



NEW EUROPEAN UNION MEMBERS
“The new Europe with the old problems”
(Thessalonica 2003)

The Conference on the future of European Cinema and the audiovisual sector after the EU enlargement has put forward the 10 new member states. For the first time in a European Conference, this panel was exclusively constituted of professionals from these countries: Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Latvia and Lithuania. The participants had the opportunity to express their point of view, their expectations regarding cinema and the audiovisual sector and the future cultural policy in Europe in general.

Height from these countries (with the exception of Cyprus and Malta) have a common past of total statism in the cultural field characterized by some people as a “socialist statisme” and by some others as a “Stalinian one”. This common past has provoked some common problems through the transition from a total economic and political centralization to a free - regulated or not- market economy.

Besides, some participants have pointed out that during communism their cinematographies were more prosperous than today and that their films, when they were victims of the totalitarianism, were better distributed in cinemas and selected in the Western festivals. This reminding didn't hint nostalgia but it reinforced the opinion of the professionals coming from these countries, according to which the sole application of the market laws created a major problem and that a political voluntarism adopted by the governments has become more and more necessary.

Liberalism has shown its dangers, mainly in the sparsely populated countries where there was a reduced linguistic geographical zone. Besides, the figures of the American presence displayed on the screen are superior to those ones – already alarming- provided by the 15 European member states. Finally, the presence of films from the 10 new countries in the Europe of 15, represents the ridiculous, even scandalous, percentage of 0,05% of the market share.

In front of this situation, the members of the panel and many participants in the room have pointed out the following:

- 1) A legal framework constitutes an absolute priority, of which several countries are deprived. It is not a simple harmonization of the already existing legal frameworks in the Europe of 15. It is the only basis that permits:
 - a legitimate and necessary state intervention,
 - a legally ratified participation of TVs in the production and diffusion of national and European works,
 - a model of tax incentive (tax shelter) which permits private capital to fuel production
 - Copyright that guarantees the freedom of creation namely the fair remuneration of creators.
- 2) Public TVs of these countries can play an important role. They are powerful TVs, in general, which remain attached to their public service role and rarely fall in the commercial faults of their colleagues coming from the Europe of 15. Consequently, they are asked to play a “motor”- role in the creation and diffusion of national and European pictures.
- 3) The Eurimages fund of the EU Council, in which participates as member, since many years, a great deal of these countries must reorientate its support policy



regarding production. The principle of solidarity which was one of its principles at the beginning of Eurimages creation, was progressively transformed into a market policy putting emphasis more and more on financial data and placing second, renown European authors, as well as “small” cinematographies, which guarantee cultural diversity. It is a serious danger for the European countries where the creator’s cinema and the low budget film are almost the only possible expression. The results of the “two guichets” system are disappointing given that the funds, which are available, are given to “high budget” films. It is true that Eurimages is a selective fund, but the rejection of a great deal of projects has created a very strong tension when Eurimages was the only pan-European authority of co-production. In principle, there is a complementarity between MEDIA and Eurimages, but the latter has insufficient means in order to face the demands all over Europe. It is urgent to establish synergy between the two programs. If we remain attached to the idea of cultural diversity, we cannot achieve its existence without the active solidarity of all its members.

- 4) The Media Plus program is already open to a great part of the new member states. Nevertheless, the budget for the 25 countries remained the same as for the 15 member states. It is a fact that all the participants have strongly denounced. This factor reduces even more actions undertaken in the crucial fields of creation and distribution. This causes also some tensions between the “old” and the “new” countries as far as the appropriation of funds is concerned. Europe should avoid these tensions if it wants to create a common identity and solidarity between its professionals.
- 5) Cinema heritage, creativity, the existence of a renowned cinema school and the competence of the professionals of the 10 new member states do not need to be proved. If we do not support them it would be not only a serious political mistake, but also a cultural and economic one. “Cinema is art, but also business” as Malraux has said. These countries can and must participate in the creation of a European cinema and audiovisual art. But if we leave their industries, alone, to die we will need several years in order to reconstruct the industrial and technical know-how, which is necessary to establish this kind of art.
- 6) The great part of participants was conscious about their struggle, which is, first of all, a struggle on a national level and they do work in their country, in order to accelerate the whole process. They have promised to raise their governments awareness in the legal framework regarding the efficient participation of TV channels, the long-term public support and their will to facilitate the diffusion of national pictures abroad, as well as the diffusion of European pictures in their own country. This struggle is facilitated by the experience of the European professional organizations, namely FERA or EFA.

