[CH] Programme to Promote Diversity of Films on Offer and Digital Cinema

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On 9 March 2012 the Swiss Ministry of Culture (*Office Fédéral de la Culture* - OFC) recently adopted a programme intended to promote the diversity of films on offer and the digitisation of cinema theatres in Switzerland. Cinema operators switching to digital in 2011 or 2012 and offering a diversified programme will thus be able to receive financial assistance over a five-year period. A maximum amount of CHF 9 million (EUR 7,491,883) has been earmarked for financing these measures during the period from 2011 to 2015. Support from the OFC may not exceed CHF 12 000 (EUR 9,989) per cinema per year, and no more than 50% of the cost of digitisation may be covered. If the supports approved are not sufficient, the OFC will give priority to operators who make the biggest contribution to diversifying the films they offer, given their geographical location. A maximum of six screens per cinema per locality may receive support. Cinema complexes with seven or more screens and companies with more than 25 screens will not receive support. The support granted by the OFC is based on Articles 2 and 49 of the order on promoting cinema (*Ordonnance sur l'encouragement du cinéma* - OECin) (see IRIS 2003-3/26 and IRIS 2006-8/13), under which a financial contribution may be paid to encourage the diversity of offer in cinemas.

The OFC assesses the diversity of programming in cinema theatres on the basis of the number of tickets sold for each film and each cinema. Cinemas scheduling a minimum number of Swiss, European and international films from the less important film-producing countries may also receive support: the threshold is fixed at 50% of tickets sold in large towns, 30% for medium-sized towns, and 20% for small localities. The granting of financial support is also dependent on selling a minimum number of tickets and providing a minimum number of showings of the films. The OFC also takes the geographical origin of the films into account, by applying weightings. The threshold of points for receiving maximum support from the OFC depends on the region where the screen is located. Contributions are reduced or cancelled if the number of showings does not reach the minimum threshold laid down. The level of diversity is recalculated each year on the basis of the films shown during the previous three years in the cinemas receiving support. If programming diversity falls below the required minimum for more than two years, the OFC may suspend or reduce its support, or even demand repayment of contributions already paid.

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Lastly, it should be noted that operators whose cinemas went digital before 1 January 2011, or will not do so before 31 December 2012, may receive reduced financial assistance (CHF 5,000, EUR 4,162) if they meet the diversity criteria laid down by the OFC.

Programme to promote the diversity of films on offer and the digital cinema

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