



TAC response to Senedd Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee inquiry on The challenges facing the creative industry workforce in Wales

September 2022

About TAC

1. TAC (Teledwyr Annibynnol Cymru) represents the independent television production sector in Wales. Our sector is a substantial component of the creative industries, in Wales and in the UK overall, with Cardiff alone having the third largest film and TV cluster in the UK¹. This provides economic, social and cultural benefits through supplying creative content. There are around 50 companies in the sector, ranging from sole traders to some of the leading players in the UK production industry. They produce content for the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5 and Sky as well as other commercial broadcasters and platforms. Our member companies produce almost all the original television and online media content for Welsh-language broadcaster S4C, and a variety of radio productions for the BBC.

Responses to Committee Questions

What is the current health of the sector's workforce, including the impacts of the pandemic, Brexit and cost of living crisis? Have workers left the sector, and what impact has this had?

How financially stable is the sector and how suitable are pay and working conditions?

2. We have taken the above two questions together. Some freelance workers left the TV production sector as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and resulting lockdowns. The remaining workforce is now facing further challenges as a result of rising costs, which is affecting the sustainability of production businesses, as detailed in our response to the Committee's short inquiry on growing costs in the industry. That response points out that our members' production activity is impacted by energy costs, fuel, food, catering, hire car and accommodation costs all being higher. While

¹ <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/news/view/2510538-cardiff-has-third-largest-film-and-tv-cluster-in-uk,-study-shows>

post-Covid some travel has been reduced the needs of filming mean this is a limited benefit in some areas and we still need people to travel and stay on location. These recent changes will have increased producer costs after budgets for programmes have been agreed, reducing or eliminating the margin on making a show.

3. There are currently staff shortages which means employees are much in demand and this is resulting in people leaving one company to go and work for another in a better or more well-paid job. This means that, while companies want to nurture talent, they are not always seeing the benefits as workers move on to other places. Therefore it is not easy for companies to carry out training and invest in people.
4. 'Craft' workers - set builders, sound technicians and so on - need always to be properly valued. There is a shortage of these skills at the moment, which ought to work in those workers' favour in terms of making higher demands but, again, some broadcaster budgets constrain the ability to pay higher rates in some cases. It is not ultimately in the producer's power to raise rates significantly unless budgets rise. Sometimes individuals hired do not have skills as developed as they ideally would be, presenting a challenge. This certainly makes it more difficult to train and appoint in ways that answers the demand for skilled long-term employees. It also creates problems for putting a process in place for equal opportunities for all and to get a more diverse workforce.
5. There is no built-in way of increasing freelancer pay, due to issues around decreasing programme budgets. However pay structures should look to provide appropriate payment according to experience and specific skills offered.
6. Employers need to make sure they are aware of rights and responsibilities – freelancers must avail themselves of these too. It could be possible to provide a 'handbook' for employees and freelancers so they are clear on their rights.
7. TAC has endorsed to the Industry Group's Statement of Commitment - Coalition for Change Campaign². It also supports the work of the Film and TV Charity, which offers those working in the industry financial advice and support, and help with issues such as mental wellbeing, discrimination and harassment, plus practical tools and resources. TAC encouraged its members to respond to the Charity's recent survey on mental health and we look forward to seeing the results.
8. TAC supports the WellBeing Facilitator pilot scheme to support mental health in Film and TV. TAC is a member of the advisory board in developing the WellBeing Facilitators Wales role. The pilot programme, a partnership between Bectu and mental health and wellbeing specialists 6ft From the Spotlight, was launched in August and is supported by the Welsh Government via Creative Wales and the Wales Union Learning Fund. A number of TAC companies have already joined the scheme and TAC is continuing to encourage its members to sign up to ensure a safe and fair working

² <https://www.tac.cymru/latest/tac-supports-statement-of-commitment-against-inappropriate-behaviour-in-tv/>

environment for all. The WBF is in place for the multi award winning Big House Giveaway by Chwarel, and also for the Gogglebocs Cymru co-production made by Chwarel and Cwmni Da.

How equal, diverse and inclusive is the sector? How can this be improved?

