[FR] COVID-19: Emmanuel Macron’s plan for culture

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On 6 May, Emmanuel Macron announced a ‘plan for culture’, with measures designed to complement those adopted at the start of the health crisis. Eight days earlier, personalities from the world of art and culture, who said they felt ‘forgotten’ even though they had been severely affected by the lockdown, had written an open letter to the French President in a national newspaper.

The President of the Republic began by granting the key demand put forward by the letter’s signatories, namely that the unemployment benefits paid to so-called ‘intermittents du spectacle’ (people who work on short-term contracts in the performing arts sector) be extended for a year beyond the initial six-month period in which their work was “impossible or severely impaired”, that is, until the end of August 2021. This should come as a relief to the 100 000 ‘intermittents’ who have been unable to work since mid-March, since they normally need to have worked for 507 hours in a 12-month period to qualify for unemployment benefits.

With regard to artists and writers, the French President announced that social security contributions would be waived for four months and that it would be made easier to access the national solidarity fund, which had already paid out EUR 80 million of aid to the cultural sector by the end of April. He added that EUR 50 million would be spent on the Centre national de la musique (National Music Centre), which opened at the start of the year and which is normally funded through taxes levied on show tickets, and that a ‘festival fund’ would be created for all cultural sectors in partnership with the regions.

Emmanuel Macron admitted that the resumption of filming, which was the other key demand from audiovisual producers, would be “very difficult before the end of May”. Since insurance companies could not pay out under traditional policies, the French President announced the creation of a compensation fund with “significant resources” that were currently being finalised with the Centre National du Cinéma et de l’Image Animée (National Centre of Cinematography and the Moving Image – CNC). The fund, which is financed by the regions, insurance companies, the Société pour le Financement du Cinéma et de l’Audiovisuel (company for the financing of films and audiovisual works – SOFICA), banks and other private sector partners, is designed to compensate filmmakers for shoots that were postponed or cancelled.

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The head of state emphasised the need to protect cultural diversity, saying he wanted to encourage and re-launch European co-productions threatened by “big predators” from the United States and China. To this end, he promised to transpose the AVMS Directive by the end of the year so that foreign platforms could be forced to invest in French and European audiovisual production “from 1 January 2021”. The parliamentary examination of the audiovisual reform bill, which includes measures to transpose the AVMS Directive, should have begun at the end of March, but has been postponed indefinitely because of the health crisis. The president also stressed the need to protect cultural assets and businesses (especially the catalogues of films and TV series) from being sold to non-European buyers. The aim is to structure and strengthen financing in a way that develops “the financial capacity of our cultural and creative industries.”

The president therefore promised to “speed up and strengthen” the transposition of the directive, which must in any case be transposed by the member states by 19 September 2020. With this in mind, he announced the creation of a task force to negotiate with the CNC and the Minister of Culture in order to “resolve the outstanding issues”. It is therefore unclear whether it will be possible to transpose the AVMS Directive – and the Copyright Directive, which is also supposed to be implemented by the end of the year – by means of an order.

Conclusion par le président de la République d’un échange, en visioconférence, avec des artistes de différents champs de la création

https://www.elysee.fr/front/pdf/elysee-module-15592-fr.pdf

Conclusion by the President of the Republic of a video-conference discussion with artists from various creative fields

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