

# Looking back and moving forward

Gender Equality Report 2017



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# A comment from the CEO

Welcome to this historical summary of how we at the Swedish Film Institute have been working on gender equality. We are publishing the report due to the extensive international attention and many questions our work has attracted. I often get all the praise for work that is based on far more than just my decision to really start taking the gender equality goal seriously – a decision I made when I first started at the Swedish Film Institute in October 2011. Today, six years later, it is clear that it has been possible to achieve a gender equal funding system without quotas, and with higher quality as a result. Achieving this has in part been down to my resolve as a leader, but also very much to the hard work of everyone else involved. Sweden is privileged to be a rich nation, without wars in recent centuries, and with a stable majority government for many years. This has favoured the gender equality work as society at large has become increasingly gender equal.

**Previous governments**, industry players, my CEO predecessors and the staff at the Film Institute too have all very much helped to make Swedish film production what it is today. What has been added since 2011 are concrete goals and ambitions, along with clear communication. Sweden cannot stand as a model for other countries; those countries must put their own work in. Even so, we do believe that the working method used at the Swedish Film Institute can spread knowledge and understanding, partly by describing our gender equality work before 2011, and also by outlining what we have done since to achieve our goals.

We have yet to achieve film production that fully sees beyond gender, ethnicity, LGBTQ and varying levels of able-bodiedness. We need to broaden representation, both behind and in front of the cameras. We have put together a new action plan for our ongoing efforts, which includes the concrete goal of spreading knowledge. This is why we have produced this report, the first of many. Our hope is that knowledge will lead us to a film industry that's sustainable in the long term, where everybody can work on equal terms.



Anna Serner  
CEO, Swedish Film Institute

# Foreword

## Anna Wahl

Is a Professor and Vice President at KTH, the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm. She has an MBA from the Stockholm School of Economics, and in 1992 defended her doctoral thesis there on “Gender Structures in Organizations – career development for women with MBA and MSc degrees”. In 2008 Wahl was made a Professor of Gender, Organization and Management at the KTH’s Department of Industrial Economics and Management. Her research areas are organization and leadership, with a particular focus on gender and feminist theory. She has taken part in several projects in association with the Swedish Film Institute, and is an important resource when it comes to knowledge of the film industry and its organization from a gender perspective.

**There are various pieces** of good advice that are generally given to organizations or sectors that want to strive for greater gender equality. One of these is about discussing which argument should be communicated through the organization/sector to explain why gender equality is a good thing in this particular context. There are several arguments that can be used to establish legitimacy and participation, such as democracy, fairness, competence, quality, profitability, development, or a good working environment. Different arguments are used in different sectors. Sometimes the argument has not been formally formulated, and this can cause uncertainty and a resistance to change. Sometimes the argument is altered, because the change process has developed since it was first formulated. In the film industry, as in many other cultural sectors, the quality argument has come to be predominant. This is a direct response to the fact that gender equality is often set in juxtaposition to quality: you can have one or the other, but fundamentally they are regarded as being irreconcilable. So actively adopting quality as an argument for working with gender equality in film is a step further than just seeing fairness and equal terms as arguments, since quality relates to a core value in the film world. This is similar to the situation in science and research, where the quality argument is also becoming increasingly common.

**Gender equality is partly about structures**, i.e. conditions that make it possible or impossible for people to make film (or conduct research). It is also about the actual content of what we make, the subjects, issues, stories and interpretations that are brought up in film (or research), since these conditions pave the way for more voices and ideas. It is common when working with gender equality to compare the significance of structure and the significance of culture. In reality, structure and culture are of course intricately intertwined and hard to distinguish. As analytical tools, though, they are useful. Allocating resources in a more carefully considered way establishes a new structure in film, where both women and men write screenplays, direct and produce film. Does this mean that we have created a more inclusive culture, one in which discrimination and diminution of women no longer exist? Not necessarily. But it does, in all likelihood, increase the opportunities for promoting a different working climate, a different predominant culture in the industry. But beyond that, does the gender distribution in key positions in film matter when it comes to what films get made? And if so,

in what ways does it matter? And to whom? These are interesting questions with complex answers. Studies show that it does in fact seem to matter, for instance when it comes to perfunctory sexist comments in film; they occur less frequently in films directed by women. It is therefore important to keep an eye on gender distribution both behind and in front of the camera, and perhaps above all on the relationship between them.

Greater gender equality in film is not only about more equal numbers, but also heightened awareness and knowledge that can challenge the culture in film. In a systematic change process this is brought together through arguments, awareness, methods and objectives. If this is in place, a lot of exciting things can happen in the world of film. The fact that Sweden could take the lead and serve as a source of inspiration in an international context makes the whole issue even more important.

# Why a Gender Equality Report?

**We want to inspire more active work on gender equality issues and show that gender equality is possible with a systematic approach, and also that gender equality can be a tool for raising quality.**

This report is an initiative of the Swedish Film Institute and aims to summarize, survey and spread knowledge about our work on gender equality in Swedish film. Various factors have enabled the Swedish Film Institute to work so intensively with gender equality: gender equality work generally in Sweden; intensified gender equality work in various quarters of the film industry; a number of governments with a distinct focus on gender equality; many committed people at the Swedish Film Institute; and an awareness of the importance of different perspectives in film.

Although gender equality work has long been part of the Swedish Film Institute's operation, it intensified considerably from 2000 when Åse Kleveland took over as CEO. 2000 was also the year that gender equality in the film industry was first mentioned in a government bill. In the bill, the government gave the Swedish Film Institute a special mandate over and above what was known as the Film Agreement (which had not yet included gender equality): to begin continuously keeping statistics of gender distribution in the key positions of scriptwriter, producer and director.

Efforts were further augmented by the next two CEOs; Cissi Elwin in 2006–2011 and the current CEO Anna Serner.

In recent years the work has also spread beyond Swedish borders, and international attention and interest in film and gender equality has never been greater. The work is also about quality; gender equality is a tool on the path to higher quality in Swedish film production. By broadening the perspectives and creating space for more voices, more people will be able to identify, and the films will appeal to and feel relevant to a wider audience. Put simply, in order to reflect the reality we live in, more and different perspectives are needed. The Swedish Film Institute has taken several important steps toward a more equal film industry, and in 2015 it achieved its goal of awarding funding for feature-length fiction film equally between male and female directors.

We want to show that gender equality is possible with a methodical, systematic approach, and that gender equality is a tool for achieving higher quality.

**The aim of the Gender Equality Report is:**

To ensure that more people are inspired by the Swedish Film Institute's work and start working more actively on the issues.

“We had an objective that no gender should be less than 40% represented.”

Åse Kleveland, CEO 2000–2006

“Gender equality was already being fervently discussed when I took over from Åse. It was a clear goal, and many initiatives were taken. We mainly achieved the 50/50 target when it came to producers, but we didn't quite get there with directors.” Cissi Elwin, CEO 2006–2010

“We aim to publish a Gender Equality report every year. This is the first one, and it sets out the historical context. Future reports will be more specific around different themes, such as comparative studies with other countries.”

Anna Serner, CEO 2011–present

# The emergence of gender equality in Sweden

The Swedish Film Institute's work on gender equality has largely been made possible by Sweden's efforts in gender equality generally since the mid-1970s. To illustrate this, there follows a brief history of how gender equality has developed as an issue in Sweden since the turn of the last century.<sup>1</sup>

## Early 20th century

The first decade of the 1900s saw the emergence of social democratic parties, the trade unions and the temperance movement. Sweden increasingly started developing into an industrial nation rather than an agricultural one. Women won the right to vote in 1919 (with a first parliamentary vote in 1921). During the 1920s women gained legal majority, became equal to men in the Swedish Marriage Code, and women began to take their place as civil servants and in grammar schools. As industrialization and society developed more job opportunities opened up, and more women were needed in professional life, even though most women were still working primarily in the home.

## The 1930s and 1940s

This was a period of great strain for the Western World: poor economy, war and a tough post-war period. All these circumstances meant that an increasing number of women were needed on the workforce. Many women experienced a division in their responsibilities, being housewives on the one hand and in paid work on the other. Low birth rates prompted debate, and the issue of an adjusted family policy came to the fore with the publication of several important works, such as Alva and Gunnar Myrdal's *Crisis in the Population Question* (*Kris i befolkningsfrågan*). To encourage having children, the government introduced an active family policy with better mortgage terms and housing contributions for families with children. Child allowance was also introduced during this period.

## 1950s

The 1950s were very much about the housewife ideal, but it was increasingly evident that the labour market's needs could not be covered only by the unmarried working women. However, one obstacle to married women also starting work was that there was no child-care system to speak of. Even so, more and more women did go into various types of profession.

### **1960s**

Not until the 1960s did the gender equality debate truly appear on the agenda, and a gender equality policy began to take shape. Female labour was needed, and the housewife ideal started being brought into question. Gender roles also started to be scrutinized and the debate gathered momentum during this decade; they were explained as learnt, socially shaped expectations on the social and familial roles of women and men. The women's movement crystallized and made its voice heard through various groups, such as Group 8, who were active on issues such as equal pay, day nurseries and pro-choice.

### **1970s**

During the 1970s, many of the reforms that form the basis of today's gender equality policy were made. The debates on the equal value, rights and obligations of men and women came to the fore, and the issues were discussed in various arenas in society. Separate taxation and gender-neutral parental pay were introduced, and child care was extended as there was now consensus that society and the family should share the responsibility. All these reforms facilitated women's entry onto the labour market. But at the same time, the gender division in the labour market became more evident. Women were employed primarily in the ever-expanding public sector (housewife jobs but in wider society) while men worked in the private, corporate sector. The gender roles were the same but the workplace had shifted.

### **1980s**

The 1980s saw the formation of the Equality Ombudsman, with the specific task of countering the lop-sided, gender-segregated labour market. Discrimination due to gender was prohibited in working life, and there were also clearer demands on employers to work actively with equality. Research into gender and equality began to emerge in the academic world, an area later known as gender studies (where gender refers to social gender, i.e. the roles we construct rather than are born to).

### **1990s**

Moving onto the 1990s, the focus was on the idea of power and the revaluation of women's work and female representation in different leading positions. The sexualization of women in the media was also a hot topic in the 1990s, and there was tightened legislation on rape and discrimination. In the 1990s and 2000s, gender studies becomes an established academic field.

### **2000s**

During the 2000s, power and sexualization in the media remain the main issues, but violence against women also comes into focus. Individualized parental pay, efforts regarding pay, and tighter demands on workplaces to chart and analyze regulations and practice in pay and employment conditions are introduced. Moreover, a lot of scientific gender research highlights how, from a young age, we internalize the roles we are assigned, largely based on gender identity.

