

FemaleAct

- We challenge the actors* in the fields of script, direction, production, acting, dramaturgy, artistic direction, editing and casting to critically question the portrayal of gender in the development of characters. We demand **more equivalent and multi-layered female roles!**
- We demand a rethinking and **updating of obsolete, discriminatory and stereotypical gender roles** and their performance on stage and in films!
- We demand **more diverse visibility** in terms of age, social and geographical origin, appearance, sexual orientation and disability in film and on stage. We demand that gender discrimination be combatted **multidimensionally and intersectionally!**
- We demand more resources for the punishment and **prevention of sexual harassment and abuse of power** at theatres and on the set!
- We demand an **adequate salary** for our work, which corresponds to our professional experience and education and is independent of our gender!
- We demand **parental leave** that allows parents to look after their children and do housework, regardless of gender!
- We demand an expansion of the infrastructure for **affordable childcare!**
- We demand that regular professional obligations be aligned with **compatibility with family life.**

FEMALEACT. OUR MANIFESTO.

We are an association founded in 2019 by Swiss actresses* from the fields of film and theatre.

As actresses*, we are constantly confronted with stereotypical role models and often earn less than our male colleagues. In addition, we live (especially when we become mothers) in precarious working conditions. Old-age poverty is a known and real threat in our profession. This is not understandable in a prosperous country like Switzerland. **Culture is a societal need, not a luxury!**

In our manifesto we have compiled aspects and demands that we are striving to address with all players in the industries of film and performing arts.

EQUIVALENT ROLES

Women* very often play stereotypes (housewives, victims of violence, desirable trophies). The latest study by the BAK¹, which analysed Swiss films between 2017 and 2018, shows a positive development: 52% of films have female leading roles and 48% have male leading roles. However, while the proportion of male lead roles in the age groups between 20 and 65 is roughly the same, the proportion of female lead roles in the age group from 40 years decreases significantly.

Women disappear quickly from the screen once they pass the age of 41.

The Bechdel Wallace Test evaluates the **status of women* parts in feature films** of all genres and checks whether independent female* characters occur. The test does not assess the quality of the film.

The criteria are:

- Are there two women in the movie?
- Do they have recognizable names?
- Do they talk to each other?
- If so, are they talking about something other than men/relationships?

Most films and programmes still do not pass this test. **We call upon the players in the fields of script, direction, production, television and casting to critically question gender, age and origin in the development of characters.**

But we actors called upon too: critical thinking and solidarity must also come from within our own ranks.

1 <https://www.bak.admin.ch/bak/de/home/kulturschaffen/film1/filmfoerderung/gender-filmfoerderung.html>

NO STEREOTYPES ROLE IMAGES

Studies on the general portrayal of women and men in the media were already carried out in the 1970s. It was found that as a visual medium, television in particular sets standards for women and men which are considered desirable by society, regardless of whether they correspond to the real situation. **Film thus propagates normative gender roles.** At the moment this **rigid image of women** still follows the dogmas of **young, white, heterosexual, cis, either sexy or maternal, sentimental, thin.** These images are stigmatizing and exclude all women who do not correspond to this artificial ideal.

We demand a rethinking and updating of outdated and discriminating gender roles and their presentation on stage as well as in films!

DIVERSITY

According to the study "Audiovisual Diversity"¹ of the University of Rostock (Prof. Dr. Elizabeth Prommer, 2017) women become more **invisible with age.** In German-language films of all genres and formats, there are three men per woman from the age category of 50.

And what about other types of diversity on stage and screens?

For **people of color**, it is much harder to work as actors. Although about 37% of the Swiss population have a migration background, you rarely see people of color on Swiss stages or Swiss television. And if they are, they are **frequently only cast for roles in which their origin or skin color is thematized.** Furthermore, they are often confronted with discriminating stereotypes. For example, people of color are often cast as prostitutes, but not as doctors, lawyers, or in parts where origin or skin color is not relevant.

We want queer people (LBTQIA+) to be represented in film and theatre as part of our society.

We demand more diverse visibility in terms of age, social and geographical origin, appearance, sexual orientation and disability in film and on stage. We demand that gender discrimination be combatted multidimensionally and intersectionally!

ABUSE OF POWER

A study published in 2019 by Thomas Schmidt² on power and abuse in theater shows that structurally conditioned **abuse of power in theater is reality.** Discourses about democracy, new forms of society and utopia are thoroughly negotiated on stage, but they **rarely take place behind the scenes.** There is thus an asymmetry between

1 https://www.phf.uni-rostock.de/storages/uni-rostock/Alle_PHF/IMF/Forschung/Medienforschung/Audiovisuelle_Diversitaet/Broschuere_din_a4_audiovisuelle_Diversitaet_v06072017_V3.pdf

2 <https://www.springerprofessional.de/macht-und-missbrauch-am-theater/17118508>

what is conveyed to the audience in terms of content and what is lived behind the scenes.

In the sense of **#metoo** and **TIME'S UP** we therefore demand: Our body is our instrument. But that doesn't mean that our bodies are available without **consent**. It should be a standard in our industry: **Only yes is yes!**

We demand more resources for the punishment and prevention of sexual harassment and abuse of power at theaters and on the set!

As a preventive measure, more intimacy coaches could be used on sets. We also call for measures to raise awareness of power structures and their abuse.

EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK

In our industry, **wages and salaries are intransparent**. There is usually a confidentiality clause that forbids us from talking about our wages. Even if this clause does not stand up in court, we usually do not know how our fees come about and are subject to a certain arbitrariness.

In addition, our work is equently seen as a hobby and pastime and not as a real profession that deserves a decent wage. However, protesting **against dumping prices and unfair wages** is difficult under a "confidentiality clause".

We demand adequate compensation for our work, which corresponds to our professional experience and education and is independent of our gender. To achieve this, salary classifications must be made transparent!

PARENTAL LEAVE AND CHILDCARE

Actors seldom have a permanent position and their salaries are often low. Since we frequently work in the evenings and on weekends, we have immense costs for child care. The **compatibility of career and family** is therefore extremely difficult in our industry.

For women, the following also applies: in the event of pregnancy, we are no longer suitable for many roles. This results in a considerable loss of income (for the whole family), which is not compensated anywhere.

There is an urgent need for parental leave that allows parents to look after their children and do the housework.

An expansion of the infrastructure for affordable childcare!

In addition, working hours are to be coordinated with the compatibility of family and career. Care costs outside of regular nine-to-five working hours are very high and stand in no relation with the salaries in our industry.