

AN END TO MEDIA PROGRAMMING INDEPENDENCE

MOVIE-MAKERS' PETITION

The European Commission has decided to put an end to Media Programming independence.

The concern about this abolition extends far beyond the walls of Berlaymont, the glass tower in Brussels that houses the European commissioners.

We, European directors and European producers, are extremely worried by the way that Media programming is thus being challenged.

This programme, launched 20 years ago, contributed to the creation of a genuine European film industry and helped in the creation of major new works that currently form part of the European heritage. They would never have seen the light of day without this programme. Two thirds of its budget is devoted to better European film distribution by arranging assistance to independent operators (the Europa Cinema chain) and distributors. This distribution of European films is all the more necessary for the education of the younger audience and the creation of diversified cultural tastes, in a context that is becoming ever more stereotypical, in a highly competitive audio-visual environment involving major players from other continents.

More recently, the MEDIA programme showed great reactivity by finding a financial resource that enabled cinemas in European countries that receive the least state aid to purchase digital equipment. This is a fundamental asset in film distribution.

The MEDIA programme, through its project development aids and training initiatives, has contributed to the creation of genuine networks of European producers who have developed co-productions. Thanks to these co-productions, films have been guaranteed distribution in the co-producers' own countries. The programme has, in fact, only recently created a fund to guarantee mobilisation of the banks, through European film producers.

We, European film-makers, recently replied to a questionnaire for the purpose of maintaining and developing this programme.

We deplore the fact that the European Commission, rather than allocating the necessary resources for the renewal of the programme and considering with the member states how they could find ways of financing the programme other than through contributions from member states (via an additional European taxation system), has confined itself to abolishing the benefits, reducing credit and ending the specifics of the MEDIA Programme.

We refuse, purely and simply, to allow the Media Programme to be abolished, or even to see it merged within another, more extensive programme.

We call upon the President of the European Commission to receive a delegation of European film-makers and to do so as quickly as possible.

Naturally, this serious challenge does serious harm to creativity and culture, the foundations of our identity and our European values.

To do any less would be to declare ourselves beaten already in the great fight for the promotion of diversity and the wealth of European audio-visual productions, our culture, way of life and thought, as well as the defence of jobs and the many European industries that are defended through our images.

This is a conviction that we wish to share with the builders of Europe.

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