



**EUROPE'S  
EUROPE'S  
SCREENWRITERS  
SCREENWRITERS**

**SOMEBODY  
SOMEBODY  
WROTE IT...  
WROTE IT**

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# FOREWORD

By Sveinbjörn Baldvinsson

President of the Federation of  
Screenwriters in Europe (FSE)



The popular perception of the screenwriter as an isolated, somewhat dysfunctional, individual struggling over an overheating computer in an untidy office has only a limited relationship to the reality. Most screenwriters write for television and work closely with teams of writers and even those writing for film work closely with development executives, directors, producers and so on.

Writers are very alert to the fact that they work in a highly collaborative art form and a highly popular one.

The European film and television industries employ 1.2 million skilled and determined Europeans and has an annual turnover of 200 billion euros. It is an odd thought that it is the story-telling of the screenwriter that kick-starts that huge investment of money and the many extraordinary talents that bring those stories to the screen.

The numbers viewing what we write, and others produce and distribute, are often amazing. It is hard to imagine that there is such a thing as a European Union citizen who has not watched film or television drama.

To a screenwriter, the idea that the film and television industries in Europe turn over 200 billion euros per annum is both entirely obvious and completely extraordinary at the same time. And it begs the important question :

**If the business is so skilful, competent and successful, why are we so badly paid? Why is our career so completely unstable?**

European culture runs on stories. We write them. We'd write more, and better, if we were properly paid.

We decided to initiate the **European Screenwriters Award** in order to try to increase awareness of the importance and centrality of writers and stories to European culture. There are lots of awards for writers, but relatively few at a European level.

We write in and to our own cultures but when we meet at a European level we discover that we all write stories and with a few exceptions we are all badly paid. Maybe that would be a good starting point for a cultural policy for Europe? **Take care of the people who write the stories, who create the art, compose the music to ensure both the diversity the audience need and the quality they demand.**



## MEET SOME SCREENWRITERS

SOME  
WRITERS

### What is a screenwriter exactly?

At any time about ten thousand people are under contract to write about 1,200 feature length films, including documentaries produced each year in the European Union and an unknown (but at least twenty times as much as feature film) amount of television drama. Just over 50% of everything broadcast on European television is written fiction.

Let us introduce you to five of Europe's most successful screenwriters.

# ADAM PRICE

## 1 PRICE



Adam Price is the head writer on *Borgen* which had three series of ten one-hour episode each.

The show sold to more than thirty countries and won a Prix Italia, BAFTA and Monte Carlo TV festival awards.

He is currently working on a new series which centers on religion, *Rides Upon The Storm*, co-produced by DR-TV, ARTE and SAM Productions, scheduled for broadcast in 2017.