# Rebellion the best cure for obdurate structures?

## Maria Jansson

is a Senior Lecturer and Associate Professor at Stockholm University's Department of Political Science. One of her research areas relates to critical studies of gender equality policy, including in the film industry. Jansson's publications include: *Distribution, produktion och jämställdhet i filmbranschen: En studie av svensk filmpolitik (Distribution, production and gender equality in the film industry: A study of Swedish film policy)*, Nordicom information (2016), *En riktig snyftare: Om distribution, produktion och jämställdhet i filmbranschen (A real tear-jerker: On distribution, production and gender equality in the film industry)*, Wift (2013), and *The Fast Track: Om vägar till jämställdhet inom filmbranschen (The Fast Track: On paths to gender equality in the film industry)*, Wift (2011). She correlates the progression of gender equality in Sweden with the specific situation for the film industry and women's roles and opportunities for action in the industry. This text is based on two of Jansson's scientific articles.<sup>2</sup>

**As gender equality progressed in Sweden, changes in the film industry were under way too. Maria Jansson, Senior Lecturer and Associate Professor in Political Science, talks about the evolution of gender equality in the film industry.**

**In recent years**, Sweden has been painted as a model nation when it comes to gender equality in the film industry. But how has work on gender equality emerged? And how has it been incorporated into film policy? It is a story about women's demands, about gender equality political measures – and about problems that arise in the meeting of gender equality policy and the Film Agreement.

Sweden's Film Agreement is often described as an internationally unique construction since it was a voluntary agreement on cooperation between the film industry and its various players, such as producers, distributors and cinema owners on the one hand, and the government on the other. Thus the Film Agreement was a platform for negotiations between the various parties involved. The Agreement was primarily a collaboration on funding film production but its arrival also saw the formation of the Swedish Film Institute Foundation, including Sweden's first film school. So the Agreement can be regarded as part of a broader government involvement, and as a way of organizing

state governance of film culture. When the demands for gender equality were adopted by the government and formulated as objectives in film policy, they were incorporated into existing structures. The gender equality measures were also modelled on the government's pattern for working with gender equality in other areas. When film and gender equality met, it was a case of bringing together two different value systems.

### **Women's demands and government equality measures**

The 1970s was a busy time with women organizing in all kinds of different areas, including film. Svenska Kvinnors Filmförbund (the Swedish women's film federation, SKFF) started in 1975. It was inspired by women in other countries, the many women's film festivals in the Nordic region and Europe, and by what is known as second-wave feminism. Discussions about women's different ways of visualizing time and space was combined with the idea that women's experiences should be portrayed in film, and lead to awareness and liberation. Demands that women's films should show the everyday lives of 'regular' women coexisted alongside critique of the middle-class idea of the ideal woman.

In the mid-1980s the feminist discourse changed and began to question whether women could, in any simple way, be said to be a standardized category: is it really possible to portray the experiences of women as a group in film, and is it the job of women filmmakers to do so? Furthermore, reports of how hard it had become for women to fund their filmmaking replaced discussions regarding women's aesthetics. As one of the organizers of the Créteil International Women's Film Festival wondered in an 1983 interview with *Film & TV* magazine: "How can we talk about a women's idiom if there are no women filmmakers?"

Illuminatingly, the first time women were mentioned in a Swedish government bill text was in a consultation response from the SKFF in 1993, which pointed out that only 9% of all producers were women and that special support for increasing the percentage of women should be introduced. It was essentially at this point that the gender equality discussion in the film industry came primarily to focus on the number of women with the opportunity to make film. It is also important to remember that the presence of women was a hot potato on the political agenda generally at this time. The 'threat' of *Stödstrumporna* (a feminist network) to form a party in the 1991 general election lit a fire behind the other parties, and the Social Democrats in particular wanted to see a strict 50/50 distribution (or 'quota') of men and women, both in political assemblies and in other decision-making bodies.

The bill that preceded the Film Agreement of 2000<sup>3</sup> discussed the problem of male dominance, focusing especially on the percentage of women involved in decision-making. In 2000 the government tasked the Swedish Film Institute to work for greater gender equality, and to produce gender-specific statistics to monitor progress in how many women and men were making films with funding from the Film Institute. 4

So the mandate of increasing gender equality was initiated by the government and its objectives had developed in a different context altogether, and based on different values than those behind the Film Agreement. Although the gender equality goal in practice would be achieved by influencing the allocation of production funding, the task did not come via the Film Agreement and negotiations between the parties; instead the government went directly to the Swedish Film Institute in its attempt to increase gender equality. Åse Kleveland, CEO of the Film Institute 2000–2006, was known as an advocate of equality, and she made sure to produce statistics, initiate training courses and order reports.

When the Film Agreement was renegotiated in 2006 a section on goals was added, and one of those focused on gender equality. Also added was a paragraph on production funding for the key positions of producer, director and scriptwriter being allocated 40/60 for films that received funding from the Film Institute. The aim was not only to ensure that more women made film, but also that a greater number of women would lead to more equal working conditions. The bill ahead of the 2013 Agreement, this time written by a conservative government, describes an even distribution of the number of women and men as a parameter in itself; i.e. the paragraph in the Agreement, which this time advocates an ‘even distribution’, aims to bring in more women, and nothing necessarily beyond that.

The equality debate is of course wider than just the government bills, and both the media and the government report *Vägval för filmen (Possible paths for Swedish Film)*<sup>5</sup> led by Mats Svegfors mention that a higher percentage of women working in film would guarantee that the films being made would portray a diversity of perspectives and experiences. At this point, the government and its agents have essentially attached three different hopes to the goal of even distribution in production funding:

- More women in the key positions of producer, director and scriptwriter.
- More women will lead to better conditions for women in the film industry.
- More women will help guarantee diversity in stories and perspectives being portrayed on the cinema screen.

### **Obdurate structures and lower priority**

One problem that has manifested is that gender equality has come to be placed in opposition to the values that permeate the rest of film policy. The two most pivotal values in the Film Agreement were quality and the size of the audience the film could attract. The various funds were allocated based on these two parameters, and still today the Film Institute uses a quality parameter based on a review index and measurement of the number of tickets sold to assess the awarded funding.

Both quality and ticket sales relate to the finished product, i.e. the films’ content and the number of people that see them. The gender equality goal, on the other hand, relates to production; what happens behind the camera and who makes the films. The differences between these principles have been used as an argument against gender equality. Over the years, male (and the odd female) filmmakers or decision-makers have given statements in the media expressing their concern that the gender equality goal will lead to a decrease in the quality of Swedish film, or that having a higher percentage of women will lead to films being made ‘that no one wants to see’.<sup>6</sup> In these statements, quality and audience success are linked to men and masculinity in various ways. For instance, there are those who say that women do not dare or want to get involved in commercial film projects since they are so risky and work-intensive. This creates arbitrary explanations as to why there are fewer women making film – explanations that may sound logical, but which also convey women and femininity in a way that suggests women are not suitable for the film industry and its terms. Thus a male norm is reproduced and gender equality is described as something not desirable.

By creating a conflict between the prevailing values of quality and audience success on the one hand and gender equality on the other, gender equality can thus be thwarted in a legitimate manner. This becomes even clearer if we take a closer look at how gender equality is discussed by the different parties in the Film Agreement. In this context, it is important to bear in mind that the Film Agreement helped to form the relationships between the various parties involved. Cinema owners, and

particularly SF which was behind a large share of the money for the Agreement thanks to the 10% fee on cinema tickets, gained a lot of power through their financial commitment. An important source of power for the distributors, on the other hand, was that films seeking funding from the Swedish Film Institute had to show they had a distributor. They could therefore influence which films could apply for funding and which could not. Automatic funding, introduced in the 2013 Film Agreement, increased the distributors' power, since the funding was partly based on their assessment of how large an audience a title might have.

In interviews with distributors, several say that they work according to commercial principles rather than gender equality. This is reflected for instance in the fact that non-profit making Folkets Bio, which works actively to a gender equality principle, has a disproportionately large share of the cinema releases with women directors. Moreover, these films are often documentaries with a relatively low budget. Gender equality having to step aside for other principles or values portrayed as more important has been referred to as 'give way' (or lower priority) by Norwegian political scientists Hege Skeije and Mari Teigen.<sup>7</sup> The phenomenon has been observed in many areas, and not just film. An important part of the explanation for this lower priority is that gender equality appears less important than other principles that have long existed in the area. Thus it is perceived as perfectly right and reasonable not to strive to achieve the set gender equality goal.

### **Radical interpretations and unruly women**

But why do these problems matter when we already know that the gender equality initiatives have had an effect? To answer that question, it is first vital to establish what effect is important. There have been more women in the three key positions of director, producer and scriptwriter among the films awarded funding by the Swedish Film Institute. But at the same time, the conditions for women still differ from those of men, both when it comes to size of budget and the commercial power their distributor has to put behind the film. Both of these factors are relevant in how large an audience a film will reach. We know relatively little about whether having women behind the camera leads to different perspectives and experiences being portrayed in film. So out of all the goals for gender equality policy, we can only say with any certainty that the first – more women making film – is being achieved.

According to feminist research, it is important to look at exactly what conditions different gender equality initiatives lead to for women, rather than just at how the number of women has increased. This is because women's subordination is often recreated in other ways once women are in key positions. In the film world, there appears still to be an uneven distribution of resources, and of opportunities to reach an audience. What is positive is that there are several players involved who interpret gender equality more radically than simply the number of women behind the camera. Under CEO Anna Serner, the Film Institute has made just such radical interpretations of gender equality. The fly in the ointment lies in the fact that the obdurate structures can easily regain power if active proponents of gender equality leave their jobs.

Another feminist point of criticism against gender equality measures is that they focus on individual women, rather than on opportunities for women to mobilize and act for further change, and this is certainly true of the way the measures are structured in the film world. Only women's own initiatives can influence this. However, women coming together, women demanding and working for change is a tough strategy in a relatively small film industry. Quite often, such activities lead women to be thought of as unruly, whining and impossible to work with, and it becomes harder for them to survive in the industry. But it can also have an effect. And it is, after all, quite evident that women organizing

themselves and placing demands have led to dividends in political objectives and a higher number of women making film, even though much remains to be done.

# A modified commission

**Work on gender equality has always been influenced by the steering documents that regulate the Swedish Film Institute's operations. The Film Agreement and the government's bills guide our work to a great extent.**

The Film Institute's operations are regulated by steering documents from the government and the Ministry of Culture. The steering documents the Swedish Film Institute has to observe are:

- The Film Agreement, up to 2016.
- Budget bills from the Ministry of Culture

The Film Agreement, drawn up in the 1960s by Harry Schein, was an agreement between the film industry and the government for greater influence and closer cooperation, with the aim of supporting new Swedish film. A 10% fee was added to each cinema ticket sold which went directly to Swedish film production; apart from that, the government added resources. From 1 January 2017 the Swedish Film Institute is a fully state-owned organization; this means that the 10% has now been removed and all money comes directly from the government.

In the run-up to the 2000 Film Agreement, there were discussion on introducing gender equality into the Agreement. This did not happen. Instead the Film Institute was given parallel assignments and initiatives by the government relating to gender equality. So the year 2000 was the first time gender equality was included in an assignment to the Film Institute, with the then government urging the Film Institute to influence the distribution of funding. The 2000 government bill said that it should be an important task for film policy to “improve the conditions for women filmmakers”. Change work was initiated, and activities and inquiries were launched. Despite this, the gender equality goal was not met, and in the 2006 Film Agreement the government and the other parties included the assignment in the Agreement itself – a more clearly defined assignment than the one in a government bill.

