

Drehbuchverband Austria

Austrian screenwriters association

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The Austria screenwriters association represents the professional interests of screenwriters in Austria. The purpose of the non-profit association is to represent and promote the artistic, economic, legal and cultural interests of screenwriters against radio and television broadcasters, publishers, the film industry, trade unions and ministries, legislative bodies and all film funding institutions. The association's main tasks also include services such as advice on contracts, funding submissions and all aspects of screenwriting.

The association is a member of the umbrella organization of Austrian filmmakers and the FSE (Federation of Screenwriters in Europe) and is represented on numerous boards and committees (including the Artists' Social Insurance Fund, the Austrian Film Institute, the jury for the foreign Oscar, the collecting society).

Members: 173 (full members: 119/Rookies: 47/Honorary members: 7)

Board members: Marie-Therese Thill (chairwoman), Valentin Hitz (vice-chairman), Jacob Groll, Roland Hablesreiter, Marie Kreutzer, Jessica Lind, Ulrike Schweiger, Sarah Wassermair, Matthias Writze, Mischa Zickler

Staff: Wilbirg Brainin-Donnenberg (managing director), Christian Neubacher (speaker), Flora Mair (social media)

Attorney: Harald Karl

Date of creation: 5.7.1989

Operating budget:

Funding for program 2022 Member´s Fees	9585.-
Funding Literar Mechana for Attorney Harald Karl	7320.-
<u>Funding Literar Mechana for Initiative Drehbuch2021</u>	<u>6208.-</u>
In total	23113.-

Collecting Society: <https://literar.at>

national legislation TV:

<https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10000785>

national legislation Cinema: <https://filminstitut.at/institut/aufgaben-und-ziele>

The Drehbuchforum Wien and the Drehbuchverband Austria are partner organizations.

Service, advice and initiatives

Our ongoing services include advice on contracts, funding submissions and other important aspects of screenwriting. We inform screenwriters about events, training courses and submission deadlines via our newsletter and social media profiles.

ORF Austrian Broadcasting

In 2023, we were able to renegotiate the script fees with a very pleasing result.

The book fees will be increased to 10% for the total fee. In addition, a significant improvement has been achieved in the distribution of fees: up to now, this has been around 1/6 each at signature and acceptance and around 2/3 as a total buy-out at the start of production. In future, larger portions of the fee will be paid on signing and acceptance - namely 27.5% each.

This agreement is of course also applicable on instalments to shorter serial formats. It is valid until the end of 2024, at which point talks on a fee adjustment are to be resumed.

After this, some points of the ORF General Terms and Conditions that have long been outdated, sometimes unusual in the industry or even immoral, need to be changed. These include the regulations on script approval, revisions and rewrites and general points that we have already called for in Drehbuch2021. Two successful negotiation meetings with ORF representatives have already taken place this year and we are well on the way to revising the ORF T&Cs.

Representativeness

We want to submit an application in accordance with the copyright law in order to establish representativeness for the professional group of screenwriters in Austria and thus be able to demand negotiations, e.g. on fees or contractual conditions with broadcasters, etc. Until now, this has only been possible through 'goodwill'. In order to achieve representativeness, we have to prove to the supervisory authority of the collecting societies that we are also supported by a large part of the profession. This includes the recruitment of new members and the evaluation of our members' participation in scripts for television and cinema. This extensive evaluation led to the reliable result that slightly more than 70 % of Austrian screenplays made into films are written by our members, meaning that our association represents the vast majority of Austrian screenwriters. This would correspond to the limit set by the supervisory authority. We will submit the formal application for representativeness soon.

Drehbuch 2021 - Screenplay2021 initiative

With Drehbuch2021, the Austrian Screenplay Association has developed standards for Austria that define the conditions for fair and cooperative collaboration between producers, broadcasters, directors and screenwriters - a kind of seal of quality to which all those involved are committed. The paper includes a series of concrete demands and was presented at the 2021 Diagonale. These range from fair contractual conditions and fair remuneration to having a say in key steps within the production process and adequate credit in all exploitation measures.

