



ANNUAL REPORT

October 2018 - October 2019

The Estonian Screenwriters' Guild (ESG) was established in August 2018 and became a Candidate member of FSE in June 2019. ESG brings together writers who work in film, television, animation, video games and new media, as well as script consultants and theorists. As of October 2019, we have 23 members (four nationalities; 12 women, 11 men).

Our main aims for the first year have been: bringing screenwriters together, mapping the landscape - looking at working conditions and prioritising issues that need our attention; dealing with legal matters (writers' contracts), raising the status of screenwriters, supporting creative work and growth as a creative and a professional.

ESG is not a collective management organisation. In Estonia, there is a separate organisation - the Estonian Audiovisual Authors' Association (EAAL) that represents screenwriters as well as other filmmakers. Screenwriters usually are all members of EAAL and can therefore participate in the management of the organisation through General Assembly, become members of the board etc.

We have participated in film industry studies and decision-making:

- representing screenwriters in the film literacy project (run by Estonian Film Institute);
- elections of Estonian Film Institute council members: submitting our candidate and voting in the elections of two new members (ESG candidate came fourth);
- participating in the OSKA study on labour force and skills anticipation in the creative sector organised by the Estonian Qualifications Authority;
- participating in a discussion group for the development of *Culture 2030* document (the general principles of cultural policy until 2030) organised by the Ministry of Culture;
- submitting candidates for the Cultural Endowment's audiovisual board for the 2019-2021 term, members will be appointed by the Minister of Culture (Margit Keerdo-Dawson is currently a member of the AV board).

Screenwriting conference

The highlight of this year was organising the conference **Screenwriter 2.0** that took place in April with speakers and attendants from over ten countries. We had the pleasure of having David Kavanagh and Raija Talvio as speakers, as well as many representatives from FSE member guilds taking part in the discussion panels.

Conference website: <http://konverents2019.stsenaristid.ee>

Our next conference will be held on April 3-4, 2020 and the theme is **collaboration** (between writer and producer, writer and director, writers amongst themselves). If anyone in FSE wishes to participate or attend, please let us know!

We have published articles and given interviews on TV, radio and print media. A lengthy article was published in May in *Sirp* (a national weekly paper with a focus on culture and society) on how conflicting views of the screenwriter's profession hinder the development of the field - are we helpers/typists or authors? (<https://tinyurl.com/y3p4feko>).

***Sahtel* / The Drawer**

Sahtel is an online platform for profiles of screenwriters and script consultants as well as pitch pages of unproduced stories. We organise events to present a few projects (read out by actors) and offer a space for networking for writers, directors and producers.

We run a website - stsenaristid.ee, we send out a quarterly public newsletter and a more frequent members' newsletter; we are active on social media: mostly Facebook, also Twitter and Instagram. In the members' area of our website we have a black list for producers and directors we don't recommend working with.

Current activities:

Good practice guide

This contains guidelines for screenwriters about work flow, rights and responsibilities. We are also preparing to meet with the producers organisation to discuss rights and some general issues regarding contracts.

Screenwriters' contracts

We are working on a [sample screenwriter's contract plus guidelines](#) for understanding and negotiating contracts; we are organising [author's rights workshops](#) for screenwriters to help writers understand the copyright law and their rights; this is organised with the help of Eero Johannes who is a copyright lawyer and the Chair of the Estonian Audiovisual Authors Association (our CMO).

Television

We are planning a preliminary study to investigate screenwriters' working conditions in order to communicate writers' needs to producers and commissioners to help end unsustainable production habits (typically, the development and production are extremely rushed: such as one month to write a 10-episode series, or starting from as little as four months from pitch to air; most of the time screenwriters sign no contracts at all, some get paid unreported fees (no taxes paid), etc.). It's like the Wild West!

Other activities

We provide some basic legal advice concerning contracts and have a list of lawyers to recommend for drafting contracts; we organise members' regular get-togethers once a month, script development camps for writers, or writers and actors, we share information about work opportunities, scholarships, training, workshops, writers' residences etc; we help producers and directors find writers.

We've been talking to local producers and financiers in order to communicate our goals.

We've been in touch with guilds and screenwriters in other countries, attended festivals, events and workshops abroad. We've also been trying to locate screenwriters in Latvia and Lithuania in order to encourage them to create their own guilds.

We'll be keeping an eye on the Ministry of Justice regarding changes in the local copyright law. Preliminary meetings with interest groups have begun.

On our birthday, we gave out a Screenwriters' Friend recognition award which is given to a person or organisation who has supported our Guild or screenwriters in general. The recipient of the first award was the film director Arun Tamm.

ESG has no staff, most of the work is volunteer-based. We have received funding for projects from the Estonian Film Institute and the Estonian Cultural Endowment, as well as donations.

Lack of funding and time is a constant concern.

This year we are creating opportunities for trainees who will help with research and organising events (these are screenwriting students, hopefully future members of the Guild).

Current board members:

Margit Keerdo-Dawson (Chair), Andris Feldmanis, Leana Jalukse, Lauri Lippmaa, Laura Raud.

Homepage: <https://stsenaristid.ee>

Margit Keerdo-Dawson

Chairwoman
Estonian Screenwriters' Guild