“The parties in the declaration of intent for a new Film Agreement in 2006 agree that one of the goals of a new Film Agreement should be to improve the conditions for women filmmakers. The parties agree moreover that a new Film Agreement should be permeated by a clear gender perspective, which manifests both in the guidelines for allocating the various forms of funding and in general goal formulations /.../ Since 2000, one of the overriding goals for government film funding has been to improve the conditions for women filmmakers. Since 2003 and to clarify the Swedish Film Institute gender equality assignment, this goal has been supplemented with the goal of increasing the

percentage of women among filmmakers who are awarded production funding.” (Bill 2005:8, p 50, in translation.)

The intent shows that the Film Institute’s funding allocation should strive for a 40/60 distribution. There was however a note in the document that funding allocation should always primarily strive to ensure that film projects awarded funding should be of high quality. The work continued, but gender equality always came second to working for higher quality in the films. To sum up, it is clear that there was a desire to bring about more even distribution, but also a fear that it would compromise the quality. And this was also a reason why a quote was excluded as an option. This problem was highlighted when a new CEO, Anna Serner, came to the Film Institute in 2011, and the Film Institute altered the focus of its gender equality work. The aim of even gender distribution in funding went from being just a matter of fairness, to being one of quality. What would be the last Film Agreement in 2013 now expressed a more clearly defined assignment.

“The parties agree to work to increase gender equality in the area of film. The objective is that at the end of the period covered by the agreement, advance production funding, counted in the number of projects receiving funding, will have been divided equally between women and men in the categories of scriptwriter, producer and director. This target applies separately to each of the film categories feature film, film for children and young people, and short and documentary film. Each year the Foundation shall report the gender distribution for scriptwriters, producers and directors in the film projects that receive funding and the average levels of funding for film only or mainly by women and men respectively.” Film Agreement 2013, Section 6.

The Film Institute’s assignment was to achieve an even gender distribution across the period of the Agreement. An “even distribution” now meant a distribution of 50/50, over time, and not 40/60. The Film Institute would still not use quotas, but if the distribution at the intended end of the agreement period in 2015 (it was eventually 2013–2016) had not achieved the goal, the Film Institute would seriously consider using a quota system. In 2015, the goal of an even distribution of funding between men and women was achieved.

The current assignment, known as the ‘Act on Film’, contains seven points for the Swedish Film Institute to follow. One of these relates to work on gender equality and diversity. With quality, renewal and availability as overriding focus areas, government measures for film should aim to support

- the production and development of valuable Swedish film
- the distribution and screening of valuable film in various viewing formats across the whole of Sweden
- a vibrant film heritage that is preserved, used and developed
- international exchange and collaboration in the area of film
- children and young people’s knowledge of film and moving pictures, and their own creation
- gender equality and diversity in the area of film
- film that helps to strengthen freedom of speech and public dialogue

From Bill 2012/13:22

## **Our view of the quota system**

For many people, using quotas is often linked to a discussion on quality. Our view of the quota system is that, fundamentally, it is a viable form of governance, and one of which we are not afraid. When an organization starts using such a system, however, there is a risk that the discussion is no longer about gender equality, but about quality or the lack of it. We have decided to try to achieve a gender equal allocation of funding without quotas, and have done so successfully, but have full respect for other organizations which may prefer another approach.

## **Action plans for equality**

With tighter requirements on even gender distribution, the strategy for achieving the goal of even gender distribution became creating a clear action plan for the Swedish Film Institute, so as to turn words into actions.

“One of the most important points in the action plan is about counting, and this is also what has enabled gender equality work to be successfully implemented internally.” Anna Serner, CEO  
The action plan for greater gender equality which was produced in 2013 was an important step in the process. The action plan was full of measures which aimed to disprove the myths about women as being substandard filmmakers, as well as other myths about the industry.

### **The actions in the plan were answers to five arguments:**

#### **1. *There are no competent women***

– The remedy in the action plan was to set up a website, Nordic Women in Film, where all women from the beginning of film history in the key positions of cinematographer, director, scriptwriter, producer and editor are presented.

#### **2. *Women filmmakers do not have enough experience***

– The remedy in the action plan was the strategy training course *Moviement*, where women directors were informed about gender structures, and exchanged knowledge and experience with each other.

#### **3. *Not that many women want to be directors***

– The actions are to carry out studies at schools to find out what is needed for women’s dreams to be taken as seriously as those of men; development funds are being put into regions in Sweden.

#### **4. *Counting decreases quality***

– The action plan shows that a quota system is not necessary since counting generates new awareness.

#### **5. *The powers in the industry do not want change***

– The action plan initiates a research study alongside the industry to create involvement.

One of the most important points in the action plan is about counting, and it has become an important tool internally. All decision-makers at the Swedish Film Institute have counting as an important foundation in their decisions, whether it relates to a featured title for the Cinematheque, which films to distribute to schools with study guides, or which analogue films from Sweden’s film history should be digitized. For decision-making on fund allocation for new film, it is vital that knowledge of film history is comprehensive, and that the films’ paths to the audience follow the same priorities. The action plan led to an even allocation of funding within the set time, without using quotas. It also entailed great success for the women filmmakers, so it would be easy to conclude that the work is

done. Who doesn't want quality? Even so, women still do not have access to the higher budgets. But above all, the projects for which the Film Institute has *not* provided funding have just as uneven a gender distribution as in Hollywood (where roughly 7–9% of feature film directors are women). So then it is clear that the Swedish film industry is not equal.

Continued initiatives and a new action plan, the current one, came along in 2016: *Goal 2020: Gender equality in film production, both in front of and behind the camera*. The plan contains four priority steps:

**1. More women in more major productions** We are carrying out cross-industry projects, the aim being to ensure that women have key roles in more and larger productions. We are also conducting a qualitative survey into which films women get the opportunity to make, and why.

**2. We are increasing visibility** – We continue to update the digital knowledge bank [nordicwomeninfilm.com](http://nordicwomeninfilm.com) with contemporary women filmmakers, and will add more professional categories. We continue to inspire by putting the spotlight on women filmmakers from film history.

**3. We will continue to count** – As well as counting women and men behind the camera, we also start counting the percentages in front of the camera. We produce an annual Gender Equality Report (this is the first) featuring qualitative analyses in the world of film.

**4. We will increase knowledge about gender and diversity** – We hold an annual film education seminar focusing on gender, which targets teachers and film educators to reach children and young people. The Swedish Film Institute offers a digital knowledge lecture about gender and the importance of more diverse representation.

# From Rookie to EWA – projects and initiatives

**Over the years, several projects, programmes and focused initiatives for filmmakers have been important to the Film Institute’s gender equality work.**

Based on the steering documents and the action plans that were formulated in a more focused effort on gender equality, several projects have been started and implemented, and final reports issued. The Rookie programme, the focused initiative on women’s filmmaking and Moviement have all been vital in ongoing, more focused gender equality work.

## **The Rookie programme**

**When:** 2007

**Aim:** Rookie was an independent initiative with the aim of funding Swedish film.

**Results:** Five films per round, with no particular time frame, were selected. The Swedish Film Institute, Film i Väst, Filmpool Nord, SVT and Nordisk Film were behind the investment in the first round. The initiative primarily targeted first and second-time feature film directors. The films should be characterized by a personal expression and should inspire new thoughts, forms and techniques. The first films were finished two years after the project began, but this coincided with a decision to discontinue the Rookie programme. Before the final film in the initiative, it was decided that the programme should only include women directors. When the funding was reserved for women only, applications flooded in – so many that other projects outside of the Rookie programme also received funding. These include *Eat Sleep Die (Äta sova dö)*, which won four Guldbagge Awards including Best Film in 2013. The final film to receive Rookie funding was *She Monkeys (Apflickorna)*, which also won a Best Film Guldbagge Award in 2012.

## **The Woman in My Life**

**When:** Broadcast on SVT, autumn 2010.

**Aim:** A talent programme in which the Swedish Film Institute and SVT invited filmmakers to submit proposals for short documentary films, 13 minutes long, on the theme of *Kvinnan i mitt liv (The Woman in My Life)*. The budget was SEK 350,000 per film.

**Results:** Eight films were selected and broadcast on SVT in autumn 2010. The selected films included Åsa Blanck and Johan Palmgren’s *Kärlek utan slut*, about the couple Ebba and Torgny who are reunited in their twilight years. *Bilder av Dina* by Johanna St Michaels is about legendary fashion

agent Dina, who ran off with her clients' money. Ronja Yu's *The Girl From the Steel Plant* (*Flickan från stålverket*) is about the filmmaker's mother, who was one of the first Chinese emigrants to the West. Tora Mårtens, Lisa Mannheimer, Hans-Erik Therus, Malin Andersson and Rebecka Rasmusson were also represented among the eight titles.

### Young Women's Filmmaking/Unga kvinnors filmskapande

**When:** The Film Institute was given the assignment in 2010, the project got started in 2011 and the final report was issued in 2014. The Pure Fiction project, which was part of it, continued until 2016.

**Aim:** Young Women's Filmmaking was a Film Institute initiative using special funding from the government. The project aimed to support young women's filmmaking and increase women's participation in the film industry. Total funding of SEK 8.3 million was allocated to 57 projects over five years. There were also investments in regional collaboration, whereby the Film Institute offered county councils and regional associations the chance to seek funding for gender equality projects in talent development, for example. The Pure Fiction project was a three-year programme for women directors, with an objective to debut with a major fiction project.

**Results:** The collaboration was extended in 2014 to be part of the infrastructure for regional film activities. Other efforts related to this included the measures taken, on a more theoretical level, to intensify development work in the regions. It led to the 2012 report entitled *Inför nästa tagning: Hur kan förutsättningarna bli bättre för unga kvinnor?* (*Ahead of the next take: How can conditions be improved for young women?*), which maps the situation of young filmmakers. In 2013, a two-day seminar on the theme of *Nya uttryck i filmens närvaro* (*New expressions in the presence of film*) was held to follow up on this report, and 2014 saw the publication of the report entitled *Nästa tagning – filmutbildningar. På väg mot ett jämställt filmsverige* (*The next take – film courses. On the path to a gender equal film Sweden*), which was an evaluation of gender equality in Swedish education programmes. In November of the same year, the work was summed up in a two-day seminar. The young women's filmmaking initiative was summed up in a final report in 2015. It is clear that the project had an effect, and that special focus affords greater development opportunities. The project also indicated the need to highlight issues of broader diversity alongside gender equality, which is an important lesson. Pure Fiction offered individual development, project development, workshops and network building. Participants included Amanda Kernell (*Sámi Blood/Sameblod*), Emelie Lindblom (*Rum 213*) and Rojda Sekersöz (*Beyond Dreams/Dröm vidare*).

