

A Report of *Into the Future* 2012

Think Tank about the collaboration between the Professional Training Providers and the European Funders, Policy Makers and Sponsors

28 to 30 March 2012 in Oslo, Norway

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Andrzej Wajda Master School of Film Directing

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Introduction

The Audiovisual Training Coalition (ATC) is an organisation which brings together independent training providers to discuss programmes, methodologies, collaborations, policy and finance and to further the interests of its members.

Into the Future, a think tank about training in a changing world, was organised for the first time by ATC in June 2010 to provide an opportunity for a group of training organisations, funders and media professionals to brainstorm about professional training over the next decade.

Into the Future 2012 was a continuation of the first edition, the aim of which was to focus on the relationships between the training organisations and European funders and policy makers.

All participants were established professionals in their field and actively contributed to the

discussions. The film professionals and funding bodies' representatives were encouraged to openly share their visions about changes and needs in the audiovisual industry over the next decade and to discuss the evolutionary role to be played by professional training in relation to industry priorities.



It took place in Oslo in March 2012 and gathered 43 professionals from 18 countries including: 18 representatives of training organisations, 17 professionals from leading funding institutions and 5 invited industry professionals. Day 1 featured presentations from training providers and funders. Day 2 was a day of discussion and brainstorming within five groups with subsequent feedback and plenary sharing of opinions. Day 3 was a half day during which representatives of the training organisations reflected on *Into the Future 2012* and future ATC activities.

This concise report of the first two days of *Into the Future 2012* aims to provide a summary of the main issues discussed during the think tank together with some conclusions.

Main objectives

1. To explore the experiences, policies and priorities of the film funds in Europe and the role played by professional training in a quickly changing industry.
2. To analyse the significant differences between countries' national and regional film training policies.
3. To discuss with decision makers from the public funds of countries where professional training is little supported how to increase their interest in, and contribution to, professional training.
4. To discuss the financing of professional training and the potential of new sources of funding.



The training providers' point of view

The following trends and issues were identified by representatives of the training organisations:

1. Cuts in funding at national and regional levels accompanied by a present lack of private funding.



2. Considerable cultural differences and needs among the European countries.
3. The development of international, i.e. beyond Europe, training programmes and the birth of the MEDIA Mundus fund are very significant trends.
4. Considerable technological changes and developments in production and distribution and the growth of cross media programmes make it vital for training programmes to keep abreast of industry needs. In particular to understand the place of cross-media in training programmes.
5. Funders tend to be increasingly territorially focused.
6. Lack of dialogue in the industry and between funders and trainers about training needs, priorities and policies. Sometimes lack of knowledge about the role of training, and its relevance to developing a sustainable industry, amongst funders.
7. The difficulty of developing new training programmes. If it is agreed by trainers and funders that professional training is key for a sustainable audiovisual industry in the future, funders at all levels should contribute to the research and development of professional training programmes.
8. Several blocks to financing professional training were identified: annual contract make long term planning impossible; the difficulty of meeting conflicting aims and criteria between funders for the same programme; competition across Europe for partners; the problems of attracting private finance.

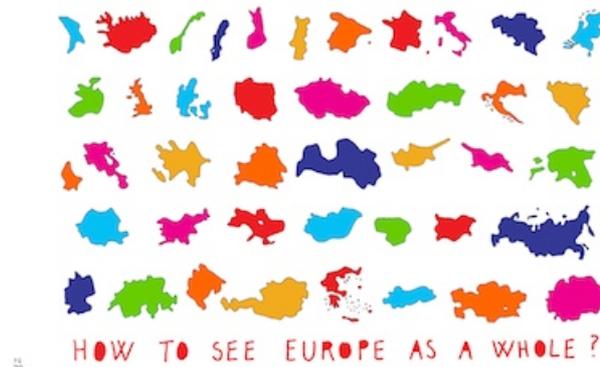
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The public funders' point of view

The following trends, comments and points of view were expressed by representatives from a variety of funding organisations:

1. There are very considerable differences in the history and provision of professional training between European countries and regions. Europe cannot be considered as one similar block in this respect. On the national public side, several countries in southern Europe have a very low provision and level of interest. Professional training tends to be much more respected and supported in the English-speaking and Nordic countries, Germany and Switzerland. In Eastern and Central Europe, it has taken time for this region to take professional training into consideration: experience has been uneven and varied. Some countries have issued new film laws, others have experienced severe

financial problems and, apart from giving grants to their professionals to participate in European training programmes, it has often been impossible for them to have a real training strategy.



