[DE] Bundesrat Issues Opinion on New Film Support Act

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At its meeting on 11 July 2003, the Bundesrat (upper house of parliament) adopted its position on the Gesetzesentwurf für ein neues Filmförderungsgesetz (Draft Revised Film Support Act - FFG-E), which was tabled in April by the Federal Government Minister for Culture and Media (see IRIS 20035: 14).

The Bundesrat welcomes, in principle, the attempt to adapt the current Act to the changing economic climate in the film sector and to give new impetus to film aid in Germany. However, it also criticises certain provisions. For example, with regard to the proposed establishment of a new German Film Council (para. 2a FFG-E), an additional advisory body responsible for discussing film policy issues and public support of the German film industry and evaluating the film support system, it argues that the FFA board, thanks to its pluralistic composition, is already a suitable body capable of advising the government on important film policy issues. For that reason, the Bundesrat believes there is no need for another advisory body which would not only be expensive and time-consuming to set up but which would also be inconsistent with current efforts to reduce the number of such bodies.

The Bundesrat also criticises the proposed arrangements for reference film aid (see paras. 22 and 23 FFG-E). This form of support is awarded to producers of full-length films to help fund a subsequent film project and is dependent on the success of the initial film; success is evaluated using certain criteria, such as the number of cinema admissions or prizes awarded. Contrary to current support arrangements, the government draft abandons the system whereby a film's evaluation by the Filmbewertungsstelle Wiesbaden (Wiesbaden film assessment board - FBW) is used as a reference point for the award of financial support. The FBW is a film aid authority used by the Bundesländer to assess the artistic merit of films and award the national stamp of quality by rating them as "valuable" or "particularly valuable". The Bundesrat fears that the decision not to use the FBW's assessment as a criterion for the award of financial support will force producers to submit new films more often to international film festivals in order to have any chance of receiving reference film aid. Consequently, German aid would almost exclusively be granted on the basis of the assessments of foreign festival organisers and juries. The Bundesrat also thinks that support should not be awarded on the basis of a film's participation in an international competition, since there is no way of objectively verifying the decisions made at such an event.

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These decisions, for example, are not always based on qualitative criteria, so to link the award of German film aid to such selection procedures and decisions cannot be justified.

Concerning project film aid, the Bundesrat believes that additional funding raised via the new Film Support Act should be made available, inter alia, to producers of short films. Short films need an appropriate level of support, firstly because this film category is very important for the development of new talent and secondly because it is starting to be recognised as an art form in itself.

Stellungnahmen des Bundesrats zum Gesetzesentwurf für ein neues Filmförderungsgesetz (FFG-E), BR- Drs. 376/03, 11. Juli 2003

http://www.parlamentsspiegel.de/cgi-bin/hyperdoc/show_dok.pl?pl=BB&part=D&pnr=376/03&quelle=parla

Position of the Bundesrat on the Draft Revised Film Support Act, BR- Drs. 376/03, 11 July 2003

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