

# EUROPEAN SURVEY ON THE REMUNERATION OF AUDIOVISUAL AUTHORS

European Film and TV  
Screenwriters and Directors :  
Their Earnings and Working Life

## FIRST RESULTS

Research commissioned by BVR Services GMBH  
from CuDOS at University of Ghent on behalf of  
FERA – Federation of European Film Directors  
and FSE – Federation of Screenwriters in Europe



# THE SURVEY

Although the European audiovisual industries' turnover in 2012 was € 107.3 billion<sup>1</sup> we at FERA and FSE know that, at national level, the majority of creators who produce the copyright goods on which the culture industries are built have extremely unstable incomes that are usually very modest. Investing the time, energy and resources necessary to create, has become increasingly difficult.

Until now, no comparable data has been available at EU-level on audiovisual authors' remuneration.

This leaflet presents the preliminary results from the first ever, comprehensive, Europe-wide research aiming at mapping out the economical and social situation of European audiovisual authors remuneration, through an online survey of FERA and FSE networks – 57 professional organizations in 26 countries<sup>2</sup>. This research project was conducted by CuDOS' team from Ghent University's Department of Sociology.

## 1.

EY study *Creating Growth – Measuring Cultural and Creative Markets in the EU*, December 2014.

## 2.

- **Categories of authors** : in total, 3217 respondents of which 1072 are screenwriters, 1474 directors and 745 other audio-visual authors.

- **26 countries covered** : Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, Poland.

- **Good response rate** : 23%

- **Representative sample** of members of guilds in European countries, meaning that established authors are slightly overrepresented, but nevertheless with a good spread of authors in different career stages (22% emerging and 49% established directors ; 17% emerging and 53% established screenwriters). The larger share of males in the dataset (68% for directors, 60% for screenwriters) reflects the situation in the field.

## Caveats

This leaflet presents the first results of the survey. The complete report will be published in September 2018.

The numbers presented here may vary slightly in the final report, e.g. due to the use of different classifications of the audio-visual authors.

These numbers are the European median. Audio-visual authors from low production capacity countries are likely to have considerably lower incomes.

# 1 WHO IS THE MEDIAN EUROPEAN AUDIO-VISUAL AUTHOR ?

The vast majority of Audio-visual authors work as freelancers (85%). Their secondary sources of income, essential to bring more stability to freelance and self-employed professional lives, include share of revenues for the exploitation of their works, as well as compensation for copyright exceptions.



## MEDIAN MALE DIRECTOR

A **median male director** is **48** years old. He has been working as a director for **17** years, having been educated to master's degree or equivalent. He works **45** hours a week on average. Including all sources of personal income (i.e. excluding partners' income) he earns € 26,000 after tax. **€18,000** comes from work as a director, of which **11%** comes from secondary sources including collective management organizations (CMOs).

A **median female director** is **44** years old. She has been working as a director for **13** years, having been educated to master's degree or equivalent. She works **45** hours a week on average. Including all sources of personal income (i.e. excluding partners' income) she earns €18,234 after tax. **€12,500** comes from work as a director of which **5%** comes from secondary sources including CMOs.

## MEDIAN FEMALE DIRECTOR



## MEDIAN MALE SCREENWRITER

A **median male screenwriter** is **46** years old. He has been working as a screenwriter for **14** years, having been educated to master's degree or equivalent. He works **40** hours a week on average. Including all sources of personal income (i.e. excluding partners' income) he earns €30,000 after tax. **€25,000** comes from work as a screenwriter of which **10%** comes from secondary sources including CMOs.

