Newsletter # 6 - April 2008

FERA Activities

Brainstorming session on Film Online with French directors on April 7
In the frame of the FERA Action Plan on Content Online, the CEO held a brainstorming session with three French film directors (Agnès Jaoui, Cédric Klapisch and Bertrand Tavernier) based on the contribution made to the European Commission consultation on creative content online. The objective of these brainstorming sessions is to prepare a FERA White Paper on film online which would include testimonies of directors whose films have “travelled” in several countries. Contacts have also been made with other European directors who will be called upon in order to collect their views on this important issue.

FERA contribution to the second call for comments on private copying levies
FERA sent a contribution to the European Commission second call for comments on private copying levies on April 18 to defend the legitimacy of private copying schemes and highlight that they are more crucial than ever with the development of new technologies.

The Executive Committee of FERA met on April 21 in Paris
The members of the Executive Committee of FERA met on April 21 to discuss the ongoing issues and prepare the General Assembly meeting of FERA on May 31 – June 1st in Dublin.

European Commission

Protocol on Cultural Cooperation in the EU's negotiations of a free trade agreement with Korea
DG Trade of the European Commission, in cooperation with DG Education and Culture and DG Information Society and Medias, organized on April 24 a meeting with audiovisual professional organisations to discuss the meaning and implications of the Protocol on Cultural Cooperation in the EU’s negotiations of a free trade agreement with Korea. The EC wanted to test draft criteria to be listed in the protocol under which European and Korean audiovisual coproductions could benefit from reciprocal preferential market access. FERA drew the attention of the Commission that a free trade agreement is not the appropriate instrument to define criteria for the eligibility of co-productions to preferential mechanisms such as the European broadcasting quotas. Accordingly, FERA proposed that the Commission simply should encourage in the protocol the development of co-productions’ agreements between EU member States and Korea (see Newsletter #4 – February 2008).
FERA memo on the Protocol on Cultural Cooperation in EU trade negotiations:
http://www.ferainfo.org/documents.php
The Bono Report on Cultural Industries has been adopted on April 10
This report has been adopted in the Culture committee on January 22 (see FERA Newsletter #3 – January 2008) and went to the plenary session with only one but controversial amendment, which has been adopted with a short majority. This amendment, driven by members of the French Socialist party, calls on paragraph 23 “to avoid adopting measures conflicting with civil liberties and human rights and with the principles of proportionality, effectiveness and dissuasiveness, such as the interruption of Internet access”, whereas this is the ultimate remedy of the “graduated answer” developed in France to fight against piracy on the Internet, after that several warning messages has been sent to subscribers. The “graduated answer” is part of a global agreement between Internet services providers and intellectual property rights holders in France. A draft law will be soon presented to the French Parliament on this issue and the Internet community influenced this report to send a warning message to the French government.


Draft opinions of the Culture committee on the Telecommunications package review
M. Ignasi Guardans (ADLE, Spain) and M. Manolis Mavrommatis (EPP, Greece) presented their draft amendments to the directives of the telecommunications package review they are in charge of to prepare the opinion of the Culture committee (framework, access and authorisation directives for M. Guardans and universal service and data protection for M. Mavrommatis). FERA is glad to see that the amendments it has proposed to strengthen the cooperation of telecom operators for the promotion of creative legal content on the internet and to ensure a fair balance between the protection of intellectual property rights and the protection of privacy have been taken on board by the two draftspersons. The draft opinions will be discussed in the Culture committee on May 6 with a vote at the beginning of June.


Audiovisual Policies in Member States

The New Norwegian Film Institute is launched
The new institute – which replaces the former Norwegian Film Institute (previously responsible for the promotion and preservation of Norwegian films), the Norwegian Film Fund and the Norwegian Film Development Agency – is overseen by a Board of Directors appointed by the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs. Four of the eight members of the NFI board were already part of a Film Committee that in 2006 wrote a crucial report, then used by the government to write its White Paper on Norwegian cinema. Among them, Nina Grünfeld, director of the Westerdal School of Communication and Henning Camre, former head of the Danish Film Institute, now president of the Think Tank on European Film. The NFI will be the tool for implementing the objective of making 25 feature films per year. It has an annual budget of €37m for film support.