### First-time directors and equality in the Noughties

**When:** 2010.

**Aim:** The origins of the report was that the Film Institute wanted to look at why the film schools' conscious admissions policy was not evident in the statistics. There were still few women directing films at this point, even though almost half of graduates from film schools were women.

**Results:** The report entitled *00-talets regidebutanter och jämställdheten* (*First-time directors and equality in the Noughties*). It turned out that one of the reasons behind the anomaly was that the majority of first-time directors came from inside the film industry, and that the proportion of women among these was very low. Women first-time directors came mainly from the theatre or other artistic areas.

### Movement

**When:** Movement began in 2013 and ended in 2014.

**Aim:** A change programme that offered individual development, mentorship and mutual learning for the 15 women directors who took part. The aim of the programme was to develop experiences, learn about gender and leadership, and to jointly identify and find ways to overcome the obstacles the directors had come across during their establishment in the film industry.

**Results:** Through the project, participating directors were given a shared platform to interact with each other, exchange thoughts and ideas, and strengthen their positions as directors. Seven of the women were interviewed about their thoughts on Movement, role models, the film industry, leadership, norms and visions. They expressed a great need for initiatives like Movement and said that it is considerably harder for women to establish themselves and be taken seriously than it is for their male counterparts, and also to have access to the same size of budget.

“The Swedish film industry is not isolated from other parts of society. Wherever there are large amounts of money, and you’re dependent on access to that money to get your project made, men take precedence. That’s a well-known fact. It happens everywhere, not just in the film industry.”

Ella Lemhagen, Director

“That’s why I welcome an initiative like Movement – because it really is a problem for me that I can’t get work, as a result of the way the industry is. I’ve been overlooked several times and young male colleagues have been chosen above me. So I wonder, is everyone blind to this constantly repeating pattern?”

Anna Hylander, Director

“I’ve never really thought about what it means to be a ‘woman’ director, since it’s not something I’ve chosen, it just an epithet that others have imposed on me. I couldn’t be anything else – but I’m a director, I don’t think so much about the fact that I’m a woman. But suddenly I became aware that other people don’t primarily see me as a director, but as a female director! It was something of a shock, and I suddenly realized that various events and strategies that I had experienced weren’t isolated incidents, but part of a structure where women and men are viewed differently.” Lisa Ohlin, Director

What also emerged were clear ideas about what men and women should and ought to do in the industry: one example that came out in the interviews was how rarely women are asked to direct TV episodes in the criminal genre. Underlying values regarding what is deemed male and female come to the fore, and women are subtly obstructed. One director also described the feeling that both male and female producers regard the male as ideal and some kind of utopia, something that everyone wants.

“One pattern that repeats, among both men and women producers, is that they all have a shared dream of finding young male geniuses. And of making this genius into something, or exercising some kind of self-realization through this ‘find’. Taking him under your wing and saying to the world, ‘Look at my amazing creation!’” Karin Fahlén, Director

When it comes to role models, several of the directors said they could barely think of a single female role model and that they wished there were more. They felt a kind of loss in not having been able to see films made by women. Both men and women see, grow up with and relate to the men’s perspective, since films made by male filmmakers are what’s on offer. The male perspective is the norm, and starting to question these norms is the way forward.

“If we just start considering the gender roles in the stories we tell, we’ve already started playing with the norms, started to dissolve them – and we really ought to be bolder, to go further!” [Helena Bergström, Actor and Director](#)

As for Moviement, all the directors said that meeting others in the same situation was the most positive aspect; being part of an active network and having the chance to talk to others and share experiences. Many also stressed the importance of finding out about the more academic aspects, with Anna Wahl having put together an education package with talks and statistics on the subject.

“On a personal level, Moviement has helped me to formulate the reality we are an inseparable part of, largely thanks to the education package designed by Anna Wahl. For many of us, this reality, with its norms and structures, has been quite a depressing experience. But looking at it from an academic perspective, rather than just a personal experience, makes all the difference.”

[Helena Bergström, Actor and Director](#)

“We now have a shared platform where we can meet on equal grounds, and a forum where we can help each other if necessary. It’s genuinely exciting to hear others talk about the profession, how they work, how they fund their projects, develop new ways of working and so on. How others manage their work. It’s great to find strength in shared experiences, because this is fundamentally quite a lonely job.”

[Karin Fahlén, Director](#)

## **Eivor and Mai**

**When:** 2013

**Aim:** The purpose of the project was to contribute to greater gender equality in film studies and material science in Sweden, and based on the project to develop knowledge of how gender distribution in gender equality projects affects both processes and results. The aim was to evolve knowledge about gender equality work, so as to contribute to greater awareness when designing projects and higher quality in the work.

The project was comprised of two parts: Eivor and Mai, which were partly based on a gender equality project in association with Anna Wahl at KTH, the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, along with two programmes for women in the film industry. The project was conducted with groups of women and men respectively in the fields of material science and film. The groups partly met separately within their respective fields, but were also brought together for mutual exchange. All elements were to have a content characterized by an intersectional power perspective, with gender at the fore. The approach was interactive with elements of change work.

**Results:** Using the results, the idea is to evolve a model on dimensions in gender equality work, for use in education and in practical gender equality work in different industries and organizations.

## **Nordic Women in Film**

**When:** Nordicwomeninfilm.com is a website and database launched by the Swedish Film Institute in April 2016.

**Aim:** Nordic Women in Film aims to highlight women filmmakers and their efforts, historically and at present, in order to give women's stories and competence their rightful place and put the spotlight on neglected or forgotten work.

The Nordic Women's Literature project – a five-volume anthology of Nordic women authors – was the original inspiration for Nordic Women in Film. Tove Torbiörnsson, documentary filmmaker, film commissioner and, on her death in 2015, a head of department at the Swedish Film Institute, took the initiative for the site and the database. Alongside CEO Anna Serner, the idea was originated in Almedalen in 2012 when the Film Institute's Gender Equality Plan was launched. The idea was later presented at the film festival in Cannes.

There were already similar projects – and more have been added – in the various arts, such as Dramawebben ('the drama web', in the theatre) and Skapelsen ('creation', in music). Nordic Women in Film initially focused on Sweden and Swedish women's creative efforts in film in five main categories: directors, producers, scriptwriters, editors and cinematographers. Actors have not been included, since women's role in front of the camera is the only area of film history where women's efforts are already widely acknowledged.

The job of systematizing the information on women film workers began in 2014 under the management of editor Jannike Åhlund. Existing information was compiled about women active in film both historically and at present, based on Swedish filmography and the Swedish Film Database. Articles of both a biographical and thematic nature were ordered from various writers, academics and journalists. An ambitious film interview project was initiated, in which well-known people talked about their professional careers. For the website launch, a number of film workers were also asked to talk about their own professional role models in film history. The interviews can be found on the website's own Vimeo page, and are also transcribed as articles. The Vimeo page also contains a longer interview with seven of the directors who took part in the mentor and leadership programme, *Movement*. Helena Bergström, Susanna Edwards, Görel Crona, Lisa Ohlin, Anna Hylander, Karin Fahlén and Ella Lemhagen talk for instance about taking a film idea to finished film, about being 'women directors', about having – or not having – access to the big budgets, about the quota system, and about seeing the world from a woman's perspective.

**Results:** When [nordicwomeninfilm.com](http://nordicwomeninfilm.com) was introduced during the *50/50 by 2020* seminar in Cannes in 2016, news of the database hit the international press. The fact that the Swedish Film Institute had translated words into action in response to the argument that "there are no women filmmakers" has inspired and continues to inspire other film institutes around the world, Ireland and Canada being but two examples. Several personnel at the Film Institute have been invited to talk about the project in different countries.

The database is a constant source of content in the Film Institute's social media flows, and it gives us a chance to highlight our film heritage and write new film history.

### **The EWA study**

**When:** Started 2014, final report 2016. The figures in the report apply to 2006–2013.

**Aim:** The two-year EWA (European Women's Audiovisual Network) study compiled research into gender equality in the film industry from seven European countries. The initiative was a response to growing concern for the marginalization of women directors, and the information would be used to achieve policy change at both a national and European level.

**Results:** The final report for the project came out in 2016 and its analysis encompassed the years 2006–2013. There is a commitment to gender equality issues in the UN, European treaties and national guidelines. However, the results from EWA show that the existing structure in the European

film industry does not support these. On the contrary, non-equal conditions are maintained by a combination of factors that include competition customs, the industry's structure, the effect of new technology, and erroneous perceptions of women's capabilities and financial potential. The report ends with 15 recommendations that highlight the challenges women directors encounter in the industry.

**The report reaches** the following conclusions:

- Only one in five films is directed by a woman.
- The majority of the funding goes to men directors (84%).
- Low budgets sustain a situation whereby few films by women reach the wider audience, which in turn makes the market less willing to invest (marketing and demand), thus starting a vicious circle.
- There are large differences in the proportion of women graduates on their way into the industry (44%) and the total proportion of women who work in the industry (24%).
- The high percentage of women graduating shows that the talent does exist, but their potentials are not being harnessed.

**EWA identified five obstacles** to women working in the film industry:

- Uneven gender distribution in the industry.
- Difficulties obtaining funding.
- Investors not daring to invest in women directors.
- Women directors receive a lower share of the funds which TV companies invest in film.
- Low representation of women among decision-makers for film funding.

The report also shows the level of success of films directed by women when it comes to awards and monetary prizes at national and international festivals. Films directed by women win more often than films directed by men. Even so, films directed by women remain significantly under-represented at the leading festivals. Not even success among critics wins over the assumption that films directed by women are of lower quality than those directed by men.

**The report also reveals** further obstacles that make it hard for women directors to get ahead in the industry:

- Inequality in average funding amounts, whereby women receive less funding per project than their male counterparts. The funding is more evenly distributed in documentary film.
- Low trust in women directors to make films with a higher budget, since the higher occurrence of women in documentary film means that women are perceived as performing better when the budget is lower.
- Pay difference between men and women, with none of the countries apart from France logging data for women directors' pay. In France, women directors earned 31.5% less than their male counterparts.
- Problems in supporting directors who are parents; primarily the industry's inability to adapt to altered conditions, e.g. access to child care during shooting, or the ability to return to the industry after starting a family.
- A lack of statistics as only very few national institutions collect data, which means that there is no coherent, evidence-based strategy in these organizations to deal with unequal conditions (apart from the Swedish Film Institute).
- Little financial support for distribution; all respondents highlighted the need for better support to increase the visibility of films directed by women and develop distribution strategies.

# Pulling towards the same goal

**All of the Swedish Film Institute's various departments work with gender equality as an everyday matter. From the smallest poster to the largest database we count, question and are aware of what we select and what we highlight.**

The integration, or non-integration, of the gender perspective in different operations and education programmes is a topical issue in virtually all operations and education programmes in society. It's about integrating gender and gender equality into an operation, rather than it being something on the outside. Annika Wik has studied gender consciousness, i.e. how deeply the gender perspective runs in an education programme, in different kinds of film programmes around Sweden. According to her, gender consciousness is relatively high, but it is a fragile situation as a lot depends on who is teaching at any given time. This gender consciousness is challenged in a range of situations, whether in the choice of guest lecturer, how assignments are formulated, in teaching film knowledge or technical know-how, or in which films are shown.<sup>8</sup> For the Swedish Film Institute, it is important that such integration exists and that all parts of the operation work to maintain it.

