[DE] Bundestag Committee Approves Increased Barrier-Free Film Provision; FFA Decision in Principle on Film Aid

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Anne Yliniva-Hoffmann
Institute of European Media Law (EMR), Saarbrücken/Brussels

On 23 May 2012, the Ausschuss für Kultur und Medien (Culture and Media Committee) of the German Bundestag (lower house of parliament) voted by a majority to approve a proposal from the coalition parties to increase the provision of barrier-free films.

The proposal began by stating that there were around 9.6 million disabled persons living in Germany, who, according to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, for example, were entitled to participate in artistic and cultural life. For blind and deaf persons, subtitles and audio description helped to provide access to audiovisual works. Although the Filmförderungsgesetz (Film Support Act - FFG) had made provision for support for the production of barrier-free films since 2009 (see IRIS 2009-3/11), so far there was no reliable proof that these rules were being properly implemented. More detailed information should be available following the anticipated review of the application of the UN Convention. The number of applications received for rental support was also small. The existing support available for modernisation work (e.g., digitisation) in cinemas also included measures to promote barrier-free access, such as the provision of wheelchair spaces. However, little response had so far been received to the offer of such support.

Efforts should therefore be made to raise awareness among all stakeholders in the audiovisual sector concerning current needs and to clarify their profitability - which was, in any case, expected in the medium term - by tapping into new target groups. Broadcasters were also obliged to act, particularly bearing in mind that persons with disabilities would have to pay the household licence fee for public service broadcasting from 2013 onwards. Sign language and plain language services should also be expanded.

Information on the effectiveness of the current rules in this area should therefore be taken into account in the planned amendment to the FFG,; awareness of these issues and needs should be raised within the film industry, the provision of barrier-free films and public service television programmes should be stepped up in cooperation with the Bundesländer, and cinema digitisation support programmes should be driven forward (see IRIS 2012-4/18).

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According to reports, the Filmförderungsanstalt (Film Support Office - FFA) has taken a decision in principle under which film aid will, in future, be linked to its barrier-free status. A corresponding amendment to the film aid guidelines could enter into force this autumn, subject to the approval of the FFA authorities.

Mitteilung des BT-Ausschusses für Kultur und Medien vom 23. Mai 2012

http://www.bundestag.de/presse/hib/2012_05/2012_265/04.html

Press release of the Bundestag Culture and Media Committee of 23 May 2012

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