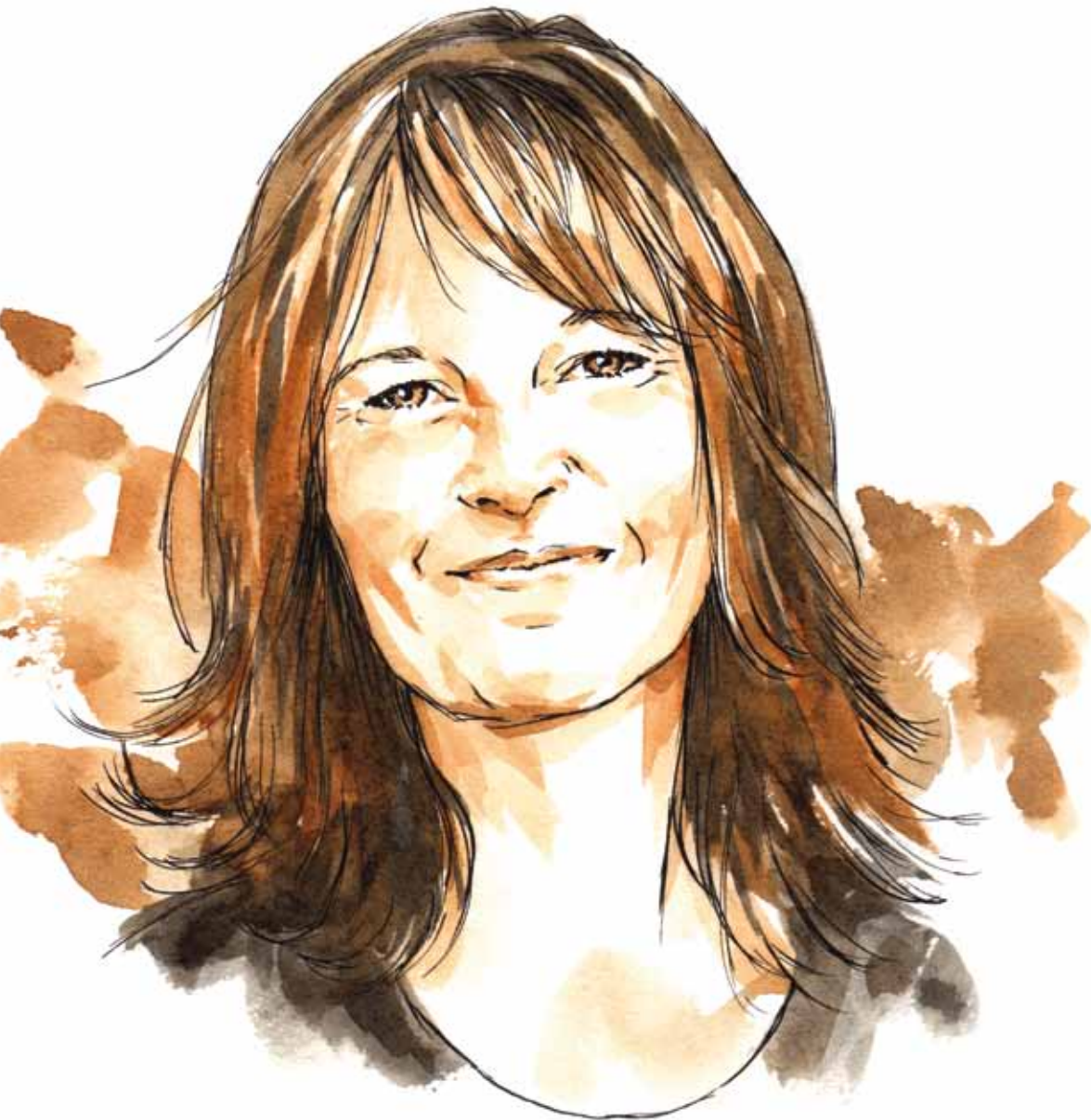
# JOHN FAY

John Fay has been an essential and consistent voice on British television for many years with his work on iconic series such as *Brookside* (for which he wrote 54 episodes), *Coronation Street* (where he was lead writer and wrote 94 episodes – with one episode having an audience in excess of nineteen million viewers), *Torchwood* and *Clocking Off*. In 2005 he received the BAFTA Award for Best Continuing Drama.

With his own series, *The Mill*, he brought an essential but overlooked period of British history to life in a searing and emotive way. An empathetic TV writer who truly understands his medium, he has highlighted issues of injustice to workers and the origins of trade unionism in a highly accessible way.



# CAROLINE LINK



Caroline Link's third feature film *Nirgendwo in Afrika* (*Nowhere in Africa*, 2001), which she adapted from the autobiographical novel by Stefanie Zweig and shot on location in Kenya, received the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film as well as five German Film Prizes (Deutscher Filmpreis), including Best Feature Film.

Her first film *Jenseits der Stille* (*Beyond Silence*, 1996), a portrait of a family with deaf parents, was nominated for the Academy Award as Best Foreign Language Film.



# SERGIO G. SÁNCHEZ

SERGIO



Sergio G. Sánchez's first feature film script was for *The Orphanage* for which he won Best Original Screenplay at the 2008 Goya Awards in Spain.

He was nominated again for his screenplays *Fin* and *The Impossible* in 2012.

