

**LARS**  
**Luxembourgish Association of directors and screenwriters**

**ACTIVITY REPORT 2022**

Through our discussions within the Board, a number of issues had been identified that had become worse over the last years. These issues are in particular related to the public financing of screenwriting and in general to the salaries of both screenwriters and directors. Moreover, we felt that the moment had come to launch a more general discussion about what Luxembourgish cinema production should aim to be in the coming years, as we consider that there is an obvious lack of a global vision for the future. We decided to address these issues, being conscious that we would need to speak to both the Filmfund and the producers.

We draw up a list of our various grievances:

- only a few producers agree to pay the writing of a treatment and conceptual notes preliminary to the first request of public funding (the producer will only pay once himself is granted financial support from the Filmfund).
- if the so-called 'writing aid' granted by the Filmfund may represent a substantial amount, only a small part of it finally goes to the screenwriter: the producer uses part of the amount to cover his general expenses, and above all, a certain part will only be paid to the screenwriter if the project gets in favour of the following funding stage which is generally the 'development aid' (so a lot of work is invested by the screenwriter with just the hope that he might be paid later on).
- considering the amount of work that occurs through the multiple re-writings asked for by the producer, it turns out that the payment of the screenwriter is not in accordance with his actual working hours. Yet it should be a common objective to create a real pool of screenwriters (which is really lacking), and the first step would be to improve their financial perspectives.
- salaries of screenwriters and directors do not reflect living costs in Luxembourg. In the absence of trade unions and any form of collective agreement, the question of the payment is left to the individual negotiation between the screenwriter/director and the producer, who very often just imposes the amount that is 'usual' in his company.
- considering the part of the Filmfund's annual budget given to the co-productions, we would like a more consequent support of the local creative scene in order to stimulate its development, f.i. by increasing the number of Luxembourgish projects receiving financial support (and maybe taking the risk of spending money on projects that finally might not lead to a concrete result).

We managed to organize 2 meetings, one with the director of the Filmfund and some members of his staff and another one with the President and the Secretary General of the Producers' association. Altogether these exchanges of views were rather positive and at least made our interlocutors aware of some of the difficulties we have to face.

Concerning the question of the funding for screenwriting, the Filmfund declared they will look for a solution to make sure the entire amount of the writing aid goes to the screenwriter. They also consider rising the amount of this aid. Which would of course suit the producers, who on their side stated that in no case they would give up their part supposed to cover the general expenses. As to the question of the salaries of the screenwriters and directors, the producers were not reluctant to the idea that we could work together on a collective agreement, in order to finish with the 'law of the

jungle' and give a transparent and solid basis to our contracts. The Filmfund on his side assured us of his support if we considered to explore this direction.

With both the FF and the producers, we also evoked a problem that young screenwriters and directors starting in the job have to face which is the lack of opportunities for low budget films, preventing them from experiencing and trying out things in a less heavy structure than the usual productions. We suggested to think about a funding structure that would exist alongside with the current system (i.e. with budgets from 2–4 million €) and that would allow to make feature films conceived for a budget from 200-300.000 €.

Finally, during the discussion with the Filmfund, our remark about the disproportionate support of coproductions did not lead to any result. They repeated that on the contrary, the national projects were privileged from the selection process on. They came up with some statistics to underline their arguments. The problem is that we lack information about the projects that are refused, which would allow a better view.

Both the FF and the producers made the reflection that it would be beneficial for all parts to meet on a more regular basis and have an exchange on our respective grievances. It is true that over the last years, our contacts especially with the producers were limited to the essential, which is due to some extent to a certain distrust from our side.

Of course we now need to follow-up on all this in a short delay to make sure that things stay on everybody's mind and to bring the promises to a concrete outcome.

Another important aspect of our activities concerned the organization of workshops / masterclasses. This has been a constant demand of our members and as thanks to the signature of a convention with the Filmfund, we are granted an annual financial support of 20.000 € since 2021, we were now in a position to deal with this request. Thus 3 events have been organized in the course of the year:

- 1-day masterclass on copyright issues in the digital market (streaming platforms, VOD, ...) with Karine Riahi, a French lawyer specialised in copyright matters in the audiovisual field.
- 3-day-workshop on directing actors by director Stéphane Foerkins (participation of directors and actors)
- Masterclass on writing series with writer/director Matthieu Frances

In 2022, we also had good news for the 'author's aid'. This support of 10.000 € goes directly to a screenwriter's project without the implication of a producer (which is an exception to the legislation that entitles the Filmfund to give funding only to a production company). It had been created some years ago at our instigation but then was abolished by the FF arguing that only a tiny amount of these projects found their way to an interested producer. The year before, we had various meetings with the FF to find a solution for this, and finally the 'author's aid' has been reactivated and is henceforth linked to the participation at 2 workshops in spring and autumn under the supervision of Miguel Machalski.

End of March, the Parliament voted the law that implements the transposition of directive 790 on copyright in the digital single market. The articles relevant for the audiovisual sector have been transposed by keeping to a great extent the wording of the directive which means that there are no concrete measures on how to apply the dispositions 'on the ground', so this will require in the near future a follow-up and certainly a discussion with the producers on this topic. Nevertheless, the transposition is a step forward in terms of protection of the author's rights in comparison with our previous legislation.

We furthermore identified the clear lack of a regular follow-up of our social media activities as another issue. A member of the Board volunteered to take charge of this in the future and care about periodically updating our social media accounts with current news, as well as our website.

### Overview of upcoming activities in 2023

Follow-up of the discussions launched in 2022 with both the Filmfund and the producers in order to realize the ideas and propositions that had come up. This will require a number of meetings with both interlocutors.

We know the government is working on a reform of the law which defines the rules of the public film funding. We are supposed to be consulted about a possible new text, along with the other guilds of the sector, but we will have to follow up on this to make sure we will be involved in the process.

We will continue our workshop program. We think of having a second edition with Stéphane Foenkinos on directing actors. We also consider scheduling a number of encounters between directors and the chiefs of departments in order to get a better mutual understanding of each other's work and challenges. And probably a workshop about 'Intimacy on set' and the handling of nude scenes which would be held by an 'intimacy coach' or 'intimacy choreographer'.