The guidelines were presented to the producers' associations, the directors' associations and the ORF in internal preliminary discussions and were sent to all relevant stakeholders and are largely supported, especially by the ORF.

In 2023, we used a detailed questionnaire sent out to our members to evaluate whether the goals we set with Drehbuch2021 could be met. There have been some improvements - especially in areas where these can be implemented free of charge - but also areas that are slow to respond to the requirements. A working group has been formed to look at the standardisation of screenplay credits. They will present their credits guidelines to the industry next autumn.

Guidelines for credits

Following the demands of the 'Screenplay 2021' initiative, we want to take measures to improve the working environment for authors on an economic, legal and practical level. One of the most important aspects of this is the regulation of credits. This is why we have developed a comprehensive 43-page guide.

This guideline follows a structure that differs from similar regulations of other organisations. Nevertheless, thanks are due to several organisations whose credit manuals have been the inspiration for this paper: Dramatikerförbundet Sweden, Danske Dramatikere, Deutscher Drehbuchverband, Federation of Screenwriters of Europe - Thanks to all colleagues in this regard.

Despite the differences mentioned, these guidelines should result in the same credits. This is absolutely necessary due to the numerous Austrian co-productions with European partners. The guide is not yet officially in circulation, final revisions are still being made, it will be published at the end of the year.

Copyright / Artificial Intelligence Initiative

As Marie-Therese Thill put it in her speech before the presentation of the Thomas Pluch Screenplay Award 2024, the technology of artificial intelligence is 'plunging or leading' us into a transformation within the industry.

Following the impressive and disturbing contributions on the topic of artificial intelligence during the annual conference of the Copyright Initiative, which took place in November 2023, we focused on the topic at the beginning of the year.

In March, author and dramaturge Oliver Schütte gave a lecture on the topic of 'AI in script development', which attracted a great deal of interest from the entire industry. His subsequent one-day workshop 'Writing with AI' was not held once as planned, but three times due to overwhelming demand from our members.

At a think tank on the topic of AI at the Austrian Filmfestival Diagonale 2024 with around 40 participants, including all major funding bodies and associations as well as representatives of ORF and numerous screenwriters, we succeeded in literally bringing the most important players together to discuss the challenges posed by this new technology.

As a result, we want to adapt our model contracts accordingly this year.

What our members write

In line with the Screenplay2021 initiative, the Screenplay Association Austria launched the social media campaign 'What our members are writing' on Facebook and Instagram at the end of 2021. The aim is to provide information about current film adaptations of screenplays by members of the Drehbuchverband Austria and to draw attention to the importance of screenwriters. The campaign is based on the similar campaign of the DDV - German Screenplay Association. It is very important to us to continue this campaign and our rising social media figures reflect the great interest in the screenwriting trade.

New website

Our website www.drehbuchverband.at (or www.drehbuchforum.at) is enjoying steadily growing popularity with around 15,000 users and around 23,000 sessions per year. It was launched this year to be tablet and mobile phone compatible and in the course of this, the author database was carefully updated and revised to present appealing short portraits of all members.

Model contracts - revision: artificial intelligence

In order to keep our sample contracts (developed by lawyer Harald Karl) up to date, it is necessary to address new technologies such as artificial intelligence. We started the year with a focus on this topic and will now incorporate the knowledge gained into a revision of the frequently requested model contracts.

Model contracts for scriptwriters include contracts for cinema feature film, television and film treatment, as well as the contracts for co-authors, script editors and script options. The continuous strive to establish standards and practices in the domestic film industry and to strengthen the independence of the authors during contract negotiations is visibly improving. The model contracts are used as a template as a whole but also in parts, they are broken down into individual components for better usability and adaptation. Each element of the contract contains a commentary to add clarity and in some cases examples to ensure better adaptability. The contracts were created after intensive work especially in the communication with our members. We understand this publication as a work-in-progress process, where we welcome suggestions and ideas for ongoing edits.

