

Country report from Norway, October 15. 2020

Like for the rest of you I suppose, the last 7-8 months have been a whirlwind of worries and unexpected challenges. The previous months, before march seems like another century, and whatever we did then, - no one remembers.

Just a few days before Norway shut down as a result of the pandemic, we got a new minister of culture. In the weeks to followed, the cultural field pushed to make him understand the field he governed, and to get him to stand up for it- especially the artists.

The compensation scheme for the self-employed, which was adopted in March by the Parliament, was amended by the Government and sent back to the Parliament in April. The change meant that the independents should calculate lost income solely with 2019 as a starting point. The Parliaments original decision was to calculate revenue losses from either 2019 or an average of the past 3 years. This change understandably hit many artists hard.

After newspaper posts, articles and a major artist action in which 30,000 artists were asked to send a letter to 3 ministers + parliament demanding a change in the calculation of income, we were finally summoned to a meeting with the Minister of culture. The meeting did not result in a change in calculating loss, but instead three days later NOK 100 million was allocated for artist grants.

In April the ministry of culture granted an additional lump sum for the Norwegian film institute of NOK 55 million.

Grants to museums, music and performing arts institutions also increased by NOK 200 million. The increase in grants is due to institutions that have more than 60 per cent of their income from government grants and do not currently fall under the compensation scheme for cultural events. 120 million goes to the museums and 80 million to the performing arts institutions.

In the proposed state budget that is under consideration in Parliament at the time of writing, a number of measures have been proposed to help cultural life through the corona crisis

The government proposes that a total of NOK 2 250 million be allocated to temporary schemes to stimulate activity in the cultural, free- and wildlife and sports sectors. From this, NOK 100 million in fresh funding for artists-grants. It also consists a NOK 15 million to focus on new talent in film

Events that lose ticket revenue should receive a compensation from the state. And at least through 2020, the self-employed shall receive compensation for documented losses in income. We're lobbying for this to be prolonged in 2021.



For the moment there is a maximum of 200 persons in a theatre with a minimum of one meter between each person. It goes without saying that cinemas and theaters loses large sums every day. -We share that experience with the rest of the world, so no need to spend much space on this here. However, the situation has led to an increase in digital transfers of theatre/concerts/dance, and in some cases streaming-premieres of films. At first, a number of artists and institutions offered this for free, but as the weeks passed and we slowly understood that we had no idea when this was going to end, one began to sell tickets or ask the public for a donation.

Film productions that stopped in the spring/summer have started again. However, several major productions have had to stop for a few weeks due to contagion on the film set with the heavy losses it entails. The same applies to theatrical performances, where unpredictability is equal and where all actors suddenly have to be quarantined for 10 days if an actor or technician tests positive.

For the film/tv industry part, it is serious that no insurance companies we insure production against stops in admission due to corona. We have asked the government for a guarantee scheme without this being put in place.

The Norwegian Conservative Government's de-bureaucracy and efficiency reform is also going through this crisis. The Cultural Council and the Film Institute are reorganized. Tasks are moved around on accounting items and all government agencies are expected to cut 0.5% of the operating budget annually. This has been going on for 6 years now and for the Film Institute and the Arts Council this is now beginning to take on. One consequence in particular screenwriters will note is the proposed closure of the Film Institute's manuscript support scheme. The funds are moved into the film consultants aerea, and although it is written that these funds are earmarked screenwriters and can be allocated to the writer without an agreement with the producer, we know that the producers are rubbing their hands together, and have already started counting the money...

The Culture Department and the Film Institute will make a proposition in the autumn of 2020, following dialogue with the industry, on a proposed change to the regulations governing the grant schemes. The proposal will be subject to a general consultation before revised regulations are scheduled to come into force on 1 January 2021.

All of the bargaining processes that usually takes place in the spring here in Norway between the unions and the employer's organization, was pushed on to the autumn. We are now in line to negotiate both our theatrical agreement and the tv-drama agreement. In an attempt to harmonize our agreements, we have put the agreement we have with NRK (public broadcaster) into account in our proposal for new agreements in other areas. Here it is clearly distinguished between the different revenue streams a writer has in a television series. First a work fee, then a remuneration for rights, then royalties on sales, and finally collective revenues from Norwaco. (our CMO)

Looking forward to seeing you all!
On behalf of the Writers Guild of Norway
Love,
Monica Boracco
