

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg 4 May 1979

Confidential
AS/Cult (31) 2
Or. Fr.

PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE ON CULTURE AND EDUCATION

Cinema and the state

THE EUROPEAN FILM OFFICE: (Bureau Européen du Cinéma)
Information and research instrument at the service of all

(Information note by Claude Degand) (1)

1. The idea, launched in 1957, of providing European film industries with a "Secretariat" or "Office" for the purposes of research, centralisation and the dissemination of information has steadily gained ground in recent years.
2. It was at a meeting in Milan, in 1976 (21-22 April), of senior cinema officials from the EEC countries, convened on the initiative of F de BIASE, the competent official for the cinema in Rome, that the first reactions came to details of the project supplied by Mr VIOT, Director General of the Centre National de Cinématographie (France), and myself. At the end of that year, Paris sent the other 8 capitals a document describing the aims and practical arrangements for the establishment and functioning of such a Bureau. The following year in "Unicinema", a review published by UNAC, Mario de PAULIS, an associate of F de BIASE, dealing with the cinema in Europe, mentioned, among the measures recommended, the setting up of a "European Central Information Office". In May 1973, in the "Spécial-Europe" issue of "Film Français", J M DEHOUSSE, Belgian Minister of French Culture, expressed strong support for the planned establishment of a European Film Office (BEC).
3. In the interval, sustained efforts have been made by the French side to demonstrate the advantages of a permanent research and information service for all those concerned, directly or indirectly, by European co-operation in the audio-visual and film area. Evidence of this is provided by the favourable reception given to the "Lettre d'Informations Européennes" a bulletin published by the CNC since May 1975 which now has a circulation of some 300, its readership including prominent persons, associations and administrative departments dealing with the cinema in Europe.

(1) Published in "Film Français" May 1978



4. It was in this context that the Belgian Minister for French Culture decided, in 1977, to unite his efforts with those being made unilaterally by Paris. As a result, and despite both the unfavourable political situation and the administrative obstacles inherent in any original scheme, a working nucleus known as the "BUREAU EUROPEEN DU CINEMA" (BEC) "European Film Office", will start functioning in Brussels in the spring of 1979. At the beginning of the year, under an Act to combat youth unemployment, the "Place Ste. Gudule" (1) engaged three persons and included in the 1979 budget an appropriation, common to the two Ministries of Culture, for the functioning of the BEC. The Belgian Minister of Dutch Culture has also agreed in principle to a further three appointments. The Bureau will therefore now have a staff of six, all of them bilingual but with different training. The question of premises is to be settled in the month of April.

5. The immediate priority task falling to the person in charge of the BEC will therefore be to train this team and make it operational as speedily as possible. It will be necessary at the same time to inventory the various needs as regards information, studies etc, for it is imperative not only to see that none of these needs is neglected, but also, while eliminating duplication, to define priorities so as to ensure that the most urgent and important matters are not inadvertently relegated to second place. Consequently it is essential, in the interests of efficacy, that, as soon as the Brussels nucleus becomes operational, West-European film organisations and associations should be asked to submit lists of the documentary material which they consider necessary to enable them to exercise their functions more efficiently within the European film community.

6. The compiling of statistical data of all kinds will obviously be a prime necessity, and involves a continuous process of objective classification and dissemination. Similar activities will clearly also be necessary in other sectors (working conditions, taxation, export, relations with the other media and the other cultural sectors, etc), not forgetting the potential impact on the film sector of the work of the European institutions - first and foremost the EEC, but also the Council of Europe (2).

7. But since informing others implies being well-informed oneself, all those concerned with the smooth functioning of the BEC will be asked to specify, in addition to their own requirements, the documentary material which they will be able, themselves, to transmit regularly or occasionally.

8. Once these initial organizational problems have been settled, the Brussels team, working in parallel with the Paris-CNC, will centralise and catalogue the documentation available to all for consultation at any time. The formidable language obstacle must be overcome if possible. The "Lettre d'Informations Européennes", too, will have to be improved and enriched without being overburdened; the monthly publication date must be rigorously observed, but this need not prevent special additional numbers from being published as events demand.

(1) The address of the Belgian Ministry of Culture

(2) As a result of the Lisbon Symposium (June 1978) on "The Cinema and the State", the Council of Europe and the EEC are to intensify co-operation in matters relating to culture and the media

9. Lastly, is there any need for a reminder that the Franco-Belgian authorities will be issuing an appeal to the other European countries to unite their efforts with those of Paris and Brussels? The ultimate aim is to make the BEC a flexible, manageable instrument designed, by the swift reliable service it provides, to ease the work of all those who, in an increasingly complex economic situation, bear responsibility for the future of the cinema in Europe.