Thomas Pluch Screenplay Award

With prize money totalling 22,000 euros, the Thomas Pluch Screenplay Prize is one of the most important film awards in the country. This year it celebrates its 30th anniversary, which is why a prize sculpture is to be awarded for the first time. The prize is sponsored by the Federal Ministry of Art, Culture, Civil Service and Sport and is awarded by the Austrian Screenwriting Association. The award ceremony took place as part of the Diagonale in Graz on April 8, 2024.

The Thomas Pluch Main Prize 2024, endowed with 12,000 euros, went to: *Des Teufels Bad* by Veronika Franz and Severin Fiala, the Thomas Pluch Special Jury Prize, endowed with 7,000 euros, went to: *Sleeping with a Tiger* by Anja Salomonowitz and the Thomas Pluch Prize for short or medium-length cinema feature films, endowed with 3,000 euros, went to: Felix Krisai and Pipi Fröstl for *Strangers Like Us* (Zaungast).

For the first time the Austrian Vice-Chancellor and Minister of Culture, Werner Kogler presented the prizes in person and thus showed his appreciation for the work of the screenwriters.

Promotion of young talent

One of the tasks we will be pursuing in 2024 is to focus more on the needs of up-and-coming authors. What are their concerns, where do they need the most support, how do they make the leap into the professional field?

We will be working on answers and how to implement them over the next few months.

drehbuchFORUM Wien

screenwriters forum Vienna

www.drehbuchforum.at

The Drehbuchforum Wien is a service centre for screenwriters in Austria and acts as a platform for know-how and as a mediator for material, authors, dramaturges and producers. We promote networking and communication within the film industry and make screenwriters visible.

Drehbuchforum Wien offers lectures, workshops, international masterclasses and seminars for both professionals and up-and-coming writers. Event series such as Let's talk about scripts and Arbeit Alltag Welt excursions are also accessible to a wider audience.

We are also involved in the area of script development: our aim is to increase the range of artistically ambitious and commercially viable material. The scriptLAB fiction and scriptLAB docu programmes provide authors with financial support and dramaturgical advice. With the programmes Table Reading for Dialogues, United Writers and the screenplay competition "If she can see it, she can be it" we complete the wide range of support and services for screenwriters.

Geraldine Bajard: "World-Building" in Film: From Genre to Arthouse.

A talk and two workshops. January 2024

We were able to win the French screenwriter, dramaturge and director Geraldine Bajard (co-author and artistic collaborator of Jessica Hausner) for a talk and two workshops on the fascinating topic of "World-Building" in film: From Genre to Arthouse . The talk on the topic of world-building between fascination and necessity How genre and arthouse are a "winning team" was aimed at the entire film industry.

At the Create a World and Bring your own World workshops, participants worked in small groups, created worlds and scenarios in guided steps and reflected on the process, and it was also possible to receive individual feedback on their own project.

The interest in the event was enormous: the two workshops were booked out immediately and the room was bursting at the seams for the talk.

Let's talk about scripts - Panel Discussions

Let's talk about scripts is our main program to call attention to the work of screenwriters. In several discussions with screenwriters about their most recent Austrian films. On one hand we do reach the movie audiences, on the other hand writers can share their experiences with the panellists. The popularity among the public is increasing every year, at the last 8 events this year we had about 500 participants who joined us in lively discussions.

Before the talk, we usually show the film to be discussed in a cinema setting, and after the event there is still an opportunity to chat informally.

scriptLAB fiction / scriptLAB docu script-development program

scriptLAB helps authors to improve their script in the early phase of writing, it is available to both professional and also young writers. The authors are working in close cooperation with a script consultant and are financially supported by the Austrian Screenwriters Forum. With this efficient, low cost program we contribute to the diversity of projects, the innovative character and the heightened quality of the scripts. Thus the writer/filmmaker can profit directly from the growing acceptance on the producers' side.

Since the program was founded, about 1550 exposes have been submitted, nearly 200 of these were funded. Most of the script development projects are now available as screenplays and are on their way to be adapted for the screen, 9 have been already being filmed, 5 are currently made into films.

