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audiovisual network

5 September 2015

WHERE ARE THE WOMEN DIRECTORS IN EUROPEAN CINEMA?

FIRST FINDINGS OF EWA'S PAN EUROPEAN RESEARCH PROJECT

Saturday 5 September 2015, h 12:00-13:30

Italian Pavilion - Sala Tropicana

Hotel Excelsior, Lungomare Guglielmo Marconi, 41 - Lido di Venezia

PRESS RELEASE

“EWA’s evidence-based research indicates that measures need to be taken to ensure fair and proportionate support for women directors to compete in an unlevel playing field of male privilege. The unequal representation of women goes against the spirit of the Bill of Human Rights, European treaties and UNESCO’s Convention on Diversity of Cultural Expression. EWA calls for positive action by governments at European and national level to end censorship of women’s view on the world.” EWA, 6.9.2015

At the 72nd Venice Film Festival, the European Women’s Audiovisual Network presented first findings from its pan-European study on gender equality amongst European directors. Alexia Muiños, Deputy Director and Holly Aylett, Head of Research shared a platform with Silvia Costa, Chair of the Committee on Culture and Education of the European Parliament.

EWA’s research builds on the findings of the European Observatory report, 2014 - showing that women directed 16.3% of films between 2003-12 and women-directed films accounted for 8.9% of total admissions. What is the experience of women at national level which lies behind these figures and what are the obstacles to progression from entry into the industry through production to film release?





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Silvia Costa welcomed EWA's research, and its timely intervention, stressing the urgent need for evidence-based indicators to inform action, and an approach which looks at the trajectory of women's experience, not only their performance at the box office.

She called for a meeting with FEMM, the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, to include the European Observatory and other interested players once the final report is published to discuss measures to address the under-representation of women.

The Conference was introduced by Alberto Barbera, Director of the Venice Film Festival and addressed by Nicola Borrelli, Director-General Cinema – MiBACT, and Monica Parrella, Director-General of the Office for Intervention, Department for Equal Opportunities at the Presidency of the Italian Council of Ministers, and discussion was moderated by Cristina Loglio, Chair of the MiBACT Creative Europe Committee.

In the audience were the President of the Italian Film Commission Network; representatives of two principle authors' associations, 100Autori and ANAC; Secretary General of Media Salles and the Director of Euro-Mediterranean Co-Production Forum in Apuglia.



Direzione
Generale
CINEMA





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Selected First Findings

(EWA's final research report will be released at the Berlinale 2016)

Absence of Policy for gender equality

In spite of awareness of inequality for women, only one European country has a coherent approach to gender equality, Sweden. As a result of target setting it has increased national funding for women to 50% and seen women's films increase from a 19% to a 50% share since 2000. In 2010 women's films also achieved 69% of the national awards in Sweden.

In other countries there is no mandatory policy only statements of principle, initiatives to raise awareness and some measures to encourage better collection of gender-based statistics.

Inadequate statistics and monitoring

Many key institutions do not keep coherent, comprehensive gender statistics. Where they exist they favour fiction over documentary, and do not enable monitoring for all stages of women directors' trajectory from film school to awards.

In spite of evidence that shorts, documentary production, and commercials are key in sustaining women directors' careers, statistics are scarce in these sectors.

With the exception of Sweden, gender-based statistics are not being systematically monitored to inform evidence-based policy in national funding.

Training as a director

There is no shortage of interest from female applicants for directing courses at national film schools although places are scarce. Women compare favourably in convergence rates from admission to graduation.

Those graduating average 40% - almost double the average percentage of those later active in the industry





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Thereafter, data on the number of directors actively in play is variable but it is higher than the numbers evidenced from national releases, and around 20%.

Key entry points into the industry

There are various routes into the industry. In order of highest preference respondents to EWA's questionnaire favoured making shorts, making documentaries, film schools, making commercials and/or music videos and acting.

These are lower budget areas of production with greater access and opportunity. The problem for women is sustaining their career once they have a foothold and progressing from their first and second productions.

The Search for Production Funding

In the qualitative survey one of the principle factors discouraging women from continuing in the industry is the competition for funding.

1 National Film Funds

Women's share of national funding, with the exception of Sweden, is neither proportional to their presence in society nor their active presence as directors

Women's films have lower budgets than male productions. Taking small (<800,000), medium and large budgets (>3,500,000), all female documentaries fall in the lowest category, and most female fiction falls below the middle of the medium budget category. France is the only country where budgets for women fall in the highest category

There is considerable difference between countries in the basic funding levels awarded to both fiction and documentary genres. but more research needs to be done into the relation between production value and audience reception.





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2 Broadcasting

Most respondents to the questionnaire feel the gender of a director does not affect investment by a public funder but does impact on investment by a private funder

The contribution of *public service broadcasting* to production is significant and can count for up to 28% of available national funding. Many female directors depend on work in television to sustain their career. However, the overall share for women's productions from this source ranges from 11.9% to 18.6%

Only 2 countries could provide data on the levels of total investment from the *private sector*, France and Sweden. Again this is a significant amount. In both cases the % share for women in all budget categories is lower comparative to the % share of national and public service television budgets

3 Regional funding

Most countries have several regional funds. On data provided women's share of available funding is proportionately higher than their % share from other funds

Achieving a release

Women's overall % share of releases ranges from 9.1% to 20.8%.

Croatia, Italy and the UK perform less well than the European Observatory's average finding that 16.3% of films released in Europe between 2003 – 2012 were directed by women. The other four countries perform considerably better than this average.

However, these figures are based on theatrical release. They do not take account of the presence of women's films in other exhibition spaces which can be considerable. In UK, for example, between 2009-13 only 48% of films over 500,000 got a theatrical release, the rest finding audiences in other ways e.g video & on-line release or through festivals.

Audience Reception





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In the questionnaire most feel that the gender of the director does not affect the audience choice of film

With the exception of Italy and UK, our national statistics demonstrate above average performance relative to the average of 8.9% found in the European Observatory report, 2014.

Women's presence and performance in documentary filmmaking is stronger than in fiction where data could be provided

Data on admissions needs to take account of other factors such as level of production budget, genre of production, support with distribution and publicity and the number of release screens. This analysis is on-going in EWA's study but merits a separate enquiry based on case study research.

Data on number of release screens is incomplete but shows that on average women's films are not given the same number of release screens as films directed by men.

In the questionnaire all countries recognised the need for greater support with publicity and distribution strategy for women's films to reach their audience.

Admissions are dominated by the top 1% of releases (usually directed by men and with the highest production budgets). Initial findings suggest that once this 1% is taken out, the women's share of the audience increases.

In some countries women's films perform better than men's films in the national top ten and in critical acclaim.

What are the principle factors discouraging women from staying in the industry?

- Competition for funding
- Job Instability





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- Scarcity of role models

What actions should be taken to improve the presence of women directors?

- Exhibiting more films directed by women on national screens
- Increased support for women directors in their transition from training into the industry
- Targeted funding for women's films
- Support for women in under-represented sectors
- Targeted programmes for young people in education

ENDS

