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France's plan to digitise its film heritage



The European Commission has ruled that a French scheme to support the digitisation of historic cinematographic works is compatible with the EU rules on state aid, inter alia because it helps promote culture while limiting the distortions of competition. The scheme is aimed at making European film heritage available to the widest possible audience thanks to new technology.

Joaquín Almunia, Commission Vice-President in charge of competition policy, said: 'I gladly lend my support to the use of digital technology for the preservation of old films for future generations because I am convinced that this initiative will help to promote the wealth of Europe's film heritage without unduly distorting competition.'

The Commission's investigation has confirmed that the digitisation scheme is an appropriate means of attaining the objective of promoting culture and that the distortion of competition is limited.

The scheme will support the restoration and preservation of works of particular interest in terms of heritage. Short and feature films produced up to 1999 will be eligible, along with historic silent films. A €400 million budget over six years will be set aside for the measure.

In addition, the aid is mainly targeted towards works whose commercial prospects are highly uncertain or very long term. Aid intensity will be on a case-by-case basis taking into account the money-making potential of the work concerned. Owners of film catalogues will subsequently be encouraged to make the digitised works available to the public. Aid applicants will be free to choose the companies to which they wish to attribute the technical work of digitisation and, where necessary, restoration, irrespective of whether those companies are established in a Member State of the European Union or not.

source: Via European Commission Press Release

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