

Annual report 2024 – DENMARK

Facts about the guild

Danish Writers Guild
Linnésgade 25, 2. sal
1361 København K
Tlf.: +45 33454035
admin@dramatiker.dk

The guild was founded in 1906.

The guild has approx. 500 members, representing screenwriters and playwrights in theatre, film, television, radio, games and other media as well as librettists and translators of drama. More than 70% of our members are screenwriters for film and television.

The annual member fee is EUR 675 (2024). Pensioners and students pay half the quota.

We are a member of the Danish CMO CopyDan (<https://www.copydan.dk/>).

Does the great crisis narrative end with this season?

Nor has 2023 been a year without turbulence. Viaplay de facto closed shop last summer and although most of the already produced Viaplay series have since been tried to be sold to other streamers and broadcasters, Danish production companies are hit hard with a Viaplay-shaped hole in their budgets.

They have had to write off a large number of developments and see approx. DKK 300 million disappear from the total film and series economy, almost a third reduction compared to before. All business and future plans have over a wide range had to be revised and throttled back. It has particularly affected us as writers who, after all, develop and write in the early phase of a project's life until, possibly. production and completion.

The Danish government has reached an agreement on the so-called cultural contribution, which in the long term will provide approx. 100 million annual contribution to the production of Danish films and TV series. That's good, but is it enough to keep Danish film and TV afloat?

However, new orders and developments are underway for the broadcasters and streamers who are active in Denmark. An assessment is that there will be a slow and calmer growth from here

on in relation to how the media image develops in the coming years. But it probably won't return to the level it was in the years before and during corona for the time being.

From the government side, we have obtained a new film settlement, which extraordinarily adds 40 million more to the film industry in this time of crisis. It is also important to us, just as it is important that the new film settlement from the autumn of 2024 makes it possible to apply for grants for continuing education through the Danish Film Institute. Continuing education during a period when you have time for it is important - also for the members of Danske Dramatikere. Especially at a time when AI is becoming a game changer in the entire film and media industry. That we as authors learn how to use AI in practice, but also ethically justifiable in relation to the copyright challenges, is something that Danske Dramatikere, in collaboration with other organisations, nationally and internationally, is already focusing on.

'23 was also the year when first the American screenwriters in the WGA and then the American actors went on strike. For the authors, it was 16 years ago that they last did it. That it also became a joint strike with the actors, you have to go all the way back to the beginning of the 60s to see the equivalent. The strike, like our streaming conflict the year before, was about ensuring fair and ongoing rights payment to the creators in the streaming area, but also about ensuring orderly conditions in relation to the use of AI. We in Danske Dramatikere supported the strike and organized both the insertion of advertisements with declarations of support from Danish screenwriters as well as a demonstration in front of Warner's Danish headquarters in Copenhagen on the international solidarity day, 14 June. The strike ended in the autumn with a satisfactory result for both writers and actors.

Will we get a theater reform before Christmas?

A political reform of the performing arts field is on the horizon. It has been discussed for a long time, but it seems that the Ministry of Culture is not averse to reviewing the area's legal complex. This means that all of us freelancers in the arts, directors, playwrights, set designers, actors and so on, must collaborate on the initiatives we see necessary to secure the theater of the future.

We have a common interest in examining and criticizing the current distribution of performing arts support, where buildings, property tax, maintenance, rent, land area taxes and office wages – in short, running the performing arts infrastructure – have become limiting opportunities in relation to being able to hire the artists who often have to see themselves equipped with several functions and areas of responsibility for one overall fee.

It is an unfairness that is not sustainable, neither for the working life of the individual professional groups nor for their rights, and as an organization we would like to see economic air in Danish

performing arts to ensure orderly conditions all around, not just for the buildings and other dead things.

That is why we are co-senders of a longer memorandum with the industry organization Dansk Teater as the main sender, in which we plead that Danish performing arts must have a real supply of new funds. There are simply too many holes in the stage carpet.

At the same time, we will focus on ensuring that the textual stage art must not disappear in the development budgets, where the production costs threaten to take the entire portion.

A great inequality is and has long been at play when it comes to theaters ordering new Danish plays. The contractually paid dramatist is at the wrong end of a glaring distortion of competition, when, for example, the dramatic text produced by a dramaturg, a group of actors, a stage manager, is remunerated with a remarkably smaller fee, not to mention the 100 percent saving, which can be obtained by performing unauthorized dramatic texts.

Imagine if, following a Scandinavian-inspired model, the new Theater Act could introduce an obligation on the part of the theaters to pay a sum to a pool that works exclusively with living playwrights and new plays, using copyright-free texts. From here on, the ambition will be that we, in cooperation with other unions, correct the debilitating pay gap that exists between the different groups of text workers who are trying to make a living in Danish theatre. Imagine if a director who actually dramatizes a novel would get a real fee for that piece of work instead of it being subsumed under the director's salary.

Can TV distributors do as they see fit?

15 March 2024, the Nuuday group, which under names such as YouSee and Telmore, which provide telephony, broadband, TV and more, have summoned the organizations that manage the rights for the content they distribute, with demands for a significant reduction in rights payments, including Copydan Verdens TV, Koda and UBOD (At the same time, Nuuday has terminated all applicable agreements).

The purpose is to demand a reduction in the rights payment of over 70% for the rights holders who supply the content for Nuuday's TV packages, including the scriptwriters.

The rights holders must now respond to the summons. The timetable is still unknown, but cases like these can be extremely lengthy and take several years to resolve.

The rights holders have also chosen to ask the Copyright Licensing Board, set up by the Danish Parliament, to assess the case. The board has the option to set tariffs and other conditions when agreement cannot be reached on agreements.

In cases like this, where the entire Danish rights system is attacked, the artists, producers and TV stations stand together as one united industry with the clear aim of ensuring that actors, producers, writers, directors, musicians and many others in the creative professions get payment for the use of their content, which others (here the TV distributors) make money from by making available to their customers.

At the time of writing, the case is running in the daily press with different versions of the same story, but the bottom line is that YouSee does not have a valid agreement with the rights holders, even though they continue to show Danish content. Therefore, together with production companies and other organisations, we have announced that we are working for an injunction on YouSee showing certain productions. No deal, no content. Read more here:

<https://dramatiker.dk/2024/08/22/faq-yousee/>

Copenhagen, September 2024