The Croatian Audiovisual Centre opens competition

The Croatian Audiovisual Centre (HAVC) launched its first funding competition for audiovisual projects in April (features, debut features, shorts, documentaries, animated and experimental films). According to the Croatian Film Law, the HAVC is entirely independent of governmental bodies. The Ministry of Culture accepts the HVAC's National Programme, a strategic, four-year document, and financing is provided from the national budget and the gross annual revenue of audiovisual production, including 2% from national broadcaster HRT and 1% of the returns of telecommunication networks and Internet providers.

Cineuropa article:  

European Cinema

Boom in Film Production in Poland

In Poland in 2007, 50% more films were produced than in 2006 (a total of 39 productions, including nine co-productions, compared to 26 in 2006). This growth is for the most part due to the film law adopted in August 2005 and the creation of the Polish Film Institute (PISF), which has provided regular financial support for domestic films. The changes in public funding are considerable. Suffice it to compare the current figures with those of the final years of the former National Film Production Agency: while the latter only granted €5.3m for production in 2004, the new Institute allocated €17.3m in 2007. Investment from television networks is not negligible. Canal+ – who, after TVP (the Polish state television network), has for the past few years been the main financer of Polish film – has doubled its funding (from €1.6m in 2006 to €3.1m in 2007).

Cineuropa article:  

2007 results in Hungary mixed

The number of Hungarian titles produced in 2007 rose to 41 feature films, compared to 45 in 2006, and 26 in 2005. This trend demonstrates the effectiveness of the Hungarian system of tax incentives, which is, however, likely to be amended this summer at the behest of the European Union. The average budget for domestic films declined slightly, to €959,000, compared with €1.1m for the previous two years. On the other hand, there has been a clear increase in public funding with, notably, €21m in backing from the Motion Picture Public Foundation of Hungary (MMK), compared to €12.6m in 2006 and €8.5m in 2005.

Cineuropa article:  

Copyright

Alain Corneau is the President of the new French association “Culture with Private Copying”

55 French organisations (Collective management societies, cultural professional organisations and consumers organisations) have created an association in order to make public actions to raise awareness on the benefit of private copying schemes for culture. Private copying systems take an active part in the artistic vitality of a country and preserve cultural diversity. It supports more than 4000 artistic events in France each year. The platform signatories have created a website on which all useful information on private copying is available (only in French) and
reinforce their cooperation to defend this system against any attacks, whether national or European.
http://www.copieprivee.org/

Culture

European Commission entrusts KEA European Affairs with study on the role of culture and cultural industries in stimulating creativity
The study will focus on ways to promote the specific role of creators and creative industries in fostering innovation at both social and economic level (see FERA Newsletter #4 – February 2008). The report, which will include policy recommendations, is due in February 2009, in the context of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation.
Press release:

EU Lisbon Treaty

Ireland Prime Minister Resignation raises EU Treaty hopes
Beginning of April's revelation that Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern is to resign on 6 May could increase the chances of a 'yes' vote in June's referendum on the Lisbon Treaty, according to Irish government officials. Ahern outlined his hopes that his resignation would "re-focus the political dynamic in this country". Allegations of corruption have plagued Ahern's third term as prime minister, provoking a slide in his popularity ratings. There had been widespread fears in Irish political circles that the June referendum would become a vote on Ahern and his alleged financial wrongdoings. Ireland is set to be the only country to hold a referendum on the Treaty, which is scheduled for 12 June.
Euractiv Article:

Slovakia and Poland ratify Lisbon treaty
Slovakia has become the eighth country to ratify the new EU Treaty as deputies approved the text by a margin of 103 votes to five - after settling a dispute over a controversial media bill that had dragged on for months. Meanwhile, Polish President Lech Kaczynski added his signature to the Treaty, clearing the final hurdle in the country's ratification process. It had already been approved by both chambers of the Polish Parliament. Ahead of Poland and Slovakia, six countries have ratified the Treaty, namely Bulgaria, France, Hungary, Malta, Romania, and Slovenia.
Euractiv Article:

Clear votes for the new EU treaty in Denmark, Austria and Germany
The Danish and Austrian parliaments approved the text on April 24, which also easily passed Germany's lower House. The votes in Vienna and Copenhagen mean the Treaty has now been adopted in 11 out of 27 countries.
Euractiv Article:
News from the Members

ARF/FDS (the Swiss Filmmakers association) Research Project on “Youth Access to Cinematographic Culture”
On March 14, a hundred of experts in the field of cinema, training, politics and social and cultural activities gathered near Bern to analyse the results of the ARF/FDS research project on youth access to cinematographic culture and to assess solutions and conditions to give them a proper and pleasant access to the wealth of cinematographic culture.
Press release and results of the research projects (only in French):
http://www.realisateurs.ch/fr/association/jeunesse-cinema

