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**SAVE ARTHOUSE CINEMAS - ENSURE FILM DIVERSITY
CICA E appeals to all levels of government to support cinemas**

CICA E, the international confederation of arthouse cinemas, is very concerned about the future of cinema as a cultural venue. "If effective immediate measures for our sector do not take effect soon, bankruptcies can be expected" says Christian Bräuer, President of CICA E. Traditional cinemas and arthouse cinemas in particular, with their high level of social and cultural commitment, do not just follow the principle of profit maximisation. They do not have necessary reserves. At the same time, they are now burdened by high fixed costs.

Tackling the pandemic is a challenge for society. It entails responsibilities for all of us. The same applies to the economic consequences. "Here, of course, we are also dependent on state aid," says Christian Bräuer. "We need aid programmes specially tailored to the situation of cultural venues and arthouse cinemas, otherwise there is a danger that in the end many will disappear forever and culture will fall through the net."

With regard to the European Union, the CICA E demands that at least two per cent of the billion-euro recovery fund would have to go to the European cultural industry. Member States must ensure that these funds are also made available to cinemas and the film industry.

Moreover, the states themselves, on all continents, must provide massive support for their cinemas. The emergency and revival plan for French cinema presented by the Minister of Culture, Roselyne Bachelot, at the congress of the French national exhibitors' association in Deauville on 23 September, and the German government's Neustart Kultur programme could serve as a model for other countries in this respect. By providing more than 100 million euros each for the cinemas and the diversity of the measures, these plans represent a strong and concrete response which will help to preserve the entire industry and whose rapid implementation will enable cinemas to resist at a time of unprecedented global crisis.

CICA E is advocating that, ideally, 4% of the European Recovery Fund's resources should be reserved for the hard-hit cultural and creative industries in the Member States. This would be proportionate with the 4.2% of EU GDP and the 8.7 million jobs that the cultural and creative sectors represent.

One thing is certain: Superheroes, Star Wars and everything that algorithms reward will continue to exist after the crisis. But what about culturally sophisticated films? Phenomena such as PARASITE, SHOPLIFTERS or THE SQUARE show how decisive film festivals and the exclusive start in the cinema are for the success of a film across all release windows and, in the case of exceptional accomplishments, over many years and decades. Arthouse cinemas not only bring cinematic art to the neighbourhood. Through their passion and commitment, a film can become a phenomenon. Works like those mentioned above would never have been seen by so many people if they had been exclusively screened online. These films need every single cinema and every single guest, in order that they can succeed. Otherwise we might lose an entire art form.

In most countries, arthouse cinemas are now open again because as parts of their neighbourhood they are part of the basic cultural services. However, the high level of safety requirements and a lack of attractive films (still) make commercial activity extremely difficult. Some of the audience are cautious and avoid visiting events in enclosed rooms. The so-called second wave is currently leading to increased safety requirements being re-imposed in some cases or even to cinemas being closed again.

Cinema is a place of culture and, in our understanding, a place of elementary discourse in our society. Culture is not a luxury good, but the yeast in the dough of society. Especially in times of crisis, art and critical debate are more important than ever for a free, democratic community.

We don't know when there will be something like normal operations in the film industry again. It's clear, however, that it will be a long time before we celebrate the diversity of the "seventh art" at festivals in the usual way, before something like normality on the set or in the cinema is possible again. Even after the resumption of cinema operations, we are still a long way from business-as-usual. Because regulations do not allow for full capacity, because older audiences and high risk groups in particular will avoid being together with strangers in enclosed rooms for even longer, because festivals are lacking as platforms and showcases for film art, and because in view of the above, studios and distributors are postponing the release of more attractive films or are giving them directly to streaming platforms.

Where market power is concentrated, artistic diversity suffers. The main focus of the entire film industry must therefore be to secure the economic survival of as many arthouse cinemas and other film industry actors as possible in the current crisis. In recent weeks, arthouse cinemas have proven that they are prepared to make tough decisions in the interest of securing other branches of the industry.

"We believe in the fundamental importance of cinemas. Media use continues to differentiate, but cinema has a unique strength in digital times: the analogue venue and the community," says Christian Bräuer. Or as Christopher Nolan commented in the Washington Post: "*The past few weeks have been a reminder, if we needed one, that there are parts of life that are far more important than going to the movies. But, when you consider what the theatres provide, maybe not so many as you might think.*"

The International Confederation of Arthouse Cinemas is a non-profit organisation aiming at promoting cultural diversity in cinemas and festivals. It was founded in 1955 by the national arthouse cinema associations of Germany, France, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Today it counts more than 2000 members and 4000 screens across 46 countries, representing 11 national and regional associations, 61 individual cinemas, 14 festivals and 4 special members.

Christian Bräuer is the president of the CICA E, president of AG Kino, the German arthouse cinema association and CEO of the Yorck Kinogruppe, which operates 14 arthouse cinemas in Berlin.

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