Since 2013 we have extended our script development program scriptLAB also to documentaries. With that we take into account the frequent blending of the boundaries between fiction film and documentary and the need for script development of documentary films. More than 317 projects have been submitted, 45 were selected for the program, 7 are in preparation for being filmed, 3 are currently be made into films, and two have already had a cinema release.

United Writers

A Weekend-Feedback-Workshop for professional screenwriters and filmmakers

In our program United Writers 4 professional scriptwriters or auteur-filmmakers have the opportunity to get feedback to their scripts. The workshop is moderated by an experienced script-consultant, but the main interchange is between the writers themselves. Each script gets feedback for half a day.

The projects can be in varying stages between an elaborated treatment and various versions of a finished script. Due to the high demand United Writers takes place twice a year, giving 8 scriptwriters per year the opportunity to work on their scripts by this successful model of collaboration.

IF SHE CAN SEE IT, SHE CAN BE IT

Female characters beyond clichés – screenwriters competition

This two-phase competition for screenplays took place already for the seventh time in 2023. This time it focused on the genre of comedy. The aim of the competition was to promote the heightened representation of differentiated and complex female characters beyond the clichés in Austrian cinema. The response has been surprising from the start: The enormous number of submissions was unexpected and has shown that there are enough ideas to portrait women away from traditional stereotypes.

Prizes are awarded for a total amount of 40.000 Euro in two phases, the prize money will benefit the screenwriters. In addition the screenwriters are given script-consultant support to the equivalent of 10.500.- Euro to develop the story. In the first step 5 exposes are being selected by a jury to be worked into treatments. In the second step one of these five treatments will awarded to be expanded into a feature length screenplay.

Additionally, we invited 16 authors for a pitching, where they had the chance to present their exposés to female producers. This competition is financed by and conducted in cooperation with The Austrian Film Institute.

Jasmila Žbanić: Keynote - Talk on the political thriller IF SHE CAN SEE IT, SHE CAN BE IT 8th screenplay competition

November 20, 2023

In the course of the main award ceremony of last year, we could proudly announce the 8th continuation of this popular and successful screenplay competition, together with the Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport and the Austrian Film Institute. The theme for the eighth edition of the competition will be political thriller.

We have therefore invited Oscar-nominated screenwriter and director Jasmila Žbanić to a discussion on the subject of political thrillers based on her film Quo Vadis, Aida? The screenwriter and dramaturge Kathrin Resetarits was her discussion partner, the genre of the political thriller, the development of the main character Aida and political cinema in general were extremely exciting aspects of the conversation.

Arbeit Alltag Welt – Everyday's Work, Unknown places

Excursions

To inspire writers creativity, we offer excursions to places, where someone could not go so easily as a single, private person.

In May 2023 we started the series on the topic of science in cooperation with the Magistrate's Office of the City of Vienna, Department of Science, Research and Business Location.

Science: Institute for Conservation and Restoration

November 2023

As one of the most internationally renowned competence centers for conservation and restoration issues and the preservation of art and cultural assets, four areas of specialization are offered for conservation and restoration: Paintings, Objects, Textiles and Stone.

Crime Scene Cleaning

March 2024

Whether it's a suicide, an accident or a body found weeks or months later - the Karwas family business "AK Tatortreinigung" (AK Crime Scene Cleaning) specializes in special cleaning, especially of crime scenes and places where bodies have been found.

Coming soon

In autumn excursions to the Austrian aerospace industry and the National Bank will follow.

Table Reading for Dialogues

Due to the very positive feedback over the past years, we organized table reading for dialogues twice in 2024. This model of supporting writers and actors in dialogue writing, which has proven very successful in the Writers Guild of Great Britain, is intended to provide support with the development of individual screenplay scenes in the script phase. The skill of actors in dialogue scenes is exploited by winning them to read selected passages of the screenplay with distributed roles.

Each project has 90 minutes to read and discuss the screenplay scenes. In a moderated conversation, the impressions are shared with the actors and the other authors, possible solutions are being discussed.

Table reading for dialogues is not a public event but is a closed round of invited participants only.