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TRAINING ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Key issues and debates for the audiovisual training sector are currently as follows:

- **Political support.** Professional training is often seen as an option rather than an integral and necessary component of audiovisual policies. Few European countries (UK, Ireland, Norway, Switzerland) have a strong training policy, allocate a specific budget for it and appoint a training person or create a training department within national film bodies. How to strengthen the place of training on the agenda of film institutions, make them develop a clear training strategy and allocate a specific budget to it? How to increase politicians' and decision makers' awareness, interest and support for training? How to position professional training as part of the film education (audience building) policy? How to raise public funds both structural and project-based?
- **Local / international dichotomy.** The Commission wants 'European added value', trainees demand international expertise, the impact and profitability of the industry is linked to productions making the most of international opportunities, but at the same time local/ multi-local experts and approaches are necessary to make training more operational and more efficient (there are considerable cultural differences and needs among European countries). What is the right balance between local knowledge/trainers and international expertise? How to increase the diversity of participants from Europe and beyond? How to develop international training sessions outside the EU?
- **New training needs.** Training is often project-based with additional modules focused on specific film or industry fields (production, regulation, distribution, feature, documentary, etc.). But training also needs to cover career development and company management skills. In general training has to meet the current needs of the industry and is a driver of innovation. 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, to train on new market opportunities, new audience behavior and new audiovisual formats. How to coach trainees efficiently on social media, viral marketing, crowd-funding, community management, series, games, etc.? How to identify and collaborate with the experts in the new fields?

- **Training accessibility.** The more people benefit from training the better. The dissemination of training to more users is being asked by the Commission and by trainees from the poorer countries especially outside the EU. There is thus a need to develop cheaper offers, for example by developing online training resources, making trainers travel rather than trainees, offering discount/support for trainees from poorer countries, etc. What is the right balance between cheap training for broad audiences and tailored, deeper, individual training involving more time and resources? What are the main targets to increase the user base of training programmes? How to address the issue of scholarship/ responsibility of national funds vs. EU level?
- **Prospective research.** There is general agreement that training is an essential laboratory to explore new developments and models, especially in times of significant technology change. A target 5% of programmes overall costs should be invested in R&D. But the changing industry raises varied and complex issues, making it difficult to prioritize developments and to define action (financial risk, time waste, etc.). Individual training organizations are also reluctant to share their unique know-how as they need to differentiate from the competition. What are the R&D topics that can be jointly addressed by all players? The needs of participants? The pedagogies and tools to address those needs?
- **Partnerships.** Erasmus+ aims to raise the level of initial education, to improve the skills of trainers and to encourage innovation. Film literacy (audience building) is generally associated to school education rather than professional training, but there is a need to 'train the trainers'. Several organizations from the audiovisual sector also feature some topical training for their members through workshops, seminars or master classes even when this is not part of their primary mission. How to address these needs? How to differentiate/cooperate with other organizations?
- **Funding.** Several financial obstacles are limiting the development of professional training: annual contracts, which make long term planning impossible; the difficulty of meeting conflicting aims and criteria between funders for the same programmes; competition across Europe for partners; the propension of funders to be territorially focused; and the difficulty to attract private finance. Generally, European training programmes are also less cost-effective than national and regional ones, making them less appealing or too costly for funders. How to increase financial resources for training from new support bodies, private sponsors and current/new users?

CURRENT ATC DEBATES

Key issues discussed at ATC past meetings are as follows:

- **Training vs. project development.** Audiovisual training can rely on a theoretical approach or a project-driven approach in which experts coach trainees to help them develop, improve or market specific projects. Theoretical training addresses broader audiences and is less expensive (same content for all participants) but coaching often leads to more sustainable business results. What is the right balance between the two? How can they combine more efficiently? Is theoretical training the target for larger-audience training, while project-driven training would be closer to consulting?
- **Selective training vs. broad networking.** Creative Europe seems to move from a project-based approach towards more networking: reaching out to larger groups seems to become an end in itself rather than developing content-driven contacts: the output, however, is generally bigger in terms of sustainable business with smaller and more selective groups guided through the training process. What is the right balance between small residential workshops and broad training sessions?
- **National vs. international training funding.** Training programmes are manifold and Creative Europe funding capacity is limited. Financial support must therefore be geared towards the most relevant training programmes, those with real 'European added-value'. How can national/regional funds and European funds achieve a better complementarity? What should be their respective roles and objectives?
- **Local vs. international expertise.** The practical experience shows that often, especially in Eastern Europe, international experts and their experience are in demand for training. Europe, though, is a mosaic of countries and market realities are not homogenous across borders. What should be the balance between international and local expertise in training programmes?
- **Costs and access to training programmes.** Training programmes are expensive for some participants, especially from Southern Europe. Financial support is also limited for people from non-EU member states. How could the cost of training programmes be reduced and national support for participants be increased?
- **Articulation between higher education and training.** Audiovisual education and professional training build on the same bedrock of knowledge, but synergies between them are under-exploited. EU's Erasmus+ programme also encourages cooperation between education institutions and business players, geographical mobility and development of new ideas or contents. How could training organizations and higher education bodies cooperate more closely and develop partnerships?

