[DE] Culture Committee Adopts Amended Film Support Act

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The Culture Committee of the German Bundestag (lower house of parliament) adopted an amendment to the Filmförderungsgesetz (Film Support Act - FFG) at its final meeting on 15 May 2013. Under the main provision of the amendment, the Filmförderungsanstalt (Film Support Office - FFA) will continue to collect film contributions after the current arrangement expires on 31 December 2013. The amendment also contains a number of changes to the film support criteria.

The collection of film contributions by the FFA remains indispensable, according to the explanatory memorandum of the bill (see IRIS 2010-8/22, IRIS 2011-3/14, IRIS 2011-4/17). The film contributions, paid to the FFA by cinema operators, video companies and television broadcasters according to Articles 66 et seq. FFG, will continue to be levied until 30 June 2016. The success of the contribution system is illustrated by the high viewing figures recorded by films supported by the FFA. For example, in the German-language film sector, FFA-funded films accounted for 94% of viewers of all German productions.

A cut in the level of support for documentary and children's films, which had been discussed during the amendment process, was avoided following comments by the Produzentenallianz (Producers' Alliance) and the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Dokumentarfilm (Association of Documentary Film-Makers). Furthermore, the time limit for reaching the minimum number of viewers to qualify for reference funding was extended from 2.5 to 3 years. Under Articles 22 et seq. FFG, reference funding is available to subsidise the production of a new film if a supported film achieves a certain level of success.

An important change to the funding concept is the obligation to produce barrier-free versions of funded films (see IRIS 2012-7/15). The previous provision of Article 15 FFG was not deemed sufficient, since the production of a barrier-free version was only one of many possible ways of meeting the funding criteria. Now, therefore, an absolute obligation to produce a barrier-free version has been introduced. This is also designed to support the German government's national action plan to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The bill's adoption by the Culture Committee follows intensive negotiations between all the parliamentary parties. The unanimous decision should not only

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ensure that the amendment gets through the Bundestag's legislative process, but should also send out a strong signal for the retention of the film support system and the levying of film contributions. A comprehensive review of the FFG is expected to take place during the next legislative period (September 2013 to September 2017).

Pressemitteilung des Deutschen Bundestages vom 15. Mai 2013

http://www.bundestag.de/presse/hib/2013_05/2013_271/01.html

Press release of the German Bundestag (lower house of parliament) of 15 May 2013

Gesetzentwurf der Bundesregierung vom 19. Februar 2013

http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/17/123/1712370.pdf

Federal Government bill of 19 February 2013

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