*The Impossible* made over € 180 million worldwide, making it one of Spain's highest grossing films ever.

*Palmtrees in the Snow*, an adaptation on Luz Gabas' best seller for which Sánchez wrote the screenplay, will open this Christmas in Spain.

Last year he adapted Carol Rifka Brunt's novel *Tell the Wolves I'm Home* for Sam Raimi to produce.

He is currently adapting Scott Snyder's comic book series *Wytches* for Plan B Entertainment and Kenneth Oppel's book *This Dark Endeavour* for Matt Reeves to direct.

# ANNE LANDOIS

Anne Landois is the show runner on *Engrenages (Spiral)*. The series is produced by Canal+, the first series screened in 2005 and the fifth series screened in 2014.

*Engrenages* has been sold to more than seventy countries. In France it often has an audience in excess of one million subscribers.

Prior to *Engrenages* she had written episodes of a number of series and many TV movies.





# UNFAIR BETTER CONTRACTS

**If the culture industries  
are so successful, why  
are so many artists poor?**

## Summary

This document is prepared by the Federation of European Film Directors (FERA) and the Federation of Screenwriters in Europe (FSE).

In preparing the document we had considerable input from a number of legal and other experts from many member states and we would like to thank each of them for their contribution.

The value of the European Culture industries is €535.9 billion. They employ more than 7 million Europeans. Within that figure the audiovisual industries account for €107.3 billion and employ 1.2 million people.

Yet the majority of individuals who make art have lives which are financially extremely unstable with incomes that are usually very modest.

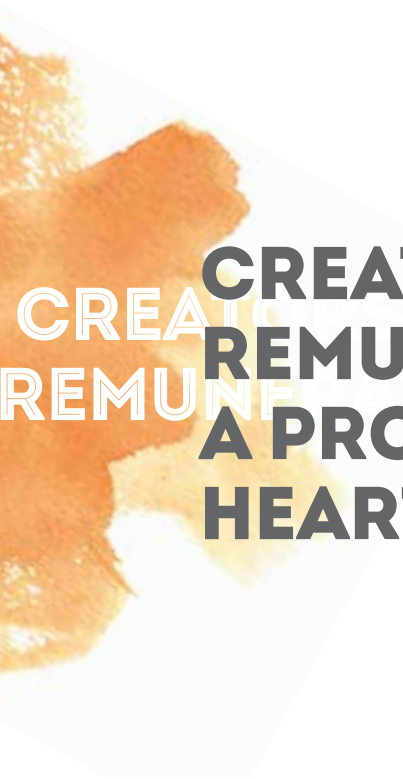
For example screenwriters median income in Europe from screenwriting in 2012, after tax, was €22,000.

Creators who cannot earn a consistent and reliable income cannot invest the time and energy necessary to create.

This problem has been acknowledged by the European Commission and Parliament many times, including in recent publications.

In this short report we summarise the problem from the perspective of screenwriters and directors – a situation similar in many respects to those of other creators and performers – and discuss some possible responses.

Defining what exactly is fair remuneration, insisting that rights and their associated payments are listed separately in contracts and facilitating collective bargaining would considerably strengthen screenwriters' and directors' capacity to negotiate better contracts.



# CREATORS' REMUNERATION : A PROBLEM AT THE HEART OF COPYRIGHT

## Introduction

The value of the European culture industries is € 535.9 billion and they employ more than 7 million Europeans. Within that the audiovisual industries account for €107.3 billion and employ 1.2 million people.<sup>1</sup> The culture industries have argued effectively that they are economically powerful, making a major contribution to the European economy.

Paintings and sculpture; songs and musical compositions; books, articles, poems; films and television programmes; architecture; circus and so on are the product of the basic human instinct for transformative imagination, for extraordinary vision and for engrossing story-telling.

But where do the creative works being bought and sold with such enormous economic success come from? They are the product of creative minds; the work of our creators, enthusiastically taken up, argued about and debated, rejected and accepted by Europe's citizens – those many people that we call the audience and business calls consumers.

