

7/04/2025

Dear Minister O'Donovan

As Chair of the Writers' Guild of Ireland, I was deeply disappointed to hear your recent comments in respect of the proposed content levy.

The Writers' Guild represents over 600 writers whose work is central to the development and success of the Irish screen industry. Together with our fellow industry stakeholders, we have been working for a number of years on detailed proposals outlining the need for a content levy, in response to the European Audiovisual Media Services Directive. I am sure that you have read the detailed Indecon report from 2021 on the potential of a media creative content fund that provided a detailed analysis of the benefits such a levy would have for our sector – and indeed for the wider Irish economy. As indicated by the Oireachtas Media Committee's report, and indeed in the Government's widespread support for the Online Media Safety and Regulation bill, it is clear that there is cross-party support for the introduction of this levy. Therefore we are at a loss to understand why you have indicated your reluctance to support the levy, and your intention to use the Broadcasting Bill to prevent further progress in this regard.

In your comments, I note that you refer to the cost of living crisis. As the representative organisation for a sector that suffers huge financial instability, I can assure you that we are keenly aware of the impact that the cost of living crisis has on ordinary Irish households. But the Content Levy was never intended to be a tax on consumers. The levy is a tax on the profits of these streamers, not a tax on the taxpayer. Specifically, it is a levy targeted at the streamers who benefit from Irish subscribers, without investing back into the creative and cultural development of our industry.

Irish audiences pay somewhere near €600 million a year to Pay TV and SVOD services like Sky, Netflix and Disney. Organisations whose headquarters are not based in Ireland. Meanwhile, they contribute little to the development and production of original Irish stories on screen.

The investment the levy would provide in Irish stories, told by Irish writers would also mean that we can retain that intellectual property in Ireland, allowing us to also strengthen our cultural exports, and grow the creative economy. Additionally, this levy would mean that finally, streamers such as Netflix would have a financial incentive to invest in Irish stories written and created by Irish talent, something that to date, they have yet to do.

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Without this important fund to develop original Irish ideas, we run the risk of becoming a purely service production led industry – where Ireland is used as a filming location and a source of crew, but where we are no longer able to develop original and worldclass Irish stories.

It's no secret that Irish writers have stories to tell – we have all seen the headlines about the Green Wave which our industry is currently enjoying. Irish writers are recognised for their talent worldwide, but if they cannot access the funding necessary to develop worldclass ideas, then our industry will never be able to compete at a global level. At the Writers' Guild, we recently conducted a salary survey of our members. Over 60% of our members earned less than €20,000 in 2024 from their writing. Without the ring fenced development funding which the content levy will provide, there will be no new Colm Baireads, Sally Rooney's, Sheena Lamberts or Peter McKennas.

We urge you to meet with us in order to properly discuss the levy and the implications that not introducing it will have on the economic livelihoods of our members.

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jennifer Davidson'.

Jennifer Davidson
Chair, WGI
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