

ALMA ACTIVITY REPORT OCTOBER 2023

FSE

ALMA membership has reached 900 members in October of 2023. Beyond strict union activity, the project scope of ALMA addresses different segments: training, networking, legal assistance, representation and negotiation, public presence of writers and dissemination of the profession, through the media and in festivals and markets, and raising awareness of demands and fair practice within the industry and among political institutions.

The 17th edition of the University master's degree in Screenplay and Scriptwriting ALMA- Carlos III University of Madrid, which tops the ranking of AV writing degrees in Spain, has started this September.

ALMA is also deploying an awareness campaign among the rest of degrees for writers and producers taught in Spain. We offer a conference or a class related to the access to the writing career, to be conducted by one or two members of the board, with the ultimate goal of informing students of the risks and their rights ahead in their careers and making the guild available to their needs and questions, and for enrollment.

Regarding PR activity, ALMA publishes news and updates of news related to screen and scriptwriters' milestones (green lights, shootings and launches of their works), authorship and writing credits on social networks, and the #NoSeEscribenSolas ('somebody wrote them') tag to announce, correct or complete the information of writers when it has been incorrectly published by media outlets or producers press notes.

ALMA is in a continuous process of reviewing and repurposing some of the activities developed, but for 2022 and 2023, they can be summarized as follows.

Legal and regulatory activity

There is a highly hostile situation in the collective bargaining of conditions for employees. Although the terms of this collective agreements are mandatory for all the writer and crew employees, the one in force was signed in 2017, and has not moved since. The producers are trying to take advantage of the need to update the economic side to push back on other issues as the working hours, worsening the overall frame.

The conversations with producers to try to establish a framework for freelancers. This endeavor is not mandatory under the Spanish law, and it is taking a longer and

ALMA has also contributed to the various regulations included in the development of the Statute of the Artist, a report and starting point on how the professional and legal situation of artists in Spain required specific regulatory adequation to their specific circumstances, namely intermittence and the deficiencies stemming from it in taxes, social protection and ability to work.

The early end of the Government mandate, on the other hand, stopped the processes of amendment of the European directive for Author's rights and the Film and Audiovisual Culture Law, frustrating the need to protect authors more ambitiously after a very mild and pro-producers and streamers regulations gathered in the Government decrees and proposals, which needed reform, achievable by pressure on the Legislature.

On the individual contract negotiation and legal counsel for our members, ALMA is focusing in improving the availability of these services. The guild has obtained funding to help our members when they hire our lawyer to review, check and negotiate their contracts in any kind of writing capacity. Through this financial help, more of them are encouraged to use the legal service, we gain a deeper knowledge of the conditions included in their contracts and larger possibilities to stop malpractice.

Regulatory and legal activity

The present situation in the collective agreement bargaining is highly hostile. Although signing these collective agreements is mandatory for all the writer and crew employees, the one currently applicable was signed in 2017, and has not been updated since. The producers are trying to take advantage of the urge workers organizations have, in order to update the economic clauses to push back on other issues, such as increasing the working hours, worsening the overall frame. Also, ALMA is promoting conversations with producers in an endeavor to create a fair and protective framework for freelance writers.

ALMA has continued to contribute to the creation and the correction of various regulations in the development of the Statute of the Artist. The so-called “Statute of the Artist” in Spain is actually just a starting point, based in a report unanimously approved by the Legislature in 2018, on how the professional and legal situation of artists in Spain required specific regulatory adequation to their specific circumstances, namely the intermittence of working by the project, and the deficiencies stemming from it in taxation, social protection and their own ability to sustain a professional career.

The early end of the Government mandate earlier in 2023 stopped the development of the ongoing sets of regulations of the Statute of the Artist, along with the amendments to the transposition of the European directive for Author’s rights, and the Film and Audiovisual Culture Law. This interruption has frustrated the chance to secure better protection for authors, much needed after what resulted in pro-streamers and pro-producers regulations through the Government decrees and transpositions.

On the individual contract negotiation and legal counsel for its members, ALMA is focusing in widening the availability of these services. The guild has increased the funding to review, check and negotiate members’ contracts in any kind of writing capacity. Through this financial help, more of them are encouraged to use the legal service, we gain a deeper knowledge of the conditions included in their contracts and larger possibilities to stop and make claims against malpractice.

Union activity

The guild has enhanced the activity with groups of particular interest who may need deeper knowledge on the uses of the industry and need the assistance of ALMA, while perhaps hesitating to join the guild due to their incoming position and lower resources:

- Writers in the beginning of their careers (May 2022)
- Writers enrolled in the Residences of the Spanish Film Academy (May 2022 and April 2023)

In the Public opinion and Media department, ALMA has re-edited the press meetings with writers from all the audio-visual spheres:

- Unscripted programs writers (September 2022 and September 2023)
- Serial Writers (November 2022) and 2023 (programed for November)
- Goya: Writers for an Academy Award 2022 (December 2022)

In the 'Serial Writers 2022' edition, ALMA focused on the impact that streamers have exerted on the working conditions (compensation, size of teams, overall number of writers working, length of contracts and intellectual property rights collected by authors globally and nationally) and raised a claim towards the Spanish Government to implement effective mechanisms to protect these authors' work and the cultural heritage of the country.

