

## Press Release



In the photo (from left): Jakub Duszyński, Elisabeth O. Sjaastad, István Szabó, Dariusz Jablonski  
EU Commissioner Janusz Lewandowski (seated)

### **EUROPEAN FILM DIRECTORS MEET EU COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI TO DISCUSS BUDGET INCREASE FOR MEDIA PROGRAMME**

István Szabó, President of FERA, the Federation of European Film Directors, and Dariusz Jabłoński, director-producer and President of the Independent Film Foundation, met EU Commissioner for Financial Programming and Budget Janusz Lewandowski in Warsaw on Friday June 17, to discuss the prospects for the 2014 - 2020 EU budget period and the need to increase funding for the MEDIA Programme.

FERA Chief Executive Elisabeth O. Sjaastad and Jakub Duszyński from Gutek Film, representing Europa Distribution, also took part in the very positive hour-long meeting, which was initiated by Mr. Jabłoński, who also represents the Polish Film Directors and Producers' Association (FRiPP).

Commissioner Lewandowski explained that in these times of crisis management and austerity measures, many Community Programmes will face cuts, but he was happy to announce that this would not be the case for MEDIA.

Over the past 20 years the MEDIA programme has been crucial in fostering a truly European film industry and statistics show, for example, that 8 out of 10 Palme d'Or winners in Cannes have been supported by MEDIA.

The proven success of the MEDIA programme makes it possible to, not only defend its current budget level, but even find room for an increase. The Commissioner said he is convinced this is "very effective use of taxpayers' money".

The filmmakers were encouraged by this news, but outlined the challenges that lie ahead for the industry. For Europe to be competitive in the global market, we need substantial transition support to make our business models fit for online distribution, which represents such great opportunities to reach new audiences. FERA also believes that more development funding for directors is important to achieve future success – we currently invest only 10% of what the US spends on harnessing the best ideas.

European cinema has a proud tradition of promoting our philosophy and lifestyle across the globe, but the contemporary audiovisual industry can also deliver "smart, inclusive and sustainable growth" on our own continent.

Our creative work drives technological innovation and creates new jobs. Telling European stories cannot be outsourced. The cultural sector shows a growth rate 3 times higher than the growth of the European economy in general – despite our very modest share of the current EU budget.

While being sensitive to the constraints of the current financial situation, the filmmakers told Commissioner Lewandowski that a raise from the current € 755 million to € 1.2 billion for MEDIA over the next 7 year period would be the - still quite modest - amount required to meet our most acute needs.

Mr. Szabó stressed that audiovisual expressions play a major role in building European identity: "If Europe does not invest in its own motion picture culture, that expresses the hearts and minds of young Europeans, then those young Europeans will be shaped by pictures produced by others".

Mr. Jabłoński added that stronger attention should be given to the circulation of European films and especially films from Eastern Europe, and proposed that the future MEDIA Programme should also include the Eastern Partnership countries Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, and Moldova.

Half way through 2011 European film directors have already delivered great successes, such as Tom Hooper taking home 4 Oscars, including Best Film and Best Director, for "The King's Speech", Susanne Bier's "In A Better World" winning the Oscar for best foreign language film and Nicolas Vinding Refn being awarded Best Director in Cannes for "Drive".

The European audiovisual industry has the talent and the ambition. If the European Union is serious about putting creativity and innovation at the centre of the agenda for the coming decade, as stated in the EU 2020 Strategy, we, the filmmakers, need the financial resources to "*unleash our creative and innovative potential*".

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