Finally, during the workshop, it was pointed out that besides the principle of cultural diversity and solidarity approved by all the professionals of the new members, the principle of equity of treatment is an essential element, the importance of which, must be admitted by Europe. This principle was not always conceived as a primordial principle for the artists and the professionals of these countries, in the past, before their accession to the European Union. It was also stressed that the Thessalonica Conference could help to dissipate misunderstandings and construct this artistic, cultural and diverse Europe desired by all the member



states. **Everyone has wished the inscription of the right to cultural diversity in the European Constitution.**

THE CIRCULATION OF EUROPEAN FILMS (Thessalonica's International Conference, May 2003)

Representatives from all the European bodies that are involved in the circulation and promotion of the moving picture, representatives of festivals and bodies involved in the production on national and European level, as well as a representative from the MEDIA PLUS program participated in the round table regarding the circulation of European moving pictures, which took place in the framework of the International Conference of Thessalonica on **the future of cinema and the audiovisual sector after the enlargement**. The discussion began with the statistics, which according to the European Observatory in 2002, showed that the figures concerning ticket sales, cinemas and films that were produced were approximately stable. It was unanimously pointed out that these figures were disappointing. Moreover, it was stressed that these figures were particularly disappointing as far as the market share represented by the Northern and Eastern European countries in the already European member states market was concerned.

1. From 1996 to 2002, this share amounted to 0,05 (a "scandalous" figure according to some comments). The aforementioned figure shows a considerable weakness of these countries to overcome the boundaries of the states that are already their partners in Europe. The paradox is that, in the past, some of these countries had powerful cinemas, distinguished professionals and a great number of renowned and gifted artists. Creators from the new member states expressed a feeling of exclusion not only from the cinema audience-buyer, but also from the European festival, in which they were welcomed in the past. The speakers presented the different efforts made for the creation of institutions that are already in progress.
2. The European Organism for the Promotion of Films (which is based on the MEDIA PLUS program) has undertaken some initiatives such as the *Shooting Stars and the Producers on the move*, which promote a new actor and a new producer from each country every year, in order to help new talents. Efforts towards this direction have been made by the European Film Academy via the institution of European Prizes, which aim at creating a European star system.
3. The steps of the Europa cinemas network, which has already collaborated with 1000 movie cinemas by helping the circulation of the European film and encouraging the independent owners, are positive. Nevertheless, it was generally admitted that these initiatives couldn't solve the problem, namely the disinvolvement of the public with the European film. The minimization of curiosity about "foreigner" cinema, especially when this foreigner is our neighbor, old or new partners in the European Union, is particularly worrying.
4. The participants have stressed that this fall of the European film has become more perceptible after the multiplication of Multiplex, which are using, in fact, cinema as a pretext and gain profit from secondary commercial activities.



5. During the discussion it was agreed that the role of cinema and the role of the audiovisual sector in raising awareness and shaping the taste are more crucial than the role of education, not only for the conservation of the identity of each country, but also for the knowledge of the “other”. This knowledge is the necessary element for the creation of respect and of a fertile ground on which a pluralistic European identity will be developed.
6. The speakers, as well as the contributors stressed that for that reason, the sector of the moving picture’s circulation cannot be yielded exclusively to the market’s power, because this would indicate the sovereignty of the right of most powerful operator and would breed all the concomitant negative consequences...
7. As far as the existing initiatives of MEDIA PLUS program are concerned, it was stressed the need to continue them through the new programs that will arise after 2006 and through the evaluation-improvement of the already existing ones. From the discussion, it was also resulted that small countries prefer to give more emphasis on the development of cinema projects where they feel a certain weakness, whereas the big ones prefer to put forward the circulation of films. These programs tend to disappear. For that reason, it was pointed out that the bodies in the member states, which are interested in, should not only form their suggestions-proposals regarding the orientation of the aforementioned programs on time, but also defend their essence.
8. It is quite obvious that until now the European Union’s policy on European film circulation is defensive. For that reason, the member states demand the adoption of a long-term, complex and complementary policy that will annul the current one-sided situation. The different suggestions that were heard can be summed up in the following points: in order to achieve a better circulation in the cinema enthusiast market, it was proposed to create a film festival representing different European countries. This festival would, in a selective program, screen in several European cities, films that have already participated in international film festivals but have not yet been distributed.
9. The ratification and application of the Directive Without Frontiers constitute a main factor that will give some vital space to the European moving pictures.
10. The existing EUROPA CINEMA network of 1000 cinemas should be expanded and constitute a vaulting horse for an important effort, which combined with the appropriate digital equipment will reduce the cost of the circulation of films in different languages.
11. Finally, because the problem cannot be faced solely on the basis of the existing institutional mechanisms, but it requires the participation of the market factors, it was suggested to create more expanded European networks by offering incentives to private businessmen provided that they will circulate European films at least in 6 countries. In conclusion, policy on this matter cannot only be focused on one production field excluding education from the moving picture.



Audiovisual Heritage and Film Education (Thessaloniki 2003)

1) Among the points approved at the end of the Turin conference in November 2002, in the frame of past year's "Cined@ys", there was this statement about audiovisual heritage:

"Finally, the diffusion of the heritage plays a role (maybe its most important one) in education. The access to film heritage for schools, universities, research centres, etc. is a priority and a duty justifying and governing all our efforts. This educational value embraces the social, industrial and artistic context of the moving images also illustrated through stills, interviews and all the other documents available (on this regard, the BFI project "SCREEN ON-LINE" is exemplary). If we do not succeed in interesting young generations to this heritage, the huge amount of work we have done so far and intend to keep on doing, is totally meaningless."

