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Missing Ring

A couple of excellent East European films and films from the  Pusan Poster Balkan have made their Asian Premiere at the just completed Pusan International Film Festival – Korea (12 October 2007). The Latvian multi-directed production “*VOGELFREI*” together with the ironic Bulgarian documentary “*THE MOSQUITO PROBLEM AND OTHER STORIES*” were some of the recent European movies that have benefited from a relatively new funding scheme: the Film Sales Support (FSS) programme.

This FSS funding scheme, which is addressed to sale agents and producers – is supported by the MEDIA programme, and it is administrated by the Germany-based European Film Promotion.

European production companies and sale agents that are planning to take part at the next edition of the Shanghai International Film Festival or at the next edition of the Pusan International Film Festival Asian should consider applying for this support to the promotion of their films.

The scheme supports a film development-stage that till recently was seldom supported in the ASEM European countries. The artistic director of the Belgrade International Film Festival recalled the regional trend in an interview for the Hollywood Reporter; “*These days, it’s easy to find money to make films, but hard to find the money to promote them internationally*” Miroljub Vuckovic said. Things may begin to change in this field; today, movies from the entire MEDIA programme member-countries are all eligible for the FSS.

The funding initiative is a real breakthrough in the obstacles that European producers faced to get their films sold in Asia. Since the introduction of the funding scheme, it is possible to say that the European film funding-chain is now completed. EU movies are eligible for supportive initiatives that follow the films – from their script development stage, and continue all along to the post-production with supports for the promotion of the films in some of the ASEM Asian most important film festivals and markets.

Demand by European professionals for promotional support to European films seems also steadily growing. A couple of month previous to the Korean event, the Film Sales Support assisted nine companies and their promotional campaigns for ten European films at Shanghai

International Film Festival (SIFF.). The European Film Promotion association led an even larger delegation later in Pusan. This year, professionals have sought FSS for 16 European films – the highest figure since the support started in 2004.

What sort of promotional assistance is involved for the selected European films at these Asian events? In the case of the Pusan film festival, the sale agent or, the producer (when no sale agent is available) of a selected film can count with financial support and also with services that include: advertising campaign in major trade-papers, the hiring of a Korean Press Agent to handle press and interview requests, a reception for the European film industry and an [On-line presentation](#) on the films on the EFP's website.

Because films presented out of Europe will continue to be labelled “European Films” whatever these are made in Luxembourg or Cyprus (just as movies will continue to be labelled “Asian Films” out of Asia whatever these are Chinese or Cambodian) the promotion of a film on an national level is seldom enough especially when smaller countries are concerned. What is the FSS for European films since the majority of the European countries have their own film promotional agencies – many of them being member of the EFP? I asked the question to Jo Muehlberger – EFP Project Manager who accompanied the EFP delegation in Pusan.

“European first-comers at Asian film market – especially those from the smallest countries such as Latvia or Bulgaria – consider the market as a difficult-one. There are cultural and language obstacles that the film industry representatives can meet here. The business culture in Asia is also different. With our long presence in Pusan (EFP comes to Pusan since 1999) we have adapted to its requirements that ask more regular, face-to-face contacts with buyers. Beside our financial support to cover some promotional costs there is another much appreciated aid that is for increasing the visibility of the European films and their representatives during the time of the festival.”

The EFP started promoting European films ten years ago. The uniqueness and the success of its activities have been made possible thanks to two main reasons: EFP has developed intense networking activities with its members and, it practices a democratic system of decision-making where one country has one voice no matter is the country size. EFP developed a model that could inspire some recent films promotion initiatives in Asia, Jo said.

RELATED:

Sales agents and producers planning to submit a film to one of the next selections shall read the detailed guideline for the promotional funding:

[The FSS Guidelines](#)

[The FSS Application form](#)

The Official website of the Bulgarian movie “[THE MOSQUITO PROBLEM AND OTHER STORIES](#)”

By Gyora Gal Glupczynski

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