

Response to the call for evidence from the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee on the economic impact of the creative industries.

‘The role of public sector agencies and the effectiveness of the support they provide’: Examples of successful policies and strategies for growing the screen industries in Scandinavia

The following observations direct themselves primarily to the question of ‘The role of public sector agencies and the effectiveness of the support they provide’ and offer ‘Examples of successful international strategies for growing these sectors’. The observations are based on preliminary findings of *Commissioning Creativity and Funding Films*, a research project that investigates best practice in film and TV commissioning and funding as well as screen policies in smaller screen economies in Northern Europe. The research project is based on a series of workshops and interviews with executives, commissioning editors and film funders in Denmark (DR, Danish Screen and New Danish Screen), Sweden (Svenska Filminstitutet and STV), Norway (Norsk Filminstitut), Britain (BFI, BBC & Channel 4) and Scotland (Creative Scotland). This project is being carried out by Dr Inge Sorensen at the Centre for Cultural Policy Research (CCPR) at the University of Glasgow and Dr Eva Novrup Redval at University of Copenhagen. The examples below pertain in particular to film, but similar policies for the television and gaming industries are in place in Denmark, Sweden and Norway.

One notable and significant difference between film policy in Scotland and that of Scandinavian countries of similar economic, cultural and socio-political standing and infrastructure is that these countries have film policies that are set out by the government with advice from and in consultation with the film industries, funding organisations and stakeholders within film culture and education. For example, the Danish and Swedish ‘filmforlig’ (Film Agreement) are policies that detail the priorities and funding frameworks for the film industries and determine the cultural, educational and industrial targets, aims and remits for the funding bodies, screen agencies and broadcasters in each respective country. These ‘filmforlig’ are renewed and re-evaluated every four years, in genuine dialogue with producers, exhibitors, and distributors from the film and screen industries, TV broadcasters and screen funding organisations and institutes, academics, film educators, critics and policymakers who are embedded in these national creative economies and cultures. The screen agencies and film funding bodies are then tasked with implementing these policies.

It should be noted here that Denmark, Sweden and Norway have distinct screen funding agencies dedicated to support, promote and develop film, TV and games as artistic endeavours, as entertainment and as industries. These agencies all received significantly more funding earmarked for the screen productions and industries than is the current the case in Scotland.

The Scandinavian model of a consultative and strategically planned approach to policy design has several advantages. Firstly, it allows government to identify and address issues regarded within the screen industries as

deserving priority. For example, though the 'filmforlig' the Swedish government has addressed gender inequalities in the film industries and successfully fostered a new generation of female film makers. The Danes have in their 'filmforlig 2010-14' developed and enhanced digital film production, exhibition and distribution in Denmark and globally. In their 2015-2018 agreement they will emphasise and develop low budget and digital film making and nurture new voices in digital film by specifying that the Danish Film Institute must fund 12-24 digital, low budget films. Also, they have allocated extra funds to foster film making in the Danish regions and specified that these funds must be monitored to ensure that they are genuinely invested in regional productions and do not end up as travel or relocation subsidies for film companies based in the capital.

Secondly, this process allows for an automatic assessment and evaluation of the success of the preceding 'filmforlig' when this is renewed and renegotiated every four years. Crucially, these reassessments and revaluations are carried out by stakeholders embedded and residing in the particular national culture and economy and from the wider film community (not just the funding agencies themselves).

In Scotland the reviews of the Scottish film policies in recent years have been carried out by consultants that are not predominantly based in Scotland and therefore have been criticised for not having sufficient first-hand experience of the work practises and the particular cultural and industrial circumstances of the screen sectors here. A periodic consultation and evaluation of policies with stakeholders embedded in Scotland, as it is the case in the Scandinavian 'filmforlig', would serve to ensure a continual assessment and re-evaluation of the quality of film policy in Scotland as well as prevent such criticism.

In Scotland, Creative Scotland is tasked with determining Scotland's film policy and funding priorities. The result is that Scotland's film policy is being both drawn up and evaluated by the very body that implements it. One problem with this arrangement is that, as Creative Scotland strives continuously to devise and articulate priorities on an incremental basis, film policy as a whole tends to lack clarity and strategic coherence. In addition, a situation where an organisation is determining, implementing and evaluating its own policies, priorities and decision making naturally risks undermining public trust and can lead to a lack of clarity and transparency, factors that are crucial to a flourishing creative and cultural industry. A film policy that vacillates for example in response to organisational or structural changes within funding bodies and their management, undermines the stability of a national industry, its ability to plan ahead and the capability to attract international investment to Scotland.

On these grounds, a division between those who set policy and those who implement it, prevents potential conflicts between funding priorities and policies and funding implementation and decisions. Based on the practices and policy adopted in Scandinavia, countries which most generally agree have successful film industries and effective funding structures, mechanisms and organisations, suggests that it is advantageous to separate decision making on film policy from the organisations that implement it.

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