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FSE Newsletter // October 2009

World Conference of Screenwriters

The World Conference of Screenwriters takes place in Athens on November 6th and 7th. The venue and agenda are in place. Most delegates are now booked for both flights and hotel. All the member guilds of the FSE and IAWG will attend. Guilds from Brazil and Israel have confirmed their attendance and invitations have gone to the two Japanese Guilds.

The Board of the FSE met for two days in Athens to prepare for the conference and met with representatives of the Greek Film Centre, the Ministry for Tourism and so on. The administration of the FSE is co-operating closely with the administration of the International Affiliation of Writers Guilds in planning the conference.

The blog for the conference is now in place at wcos.wordpress.com

International Affiliation of Writers Guilds

The International Affiliation of Writers Guilds, which brings together the two American Guilds, two Canadian guilds, guilds from Australia and New Zealand and the Irish and British Guilds, met in Washington and on its agenda considered the proposal for the first World Conference of Screenwriters. The IAWG has agreed to organise its annual general meeting in Athens just before the conference to facilitate the members Guilds of the IAWG to attend the conference.

Viviane Reding to be reappointed EU Commissioner

The current Commissioner for Information Society and Media, Viviane Reding will be reappointed as a Commissioner for a third term, hopes to retain her portfolio and hopes to add the issues of online copyright, access to broadband and state aid to broadcasters to the portfolio of issues she is addressing according to a press article which you can read here:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/infosociety/reding-plans-new-commission-term/article-183406>

Fédération des Scénaristes d'Europe // Federation of Scriptwriters in Europe

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Final Report on the Content Online Platform

The Content Online platform has published its report, following a number of meetings organised by Viviane Reding and concentrating on a number of topics including 1) New business models and enhancement of legal availability of contents; 2) Management of copyright online; 3) Piracy and new legislative approaches, self-regulatory and co-regulatory initiatives; 4) Protection of Minors, improving media and digital literacy, enhancing parents' awareness on the risks and defining responsibility between all stakeholders; 5) Cultural Diversity.

The Report can be read here:
http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/docs/other_actions/content_online_report.pdf

Digital Britain Report Published

The final version of the Digital Britain report was published by the British Government on 16th June.

The report's main measures include a three-year plan to improve universal access to broadband services by 2012; investment in broadband services; mobile spectrum liberalisation and next generation of mobile services; legal and regulatory framework against digital piracy; and a consultation process on funding options for national, regional and local news.

The report presents far-reaching proposals to bring Britain fully into the digital age. These include a levy of £6 per year (€7) on all telephone land-lines to pay for the development of access to a minimum of 2Mb broadband for every UK home – however remote, and the switching of all national radio services to DAB in 2015. But the British Guild

will oppose plans to “top-slice” part of the BBC's income from television licences and hand it to commercial broadcasters to pay for news services.

The report can be read here:
<http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/digitalbritain-finalreport-jun09.pdf>

Problems with the German Federal Funding System

The German Funding System, above all the Federal German Film Fund has been (and partly still is) under a lot of pressure, legally and financially. The fund partly depends on levies on broadcaster and distributors, a system whose legal basis was successfully challenged by broadcasters recently, leading to a funding crisis.

This funding crisis has particularly effected so-called ‘reference funding’ a system of support for producers based on the success of their films from the previous year.

A new revision of the recently revised film funding law is very likely. Bernd Naumann, Federal Minister for Arts and Culture, is promoting new legislation which would broaden broadcaster support for the FFA on a better legal base.

French Internet Piracy Contravenes Human Rights

The new French law, which allows internet access to be withdrawn from consumers engaged in piracy, was declared to be in violation of human rights provision by the French Constitutional Court on June 10th. New legislation is being considered which would involve a judge in decisions to block access to the internet.

Product Placement

The decision of the British Minister Andy Burnham to ban product placement outright in the United Kingdom will probably be reversed following a reshuffle of the UK Government and the promotion of the minister to a different job. Burnham had decided that 'no conclusive evidence has been put forward that the economic benefit of introducing product placement is sufficient to outweigh the detrimental impact it would have on the quality and standards of British television and viewers' trust in it.' The new Minister thinks differently.

Meanwhile it seems that the German government will legislate to allow Product Placement but under quite strict regulations which will limit its use.

Happy Birthday To The Writers' Guild Of Great Britain

WGGB is celebrating its 50th birthday this year. Although the Guild is the successor of a screenwriters' association formed in the 1930s, it was in 1959 that it was relaunched as a trade union for film and television writers. Over the years writers in radio, books, theatre and videogames have joined.

On the actual date of the anniversary, 13 May, we held a special lunch at London's top celebrity venue, the Ivy restaurant, which was attended by several pioneers of the Guild, including three founder members and past Presidents and Chairs. In September there will be the launch party for a new illustrated history of the Guild.

Government to eliminate Advertising on TVE (Spanish Public Television)

The process could occur as early as September. RTVE will be funded exclusively through other resources other than advertising. Part of their income will continue to be contributions from the state budget. The rest, which used to come from advertising, will be obtained through other ways. For example commercial television operators that operate statewide or in more than one region will provide an annual 3% of their income, and telecom operators 0.9% of their income.