Funding is the Film Institute's perhaps most prominent area for showing a marked change when it comes to filmmaking, and who has the opportunity to make film. And while funding is of course a vital aspect of gender equality work, it is also important to show in what other ways gender equality and attitudes around it are incorporated into all of the Film Institute's activities in different ways. The Film Institute budgets and plans annually for the various parts of its operation, and gender equality is always a factor in each of those parts.

“Guidance is needed in order to avoid unconsciously discriminatory choices. One important aspect has been to train everyone internally at the Film Institute in both gender equality and diversity. But this training is hard to translate into reality. Once we started counting, it became evident that we needed new ways of talking about quality.” [Anna Serner, CEO](#)

## **The Cinematheque**

The aim of the Cinematheque is to make film history available and bring it to life. This largely entails questioning that history, how it came to be written, by whom and for whom, and to help rewrite it. To achieve this, it is therefore crucial to continuously work with gender equality and wider representation in the programming, so as to highlight the facets that are hidden, forgotten and

neglected and make film history more inclusive for those people who do not see themselves represented on screen.

Only a very low percentage of films ever made have been directed by women. The situation has varied with the times: there were more during the silent movie era and after the 1960s, fewer during the 1930s–50s. Films directed by women were not distributed internationally to the same extent, which is one of the reasons why fewer titles have been preserved for posterity. Another reason is that they were quite simply not considered important enough to preserve. Nor have they been restored, relaunched or even researched and written about to the same extent. This presents a tremendous problem for cinemathèques that focus on feature films and older films, as showing older films by women is harder and requires more resources.

For the Film Institute's Cinematheque it has not been realistic to offer an even distribution based on gender; rather we have decided to over-represent women directors in our programming so as to highlight the directors and films that do exist. Our objective is that 15% of the films over the course of a year should have a woman filmmaker. This target is in between the actual range available and the level aspired to by Swedish festivals that work with new film. The Cinematheque actively searches for copies and monitors research, and when visiting festivals it prioritizes films by women so as to expand its own knowledge. To question the idea that it is not possible to work with film history based on a gender equality perspective, in 2014 we decided to present a programme over two months of films by women only, to prove to ourselves and others that it is indeed possible if only the will exists.

Programming films is just one way of working with the gender equality perspective. The Cinematheque strives constantly to emphasize the conditions of women film workers historically, in order to show why women have had such an obscure role in film history. How the films are presented by the Cinematheque today is also important; which words are used to describe them (whether men's or women's films), explain the contexts they were made in, and what images are used to promote the films.

The Cinematheque also has targets relating to other aspects of its work, i.e. that half of the writers, lecturers, invited guests and business partners should be women.

## **Film Forum**

The Film Forum (Filmrummet) is the Swedish Film Institute's forum for discussion and debate on everything from industry-related issues, research, artistic challenges and accomplishments, to reflecting topical social issues and individual development via the medium of film. Around 20 Film Forums are held across Sweden every year, with the main base at the Film House in Stockholm. Since the Film Forum is part of the Film Institute's dialogue with the industry, and bearing in mind the position we have, we see it as our job to inspire others to think and act for greater gender equality in the industry. Our work is based on steering documents for gender equality and representation, so that we can see and follow up on our set goals.

One concrete action is to ensure that over time, half of our moderators, guests and active participants should be women. Counting is a simple, effective way of working.

In choosing subjects and focus areas, we look at and problematize gender equality issues. We do this for instance by putting the spotlight on professional women film workers in traditionally male roles, in order to prove that the idea of 'they don't exist' is untrue.

Some examples of gender equality work in the Film Forum are a master class with Germaine Greer, the panel discussion *African Women in Film* in which four women directors discussed their views on filmmaking and representation (in association with CinemAfrica), and *Filmfotots konst (The Art of Cinematography)*, in which the majority of programme participants were women.

## **Film in Schools**

The Swedish Film Institute supports educational film work in schools and municipalities across Sweden. Film literacy is the ability to interpret and analyze film and moving pictures, as well as a basic ability to create film yourself. Today, it is more important than ever that all pupils in Sweden are film literate so they can understand the world around them, achieve knowledge targets in school and have equal democratic circumstances in a digital society. Film should be a resource, and should be used in different sectors of society, including schools and art schools for instance. Film has the potential to be both an artistic experience and a path to more in-depth knowledge.

For film education at schools in Sweden, the Film Institute continually writes and publishes film study guides for both Swedish and foreign films. The study guides are the most appreciated resource in this area, and the most popular guides are the ones that address themes such as gender, diversity and democracy. These themes are also used as search words for the film study guides on our website, which makes it easier for teachers who want to focus on these areas. The guides bring pupils into contact with films and discussions they would otherwise not have.

In choosing films for study guides, our point of departure is our goal of increasing diversity in the film range for children and young people. This goal is set in our steering documents, which also underline our endeavour for diversity between genders, nations, ethnicities and so on, both thematically and in terms of filmmakers. In 2016, 44% of the films for which we published study guides were directed by women. The steering documents are also used when it comes to writers, seminar speakers, subjects for education programmes, teacher reference groups, workshops and so on, our aim being always to consider an even distribution between represented genders. This applies for example to Film in Schools days where we meet teachers, film educators and school management around the country; the gender equality perspective is reflected both in the choice of speakers and in the themes. The 2017 days took place in Malmö, Stockholm, Umeå and Kalmar on the theme of 'Film across all boundaries', and gender boundaries were addressed by lecturer and trans activist Yolanda Bohm.

## **Making available**

Up until 2014, the government granted the Swedish Film Institute SEK 40 million to begin digitization of the Swedish film heritage over a five-year period. In autumn 2016 the government granted SEK 2.5 million a year to strengthen the ongoing digitization initiative, and the 2017 budget bill suggests making it a permanent annual grant. In all there are more than 12,000 analogue Swedish films, of which 2,600 are feature films, and by 2019 only 500 of these will be digitized and available.

The first 500 films are just the first on the priority list, and also moving forward the selection process will be tremendously important. An Editorial Board comprised of people from different departments and with different areas of expertise at the Film Institute is working continuously to select films for digitization. The board also has its own reference group with representatives from Stockholm University, the Swedish Federation of Film Societies, the National Library of Sweden, the Swedish Federation of Film Critics, Sveriges Filmregissörer (SFR, the film director branch of the Swedish Union for Performing Arts and Film), Oberoende Filmars Förbund (the federation of independent filmmakers) and the Swedish Film & TV Producers Association.

The Film Institute has established guidelines for selection, and the aim is to achieve the greatest breadth possible in the selection of titles. One of the aspects being particularly considered is women filmmakers. Over the years, many films by women directors have been de-prioritized in different ways and have not been available for cinemas, issued on DVD or been available on Video-on-Demand services. Digitization offers a unique opportunity to achieve a truer version of history, while also making that film history known and available.

It would of course have been ideal if 50% of all digitized films had been directed by women, but that would mean not many films at all would be digitized. Up until the 1960s, never more than 3% of Swedish films were directed by women. Only two films were directed by women during the 1950s: *Det är aldrig för sent* (1956) by Barbro Boman and *Rätten att älska* (1956) by Mimi Pollak. In other words, there would unfortunately not be much of a film history if the Swedish Film Institute decided to digitize as many – or as few – films directed by men as by women. It is worth adding that of the few films made by women over the years, far from all of them have been preserved; they have not always been regarded as historically or artistically important.

Roughly 20% of the films that have been digitized during the first half of the project were directed by women. For comparison, between 1910 and 2015 just under 12% of all Swedish feature films were directed by women, the majority of those during the latter years. The Editorial Board for selection has consciously raised that percentage. Through digitization, the Film Institute can continue to prioritize films made by women and works that were previously de-prioritized can be highlighted, giving important perspectives on our history through the eyes of present and future viewers.

## Funding

Over the years covered by the report (and since 1993), the Swedish Film Institute has worked with a commissioning system, with Film Commissioners in the areas of feature films, documentaries, short films, international co-productions, the Moving Sweden initiative, and children and young people. During the period 2013–2016, development funding was also awarded to drama series via a commissioner. Commissioners are employed for at least three years, with the possibility of up to a two-year extension. These commissioners essentially receive applications, grant development funding, and finally recommend selected projects to the CEO for a production funding decision. There is of course a lot of work in between those stages, relating to coaching for the project's development.

**Once the Film Institute** started counting and keeping statistics, it became evident that we needed new ways of talking about quality. The Film Institute has therefore introduced quality criteria as a starting point for discussion and argumentation about the quality of different projects. At present the criteria are originality, topicality and craftsmanship. For each recommended title the commissioners must argue how well the projects meet the various criteria, and also make sure that their funds are allocated evenly between women and men over time. The most interesting aspect of clarifying a project's quality – rather than giving in to subjective emotions (thus increasing the risk of unconscious discrimination) such as “It's that gut feeling”, “I fell in love with it” or “You recognize quality when you see it” – is firstly that the decision becomes explicable, and secondly that it's about the project rather than the gender.

Having said that, three words are not enough to encompass all aspects of quality. Each word has to be nuanced to make it relevant in relation to different kinds of film. The language develops as new Film Commissioners are brought in, and our aim is to have good, clear communication with the filmmakers when demanding quality in our funding system. In 2017 the Film Institute is striving to draw up new, more, better developed and more systematic guidelines for assessing quality. This will entail new terms which in some way say something about a project's quality, such as its originality or relevance for instance. Jointly, these terms will convey an overall idea of the level of quality of each project. The tool will primarily be used by the Film Commissioners in their assessment of submitted scripts.

**This means that** defined quality, rather than expected quality, will govern the decisions. Research which shows that men are chosen on potential and women on experience<sup>9</sup> supports our conviction that we thereby have the opportunity to achieve the highest possible quality at any given time. We are bolstered too by the results of our funding decisions in recent years as regards high ratings from

Swedish reviewers and at international festivals. Swedish films over time generally have higher average ratings from Swedish reviewers. The three most highly rated films in the past ten years are from the past seven years, and all were directed by women.

This has in part been achieved thanks to the decision-makers who award funding to new Swedish film. They have met great resistance along the way. Some filmmakers who applied for funding have been unsure of the grounds for awarding it. The resistance is based on arguments of principle, but can also be interpreted from subjective perspectives. Over the years, we have noticed that men have often felt that they were awarded funding for being competent filmmakers. The women who received funding have of course also felt that the quality of their projects was important, and they were often of the opinion that there was no discrimination. They themselves are proof that there was no discrimination. Generally speaking, no woman wants to think of herself as ‘making up the numbers’, or to be associated with a gender that ‘needs help’ – especially those who didn’t. Men who did not receive funding previously see their chances diminish even further. Only the women who did not receive funding previously can see a genuine advantage in admitting that there is discrimination. Being the person, the Film Consultant, who has to deal with all the frustration and disappointment is a great challenge, and these people need to be firmly grounded in a defined decision-making process with selection criteria. The lack of internal grounding initially created external resistance, but there was also great acceptance for the internal process. As success for the women filmmakers has increased, the external resistance has turned into strong support, even though that support is by no means total.