2) The importance of audiovisual creations in the European XXth Century cultural life doesn't need to be proved anymore. That's true from many sides: as major contribution to the artistic and cultural values of the century; as one of the most dynamic sector in the economic development of the so called "cultural industry"; more deeply, as the new dominant language supporting any kind of social behavior, exchange of ideas and mass communication in our countries.

3) The educational system of each European country must take into account this multiple dimension of the audiovisual world, especially the historical (including its economic functioning and growth) and the linguistic ones. It is exactly what schools have always done at every level when teaching our children how to use the main daily communication tool, their native tongue: through the learning of literature's history and language's rules.

4) In the audiovisual field too, every European citizen have the right to keep and develop his national / regional / local cultural identity as a fundamental basis of his citizenship; and to be educated and prepared to recognize, understand, taste and appreciate the other European and worldwide cultures.

5) As in the publishing industry and the books market, as for the other languages of the human expression (music, fines arts...), it is up to the school to educate the collective demand for creations, and building a public, should I say a "market", for creators.

6) Actually the final result of this process could be described as "a market for immaterial goods", but the mere market concept should not be the driver of the process, since the simple consumption of these cultural products is not the sole, nor the most important aim of an educational approach.

7) Nevertheless, the only structural space in our society not completely dominated by the market laws is the one our States dedicate to the reproduction and transmission of our cultures: the educational system. We think European audiovisual industry should at least target the same difficult balance established in the field of the publishing industry by the relation between national language and literature of each of our country and books global market.



8) From this perspective, the audiovisual heritage must be conceived, protected, taught as our "moving images literature", unique and mandatory source of audiovisual language learning and audiovisual history and ideas understanding.

9) After half a century of successful experiments in many European countries, the full integration of audiovisual language and literature in the curricula of our schools at every level, as well as in the professional training of teachers, is still a mirage that doesn't seem near to become a reality in the whole Europe (although the Thessaloniki participants have taken note of some progress in this direction, country by country: Sweden, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, etc.)

10) Still far appear the day when the relation between AV archives and schools will be like the one of today between libraries and schools, between museums and schools.

11) To substantially modify these situation, the Thessaloniki participants agreed on some priorities :

- Cooperation among film-organizations and other relevant cultural institutions is a basic need.
- The focus on developing projects that improve the expertise of teachers and relevant partners are essential to a quality film-education.
- Digitalization of educational methods and digitalization of information are two main requirements in order to have better exchange standards.
- Internationalization is necessary to learn from each other's experiences.

12) Participants declare themselves convinced of the fact that film-education is an important key for a better European film-climate. Filmmakers and film-organizations throughout Europe agreed that there is a lack of interest in our own films, a lack of curiosity and appreciation for European Films. To change this situation, we have to search for the origin of the problem, that lies in education.

13) Participants underlined also the great interest raised among panel members and in the audience by the different educational experiences coming from different European countries ; and the substantial agreement on methodologies and their applicability across national frontiers (e.g. the Greek project "Let's cinema").

14) Some participants suggested also the urgency to define some kind of "educational copyright", starting from the most positive cases registered all around Europe by few educational institutions (for instance BFI) in their successful dealing with right-owners.

15) During the session it was clearly recognized as a major political advantage that all the sides of the problems under discussion, were falling under the competence of a single EU Commissioner, Mme Viviane Reding, in charge of Audiovisual, Education and Culture.

16) Recognising the need to improve the access and educational use of films held by Europe's public AV archives, the Conference sought Commission support for:

- the implementation of a linked set of databases of Europe's public archives to facilitate the retrieval of film titles, their location and rights holding ;
- the development of a fund to enable film archives and film education bodies to meet and exchange information on best practices in relation to pedagogy, rights clearance, technological innovation, etc. across all the European countries ;



- the establishment of an agency with expertise in rights clearance to enable Europe's public and private DVD publishers to release titles from Europe's film heritage, with multiple language subtitles;
- the improvement of transnational cooperation in using materials from Europe's archives in order to enhance additionality, enrichment and circulation of educational products based on AV heritage.

17) The Conference further recognised the importance of taking advantage of the young people interest in new technologies interactive applications. It recommended a deep investigation by the Commission of the legal consequences of using archive material in these applications ; and the possible funding of a pilot project in this area, to encourage a greater access to and use of the older audiovisual heritage of Europe.

18) Finally, the Conference proposed, following a suggestion coming from EFA in December 2002 and from past year's "Cined@ys", the creation of an European Agenda for the integration of cinema and audiovisual languages in European schools curricula dedicated to young European citizens/viewers.

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