

Young creators' take-aways: Fight for your rights, and your crazy ideas!

“Fight for your rights, and your crazy ideas” were the words of young creators at an online event on 27 April 2022 organised by the Society of Audiovisual Authors in partnership with the European Parliament’s Cultural Creators Friendship Group, celebrating the European Year of Youth and World IP Day. Young European filmmakers and Youtubers shared their experiences of how to make a living on online media and streaming platforms, in conversation with members of the European Parliament.

Young creators Freya Hannan-Mills (British writer and director), Kevin Tran (French Youtuber), Paula Sánchez Álvarez (Spanish screenwriter) and Aleksander Pietrzak (Polish director and writer) participated in our event. From the European Parliament, we were joined by Laurence Farreng (Renew/France), Niklas Nienaß (Greens/Germany) and Tomasz Frankowski (EPP/Poland). Cécile Despringre, Executive Director of the SAA, provided her expertise on audiovisual authors’ rights. Read their [biographies](#) and watch the [recorded event](#).

3 take-aways from the young creators’ testimonies:

1. Being a creator is a profession, but not a nine-to-five job

Freya, only 18 years old, already writes, acts, directs and produces. Her passion to create is her driving force and she hopes that in the future she will be able to earn a living from her creative work. Freya will soon graduate from high school and go on to study filmmaking at the University.

Paula is a young Spanish screenwriter. She talked about the passion of screenwriting but reminded that it is not a nine-to-five job. In the creative process, there is a lot of invisible creative work that cannot be measured.

Kevin started creating on YouTube in 2012. Back then, he wanted to prove that a French guy of Asian descent could entertain without making fun of Asian people or their accent. Today, he is one of the biggest French Youtubers with 5,4 million subscribers, making videos and animations in French, English and Chinese. Being a Youtuber is still not considered a professional job by many. It is therefore difficult to ask for financial support for work equipment or for a mortgage, for example.

Aleksander is one of the youngest established directors in Poland. He made his first feature film at the age of 25. It took him 8 years until he could make a living as a filmmaker. Aleksander highlighted that starting out is difficult as you are being paid less for your first work. Even if you made a movie, when you go to television, you are still considered as a debutant because you only worked in cinema before. The same happens when you go on to theatre, radio, etc.

2. CMOs provide young authors safety, help to overcome challenges, and give opportunities

Kevin and Aleksander highlighted that receiving royalties from their CMO has allowed them to continue creating and upholding their artistic freedom.

Kevin uses all the money he earns of YouTube ad sales and product placements to produce new videos, and he lives of the royalties he receives from the French CMO [SACD](#) and a manga he made in 2016. This support from CMOs helps future talents to emerge and continue. “Authors can focus on creation

and not worry about paying their bills”, said Kevin. “The Polish CMO [ZAPA](#) fights for my rights”, claimed Aleksander. “When you are young you do not have money for lawyers, but CMOs can provide legal support. Royalties are not only important when you are young; as royalties stay with us 70 years after we die, it is therefore also a safety for our family and children”, he continued.

Freya and Paula have benefitted from the support of CMOs in terms of networking and competitions that have given them contacts to people they otherwise would not have been able to access. Both pointed out how important it is to give opportunities and support to authors from disadvantaged backgrounds, those not born in connected or wealthy families.

Freya has been participating in the film competition ‘Film the House’, which is a parliamentary-based film and scriptwriting competition for students and independent filmmakers based in the UK. The British CMOs [Directors UK](#) and [ALCS](#) sponsor the event, and this is where Freya learned about them. Paula discovered the Spanish CMO [DAMA](#) as a student when attending screenwriting events organised or sponsored by DAMA. “I would have thought that they would only manage the rights of big successful screenwriters, but this is not the case”, said Paula; “DAMA helps cultivate authors since they are young”. Paula was given a year of personalised tutoring with a professional screenwriter, something she would not have been able to access nor afford on her own. Aleksander said that he considers his success a combination of hard work and luck: 50% talent and the other 50% are about the events you go to and who you meet. CMOs can play an important role in providing these networking opportunities to young people.

3. When streaming platforms pay authors’ rights, it’s a win-win

Aleksander warned that this is the ‘last call’ before big streaming platforms are getting too big to change. As long as authors do not get fairly remunerated, they cannot afford creating the content they want and maintain their artistic freedom. Therefore, the better environment we create for artists, the more we also defend European culture.

Kevin stressed that we can co-exist with online platforms such as YouTube, that differently from platforms such as Netflix, host original content from ordinary people ‘like you and me’. However, the YouTubers that last long are the ones who are the most professional and reinject their revenues in new content. That is why authors’ rights are so important, as royalties enable authors to continue creating and developing their activity further.

“Authors should not be the last to be compensated. Their works, regardless of which media it is shared on, should generate equal rights and royalties”, said Paula.

“Intellectual property is a really important topic that needs to be talked about. People need to have that safety and security of their own intellectual property”, concluded Freya.

“Be brave, even if people won’t like it, show yourself and listen to your intuition. Fighting for your crazy ideas will make an author out of you and evolve cinema.”
Aleksander Pietrzak (Polish director and writer)

Background

- + **Collective Management Organisations** are entities formed by and for authors to defend and enforce their rights collectively. They negotiate with users, collect and distribute royalties to authors. They also provide social and administrative support to authors, offer trainings, organise networking events and fund new artistic projects. Many of them also assist in negotiating contracts with producers. [Read more](#).
 - + **The situation for audiovisual authors** varies widely from one country to another, in terms of social protection, working conditions, authors' rights and remuneration. In the EU, there are countries which have developed exemplary policies ensuring that authors get paid not only for creating the works (the time and efforts they spend on it) but also receive royalties for their exploitation on different media. This is the case in Belgium, Estonia, France, Italy, Poland and Spain. Other countries tend to consider audiovisual authors as any other workers and let them be mostly deprived of their author status. They use the argument of contractual freedom to allow buy-out contracts, which transfer all their IP rights to the producer for a lump sum payment, with no additional remuneration to be paid by users for the exploitation of their works.
 - + **The 2019 EU Copyright Directive** is an important progress because for the first time, it recognised that authors and performers are in a weak bargaining position and need additional protection. Article 18 establishes, in EU law, a right to appropriate and proportionate remuneration for authors and performers when they transfer their rights. This provision can be the legal basis for collectively managed remuneration schemes generating royalties to authors for the exploitation of their works by audiovisual media services, in particular online, on top of the remuneration paid by producers. [Read more](#).
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