



**FERA**

Fédération Européenne des Réalisateur·s de l'Audiovisuel  
Federation of European Film Directors

## **Creative Europe 2014-2020 mid-term review**

### **FERA position paper**

The **Federation of European Film Directors (FERA – Fédération Européenne des Réalisateur·s de l'Audiovisuel)**, founded in 1980, represents in Brussels the independent voice of film and TV directors as the primary creators of audiovisual works. With 35 directors associations as members from 29 countries, we speak for more than 20,000 European screen directors, representing their cultural, creative and economic interests at national and European level. FERA works to promote policies that maximize the cultural, creative, social and commercial potential of the audiovisual industry.

[FERA aisbl EU Transparency register Id No. 29280842236-21](#)

FERA supports the MEDIA sub-programme and acknowledges its past achievements. Its existence and financial integrity are essential incentives to foster the sustainability of an innovative European audiovisual sector.

But the current programme lacks support for audiovisual authors, particularly film and TV directors. This situation is not new, and was already identified by FERA in the evaluation of the 2007-2013 edition of the MEDIA programme.

**The European audiovisual landscape is changing rapidly. Its sustainability and creative strength depends on the quality of the works it produces.** To fully reach its objectives and promote a high-level of quality for the works funded by its different support schemes, the **future MEDIA sub-programme must strengthen its focus of talent and creation.** We therefore recommend the following :

- Introduce a creative networks support scheme open to audiovisual creators (capacity-building),
- Bring the MEDIA Training support scheme up to speed with current needs of creators (soft skills development, peer-coaching),
- Development funding : introduce individual grants,
- Production funding : introduce talent scouting through microbudget programme,
- Make fair conditions to directors and audiovisual creators a systematic eligibility criteria,
- Include gender equality as an horizontal requirement in MEDIA support.

## MEDIA, an essential tool for a thriving EU audiovisual sector

- FERA believes that MEDIA is an **indispensable tool to build strong European audiovisual co-production projects**.
- In a changing distribution landscape, **only MEDIA can provide the research and development capacity for our sector to find innovative ways to promote and distribute European audiovisual works throughout Europe**.
- To advance the European audiovisual industry's ability to thrive in the digital era, MEDIA should incentivize good practices such as the systematic use of standard identifiers for audiovisual works. Their wide implementation should lead to better visibility of the use of the works, and such transparency would be greatly beneficial to the whole value chain, particularly in the digital exploitation of AV works. ISAN's structure corresponds to the EU audiovisual market specificities (facilitating the management of rights, tariffs adapted to local market players, etc.). **The use of the ISAN standard should be a requirement to get access to MEDIA funding**.
- MEDIA is a necessary research and development tool to face the challenges of a linguistically diverse distribution market transitioning to the digital era. **Its financial integrity and current overall objectives are therefore essential to the sustainability of our sector**.
- To fully reach its objectives, the **future MEDIA sub-programme must strengthen its focus of talent and creation : this will promote a high-level of quality to works funded by its different support schemes**, and make it sustainable on the long term.

## Audiovisual creators in MEDIA

« – What does the EU MEDIA programme mean to you?

– It's not a question for me, it's a question for my producer. »

*Bouli Lanners, Belgian actor and director, in « Behind the scenes » MEDIA 25 anniversary promotion clip*

- A director is both an author and a skilled independent professional technician, at the heart of the creative process and responsible for overseeing its realization during the different production stages.
- It is the director who, as creative leader, brings a singular vision to a film that begins from the original idea and continues right through the production process. From the first stage of writing the script to the editing stage, they constantly adapt to the requirements of a production process that can last over significant periods of time – on some feature films, several years.
- **Yet directors, like all the other creative individuals in the audiovisual sector, are not targeted by specific actions within the MEDIA sub-programme.**

- The MEDIA sub-programme priorities are to reinforce the European sector's capacity to operate transnationally, and to promote transnational circulation.
- These priorities are translated in support to projects, companies or business-to-business capacity building. Contrary to the Culture sub-programme, it currently does not provide for any such capacity-building support to individual creators.
- Directors could be considered to be benefiting indirectly from most of MEDIA support schemes, which support projects created and carried out by directors. But in fact, these support schemes mostly target business operators, and, to one exception, not working creative individuals.