Additionally, the Corporación RTVE will receive 80% of the money raised by tax on reservation of public radio regulated in the General Law of Telecommunications. Finally, the Corporation will also include income earned by the exercise of their own activities and the merchandising of their services and products.

Government revenues may only be used by the Corporation to fund public service activities. In this sense, the draft Act limits to 10% of the annual supply purchases and the acquisition of broadcasting rights for sporting events, excluding the Olympics and Paralympics.

In addition, the rule enhances the public service nature of the RTVE Corporation, establishing the obligation of including programming to accommodate political groups, trade unions and social transmission of the main parliamentary debates, children's programs and political debate. Progress was also made in accessibility for people with disabilities and in supporting production and broadcasting of European audiovisual production.

Reactions to the plan have been mixed. The private channels have said virtually nothing (it's what they wanted). For the telecoms Redtel (Telefónica, Vodafone, Orange and Ono), the measure "is unfair." "It is difficult to explain why the telecom operators have to finance a particular model of public television station that operates in another market, the audio-visual," they said in a communiqué. They also announced that they will see if they go to the courts to defend their interests both internally and in the community.

Advertisers are also against the measure because they consider that they threaten free competition in the sector.

Once the new financial model for RTVE has been discussed in the Cabinet, the draft will be reviewed by the State Council and the Commission for the Telecommunications Market and then be transferred to Parliament for debate.

The problem is that it will be a lot of minutes of advertisement to replace with programs, but with the same budget. It seems good for screenwriters because it will be more work, but we will see what happens and hope salaries would not be cut down.

Turkish Broadcaster to pay Repeat Fees.

The Turkish collecting society (SİNEBİR) is conducting negotiations entitled "secondary payments" with the national TV channel TRT for a while as a result of which TRT has taken a leading decision to pay royalties for repeated broadcasts.

The information concerning the European copyright models compiled by SENDER from FSE and guilds member of FSE have been used in the meetings conducted with

TRT and with the help of this information the principles, general scope and criteria of the negotiation has been defined.

SENDER AND FSE PROPOSAL

As agreed at the last AGM of FSE the Board of FSE has written to the President of Turkey, and to the Prime Minister, Minister of Culture and the Minister responsible for the European Union a letter supporting first the script writers and then all cinema creators in respect of the particular problems of the Turkish industry, in particular the failure to respect the rights of the creators.

Film Story Competition at the European Film Festival

For the first time the Brussels Film Festival and the Flemish Writers Guild have organized a FILM STORY COMPETITION..

The purpose of the FILM STORY COMPETITION is not only to promote excellent story ideas on European level but to also encourage authors and assist them in the professional development of their scripts.

From the participants we expected an extensive synopsis of a feature film idea. 3 pages maximum, written in English, French or Dutch.

Thanks to the help of the F.S.E. and the support of the European Guilds that distributed the call for entry, the competition received in total 211 synopses from 17 different countries, a quadruple of the amount of last year entries.

Selected by a jury of professional screenplay writers, the 2 winners received a free place on a Script Factory course of their choice in London together with a refund of

their expenses. The winners also have been invited for a weekend to Brussels to attend the Festival's Awards Ceremony held on July 5, 2009.

And this years winners are: Dragan Stankovic en Marin Malesevic (SRB) with "Apophenia" and Faisal A. Qureshi (U.K.) with "The Footsoldier". We want to congratulate them and hope to see their project on the big screen soon.

A new call for entry will be distributed spring 2010.

Flemish Scenaristengilde stops music publishers in General Assembly of Sabam

The annual General Assembly of Sabam, the Belgian Organization of Authors, Composers and Publishers, on June 8th had been announced as a historical one. For the first time in years organizations of composers and music publishers had formulated a great number of proposals to change Sabam's General Agreement. A lot of discussion arose about art.35. This article had been changed in 2006. The changes were then considered as a necessary correction of the proportion of rights paid out to musicians on the one hand and screenwriters on the other hand. Composers and music publishers wanted to undo this change, thus disadvantaging screenwriters.

More than 300 partners, an extraordinary high number, took up their right to vote in the General Assembly. Minutes before art. 35 was to be voted the Scenaristengilde launched a resolution, asking Sabam to set up a separate division for screenwriters in order to be able to increase the rights paid to

screenwriters with respect to the rights paid for music, especially concerning DVD, Video on Demand and Internet Exploitation.

After that the organizations of composers and music publishers decided to withdraw their proposal to change art. 35. For now things remain as they are, but a whole lot of changes are expected in the course of the next year. Sabam promised to get started on setting up a separate division for screenwriters. Composers and music publishers announced they were open to proposals, but determined to stand up for their rights.

The General Assembly elected a member of the Scenaristengilde to have a seat in one of Sabam's supervisory boards. This will enable him to defend the rights of the screenwriter and keep an eye on the evolution the following year.