**The challenge** for the commissioners is to award funding to projects of high quality, but there are also many other factors to consider. There must be film for everybody, regardless of age and gender preference. There must be a diversity of titles for a complete repertoire. For the best projects to reach everybody, gender equality and a broad representation of voices is necessary. So having gender equality and broad representation is an important strategy for achieving the actual goal of high quality in all projects, for everybody. To avoid subconscious discrimination, one important aspect has been to train all employees at the Film Institute in both gender equality and diversity. But this training is hard to translate into reality.

The actual decision-making process takes place in several stages, from early development to the final decision on production funding. By the time the decision is made on production funding, it is usually too late to start thinking about gender equality. In Sweden and the other Nordic countries we have a commissioner system which gives one person the power, and the responsibility, to choose which projects should receive funding so that all the goals can be achieved. When a Film Commissioner eventually recommends a title for production funding, many other projects have had to be rejected along the way. The projects that are recommended often have reasons as to why they are receiving funds. So another great challenge is to understand why other projects were not perceived as being of equally high quality. This is why the task of making the criteria words as comprehensible as possible is so important, as indeed is adding further clear terms.

Counting around each decision and progressively aggregating the figures will reveal whether the choices are being made to the undue advantage of a particular gender. This creates an awareness which influences the choices earlier on in the process. Moreover, the decision-makers start looking at the films through new eyes, looking for quality in new ways so that the goal of equal fund allocation can be accomplished. So perhaps the most important function of counting is to increase awareness and watchfulness.

### **Nordic Women in Film**

Nordic Women in Film started out as an idea in 2012. The project was launched in 2016 and is now part of the Swedish Film Institute’s standard operations. The [nordicwomeninfilm.com](http://nordicwomeninfilm.com) website strives

to combine different aspects in the presentation of women's achievements: lexical, research-related academic, and the gender equality aspect. Nordic Women in Film focuses on film history, but is also firmly grounded in contemporary filmmaking. The archive is not film history's final resting place, but rather a treasure trove of largely unknown and unwritten history of women's talent and women's accomplishments in film.

There are currently around 800 name records, which constitute the main content of the database. The records contain meta data, details of years active, filmography, biographical text, stills, links to other relevant sites and actual film. New interview films and newly written articles and essays supplement the information. Through social media presence – primarily the Film Institute's Facebook page *Svensk film* and Nordic Women in Film's Instagram account – we highlight different events involving women in film, retrospectives, inform about festival attendances, awards and distinctions, and more. By linking to the website and relevant name records, we disseminate information about Nordic Women in Film.

**The editorial staff** for the site regularly help in putting together the Cinematheque programme, with invited guests and screenings. Cinematographers Sophia Olsson and

Ita Zbroniec-Zajt took part in a discussion on cinematography and chose a few inspirational films, as well as showing their own works. Filmmaker Lena Ewert talked about her turbulent time at the Swedish Film Institute's Film School in the late 1960s, alongside a screening of *Den vita sporten* (1968), one of the three highly debated films she made during her education. The most productive Danish scriptwriter of all time, Harriet Bloch, was presented in a lecture alongside a screening of *Love and the Journalist* (*Kärlek och journalistik*, 1916) by Mauritz Stiller.

A new seminar entitled *Transnordic trajectories: past, present and future film history through Nordic Women in Film* was held at the Film House on 30 November 2017. This coincided with a relaunch of the website, which now lives up to its name as it becomes truly Nordic. With funds from the Nordic Gender Equality Fund (NIKK – Nordic Information on Gender), the site will also incorporate Danish and Norwegian material from the end of 2017. The NIKK project is a one-year initiative in which Stockholm University and the Swedish Film Institute are working alongside the National Library of Norway in Oslo and the University of Copenhagen to build up a network of researchers and writers with an interest in women's contribution to Nordic film history, with a focus on women's work as directors, producers, cinematographers, editors and scriptwriters. Some of the texts about internationally known and/or active women and other key texts are available in English. In the longer term, the site also aims to include articles in Finnish and Icelandic, and to translate more texts in Nordic languages into English.

**The collaboration** between the Film Institute and Stockholm University deepens and evolves the established network for research into women in Nordic film history. The researchers who have specialist expertise in Danish and Norwegian film history in the network contribute to the production of texts in Danish and Norwegian. Key texts from each country are translated from Swedish, Danish and Norwegian into English, so as to make research into Nordic film history and women's contribution to it available to a wider international readership.

The vision is that the site, in its Nordic approach, will benefit not only Nordic film researchers but also anyone with a general interest in the Nordic countries. Because research material into Nordic film is being published on a site that is open and freely accessible to anybody with an interest, and where many of the articles are written in a more readily accessible format than is normal in the academic world, we believe the material on the website has every chance of achieving a broad reach.

### The roles of the four organizations:

- Stockholm University, Department of Media Studies, has the main responsibility for the one-year NIKK project. Project management includes coordination of network meetings, contact with external writers, general responsibility for the project's contacts with researchers, and long-term planning/development of a strategy for the wider Nordic and international dissemination of the research.
- The Swedish Film Institute is responsible for managing nordicwomeninfilm.com. The organization's role in the NIKK project is to maintain the existing site and ensure that the Danish and Norwegian material produced by researchers in the network is uploaded in an appropriate format.
- The National Library of Norway is the principal for the NIKK project's selection of Norwegian women film workers, coordination of assignments from Norwegian-speaking researchers and reviewing Norwegian texts.
- The university of Copenhagen, Department of Media, Cognition and Communication, has the corresponding role in Denmark.

Thanks to the collective research expertise in the Women's Film History Network: Norden, the site's connection with research and its potential to serve as a Nordic knowledge base for researchers and the general public are developed.

### Press and PR

Communication at the Swedish Film Institute entails sorting, evaluation and prioritization. We have both an administrative (internal) and an outreach (external) remit. Both of these functions are dealt with based on questions of tonality and prioritization. In other words, the focus is not only on what is communicated, but how this is done. The gender equality perspective permeates the Communications & PR Department's day-to-day work as we evaluate:

- What words and images do we use when talking and writing about Swedish film and the people behind them?
- What point in time do we choose – in what context?
- What channels do we choose, and what spokespeople do we highlight?
- Where are we in the balance?

Press and industry releases are preceded by a careful evaluation as to which titles and filmmakers are used in images, headers, preambles and body text. Selection is even more important in more extensive mailings, since there is not room for all projects. The selection should be balanced and credible, while also including gender equality work. An established filmmaker has a high news value, but we can increase knowledge and new perspectives by constantly adding new names and their accomplishments.

**One clear example** of this is the communication journey with Amanda Kernell, to mention a breakthrough for a filmmaker during 2017, whom we have followed and supported since her first short film. Another is Ruben Östlund's Palme D'Or in Cannes for *The Square* (2017), for which production designer Josefin Åsberg also won the Prix Vulcain for the same film in 2017. We keep an extra close eye on projects with women in key positions (director, scriptwriter, producer, cinematographer, editor) to make sure that we always have new stories to tell.

It is important in communication work to maintain close contact with other departments so as to stay on course. For example, we monitor ongoing statistics about filmmakers in the projects that are awarded production funding. In this case, PR may be involved in straightening out any distortions that are discovered, for instance by highlighting women in a particular professional group so as to show positive examples. Ahead of all major events such as the autumn and spring presentation, the Guldbagge Awards, and seminars and press conferences at film festivals, we produce various data on the current balance – not only to see how we are doing ourselves, but also to find perspectives to present to the media and the industry. Transparency and perspectives in terms of both time and content should permeate our work.

**As important as** it is to consider our own internal compass, it is equally important for Communications & PR to monitor the informal discussion in the industry and follow filmmakers' own communication, so that we can capture the latest issues, news and tendencies. A useful tool in this is social media, enabling us to join the debate quickly, publish our own news, or simply to encourage, comment and demonstrate our involvement.

There is an ongoing exchange with the Nordic Women in Film database. Nordic Women in Film's activities and texts are promoted for instance on the Film Institute's Facebook page and website. The collaboration will expand with the new version of the Swedish Film Database being launched at the beginning of 2018. The databases' content will be cross-linked and the editorial staff will be able to share ideas.

Gender equality work also permeates the process of relaunching the Swedish Film Database, particularly the pages with articles, both in terms of themes and writers. Diversity of representation overall is considered, and not just gender.

**The Swedish Film Institute's action plan** entitled *50/50 by 2020* has received extensive national and international attention both in the industry and the media, not least thanks to CEO Anna Serner's participation in press events, seminars and panel debates. We work closely alongside WIFT (Women in Film & Television) to spread the message to their network and create a platform for sharing inspiration. The hashtag #5050by2020 has evolved its own life on social media, but we must constantly highlight new victories in our area and view the process over time.

PR work also entails organizing events, from small press conferences to large presentations and the Guldbagge Awards Ceremony in association with SVT. The Film Institute has a leading role here, for example in the process of selecting a compere, people presenting the awards, performing artists, and also which people are there to meet the press and represent a film in the media.

### **Other film industry initiatives**

Over many years, a large number of civil rights organizations have been formed and have led opinion within film. WIFT (Women in Film & Television) has been in Sweden since 2003, proactively working for equal conditions for women in the entertainment industry. WIFT's work includes several publications: *Att göra som man brukar* (roughly 'Doing the same old thing', 2006), *Om kvalitet* (*On quality*, 2007), *The Fast Track* (2011) and *A real tear-jerker* (2013). Seminars and debates on the themes have also been organized in conjunction with the publications.

WIFT now also works on a pan-Nordic basis in the newly started organization WIFT Nordic. There have also been various other activities and projects to increase awareness of gender inequality, and of women's advanced expertise and high capacity in filmmaking. Doris is one such project which began in 1999 in Gothenburg, with the aim of bringing about a change in attitudes and structures in the film industry. The Doris project invited women filmmakers in all creative positions to create short films made exclusively by women. Other projects include the Stockholm Feminist Film Festival which showcases film made by women filmmakers, telling women's stories and experiences, and IFEMA

(International Female Film Festival Malmö), which since 2006 has been showing films made by women directors. Film i Väst has successfully run a project called *The Hub*, which promoted women filmmakers in western Sweden. Projects in the southern region of Skåne include *Producing People*, a programme for developing talented producers from the province. In Norrbotten, in the far north of Sweden, Filmpool Nord launched the *MQ film* project to bring together young women across the region with an interest in film. There are many projects, and many people behind them, and they have all helped to lay the foundation for the Film Institute's work.

