model, Yle pays a developing fee for writers working without a production company and takes care of the development in the treatment and early script stage. It then chooses the company who produces the show, just a couple of months before the production. That brings up various problems with the copyright and VOD revenue issues.

Our aim is to rise to the Scandinavian level in relation to the payments the writers get from each episode of TV-series, and the amounts of rights the writers sell during the development and production stage, and the VOD rights. The role of the head writer and the payment model for the whole team working on a series is also to be negotiated. It is a giant leap, and the ongoing negotiations are tough.

2. #metoo in Finland 2017/2018

The #metoo debate started in Finland in October 2017 by the publication of an article in the leading daily Helsingin Sanomat. In it, a young actress-director was interviewed about her film school thesis work in which she describes her experiences in the film industry as a young woman. No names were named. At the beginning of December Helsingin Sanomat and Svenska Yle published a declaration signed eventually by 1200 women in film, television, theatre and opera. The statement was inspired by Sweden's #tystnadtagning action. Ours was called #kulissientakana/ #bakomkulisserna. Attached to the text were anonymous case histories. In January there was an event in which the case histories were read by female actors on the stage. Among the invited guests were the Ombudsman of Equality, the Minister of Culture and former President Tarja Halonen.



Already before the #kulissientakana declaration in November a joint workgroup was formed initiated by the Producers' Association. Representatives of the unions and associations of actors, directors, writers, film workers and film schools produced a leaflet Guidelines for the prevention of sexual harassment in the film and television industries that was published in February and underwritten by all relevant organizations – also funders. The Finnish Film Foundation has announced that the leaflet will be an attachment to all its funding agreements.

The Minister of Culture nominated Dr. Jaana Paanetoja, a specialist in labor law to act as a one-woman committee to examine the situation. She published her report mid-September 2018. The report covers a variety of workplace safety and contractual issues besides the problem of sexual harassment. The measures proposed by the report are related to, for instance, the primary importance of the development of internal operations in the industry, the clearer definition of responsibilities, obligations and rights and the strengthening of confidential cooperation.

Gender equality and diversity

Cupore, Center for Cultural Policy Research published a study in the summer of 2017 Gender Equality in Finnish Film Production – The Division of Public Financing. The study was commissioned by the Ministry of Culture after some lobbying by Women in Film and Television Finland. Key findings: public funding in 2011 – 2015 was mainly directed to male-led film and television projects. The overall share of male directors, writers and producers is 75 %. Still almost half of the film professionals are women. According to the study, the public broadcasting company Yle commissioned serial drama directed by male directors for 18 million euro while spending 360 000 to commissioned serial drama directed by women (and almost twice that amount to projects directed by a male-female team).

After the publication of the research, the reaction of the decision makers has been a lot of talks and little action. Finnish Film Foundation has formed a debate forum called Forum for equality and diversity. The participants come from various professional organizations and minority rights groups.

Sunklo conducted a query to its membership in 2017. Questions about gender equality were included in the study. Experiences of gender discrimination were reported, but there were differences in the fields of work. Discrimination concerning employment and funding was reported by 50 % of women in the film industry, 23 % in television and 23 % in theatre.

3. Collective Management of Screenwriters' Rights

One of the biggest conflicts in the contract negotiations of screenwriters is currently the transfer of collectively managed rights of the authors to the producers. It is an issue in practically all new contracts, especially with TV writers. The producers have started to demand at least the transfer of all cable retransmission rights to the production company without any additional fee to the writer. Sometimes the demands extend to other collectively managed rights as well.



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These demands are very similar from one production company to another and are directed at all authors. There has been talks with the producers' association and our CMO Kopiosto, but so far with no results. The producers' argument is that the channels are adding these rights in their contracts with the production companies and that they have no other option than to demand the same rights from the authors (and that they are not paid for these additional rights by the channels and therefore cannot pay the authors either). In talks with Kopiosto, the channels have denied that they are demanding any other collective rights except the cable retransmission rights from the production companies.

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