9. TAC shares S4C's annual Diversity, Inclusion and Representation Survey questionnaire with our members, to help S4C and TAC gain a better understanding of the sector. This also feeds into the TAC training programme. S4C's Diversity, Inclusion and Equality strategy for 2022-27³ is committed to continuing with this survey as well as ensuring that diversity, equality and inclusion is an important part of the TAC/S4C training partnership.
10. The TAC/S4C training programme (more information on which is included in our answer to next question) includes courses on various aspects of diversity and inclusion, including race, gender, disability and socio-economic factors, to make sure companies can be as inclusive as possible.
11. TAC hosted in September a Diversity, Equality and Inclusion workshop to give companies the opportunity to learn, discuss and ask questions on how to foster inclusive workplaces, including what practical steps can be taken and how to work through barriers.
12. Overall there are a lot of different schemes which seek to tackle issues around diversity and TAC would like to see as much partnership working as possible to allow joined-up initiatives to maximise the use of resources.

How sufficient are skills and training opportunities? Are there gaps, and how should they be filled?

13. TAC partners with S4C to deliver a training programme, and since 2019 TAC have delivered 76 courses, for which there were 1,159 registrations. This training programme was set up in recognition of the need to ensure companies can meet their responsibilities as businesses as well as seeking to grow them, plus ensuring their workforces have the appropriate skills. We do not currently charge freelancers to attend this training.
14. It provides bespoke training to meet the needs of production companies in Wales specifically. The S4C/TAC Training Agreement was agreed and signed earlier on in the year for a period of 4 years. We therefore look forward to continuing the collaboration with S4C in order to follow their training priorities as well as TAC's own priorities where we survey our members annually on training needs and requirements.

³ https://dlo6cycw1kmbs.cloudfront.net/media/media_assets/Reflecting_Wales_StrategyENGLISH2022-2027.pdf

15. TAC and others are finding that there is in general a clear lack of Welsh language training provision for people working in the Welsh language media sector.

What has been the impact of support from public bodies such as the Welsh Government, and is further support needed?

16. The Welsh Government could look at what more it could do to work with industry on establishing a clearer career path so that those entering TV production can be fully aware of the options open to them to develop and grow professionally.
17. We note the appointments to the new Shadow Broadcasting Authority and will be giving views on its remit and priorities. A key factor for the sector is that any changes to the structure and regulation of broadcasting in Wales must not have any negative impacts on investment from the public service broadcasters or commercial broadcasters from the UK and overseas.
18. Creative Wales has just published its Skills strategy and Skills Fund. TAC welcomes such initiatives to help grow the skills base in the sector and is in regular dialogue with Creative Wales.
19. We believe it would be beneficial if the Welsh Government studied the funding sources available to the creative industries and compare with the creative agencies of other nations to ensure that they are competitive.
20. We welcomed the setting up by UK Government of the Production Restart Scheme during the COVID-19 lockdowns, which allowed companies to be protected in cases of losses caused by cancelled productions. This scheme has now come to an end however COVID-19 remains an issue causing some loss of staff days.
21. TAC has been in discussions with the UK Government's Department for International Trade, and is hoping to hold a session to help our members understand what opportunities might be available with support from the DIT, and how companies can play a larger role in the international market.
22. We have also been making the case to the UK Government for it to review the High End TV tax relief, which has a minimum qualification threshold of a minimum £1m per broadcast hour of qualifying production costs.
23. Given that average high-end S4C production costs are £250k-£300k per hour, HETV tax relief is not accessible for almost all S4C productions. We recently detailed this issue in our response to the UK House of Commons Treasury Commons Select Committee, which is currently holding an inquiry into tax reliefs⁴.

⁴ TAC's full submission to the Commons Treasury Committee inquiry is available here: <http://www.tac.cymru/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/TAC-response-to-Treasury-Select-Committee-inquiry-into-Tax-Reliefs.pdf>

24. We have also seen the discontinuation of funding to the UK contestable funds, the Young Audiences Content Fund and Audio Content Fund, both of which were a boost to Welsh language production. We would welcome Creative Wales and where relevant the Shadow Authority looking into Welsh national versions of these important programmes if funding is not found at UK level.
25. Lastly we welcome the introduction of a new content fund by BBC Cymru Wales and Media.Cymru to support production companies with developing innovation-driven content⁵.

⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/mediacentre/2022/bbc-cymru-wales-and-media-cymru-announce-new-content-fund>