**Women's Film History Network: Norden** is a network for academics researching Nordic film, with a particular focus on women's contributions to film history. It is an informal network created in connection with *Making the Invisible Visible in a Digital Age*, a conference organized by Stockholm University and the Film Institute at the Film House in Stockholm, 2014. Today the network has 30 or so members who conduct research in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Germany, North America and the UK. The coordinating researcher for Women's Film History Network: Norden is Ingrid Stigsdotter. During 2016–2017, NIKK (Nordic Information on Gender, a Nordic cooperative body under the Nordic Council of Ministers) helped to fund the Women's Film History Network: Norden project, which is a collaboration between the Department of Media Studies at Stockholm University and the digital service [nordicwomeninfilm.com](http://nordicwomeninfilm.com) at the Swedish Film Institute. The network's strapline is, "Revisiting and revising film history through [nordicwomeninfilm.com](http://nordicwomeninfilm.com)".

# A world first

**From 2000 until the present day, the percentage of women has grown significantly in all three key roles in Swedish film – a development that has attracted great international interest in the Film Institute’s work, and in Swedish film.**

## **Our work is producing results**

Assessments and analyses of seminars and funding reveal that the efforts are having an effect. Previously, much of the work on gender equality has been incorporated into the day-to-day operation, and the results reflect this. It manifests in which films are digitized, who is invited to seminars, how film study guides are put together, in projects and initiatives, which films are awarded funding and so on. The international attention too shows that what the Swedish Film Institute is doing is unique; it is garnering attention in other countries and having an impact on their own gender equality and quality work.

Swedish film critics are very positive towards the films being produced, and Swedish film has never before achieved such high average review ratings. The title with the highest average review rating between 2007 and September 2017 was *Sámi Blood/Sameblod* (2017) by Amanda Kernell, with 4.40. This is followed by *The Reunion/Återträffen* (2013) by Anna Odell with an average of 4.33, *She Monkeys/Apflickorna* (2011) by Lisa Aschan with 4.21, *Searching for Sugar Man* (2012) by Malik Bendjelloul with 4.20, and *Everlasting Moments/Maria Larssons eviga ögonblick* (2008) by Jan Troell and *Drifters/Tjuvheder* (2015) by Peter Grönlund, both of which had an average of 4.17. Films awarded production funding by an SFI Film Commissioner achieve on average a higher average review rating index than those without funding: 3.16 against 2.30. The average rating index for films that receive automatic funding or the former market funding is 2.35. Also for films awarded commissioner funding there are differences between genres, but the overall average review rating is higher for films with funding than those without in the same genre. Films where the director, scriptwriter and producer are jointly mainly women have a higher average review rating index than titles with a majority of men: 3.12 against 2.85. This applies to all types of film apart from documentaries, where the average review rating index is the same regardless of which genders are involved. This is also true of the three roles individually, apart from in crime films. Films where women are in majority in the roles of scriptwriter, director and producer have a higher rating index than those with men in these roles. The average rating also has a wider spread for films made by men.

**The Bechdel-Wallace Test** is often an eye-opener, as it reveals whether there are at least two named female characters in a film who talk to each other about something other than men. Since 2015, the Film Institute has been running this test on Swedish feature-length fiction films awarded funding during the year. In 2015, 75% of the titles released passed the test, and in 2016 the figure was 50%. Thanks to the decisions that have been made, once again in 2016 the Film Institute managed to achieve the goal of even gender distribution for different types of funding. Looking at all three years

in the latest agreement period, it is even clearer that all funding types have been distributed evenly between men and women. Virtually all funding has a gender distribution where women are awarded between 45% and 60% of the funding.

The exception is automatic funding (which has since become market funding); in 2015 it achieved almost even gender distribution (director 60% women, scriptwriter 37% and producer 60%), while in previous years, particularly 2013, there was a marked issue whereby no women directors or scriptwriters were awarded funding. The trend in this funding therefore even more clearly indicates that work on gender equality has progressed and produced some good results. It is additionally evident that gender equality work with funding pays, looking at the percentage of women in these three positions with funding and without. The percentages of women in the roles of director, producer and scriptwriter for feature-length fiction films released during the past three agreement periods (2000–2005, 2006–2012 and 2013–2016) have, without exception, always been better distributed for films with funding from the Film Institute than those without. The trend for films without funding is also developing positively, especially for producers, although not at the same pace as for films with funding.

During the period 2006–2012, the Film Institute made 29% of its funding decisions in favour of women directors. In 2013–2016 this increased to 49%. So even though funding varies year on year, it is clear that gender distribution over the past five years has begun moving in the right direction. Several Swedish women directors have taken part in international film festivals with great success. Amanda Kernell's *Sámi Blood (Sameblod)* has won prizes, in Toronto in 2017 Niki Lindroth von Bahr won the short film award for *The Burden (Min börda)*, and in 2015 Beata Gårdeler and Sanna Lenken won Crystal Bears at the Berlin Film Festival for *Flocking (Flocken)* and *My Skinny Sister (Min lilla syster)*.

The Guldbagge Awards are also a good reflection of the results in a longer perspective. Held annually in January, it acknowledges films and filmmakers who over the past year have made films and stories of high quality, reached large audiences, or both. It nicely reflects the concrete results of initiatives taken, including young female filmmakers being given the chance to establish themselves in the industry, receiving funding for a film idea, seeing it through and then winning awards – all to a greater extent than previously. The years 2011, 2012 and 2013 stand out particularly, as they were all years when films directed by women won the Guldbagge Award for Best Film: Gabriela Pichler, Lisa Aschan and Anna Odell.

## **International attention**

Several things make it clear that we are alone in achieving gender equality, with the Swedish Film Institute's money at least. We can see that international productions with women directors are finding Sweden as a co-production country. The percentage of women directors who receive funding from our international co-production funds has doubled between 2013 and 2016, and is now around 50%. This is very likely because they have noticed that our money is available to women filmmakers too, and this means they have a greater chance of receiving funding if they apply in Sweden than in other countries. For Sweden, it means that Swedish creatives get to work with major international filmmakers such as Agnieszka Holland, and can also bask in the glory of having their films selected for the leading film festivals. The international co-productions to which the Film Institute has awarded funding have a strong presence in e.g. Cannes, Toronto and Berlin.

The Film Institute is invited to various places around the world to talk about gender equality, far more in fact than we have had time to attend. We select which countries to visit based on an evaluation of whether the country is an important market for Swedish film, if we are attending a festival there anyway, or whether the country may have democratic shortcomings in other ways (no freedom of speech or human rights alongside gender discrimination). This means that we have been to many places in Europe (Germany, France, Spain, Albania, Greece, Ireland, the UK, Norway,

Finland, Iceland, Denmark) and beyond (the USA, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, South Korea, Georgia, Australia). In almost every country, our visit garners extensive media coverage. Gender equality work has provoked an active interest in Swedish film, and this in turn builds Swedish film as a brand.

### **50/50 by 2020**

One of the most prominent activities in 2016 was during the Cannes Film Festival, when the Swedish Film Institute organized a seminar to discuss gender equality in the film industry. It was a popular initiative and its effects were still being felt in 2017, when the gender equality seminar became part of the festival's standard programme.

A distinct ripple effect is being achieved. Roger Wilson of Sveriges Radio (Swedish Public Radio Broadcasting) reports hearing several voices on gender equality in the film industry,<sup>15</sup> including Cannes jury member Jessica Chastain who raised the issue at the jury's press conference at the 2017 festival. She had seen 20 films in short succession and said she was shocked by the way women were depicted in the festival's competition entries.

“This is the first time I've watched 20 films in 10 days. And the one thing I really took away from this experience is how the world views women from the female characters that were represented. It was quite disturbing to me, to be honest – with some exceptions.”

She encouraged the film industry to let in more women directors so that the perspectives so rife in the industry can be changed.

“I hope when we include female storytellers they will be more like the women I know in my day-to-day life. They are proactive, have their own point of view and don't just react to men around them.”

### **Voices from outside**

Gender equality work has provoked an active interest in Swedish film, and hopefully this in turn builds all of Swedish film as a brand.

“It is an established fact that women are underrepresented in cinema, particularly among the ranks of directors. In the United States, women direct from 5 to 10 percent of feature films, according to statistics compiled by the entertainment website Indiewire. /... / Before one assumes that this gender imbalance is one of those regrettably intractable problems, tied to social forces that take decades to alter, consider the case of Sweden. The government-backed Swedish Film Institute helps fund most of the country's cinematic output. Between 2000 and 2012, these films were essentially dominated by men, who in a given year typically directed between 70 and 90 percent of all productions. Those statistics began to change quite rapidly after the 2011 appointment of Anna Serner as chief executive of the Institute. She called the gender imbalance in Swedish cinema a ‘catastrophe’ and set an ambitious target that half the films supported by the Institute should be made by women. Last year, the Institute achieved gender parity among directors for the first time and is on track to replicate its success, or come close, in 2015.”

[The New York Times, 2015 13](#)

“On April 25, Serner was on hand to deliver a lecture to an audience of mostly New York Film Academy students in Burbank, California, during which she tore apart the excuses for gender inequality used by executives in both the Swedish film industry and Hollywood. Her

castigations seemed all too relevant: Just last week, TheWrap reported that Fox and Paramount have not hired a single woman to direct their respective slates of more than 20 upcoming movies. ‘Male and female producers come to me, and they say, ‘You know, Anna, it’s only young men coming up showing [me] their portfolios,’ Serner said. ‘And it’s like, Yeah, that’s probably true. But if you want the best films, you should probably start looking for the women and not be so lazy, sitting and waiting for them, because otherwise, you won’t get the best ones. Because otherwise, you will just have to get the ones [that know to show up], and that’s not good enough. ‘Then the producer gets really mad with me, actually. But that’s the truth.’”

[Buzzfeed, 2016 14](#)

“The Australian Directors Guild has also suggested that local productions adopt a quota to ensure 50% of films funded by Screen Australia are made by female directors. The Swedish Film Institute introduced a similar policy in 2012, with a goal to reach gender parity for directors, producers and writers and attained it within just three years. When CEO of the Swedish Film Institute Anna Serner found women were having a harder time getting finance from other sources because financiers didn’t ‘trust them’ she knew she had to take action.”

[The Guardian, 2016 12](#)

“Ms Serner’s revolutionary policy has not been welcomed by all of Sweden’s neighbours. “Denmark always think we are crazy doing this. They say they already have equality, but Denmark only gives 17 per cent of funding to female directors. Most leaders tend to hesitate because it is really very scary. You are asking for trouble and they are not prepared to take the trouble. I get a lot of support from Finland and Iceland but they don’t do anything. ‘The further you get from Sweden, the less threatened people tend to feel... We had Jane Campion visit us recently and she just loved it. She is bringing an action plan to both New Zealand and Australia.’ Campion will face an uphill battle in Australia. The number of women in some areas of the industry, particularly technical, has been going backwards. The Swedes put us to shame, in fact. They also shine a light.”