Support Scheme	2017 Budgets (estimates)	Directors benefiting DIRECTLY from eligible projects	Directors benefiting INDIRECTLY from eligible projects	Directors NOT benefiting from eligible projects
Access to Markets	7,5 M EUR		x (as industry market participants)	
Audience Development	1,9 M EUR			x
Promotion of European AV works online	9,5 M EUR			x
Film Education	1,4 M EUR			x
Co-production Funds	1,5 M EUR			x
Development of EU Video Games	3,7 M EUR		x (only games)	
Development - Slate Funding	12,5 M EUR		x	
Development - Single projects	5,3 M EUR		x	
Distribution - Automatic Support	20,2 M EUR			x
Distribution - Selective Support	9,7 M EUR			x
Distribution - Support to sales agent	2,6 M EUR			x
Film Festivals	2,9 M EUR			x
Cinema Networks	10,7 M EUR			x
Online Distribution	5,15 M EUR			x
Training	7,3 M EUR	x		
TV Programming of AV EU works	12,5 M EUR			x

- **The Training support scheme does target all professionals from the audiovisual industry, but has an out-of-date approach to the realities of the EU audiovisual labour market.**
- A "craft skills" training offer for directors does exist at EU level. Yet it is mostly focused on script development and pre-production – a project-based approach of the training needs of directors as creative professionals, which does not take into account their role as overseer of the production of the work.
- Meanwhile, the EU audiovisual sector labour market pressures more and more creative individuals into free-lancing, while skills development needs are increasing but unpaid or simply unavailable<sup>1</sup>. A "soft skills" training approach, such as capacity-building for more sustainable careers, is lacking.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.creativeskillseurope.eu/>

- Forums where EU film and TV directors could find innovative ways to tackle the evolution of their craft in a fast-changing industry are also missing in the existing training offer, while it is available for other categories of audiovisual professionals in a exclusively business-to-business approach (Access to market support scheme).

- **FERA considers it is imperative MEDIA finds a better balance between talent development and support to creativity on the one hand, and projects production and commercial output on the other.**
- **As it stands, it does not sufficiently consider or support the initial, essential elements of the entire audiovisual value chain : creativity and talent. This impacts the quality of the works supported by MEDIA.**
- **Better understanding of the actual role and craft of directors, an essential category of audiovisual authors whose work is at the very heart of European audiovisual creation and cultural diversity, is needed.**

## Where are audiovisual creators in Creative Europe ?

- Contrary to the Culture sub-programme, MEDIA does not support actions enabling individual creators to cooperate internationally, or cultural and creative organisations to network.
- Where such support to Networks existed in the former Culture programme, audiovisual creators were simply excluded without warning.

Under the former Culture Programme support to European Networks' Guidelines, the eligibility of applicants was defined as follows:

### « II.2.1.2 Eligible applicants

*The Programme is open to the participation of all categories of cultural operators, insofar as the organisations are acting in a non-profit-making capacity. Audiovisual cultural industries and activities (including film festivals), already covered by the MEDIA Programme, are not eligible under the Culture Programme. **However, organisations having their main activity in the audiovisual sector and acting in a non-profit-making capacity are eligible under strand 2 of the Culture Programme, category "Networks", as no such support exists under the MEDIA Programme.** »*

The Culture sub-programme Network support Guidelines published in December 2013, marked a significant change in policy, by removing the eligibility of audiovisual networks :

*« 5.3.1 Applicant organisations must be active in the cultural and creative sectors as defined in article 2 of Regulation of European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Creative Europe Programme (2014-2020) and repealing Decisions Nos 1718/2006/EC, 1855/2006/EC and 1041/2009/EC. Proof of this activity will be required (such as for instance statutes). **Networks covering exclusively audiovisual industries and/or activities already covered by the MEDIA***

*Sub-programme are not eligible for funding under this scheme. However, networks consisting primarily of non-audiovisual sectors which include members from the audiovisual sector are eligible. »*

Nonetheless, the 2011 Communication about the Creative Europe Programme stated :

*« The large number of calls and categories, which increase complexity and reduce transparency, will be reduced from 9 to 4. Actions lacking critical mass, a long-term perspective, or which are over-subscribed due to their design will be discontinued. **However the new measures will in principle be open to operators currently addressed by the discontinued strands, subject to meeting the necessary conditions and criteria.** » (Page 5).*

- To this day, the MEDIA Sub-programme still does not provide such support for audiovisual networks.

- **FERA considers there is an unlevel-playing field between European creative individuals, which must come to an end by either re-integrating audiovisual creators as eligible under the Culture sub-programme support strand to European Networks, or by creating an equivalent support strand for them in the MEDIA sub-programme.**

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## Recommendations

**The essential element of a successful audiovisual policy is to foster the cultural aspect of the sector – that is to say talent and creation. Sole focus on industrial support does not promote the level of quality of works which is necessary for a sustainable audiovisual policy.**

To adjust Creative Europe and its MEDIA sub-programme's approach, and make it reach its full potential, a better balance must be struck between talent development and support to creativity on the one hand, and projects production and commercial output on the other.

To achieve this, FERA believes that two types of measures are needed :

### 1/ Introduce creative individuals as direct beneficiaries of MEDIA support

- **Introduce a creative networks support scheme for audiovisual creators**
- Forums where European film and TV directors could find innovative ways to tackle the evolution of their craft in a fast-changing industry are needed. It is currently only available for other categories of audiovisual professionals in a exclusively business-to-business approach.

