[ES] Controversies over the Catalan Cinema Law

IRIS 2011-10:1/14

Laura Marcos and Cristina Mora
Enrich Advocats, Barcelona

A new Catalan Cinema Law was approved by the Catalonian Government on January 2010 and came into force on 7 July 2010 (see IRIS 2009-5/21)

This new Cinema Law has been particularly controversial, as its main innovation is the obligation to dub and subtitle foreign movies into the Catalan language (a co-official language in the Autonomous Community of Catalonia alongside Spanish). By virtue of Article 18, when more than one copy of a dubbed or subtitled movie is released in Catalonia, distribution companies are obliged to distribute fifty per cent of the analogue copies in the Catalan version. The only exemption is for dubbed European movies of which less than sixteen copies are distributed in Catalonia. Previously, foreign language movies were normally only dubbed into Spanish.

Controversy has been caused by the high increase in costs that this new measure will necessitate. As a result, it has been the object of serious debate among producers, distributors and exhibitors.

After much discussion, the Catalonian Government and the US majors reached an agreement in September 2011 that will end this conflict at least in the medium term. The agreement states that the Catalonian Government shall assign EUR 1.4 million in economic aid in order to help distribution companies in the dubbing and prints, as well as with promotion. This more than doubles the budget of EUR 600,000 assigned in 2010 towards the same concept. As a result of the agreement in 2014, one out of four movie showings will be in Catalan and the number of spectators will rise from 117.000 in 2010 to over 1.5 million by next year.

The European Commission has also intervened in the controversy over the new Cinema Law. The Commission considers that the Law infringes the principle of European competition, as it favours productions in Spanish (Castilian) over other European films, as films in Spanish will not be under an obligation to comply with the new measures. The Commission has accordingly sent a letter to the Spanish Government informing it of the opening of a file that will aim to examine the nature of Articles 17 and 18 of the Cinema Law, which are considered to be unacceptable.

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

Llei 20/2010, del 7 de juliol, del cinema

https://www.gencat.cat/eadop/imatges/5672/10187134.pdf

Catalan Act 20/2010 of 7 July 2010

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026