European Commission: France's Plan to Digitise its Film Heritage Approved

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On 21 March 2012 the European Commission gave the green light for the national scheme to digitise France's film heritage (see IRIS 2011-7/23). The national centre for cinematography and animated images (*Centre National de la Cinéma et de l'image animée* - CNC) has been instructed to implement the action programme, which will have a EUR 400 million budget over six years. Short films and feature films produced up to 1999 will be eligible, along with historic silent films.

The European Commission carried out an investigation to determine the compatibility of the digitisation scheme with Community rules on state aid. Under Article 107(3)(d) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), state aid aimed at promoting culture and preserving heritage may be granted under certain conditions. In the present instance, the digitisation scheme aims to preserve and restore works of major interest in terms of European cultural heritage. The aid mainly targets works with highly uncertain commercial prospects and will be adapted according to their money-making potential. Owners of digitised works will be encouraged to make them available to the public and will be free to choose the companies they wish to carry out the digitisation and any necessary restoration of the works. The investigation revealed that the digitisation plan "constitutes a suitable means of achieving the objective of promoting culture and that any distortion of competition will be limited". The scheme was therefore declared compatible with EU rules on state aid.

The project falls within the scope of the European Commission's cultural policy and should help to enhance the distribution of European films, interoperability and accessibility to the collections held by the European digital library *Europeana* (see IRIS 2012-1/4, IRIS 2011-4/6, IRIS 2011-3/5 and IRIS 2008-9/101). The scheme is also "aimed at making European film heritage available to the widest possible audience thanks to new technology".

Press release of the European Commission, 21 March 2012

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