[CH] Completion of Second Round of Bilateral Negotiations Will Enable Switzerland to Rejoin the MEDIA Programme

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Patrice Aubry
RTS Radio Télévision Suisse, Geneva

On 19 May 2004 Switzerland and the European Union (EU) reached a political agreement on the second round of their bilateral negotiations. The agreement covers nine topics, including extension of the agreement on the free movement of people to the new EU member States, taxation on savings and combating fraud in indirect taxation (Customs duty, VAT, etc). Completion of these negotiations will also enable Switzerland to rejoin the MEDIA programme for encouraging the cinema industry. Professionals in Switzerland's cinematographic sector will once again be able to participate fully in all elements of the MEDIA Plus and MEDIA Training programmes.

Swiss participation in the MEDIA programme will make it easier for co-productions of films between Switzerland and EU countries through support from Community funds. For distribution, MEDIA will firstly make it easier for Swiss audiovisual productions to gain access to the European market and secondly will support the distribution of European films in Switzerland. MEDIA will thereby contribute to the diversity of the cinematographic offer on the Swiss market. Swiss professionals subject to the same conditions as their EU counterparts will also once more have the benefit of easier access to cinema training schools supported by the MEDIA programme. Lastly, the Swiss cinematographic industry will also be able to take part in the cinema festivals organised within the EU and thereby contribute to the promotion of European audiovisual production.

Switzerland's participation in the MEDIA Programme is conditional on its legislation in the field of television being compatible with EU rules. This harmonisation already exists to a large extent, as Switzerland is a party to the European Convention on Transfrontier Television. In the course of the bilateral negotiations, the discussions covered requirements in terms of minimum quotas for European audiovisual works (50%) and independent productions (10%) broadcast on television. According to the agreement reached with the EU, Switzerland has undertaken to transpose these requirements into its national legislation, although in practice these quotas are generally already achieved by Swiss broadcasters.

Switzerland is to contribute EUR 3.75 million per year to financing the MEDIA programme. This amount represents an annual cost of approximately CHF 3

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million more than the amount allocated by the Swiss Federal Council (CHF 2.758 million in 2004) in order to finance the compensatory measures intended to attenuate the negative effects of excluding Switzerland from the MEDIA programme (see IRIS 2002-9: 12). The nine bilateral agreements should be signed by the end of summer 2004. Eight of them will then be submitted separately to the Federal Parliament for approval. In view of the time required for holding a referendum, the agreements will not however enter into force before the start of 2005 at the earliest.

Document final sur le sommet Suisse-UE - Aperçu des solutions retenues lors des négociations sur les questions en suspens

http://www.admin.ch/cp/f/40ab55be_1@fwsrvg.html

Final document on the Switzerland-EU summit - Overview of the solutions adopted during negotiations on pending matters

Dossier Négociations bilatérales II Suisse-UE

http://www.europa.admin.ch/themen/00499/00755/00758/index.html?lang=fr

Dossier on the second round of bilateral negotiations between Switzerland and the EU

http://www.europa.admin.ch/themen/00499/00755/00758/index.html?lang=en

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