Creators who produce the copyright goods on which the culture industries are built are poorly paid with very unstable incomes (see below and page 29 of this booklet). A more proportionate share of the income generated by the culture industries must go to the creators.

This document is put together by the Federation of Screenwriters in Europe (FSE) and the Federation of European Directors (FERA) to affirm the many assertions by the Parliament and the Commission that creators' remuneration needs to be guaranteed and to make specific proposals for changes that would be of real practical benefit to Europe's creators, in particular, in this document, its audiovisual authors – screenwriters and directors.

<sup>1</sup>) EY – *Creating Growth – Measuring Cultural and Creative Markets in the EU*, December 2014

# Creators' income, far from fairness

Not since the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries have we believed that poverty enhances creativity. Creators who cannot earn a consistent and reliable income cannot invest the time and energy necessary to create.

The facts about creators' incomes are well known to the European Commission, which has commented on them many times. The belief that creators should be remunerated fairly is consistently supported by the European Union institutions.

For example, the European Commission has said, in its plans to facilitate the online distribution of audiovisual works in Europe, that it "considers that an appropriate remuneration for rightholders should be ensured"<sup>2</sup> and, more recently in its Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe, that "measures to safeguard fair remuneration of creators also need to be considered in order to encourage the future generation of content".<sup>3</sup>

The European Parliament resolution of 9 July 2015 says that it "deems it indispensable to strengthen the position of authors and creators and improve their remuneration with regard to the digital distribution and exploitation of their works".<sup>4</sup>

Most recently a report on authors and performers remuneration, prepared for DG Connect, states that "there is a lack of transparency of the remuneration arrangements in the contracts of authors and performers in relation to the rights transferred... [which] has an adverse effect on the functioning of the Internal Market".<sup>5</sup>

Most creators, working in Europe, have **two main forms of income** – firstly, the initial payment from the producer for the work that they do, including the first licensing of the work (often individually negotiated, sometimes based on collectively bargained minimum standards); and, secondly, the ongoing income that they receive from the exploitation of the work in various markets over the years (sometimes from the producer, often from collective management organisations when secondary rights are collectively managed).

The balance between these two forms of income varies from one art form to another. Visual artists, for example, have the bulk of their income from initial sales and only a modest flow of income (resale rights, exhibition rights, etc.) from further use of their work. Composers, however, are relatively modestly paid for the initial work and receive the bulk of their income from ongoing exploitation usually managed by CMOs.

Screenwriters and directors have roughly 80% of their income from their initial contracts and 20% or less from payment made from the ongoing exploitation of their work.

## Findings of FSE study<sup>6</sup>

- Screenwriters' median income in Europe, after tax, from screenwriting in 2012 was €22,000.
- Collective management organisations provide 61% of respondents with less than 10% of their total screenwriting income.

## Findings of SAA white paper<sup>7</sup>

- SAA members' audiovisual collections only represent 0.37% of the audiovisual sector revenues.

<sup>2</sup>) *Green Paper on the Online Distribution of Audiovisual Works Online*, European Commission, 2011, p.15

<sup>3</sup>) *Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe*, European Commission, 2015, p.7

<sup>4</sup>) *European Parliament Resolution Evaluating the 2001 Copyright Directive*, paragraph 24

<sup>5</sup>) *Remuneration of Authors and Performers for the Use of their Works and the Fixations of their Performances* IVIR for EC, July 2015

<sup>6</sup>) *European Screenwriters' Income 2012: An Overview*. See p.29 of this publication

<sup>7</sup>) *SAA White Paper on Audiovisual Authors' Rights and Remuneration in Europe*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2015



# What can be done ?

Like the dual nature of creators' income itself – from ongoing distribution of the work but mostly from the initial contract – the solution to the issue of creators' income has two elements.

- 1 We need certainty that creators share in the economic success of their work online.
- 2 We need a rebalancing of contract terms.

## 1 AN UNWAIVABLE RIGHT TO REMUNERATION FOR ONLINE USE

Increasing creators' capacity to share in the economic life of what they create is important, not just because it is fair, but because at a very practical level this kind of payment helps to even out and make more stable the working lives of creators.