- **Creative individuals in the audiovisual sector should have the same opportunities to capacity-building, innovation and European talent promotion. Support to European audiovisual creative networks is needed.**
  - **Bring the MEDIA Training support scheme up to speed with current needs of creators**
- "Craft skills" training is currently mostly focused on script development and pre-production for directors in MEDIA : this project-based approach of the training needs of directors as creative professionals does not take into account their role as overseer of the production of the project. **A better understanding of directors' and other creative individuals' needs should be included in Training projects' evaluation.**
- The EU audiovisual sector labour market pressures more and more creative individuals into free-lancing, while skills development needs are increasing but unpaid or simply unavailable. **A "soft skills development" approach, such as capacity-building for more sustainable careers, should be included in Training projects' evaluation.**
- Assistant directors and script supervisors' remuneration seems to be threatened by budget cuts in some countries, which is alarming considering the invaluable support they provide for the director. **Fostering future directing talents requires strong creative partnerships with assistant directors and script supervisors : their training and need for fair remuneration to build sustainable careers should be particularly taken into account.**
- **Peer coaching of young directors in the form of mentoring should generally be encouraged.**
  - **Development funding : individual grants**
- Directors are essential "generators of content" of the European audiovisual sector and yet currently enjoy little, if any, support in their innovation efforts – including a lack of remuneration for development of new projects.
- MEDIA should reassess its approach to support projects' development, to bring it closer to industry practices : developing a script does not necessarily start with a screenwriter and producer. **There is a general need for flexibility in development funding to include project initiated by individual directors, or directors and other audiovisual authors.**
- In order to support experimentation by individual talents, **MEDIA should introduce development funding in the form of individual grants.** Seed development funding could also be given to creative collaborations across borders, as a mobility incentive, e.g. a director/screenwriter team, or a director/cinematographer team.
- Examples of such individual Research & Development funding exist at national level : French CNC's aide à l'écriture (30 000 EUR), Norwegian Film Institute's VIP Scheme for established directors.
- **Production funding : talent scouting through microbudget programme**
- In creation as in business, research and development is essential to foster innovation. European young creative talents in the audiovisual sector should be given a chance to experiment without dire consequences.
- **MEDIA should introduce a scheme to supports the development, production, digital distribution, and the promotion of a first feature film or web content project by emerging**

**European creators.** It would stimulate the use of new digital distribution platforms and allow emerging creative talents to innovate in digital marketing and promotion.

- An example of such a support scheme exists in Canada : Telefilm Canada Talent Fund Micro-Budget Production Program.

## 2/ Improve the situation of directors and other audiovisual creators as indirect beneficiaries of MEDIA support

- **Make fair conditions to directors and audiovisual creators a systematic eligibility criteria**
- Directors are facing little – if any – support in developing and promoting their works. Directors touring to promote their films are not able to develop their new projects and are generally not compensated. This vicious circle creates particularly precarious conditions for future projects development.
- **Before allocating financial support to projects' development, production or promotion, MEDIA should ensure that directors, and other audiovisual creators, are fairly remunerated and are provided proper working conditions.**
- **Include gender equality as an horizontal requirement in MEDIA support**
- Creative freedom should operate with no boundaries or gender. FERA considers it necessary to the audiovisual sector's welfare to allow the diversity of talent to fully express themselves.
- Over the last few years, the Council of Europe has been developing gender equality initiatives for the audiovisual sector (Eurimages gender equality policy, CoE Recommendation). **A similar approach should be undertaken by the European Commission, Creative Europe and the MEDIA sub-programme.**
- **FERA supports the recommendations put forward by the EWA Network in its 2016 report « Where are the Women Directors in Europe », with measures ranging from eligibility criteria for support to works and training programmes, to gender-related data collection in the reporting system of projects funded by MEDIA.**

## Background information

### Directors: Who we are and What we do

A director is both an author and a skilled independent professional technician, at the heart of the creative process and responsible for overseeing its realization. To build a sustainable professional career, these key individuals whose creativity is at the heart of the audiovisual production process must be properly rewarded.

It is the director who, as creative leader, brings a singular vision to a film. A vision that begins from the original idea and continues right through the production process, from the first stage of writing the script to the editing stage, adapting to the requirements of a process that can last over significant periods of time – on some films, several years.

We conceive stories for the screen. Working alongside our co-authors, screenwriters, composers, we develop the script into a visual story, directing the camera and actors to visualise the screenplay, commissioning music and supervising the edit and sound design to create the finished work or film.

Making those stories captivating for the audience in front of the screen, whatever their subject and form, is a craft and requires a very specific skillset. In our audiovisual industry, it also takes significant amounts of time and money. **This is our authorship as filmmakers, a decisive part of the creative process that is appropriately recognized in the law of copyright.**

**Directors are already at the forefront of changes brought about by digital technology** – and in many cases leading those changes. They have embraced the changes to camera technology, to editing, and the possibilities of new distribution through internet platforms. They have used new digital technology to operate in ways that are leaner and faster, often taking the camera to places it hasn't been seen before, telling new kinds of stories in different ways. And their creative leadership has been decisive in the digital effects (CGI) revolution, with all the possibilities for integrating live action and computer-generated imagery.

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