[FR] Changes to Regulations on Media Chronology

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Amélie Blocman
Légipresse

The purpose of media chronology is to establish a minimum period between showing a feature film in a cinema and using it in other ways, particularly in video form. Thus, in compliance with Article 1 of the Decree of 4 January 1983, no feature film shown in a cinema may be used in the form of supports intended for sale or rental for private use by the public, particularly in the form of video cassettes and video discs, within a period of one year from the issue of the authorisation of exploitation. It is accepted that this provision should apply to the DVDs currently available commercially. In practice, this period was nine months and could be reduced, following deliberations by a committee of professionals, according to the success or failure of the film in cinemas. Since 1 January, by virtue of a Decree of 24 November last year, holders of video rights may, with the agreement of the film's distributor, obtain a reduction of this period to six months from the Centre national de la cinématographie (CNC - National Cinematographic Centre).

Not only does the new Decree reduce the delay before producing a video or DVD version to six months, which brings France into line with the other countries of Europe; it also extends Article 1 of the Decree of 4 January 1983 by stating that "these provisions shall apply whatever language versions of the work are fixed on these supports". Specifically, this paragraph prohibits the sale of DVDs imported from the United States and Canada (zone 1), including those in their original language version without sub-titles. The regulations in force until now contained a legal loophole which allowed the import and sale in France of DVDs from zone 1 which had no sub-titles, sometimes even before the film had been shown in a cinema. The main purpose of the Decree is to protect the European cinema industry, but it will probably not prevent the on-line purchasing of zone 1 DVDs on foreign sites, or the downloading of films on the Internet.

Décret n° 2000-1137 du 24 novembre 2000 modifiant le décret n° 83-4 du 4 janvier 1983 portant application des dispositions de l'article 89 de la loi du 29 juillet 1982 sur la communication audiovisuelle, JO du 26 novembre 2000

Decree no. 2000-1137 of 24 November 2000 amending Decree no. 83-4 of 4 January 1983 on the application of the provisions of Article 89 of the Audiovisual Communications Act of 29 July 1982. Official Journal dated 26 November 2000

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