

THE MEXICO MANIFESTO

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Writers and directors make a vital contribution to culture, diversity and economic growth all over the world. Our work is the foundation of a huge international industry that acts to immeasurably multiply its value. But our ability to do this work is gravely under threat and we need the support of lawmakers to protect it.

Our Cultural Contribution

In an increasingly fragmented world, our work brings people together both emotionally in a shared appreciation for art, and physically into theatres and cinemas. It provides entertainment and education, stimulating literacy in our children and empathy in our communities. It builds a crucial understanding and appreciation of history and of other cultures around the world.

The United Nations Development Programme described culture as both “a driver and an enabler of human and sustainable development”, and writers and directors are at the very heart of this¹.

Our Economic Contribution

Of equal importance, is the growing contribution of creative industries to their country’s gross domestic product (GDP). In Europe alone, copyright intensive industries contributed more than four percent of the EU’s total GDP and more than three percent of its total employment. This equates to around half a trillion Euros and over seven million jobs².

These growing, dynamic and innovative industries rely on the creative talent of individuals and in particular, the writers and directors whose work forms the basis of all film, television, dramatic and literary productions.

Why Are These Contributions in Danger?

Despite the glamorous perception of film, television, theatre and literature, the overwhelming majority of creators here are not able to make a living from their work. Consequently many leave the industry every day and their potential contribution to culture and the economy is lost.

¹ Speech by Helen Clark, UNDP Administrator, at the UNDP and UNESCO Featured Event: Widening Local Development Pathways: The Creative Economy and the Post-2015 Development Agenda – 10 December 2013

² Data from study by the European Patent Office titled “Intellectual Property Rights intensive industries: contribution to economic performance and employment in Europe” (September 2013)

One important reason for this is the way that contracts between authors and production or distribution companies are negotiated and concluded. In most cases, screenwriters and directors are the weakest party in these discussions and are unable to individually negotiate fair deals. They are therefore often forced to accept buy-out payments against the transfer of all their rights without compensation.

As a result these creators receive no benefit from the future success of their work and have no body of work from which to derive an income. Without this to bridge the necessary development gaps between projects, many are forced to leave the industry.

This issue is more pressing today than ever before due to the rapid development of new distribution models. Internet services are streaming more audiovisual content, to more people, across more devices but the weak position of creators in contractual negotiations often denies them access to the revenue from this growing digital market.

What do We Believe?

We believe that it is the role of the legislator to redress this balance of power. We believe that all creators should be allowed to make a living from their creations and that doing nothing is no longer an option for governments that wish to protect the vital cultural and economic contributions that we provide.

Authors are the “engine room” of the creative industry and protection of their rights is the key to their survival. Without a script or a director there can be no film, no television production, no theatre play and no novel.

Our Call to Action

We call on national governments and law makers to adopt copyright legislation that provides writers and directors with an unwaivable right to remuneration that is compulsorily negotiated with users of these works and managed on a collective basis

Only by acting collectively can the balance of power be redressed and a sustainable system be built for creators. It is the only way to guarantee that writers and directors are fairly paid and it establishes a direct and equitable revenue stream between the market and the authors.

Remember that without authors, there is no audience.

About Writers & Directors Worldwide

Writers & Directors Worldwide is a not-for-profit organisation that exists to protect and promote the rights of audiovisual, literary and dramatic creators.

Chaired by French author and screenwriter Yves Nilly, and led by an international executive committee of established screenwriters, playwrights, poets and directors, the organisation provides a forum for the sharing of ideas, information, best practices and practical advice to defend the right to fair remuneration.

Through regular working groups, Writers & Directors Worldwide provides specific experience and expertise both to creators and to the authors' societies that manage their rights. Within the dramatic, literary and audiovisual repertoires, the organisation aims to:

1. Unify the voice of creators
2. Support authors' organisations in their fight to establish effective rights and fair remuneration for creators
3. Raise awareness of creators' rights issues within the industry and with the wider public
4. Enhance the economic and cultural contribution of creators in all areas of the world

In April 2014, Writers & Directors Worldwide was appointed as an official observer to the World Intellectual Property Organisation's (WIPO) Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights.

For more information please visit www.writersanddirectorsworldwide.org or contact us at info@writersanddirectorsworldwide.org