For the Writing TV Unscripted Shows 2023, on September 28th, one of the two roundtables looks at the working conditions, main problems and professional vindications of these writers, an opportunity ALMA takes to present coincidences with the demands of unscripted programs included in the WGA Strike.

This denounces and claims are fully consistent with the demands of the WGA Strike and allow as to combine efforts in that direction with the current global movements.

ALMA has also attended tens of requests from media outlets since the beginning of the WGA strike, most of them showing interest on the real possibility that a strike could occur in Spain.

MAY 1ST International Labor Day



Every May 1st, ALMA calls its members to action and reminds them of their right to have remunerated, recognized, respected, freely developed and decent work, and to honor all of those requirements when they are team chiefs or work with their fellow writers.

June 14th, 2023: Screenwriters Everywhere

In support to the WGA Strike, ALMA deployed a campaign with memberships, the press and in coordination with the FSE and the IAWG to make visible the collective action in the US and globally. The social networks were replicating all the relevant messages as intensely as it was possible.

Information was gathered and made clear as to convey it to an audience of writers and journalists who are not familiar with the situation in the US audiovisual market, helping to get it through the interested colleagues of the striking writers (to foster solidarity and understanding) and to the general population through the media.

International Master Class with Howard Gordon <https://youtu.be/wgkABi2HMf0>

As the reference of professional writers in Spain, ALMA got the opportunity to organize a Premiere event and a master class with Howard Gordon, who was presenting his last show, 'Accused', in Madrid.

ALMA sold out an event crowded with members on March 3rd, 2023, in which two Spanish writers interviewed Mr. Gordon on his long and successful career ('Homeland', '24', 'Buffy, the vampire slayer' or 'The X Files'), but there was also an insight on the problems of the industry that would eventually lead to the beginning of the WGA Strike, two months later.

Professional and dissemination activity

Writers Guild of Spain Awards (March 2022 and March 2023)

In every edition, ALMA presents the awards to the best screenplays of feature documentary, feature film comedy, feature film drama, daily series, comedy series, drama series, entertainment program and best contest.

In the 2023 edition, Caroline Otto, President of FSE, and Thomas McLaughlin, Chair of the PRG, in representation of the IAWG, were invited to address the Spanish writers and explain the transcendence of the current situation, the solidarity among writers and the urgency of claiming for fair professional conditions. Caroline Otto, president of FSE, attended the gala.

The board of the guild gives an Honorary Award to the recognition of persons with a special significance to the guild or the profession.

In 2023, the award was bestowed on the 22 writers who won the lawsuit against The Mediapro Group, a multinational and one of the largest corporations in the sector in Spain.

International Writers' Rooms

SGI and ALMA created a working group under the title of 'International Writers' Rooms to introduce writers from both guilds and allow them to share experiences, learn from each other and create bonds to open a new pathway to working together.

Malaga Film Festival (March 2023)

Málaga is quickly becoming the second most prominent film festival in Spain (after San Sebastian International Film Festival), reaching larger amounts of participants by the year. ALMA has approved a strategic agreement with the festival with the objective to raise attention to the writers in its context.

In 2023, there was an interactive workshop (sold out) on 'The female characters you want on screen'. The panel included three female screenwriters who projected screenplays with presentations of their female protagonists, introducing the festival participants to the peculiarities of the character-building process. The interactive section consisted of creating a female protagonist with ideas pitched by the audience, and tying those to the possible stories they would be involved in, analyzing stereotypes, prejudice and consequences of each creative decision made.

Conecta FICTION 6 and Conecta FICTION 7 (June 2023)

ALMA maintained the cooperation with this initiative, to facilitate members' and the Guild's presence in the most prominent international series market of Spain. It covers the Ibero-American, European, and of course Spanish territories connecting talent and broadcasters and producers.

Four members of the guild enjoyed a free pass and accommodation through a pitching contest organised by ALMA and Conecta FICTION.

Film series: 'Somebody wrote it' (2022 and 2023)

In partnership with the Spanish Film Academy, ALMA continues the screening of recent, successful films followed by a conversation with their writers, to increase visibility for feature film writers in a coordinated manner with our social media campaign #NoSeEscribenSolas (Somebody wrote it) which claims for complete reporting of the names who write shows, series, and films.

Other activity with festivals, contests and awards

MECAL Festival Barcelona | June 2023 | ALMA decides and presents the Award to the Best Screenplay of Spanish Short Film.

FesTVaI | National Television Festival of Spain
September 2023 | Round Table: *Docuseries script: a raising format*

Spanish Cinematography National Award ALMA appoints a member of the jury and proposes writer candidates.

Navarra Tierra de Cine | September 2023. ALMA selects two tutors to consult the winning screenplays selected to be shot as short films.

Julio Alejandro Award (SGAE) | ALMA appoints members of the selection committee, and of the jury to this screenplay award.