- **New training fields.** The audiovisual sector is evolving fast and new methods to tell stories or to reach audiences are emerging. Training courses must therefore cover new fields of expertise such as social media, viral marketing, crowd-funding or community management to meet the needs of the industry. But what should be their place and their weight in training programmes?
- **New training formats.** New training formats are now using digital approaches, bringing together real production and training, creating interdisciplinary and international labs, building bridges between old and new media, creatives and technicians, financiers and lawyers. What are the performances of these new training initiatives? Which are the most successful and should be replicated?
- **New trainers.** Training programmes should focus more on distribution, marketing and audience development - bringing festival programmers and distributors more significantly into the training mix or introducing “audience designers”. Context for films to travel more effectively can be supported through EU training providers having a better understanding of the domestic markets of non-EU partnering countries.
- **New trainees.** The central target group of audiovisual training is (and will remain) the creative triangle producer-writer-director. But training should also address other stakeholders involved in the creative or business side of the production/distribution chain: decision-makers, funders, digital technicians and managers, broadcasters, etc. What are the needs of these various targets? How to address them?
- **Cultural differences between countries.** A producer in Europe has a different role than a producer in China, India, etc. It is essential to give training participants a clear understanding of the cultural differences between various parts of the world in contracting, financing and definition of roles, to establish common points of reference to and then to introduce programming that effectively bridges differences.
- **Entrepreneurship training.** Coaching for professionals and projects is good, but coaching in company development and management is also vital to ensure the viability of production companies. Training sessions for producers should thus include more entrepreneurship courses as part of their syllabus (business models, business plans, audience strategies, negotiation skills, etc.).
- **International programmes.** Europe needs to reach beyond its borders and to develop international to thrive in the globalized world. Training programmes should therefore explore the domestic challenges and distribution methods in non-EU markets to better understand how EU films can reach those audiences (and how non-EU films reach European audiences). Training providers could explore collaboration with large and active markets such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand or Singapore.
- **Evaluation, research and development.** Training programmes should be evaluated in respect to the evolution of careers, of projects and of companies based on surveys among participants and internal and external reports. Programmes should also invest in research and development on a regular basis to secure constant creative updating, prepared via surveys, external expertise and think tanks.

- **Sharing and dissemination of knowledge.** Dissemination of market intelligence is important beyond the delivery of training programmes. Best practices exchanges are also vital to cultivate dialogue among exhibitors, sales agents and distributors. How to encourage knowledge sharing on a continuous basis? How to develop permanent feedback from market players on what is working and what is not?
- **Financing policy.** The pressure on public film funding has increased significantly in the current financial crisis. Training providers and programmes, however, need sustainable financing to play their role within the industry and to help the European audiovisual sector get stronger and develop. How to encourage constructive dialog between European institutions, national/regional funders, training providers and professionals and help them build a long-term concerted financing policy?
- **Cultural vs. commercial dichotomy.** A market-oriented approach of training is relevant and necessary to preserve and develop the competitiveness and economic potential of the European audiovisual industry. But creativity must also be at the heart of audiovisual training. How to combine for creative exploration of projects in training programmes in addition to the business-focused elements?
- **Studio' programmes.** Co-operative processes (between writer-producer-director, or producer-distributor, or the workflow from camera to post-production) are decisive on and between all levels of the industry, and should therefore be emphasized within training activities. New training programmes should introduce 'studios' that will allow directors and actors to explore material without fear of failure.

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