Commission study on creators and performers remuneration recommends "Policy 5 : Facilitate the exercise of the right of making available".<sup>8</sup>

The Society of Audiovisual Authors, the grouping of collective management organisations in the audiovisual industries, has a proposal, endorsed by both FSE and FERA, for an unwaivable right to equitable remuneration for the online exploitation of audiovisual works, managed collectively. This already exists in some Member States and would be extended at EU level as a European copyright law principle.

This proposal published in the SAA second edition White Paper, would uniformly develop collective management for the online uses of audiovisual works throughout Europe. In addition to the existing collective streams of income, for example cable retransmission and private copying payment for online uses would be ensured and could significantly help to even out creators incomes.

This makes practical sense to screenwriters and directors. It is clear and straightforward; can apply across the European Union; is based on existing processes and procedures that are well understood and well managed by the collective management organisations.

### Proposal of the Society of Audiovisual Authors (SAA)

- When an audiovisual author has transferred or assigned his making available right to a producer, that author shall retain the right to obtain an equitable remuneration.
- This right to obtain an equitable remuneration for the making available of the author's work(s) cannot be waived.
- The administration of this right to obtain an equitable remuneration for the making available of the author's work(s) shall be entrusted to collective management organisations representing audiovisual authors, unless other collective agreements guarantee such remuneration to audiovisual authors for their making available right.
- Authors' collective management organisations shall collect the equitable remuneration from audiovisual media services making audiovisual works available to the public in such a way that members of the public may access them from a place and at a time individually chosen by them.

## 2 IMPROVE CONTRACTUAL PROTECTION OF AUTHORS

An analysis of creators contract law commissioned by the European Parliament says : "The existing contractual protection of authors, as included in copyright law and, indirectly, in general contract law, appears not to be sufficient or effective to secure a fair remuneration to authors or address some unfair contractual provisions".<sup>9</sup>

The many problems of authors' contracts can be grouped in to four categories :

- a) the capacity to bargain fairly,
- b) ensuring the right to share in the economic life of what authors create,
- c) avoiding buyout contracts, and
- d) ensuring that contracts are honoured.

<sup>8</sup>) SAA White Paper on Audiovisual Authors' Rights and Remuneration in Europe, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2015

<sup>9</sup>) Dusollier et al., 2014, p. 13

## A) Strengthening the bargaining position of the authors

The **unequal negotiating relationship** between the producer and the screenwriter or director is usually noted by analysis of creators' contracts.

The situation is made more difficult by decisions in a number of Member States (Ireland, Netherlands and Spain, for example) that the negotiation of standard minimum contract terms by collective bargaining is contrary to competition law. By contrast, German copyright law requires negotiation between representative organisations of creators and producers or publishers as the means of establishing what level of remuneration is fair.

The application of the principle of contractual freedom produces contracts which consistently benefit only one side of the negotiation.

Minimum standards arrived at by collective bargaining done by representative organisations provides basic standards and protection.

The European Parliament "calls for improvements to the contractual position of authors and performers in relation to other rightholders and intermediaries".<sup>10</sup>

### Some more detailed proposals on authors negotiating power

- Collective bargaining and collective rights management are crucial to strengthen the bargaining power of screenwriters and directors in contract negotiations, renegotiations, and in the event of litigation.
- Collective bargaining agreements should provide the basic minimum standards on which contracts should be based.
- Screenwriters and directors' organisations should benefit from an exemption to the application of competition (anti-trust) law in order to facilitate collective bargaining.
- Contracts, including rights' transfer clauses, should comply with national and European laws and should be void if they do not.

## B) Fair remuneration is proportionate remuneration

Much of the discussion of creators' incomes revolves around the concept of fair or equitable remuneration.

What is fair remuneration? One key and obvious principle is that remuneration which is fair has to be proportionate to the income generated by the work done.

The **best seller** clause system first used in German copyright law and recently introduced in Dutch law works well and would act an important matrix for a European approach.