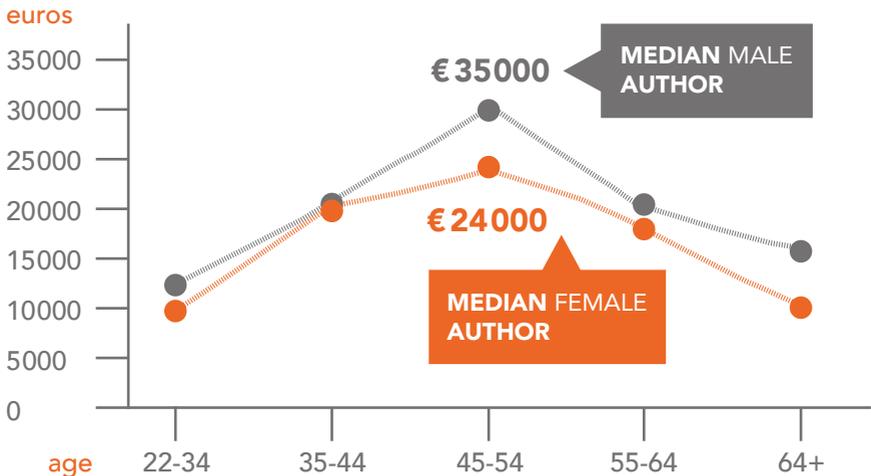
A **median female screenwriter** is **44** years old. She has been working as a screenwriter for **12** years, having been educated to master's degree or equivalent. She works **40** hours a week on average. Including all sources of personal income (i.e. excluding partners' income) she earns €27,000 after tax. **€23,500** comes from work as a screenwriter of which **10%** comes from secondary sources including CMOs.

## MEDIAN FEMALE SCREENWRITER



## WHAT DOES A CAREER PATH OF A EUROPEAN AUDIO-VISUAL AUTHOR LOOK LIKE ?

Both male and female audio-visual authors have their financial peak around the age of **50** : **€24.000 for females, €30.000 for males** as their total personal income from all sources after tax. This is the income of older respondents who are still in the business after 20 years. Both younger and older audio-visual authors have to get by with significantly less. In older age categories, this is especially problematic for female audio-visual authors.



### UNPAID WORK LONG HOURS

Two additional points are relevant.

Firstly, respondents noted that **long hours of work are the norm**, especially for directors during the production phase.

Secondly, **significant amounts of unpaid work are usual**, especially during the development phase. Directors report that 60% of the work they do during the development phase is unpaid and screenwriters say that 56% of their development work is unpaid.

## HOW DO THEY MAKE ENDS MEET ?

Audio-visual authors usually have 2 or 3 additional sources of income :

- a) other work in the audio-visual sector,
- b) work outside the audio-visual sector,
- c) co-reliance on partners income.

A lot of audiovisual authors experience financial problems and insecurities.

Only **13%** of audio-visual author are satisfied with job security in the audio-visual author sector (63% is explicitly dissatisfied).

Only **30%** are confident about their future as an audio-visual author.

**75%** of the audio-visual authors indicate that financial insecurity as an audio-visual author is huge.

**56%** of the directors and **44%** of the screenwriters indicate that they would not survive as an audio-visual author without income from other sources.

Almost all respondents also do other work within the audio-visual sector.

For example, **50%** of the directors and screenwriters also teach or give workshops.

### OTHER JOBS

**34%** of directors have another job outside of the audio-visual sector.

**42%** of screenwriters have another job outside of the audio-visual sector.

### CO-RELIANCE ON PARTNERS INCOME

**71%** of audio-visual authors have shared income with a partner. Only **19%** of directors and **33.5%** of screenwriters, who do not have shared income with a partner, say that they can easily or fairly easily make ends meet or cannot compared to **49%** of directors and **61%** of screenwriters who do share income with a partner.

# HIGHLY MOTIVATED DESPITE ABSOLUTE LACK OF JOB SECURITY

## THE GROUNDS FOR WEAK BARGAINING POWER

This tension between high motivation and financial reality explains and illustrates the very limited bargaining power and absence of contractual freedom that is the norm for Europe's audio-visual authors.

**83% (4 out of 5)** of audio-visual authors indicate that "even if the life of an audio-visual author is insecure, I wouldn't want to give it up".

**66% (2 out of 3)** indicate that it is difficult for an audio-visual author to "stand up for your rights".

**81%** of the audio-visual authors indicate that it is difficult as a young director to bargain a good contract and **56%** find it also difficult for an established author.

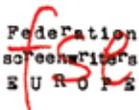
**20%** indicate that they never get space to negotiate a contract or an agreement.



## RESEARCH PROJECT



**FERA** Founded in 1980, the Federation of European Film Directors gathers 36 directors' organisations from 27 countries. It speaks for approximately 20,000 European screen directors, representing their cultural, creative and economic interests at national and EU level. @Film\_directors



**FSE** The Federation of Screenwriters in Europe is a network of national and regional associations, guilds and unions of writers for the screen in Europe, created in June 2001. It comprises 25 members from 20 countries, representing more than 7,000 screenwriters in Europe. @ScreenwritersEU