[The Sydney Morning Herald, 2015 11](#)

“Internationally, the film industry is in the midst of a kind of feminist awakening, with the inciting incident being slightly different in each country. /.../

Many countries are looking to Sweden as an example. When Anna Serner, an outspoken chief executive from the advertising world, became head of the Swedish Film Institute in 2011, 26% of the movies the agency financed were directed by women. Due in large part to Serner’s aggressive advocacy, by 2014, 50% of the films the institute financed were directed by women. Female directors now win about 60% of the prizes at Sweden’s version of the Oscars, and the majority of Swedish directors invited to international film festivals are women. Sweden’s programs, which are partly funded by a 10% tax on movie tickets, would seem unthinkable interventionist in the market-driven American film industry, and have even been controversial in a country that considers gender equality a cornerstone of its identity.”

[Los Angeles times, 2016 10](#)

# Future challenges

**We have made good progress, but a lot of work remains to be done for gender equality in front of the camera, behind the camera, and in equal terms for filmmakers.**

Sweden now has an even distribution of film funding between men and women. But several gender equality challenges remain; for instance, women tend to work in projects with smaller budgets than their male counterparts. And still we hear reports of sexist occurrences and comments in the industry, as was especially evident in the #metoo debate of autumn 2017. There are different value systems that need to be united, where quality should not be synonymous with men, but quality in film should be independent of who has the opportunity to make it. Because we do not believe that the structures in actual fact have changed in a way that's sustainable in the long term. The international limelight led to the seminar entitled *50/50 by 2020 – Global Reach* in Cannes 2017. The initiative is about counting also behind the camera. The aim of the action plan is to keep the question and awareness alive, so that we not only develop our decision paths, but also continue our efforts to eliminate the need for a gender equality plan in the future. The new action plan still emphasizes the importance of counting, but we are developing the counting to take place both in front of and behind the camera. We will continue to spread knowledge, and this report is a part of that knowledge. Several countries have adopted the goal of a 50/50 distribution by 2020 (Canada, Ireland and parts of Australia, among others), and others are being inspired by our efforts. Sweden has a particularly favourable foundation for achieving gender equality, but it is clearly also possible in other nations.

**Maria Jansson writes about** three pillars in her text: more women in the key positions of producer, director and scriptwriter; more women will lead to better conditions for women in the film industry; and more women will help guarantee diversity in stories and perspectives being portrayed on the cinema screen. We have demonstrably achieved change in two of these at least: more women in key positions and more perspectives being portrayed on cinema screens. The remaining aspect, about better conditions for women in the film industry, is harder to measure. There are various kinds of conditions to take into consideration, for instance on a filming location: women filmmakers should have access to child care so that they can take on the jobs they want (see also the EWA study, page 22), but there are also financial conditions, i.e. the funds should be distributed just as equally as the projects. But ultimately, we are convinced that conditions for women will change as women take on a more prominent role in the industry.

# Important events

**Several Film Agreements, government bills, people, reports, projects and films have made an impact over the years. These are some of the events that have influenced our work on gender equality at the Swedish Film Institute.**

## **1999**

The proportion of feature-length fiction films awarded funding which had women in key roles is 17% for directors, 19% for scriptwriters and 25% for producers.

## **2000**

Åse Kleveand becomes CEO. New Film Agreement. The Swedish Film Institute is tasked by the government to keep statistics of funding awards based on gender – the first time gender equality is included in a bill to the Film Institute.

## **2001**

Half of all funding for further training for professional filmmakers goes to women.

## **2002**

The book *Män, män, män och en och annan kvinna... (Men, men, men and the occasional woman...)* is published. An initiative of Arena and the Swedish Film Institute Film Commissioners, highlighting conditions for women filmmakers.

## **2003**

Karolina Jonsson's short *Novembersnö* is selected to compete in Cannes.

## **2004**

The book *Hur svårt kan det vara? (How hard can it be?)* by Camilla Larsson, in association with the Film Institute, is published. Maria Blom's *Masjävlar* wins the Guldbagge Award for Best Film.

## **2005**

The Cinematheque screens a Mai Zetterling retrospective.

## **2006**

Cissi Elwin becomes CEO. A new Film Agreement. Ylva Gustavsson and Catti Edfeldt win the Guldbagge Award for Best Film, *Kidz in da hood (Förortsungar)*.

## **2007**

The Rookie programme begins, an initiative for first and second-time feature film directors.

## **2008**

Maj Wechselmann's documentary *Bang and the History of the World (Bang och världshistorien)* is the most viewed documentary of the year.

## **2009**

Bengt Toll becomes Acting CEO. The government report *Vägval för filmen (Possible paths for Swedish Film)* is completed.

## **2010**

The report entitled *00-talets regidebutanter och jämställdheten (First-time directors and equality in the Noughties)* is published. The Film Institute is awarded special funds by the government in a several-year strategy to increase gender equality in the film industry.

## **2011**

Anna Serner becomes CEO of the Swedish Film Institute, Young Women's Filmmaking begins, cooperation with the regions is intensified, Lisa Aschan's *She Monkeys (Apflickorna)* wins the Guldbagge Award for Best Film.

## **2012**

Release of Gabriela Pichler's *Eat Sleep Die (Äta sova dö)*. Then wins the Guldbagge Award for Best Film. Producer China Åhlander accepts the award.

## **2013**

Action plan for greater gender equality is initiated, Moviement starts up, a new Film Agreement, and the gender equality goal becomes 50/50 rather than 40/60. Anna Odell's *The Reunion (Återträffen)* is released and attracts many cinema-goers. It then wins the Guldbagge Award for Best Film – the third consecutive year the Best Film prize goes to a film directed, written and produced by a woman.

## **2014**

The Young Women's Filmmaking special initiative comes to an end – the report *Inför nästa tagning (Ahead of the next take)* is released in connection with this and the EWA project begins.

## **2015**

The target of equal distribution of funding is achieved, summary and final report of Young Women's Filmmaking.

## **2016**

New action plan for gender equality, Gender Equality seminar in Cannes, Nordic Women in Film is launched, EWA project final report, Digitization Report published, proportion of feature-length fiction films awarded funding which had women in key roles is 65% for directors, 38% for scriptwriters and 42% for producers.

# Conclusion

## Notes

1 Jämo Resurs “Jämställdhetens historia”

<http://www.jamombud.se/omjamstalldhet/jamstalldhetshi/>

2 Jansson, Maria (2016) “The quality of gender equality: gender quotas and Swedish film governance” in *International Journal of Cultural Policy* and Jansson, Maria (2017) “Gender equality in Swedish film policy: Radical interpretations and ‘unruly’ women” in *European Journal of Women’s Studies*.

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### **Other sources**

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Swedish Film Institute Results Report 2010–2016

Film Agreement 2000, 2006, 2012

Swedish Film Institute Statistics

### **Further reading**

At [www.filminstitutet.se/dokument](http://www.filminstitutet.se/dokument) you will find our internal steering documents, action plans and government bills and appropriation instructions, including (in Swedish unless main title in English):

Handlingsplan for representation och tillgänglighet (Action plan for representation and accessibility)

Goal 2020: Gender equality in film production, both in front of and behind the camera (2016)

Towards Gender Equality in Film Production (2013)

<http://193.10.144.150/en/about-us/swedish-film-institute/gender-equality/> contains statistics, information and targets related to our gender equality work. There are also project reports for several of the projects outlined in this report, including:

The EWA report (2016, in Swedish only)

Inför nästa tagning (Ahead of the next take) (2012)

00-talets regidebutanter och jämställdheten (First-time directors and equality in the Noughties) (2010)

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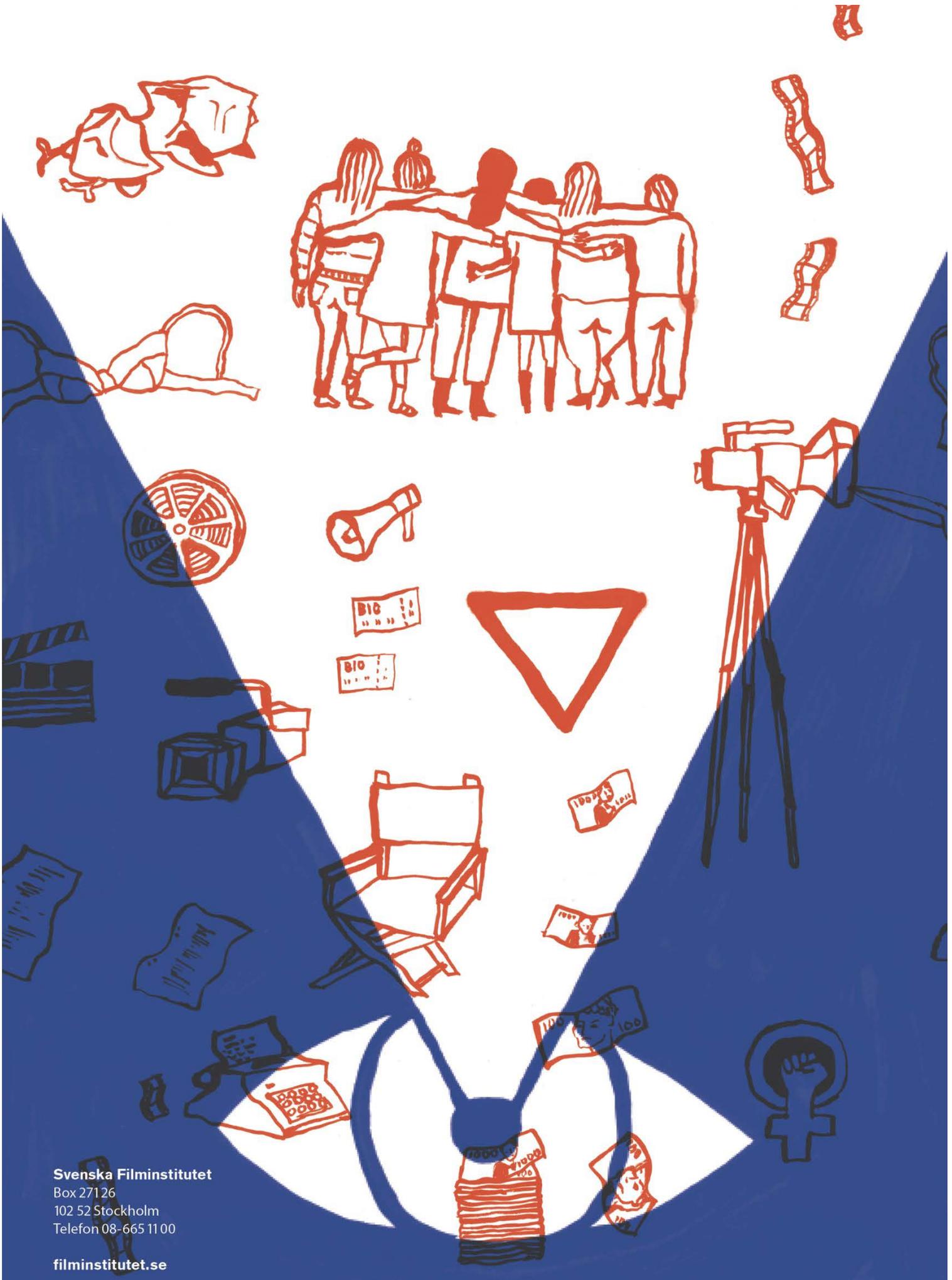
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