### Some more detailed proposals on fair remuneration

- Screenwriters and directors should be paid proportionately to the work they have done and to the income each type of exploitation of their work generates.
- This rate of remuneration is the rate which would be agreed by organisations collectively representing creators and producers were they to negotiate together.
- Screenwriters and directors should be paid for each form of exploitation of their work.
- A contract which does not provide proportionate remuneration to screenwriters and directors should be considered null and void.

<sup>10</sup>) European Parliament resolution of 9 July 2015, paragraph 25

## C) Balance the transfer of rights from the individual creator to the producer of the work

Another issue often noted is so-called “buy-out” contracts. This is where the producer purchases all rights for the life of copyright from the author for a fixed and usually low price.

The European Parliament “ maintains that it is essential to guarantee authors remuneration that is fair and proportional to all forms of exploitation of their works, especially online exploitation, and therefore calls upon Member States to ban buyout contracts, which contradict this principle ”. <sup>11</sup>

Commission study on creators and performers remuneration recommends :  
“Policy 1 : Specify remuneration for individual modes of exploitation in the contracts of authors and performers”. <sup>12</sup>  
“Policy 3 : Limit the scope for transferring rights for future works and performances and future modes of exploitation”. <sup>13</sup>

Commission study on authors and performers remuneration states “The absence of information on which to base an estimate of likely earnings in different Member States undermines the ability of authors and performers to effectively exercise their freedom of movement across jurisdictions (non-tariff trade barrier) and has an adverse effect on the functioning of the Internal Market”. <sup>14</sup>

The most effective way to ban buyout contracts is to provide for the separation of rights and to remunerate them separately. The effect of this is to increase transparency in the contract to the advantage of all.

## D) ENFORCE THE PROPER APPLICATION OF CONTRACTUAL TERMS

A topic not often discussed in respect of contracts is their enforcement. Individual creators who are highly dependent on subjective assessments of their talents are not motivated to complain when contract terms are abused or broken. Contracts should include procedures to ensure respect for the terms.

### Some more detailed proposals on contract enforcement

- Contracts should provide for mediation as the preferred means for dispute resolution.
- Screenwriters and directors should receive damages in addition to remuneration where payments have not been made.
- Provision should be made in the contract to prevent unfair termination of contract, dismissal and deduction of fees/wages.
- Transparency and good governance in respect of the financial exploitation of works should be expressly provided for in the contract and penalties should apply to producers who fail to provide information to those for whom they hold the rights.

### Some more detailed proposal on transfer of rights

There are three ways the transfer of rights need to be balanced.

#### SEPARATION OF RIGHTS

All rights transferred to a producer or other user by contract should be separately identified in the contract and remunerated. Only those rights separately identified, and no others, are transferred.

Unknown uses at the time the contract is signed cannot automatically be transferred and must be negotiated as and when they arise.

#### PRINCIPLES IN RESPECT OF PAYMENT TO AUTHORS

- Transfer of rights to producers and other users should not occur until payment has been made.
- Screenwriters and directors should have the right to utilise the services of CMOs to manage their rights and the producer should have the responsibility to inform those to whom the rights are transferred that the screenwriter and/or director has done so.
- The right to remuneration and the right to transfer rights to a CMO should be expressly excluded from any provision of presumption of transfer of rights.
- In the event that exploitation of the work is significantly greater and generates significantly more revenue than anticipated when rates of payment were first agreed, the screenwriter and director should have the capacity to seek additional payment (so-called “best seller” clause).

#### EXTENT OF TRANSFER OF RIGHTS

- Transfer of rights should be for a limited period specified in the contract.
- In the event that a producer fails to bring a project into production within an agreed time not exceeding three years, then any rights transferred, or options to acquire rights agreed, would fall and the rights would revert back to the audiovisual authors.
- Where a project has been produced and the producer fails to properly/adequately exploit it, the rights transferred should revert (so called “use it or lose it” clause) back to the audiovisual authors.