News from the Danish Film Directors
1. On 1st of May, the Danish Film Directors, the Danish Stage Directors and the Danish Screenwriters joined forces by moving in together in new offices. This shared location marks the beginning of a stronger cooperation between the three organisations and it is the strong belief of the Danish Film directors that it will – among many things – strengthen their bargaining position.
2. Just before Christmas, the Danish Film Institute sent out propositions for new film support provisions, which removed the possibility for a director or a screenwriter to get script support when making a documentary. The plan behind this was both to shift the power from the creative people to the producers, but also to allow producers to claim overhead from the support money, now called “development”. The script support had until now been aimed only at directors and screenwriters and was the only place they could get paid without having a producer involved. The Danish Film Directors opposed the proposal both in the press and in meetings with the head of the Danish Film Institute.
http://www.filmdir.dk/

News from the Latvian Filmmakers' Union
The Latvian Filmmakers' Union is engaged in a struggle with different government institutions in order to defend the author's rights of its members. Some nine months ago a certain M. Petrovsky submitted a demand to privatise the exclusive material rights of an author in a number of films produced during the Soviet period. The Cabinet of Ministers refused this particular bid but sustained the possibility to do so in future, declaring author's rights as a State property. A draft Film law is submitted to the Parliament with a provision attributing the author's rights in films produced during Soviet period both to legal persons (studio or state) as well as to authors as individuals. Filmmaker's Union of Latvia considers it as a serious derogation from Latvia's international commitments.
www.latfilma.lv/lks/

40th Anniversary of the Directors Fortnight
Created in 1968 by SRF (the French Society of Film Directors), the Directors Fortnight commemorates its 40th anniversary this year. Special screenings will be organized during the Cannes Film Festival and in other Festivals all around the world.
www.quinzaine-realiseurs.com

Forthcoming Events

High Level Conference on Counterfeiting and Piracy on May 13 in Brussels
The European Commission is organising this conference which will bring together Members of the European Parliament and major stakeholders to discuss the most important aspects of
counterfeiting and piracy such as the effects on economic growth and job creation, risks to citizens' health and safety, international trade flows as well as internet piracy. The Conference intends to be the starting point of a process towards a long lasting strategy mobilizing both industry and public authorities to jointly combat counterfeiting and piracy.
Program and registration form:
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/ipreinforcement/index_en.htm

European Audiovisual Observatory Afternoon on May 18 at the Cannes Film Festival
"VoD - which licences for which markets?" is the theme of this year's European Audiovisual Observatory Afternoon in Cannes. The Observatory will be offering a practical and analytical approach to the VoD market in Europe with the participation of legal and market experts.
Program and registration form:
http://www.obs.coe.int/about/oea/pr/mif2008.html

Sixth European Day on May 19 at the Cannes Film Festival
The theme on the agenda for European Union Culture and Audiovisual ministers at their meeting on the sixth European Day on May 19 at the Cannes Film Festival will be: "Ways to build relations between professionals and promote audiovisual collaborations with other countries or regions in the world." Invited by Viviane Reding, European Commissioner for Information Society and Media and the Festival, the ministers will share their thoughts with artists, intellectuals and professionals and discuss the willingness to exchange based on respect for diversity and the reciprocity of partnerships initiated between professionals and of collaborations developed between European countries and other major film territories. There will also be an information session open to the public on the preparatory action on Media International in the afternoon of May 19.
Cineuropa Article:

FERA Lunch on May 20 at the Cannes Film Festival
SRF (The French Society for Film Directors) organises on May 20 a lunch for FERA members present at the Cannes Film Festival. Representatives of FERA members will be welcomed on the Directors Fortnight’s terrace. Please register with FERA office.

Public Hearing on Private Copying Levies on May 27 in Brussels
The Internal Market and Services Directorate General of the European Commission organises a hearing on "Fair Compensation for Acts of Private Copying". This hearing follows the consultation that lasted from 14 February 2008 through 18 April 2008. The hearing is organised around three panels: the Role and impact of private copying levies in the digital environment, the Member States’ experience with private copying levies and Private copying levies – what direction should future policy take?
Program and registration form:
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/copyright/levy_reform/index_en.htm