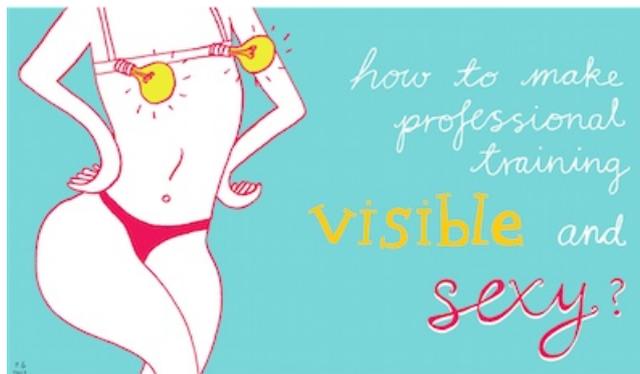
2. Few European countries have a strong training policy (such as UK, Ireland, Norway, Switzerland), allocate a specific budget for it, appoint a training person or create a training department within the film institution.
3. Several funders acknowledged that they should dedicate more time to understanding their professionals' needs and knowing the professional training offer at a European level better.
4. Regional funds tend to be driven by the economic impact in their region. However, many have shown an increasing interest in professional training over the last decade.
5. Many funders felt that the changing industry and market raises complex issues, making it difficult to know which developments to prioritise in order to answer not only the current but also the future needs of their professionals. They also noted that film institutions are often slow to respond to industrial changes.
6. Professional trainers should become more flexible and organic to face the new challenges of this ever-changing audiovisual industry.
7. Are there enough cross-disciplinary programmes? Should training take more account of audience orientated films?
8. There is a lack of diversity among the pool of experts participating in professional training workshops ("we see always the same faces!").
9. European training programmes are not sufficiently cost-effective compared to national and regional ones. This can make them unappealing or simply too costly for funders.
10. Good professional training is extremely valuable. It encourages professionals to question themselves, improve their skills, share and compare experiences with peers, get inspired by them and identify the possible developments or changes to be brought to their strategy and plan of action. Professional training does contribute to the development of professional networks and bridges throughout Europe and across continents and to a more sustainable audiovisual industry.



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Public funders' feedback to training providers

1. Have a clear business strategy and research prior to meeting potential partners: approach funds with which a partnership can be relevant.
2. Find professional spokespersons to make the first approach: funders can be more easily convinced by local professionals explaining the benefits of a programme.
3. Improve the marketing and branding of training organisations and professional training in general.



4. Become a source of information on the trends of the industry. ATC could gather the data of all training organisations as well as the national and regional funds since the existing European surveys are very expensive.

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Conclusions, Recommendations and First Results

1. "We are all on the same boat": an ever changing industry should be an innovative, collaborative and supportive industry".



2. General agreement that professional training is a strong ally to the audiovisual industry, an essential laboratory to explore new developments and models, especially in times of significant technological changes.
3. It is necessary to reform the way that professional training is understood in the industry. It needs to be seen as an integral and necessary element rather than a possible option.
4. In addition to improved and modern communication tools, training organisations should do more lobbying, especially country by country. This could assist funds audiovisual funds to increase politicians' and decision makers' awareness, interest and potential support.
5. If professional training is accepted as part of the film chain, it should be on the agenda of the film institutions with a clear strategy and a budget allocated to it. Funders could use professional training more to develop synergies with other departments such as development, production, European and international affairs.
6. European training organisations need to continue to prove to funders the added value their programmes can bring to their film professionals and industries as compared to national or local initiatives.
7. In order to develop fruitful, organic collaborations between training providers and funders, it is essential to maintain a regular dialogue and to be aware of each other's needs and priorities. As described in some of the case study presentations, new initiatives can be launched jointly by a training organisation and a funder based on common concerns and a gap to be filled.



8. Despite the current difficult funding environment, national public funders remain the first partners for training providers with the regional funds playing an increasingly

valuable role.

9. The first result of this conference has been the creation of a Training Working Group, located in the pan-European organisation CineRegio, with the aim of: maintaining a close relationship with ATC and encouraging regional funds to share their experiences, ideas and needs; to provide ATC with a list of the priority needs of their members. Representatives of national funds have also clearly expressed their wish to pursue further discussions with professional training organisations and to maintain a focus on this sector of the industry.



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Illustrations: Pernille Gulbransen

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