<sup>11</sup>) European Parliament resolution of 11 September 2012, paragraph 46

<sup>12</sup>) *Remuneration of Authors and Performers for the Use of their Works and the Fixations of their Performances*. IVIR for EC July 2015

<sup>13</sup>) Ibid

<sup>14</sup>) Ibid p.8



# SCREENWRITERS' INCOME IN EUROPE

## Conclusion

Europe is its diverse and extraordinarily rich culture. Culture is not just undifferentiated "content" to be measured in petabytes. It is made of the vast number, richness and complexity of the stories and pictures that reflect our contested, linguistically varied, joyous and permanently inconclusive debate as to who we are and where we are going.

In the rest of the world Europe is known primarily through its history and its culture – a culture largely defined by the struggles and achievements of individual creators. The worldwide market place for cultural production from Europe relies on the reputation of our creators, whose ownership of their work – moral, legal and financial – enables them to create their unique stories. These stories and all the others – musical, visual and verbal – are created by Europe's authors.

We should take better care of them.

## STUDY ON REMUNERATION

The Federation of Screenwriters in Europe undertook a survey in 2013 to inform a series of workshops for screenwriters' guilds in European countries entitled Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining in the Digital Economy, a project supported by an initiative run by DG Employment of the European Commission and organised by UNI-EUROPA (Euro-MEI) and the Federation of Screenwriters in Europe.

An online anonymous survey, asking seven questions, was distributed by 21 European screenwriters' guilds belonging to the FSE. 700 professional screenwriters working in over 25 countries responded and provided information about their income in 2012.

The analysis of the survey was published in a booklet titled European Screenwriters' Income in 2012 : An Overview. This publication provides factual information to illuminate the discussion about authors remuneration.

## KEY INFORMATION

- Screenwriters' median income, after tax, from screenwriting in 2012 was €22,000.
- 57 % of the writers surveyed earned less than €30,000 and only 7 % earned more than €100,000, showing the disproportionate range of yearly income.
- Only 23 % of all screenwriters polled reported an increase in pay from 2011 to 2012 with a majority of all respondents (57 %) depending on income outside of screenwriting.
- Most writers worked in multiple fields of screenwriting, but a strong minority (34 %) depended solely on television for their yearly income.
- Collective Management Organisations (CMOs) provide 61 % of respondents with less than 10 % of their total screenwriting income.

## FREE DOWNLOAD :

<http://scenaristes.org/pdfs/fseleafletremunerationweb.pdf>

# FEDERATION OF SCREENWRITERS IN EUROPE / FSE

The Federation of Screenwriters in Europe (FSE) brings together 24 screenwriters organisations from 19 European countries including 15 member states of the European Union.

The 8.000 or so writers who make up the member guilds and unions of FSE write the stories at the base of a European industry worth €107 billion and employing 1.2 million Europeans.

Established in 2001 in Athens, the FSE seeks to create a European community of writers for film and television, to provide practical assistance to its members and to represent their interests at the institutions of the European Union.

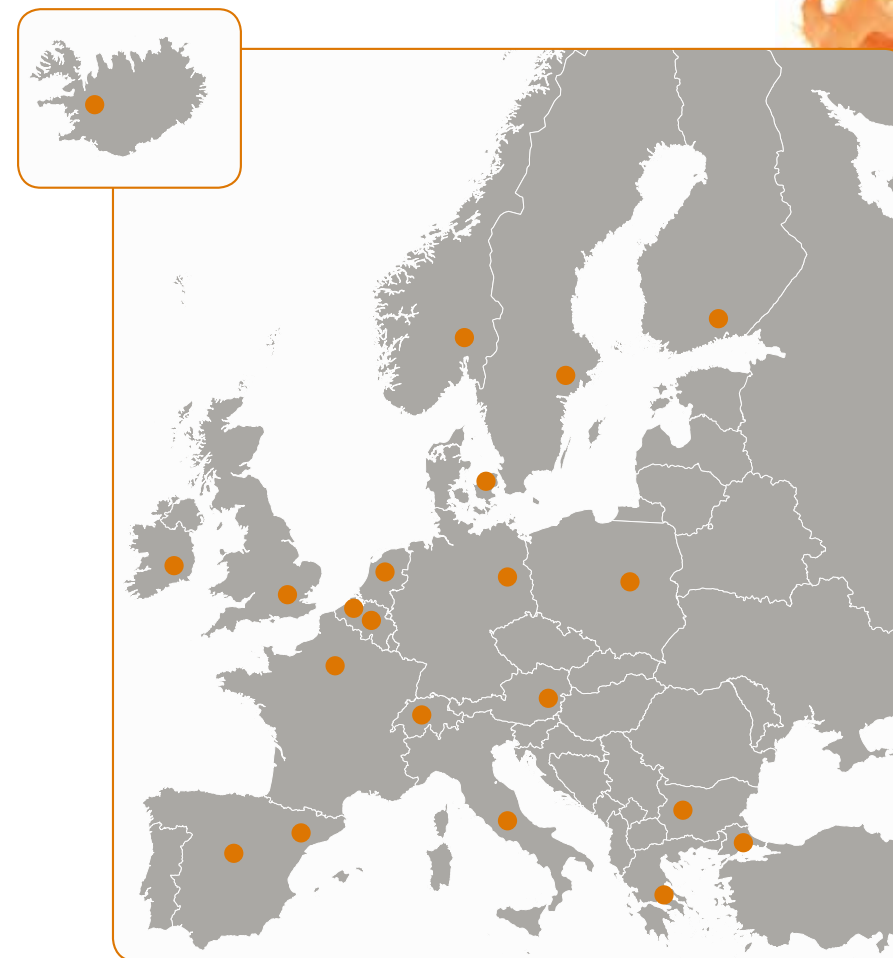
More information at [www.scenaristes.org](http://www.scenaristes.org)

## Partner members

- FRANCE / SACD
- SPAIN / DAMA
- SPAIN / SGAE

## Member guilds

- AUSTRIA  
Drehbuchverband Austria
- BELGIUM  
ASA / Association des scénaristes de l'audiovisuel
- BELGIUM  
Scenaristengilde vzw
- BULGARIA  
BAFTR
- DENMARK  
Danske Dramatikere
- FINLAND  
Sunklo / Suomen Näytelmäkirjailijat ja Käsikirjoittajat ry
- FRANCE  
La Guilde française des Scénaristes
- GERMANY  
VDD / Verband Deutscher Drehbuchautoren e.V.
- GREECE  
ESE / Scriptwriters' Guild of Greece)
- ICELAND  
FLH : / Félag leikskálda og handritshöfunda
- IRELAND  
WGI / Writers Guild of Ireland
- ITALY  
WGI / Writers Guild Italia
- NORWAY  
Norske Dramatikeres Forbund
- POLAND  
Stowarzyszenie Filmowcow Polskich, Kolo scenarzystow
- SPAIN  
ALMA / Asociación Literaria de Medios Audiovisuales
- SPAIN  
FAGA / Forum de Asociaciones de Guionistas del Audiovisual  
FAGA includes 4 regional guilds: A.GA.G - EDAV -EHGEP - GAC / SIGC
- SWEDEN  
Sveriges Dramatikerförbund
- SWITZERLAND  
SCENARIO
- THE NETHERLANDS  
Netwerk Scenarioschrijvers
- TURKEY  
SENDER
- UNITED KINGDOM  
WGGB / Writers' Guild of Great Britain



Map of Europe with Countries - Single Colour by FreeVectorMaps.com

# EUROPE'S EUROPE'S SCREENWRITERS SCREENWRITERS

SOMEBODY  
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WROTE IT...  
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## CONTACT

FEDERATION OF  
SCREENWRITERS  
IN EUROPE

David Kavanagh, Executive Officer  
Amélie Clément, Manager

[info@scenaristes.org](mailto:info@scenaristes.org)  
[facebook.com/screenwriterseurope](https://facebook.com/screenwriterseurope)  
[twitter.com/ScreenwritersEU](https://twitter.com/ScreenwritersEU)  
Tel. +44 20 3287 3366

