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22 Ministers of Culture defend “our European and cultural sovereignty” from Cannes 2025

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Cultural Ministers of 22 European countries published a letter during Cannes 2025. They called for strategic actions as “a collective response in favor of a Europe of Culture, of which cinema must be a central component”.

by Eirini Polydorou

The 22 Ministers of Culture joined forces and published a common letter-initiative calling for strategic actions on the “two urgent issues” of the co-production and distribution of European cinema, stating that “creating better together and sharing our cinema more effectively - will be a priority for us on the European agenda in the months ahead”.

European Diversity is a Challenge and an Advantage

The Ministers noted that “European cinema only accounts for a third of cinema admissions in Europe - and a little less for streaming service audiences”.

They traced the cause for this to the diversity that is inherent to European cultural identity, and underscored that "if each country remains attached to its national cinema, it is, in fact, the Hollywood imaginary that European audiences have more in common - and the Asian imaginary for new generations".

They suggested transforming the challenge to an advantage for European cultural sovereignty in today’s threatening environment. “The challenge that must unite us today is to make this cinematic diversity an integral part of a European cultural sovereignty, in a context where the threat of a commercial war imposed on the cultural sectors is emerging, the cinema in particular”, as said in the letter. They considered diversity as of great potential, saying that “We're sitting on a

gold mine, and we are not sufficiently aware of it”.

"We have the Will" and Four Aims for European Filmography

According to the Ministers: “When it comes to cinema, Europe believes in diversity, surprise, and sometimes shock”. They expressed that they believe in “in small cinematic miracles that bring people together across borders... in films that don't appeal to everyone”.

They concluded by highlighting the need to “broaden the horizons of what is possible” through four actions, the following;

“1. encouraging European audiences to become more familiar with the filmography of their close neighbors".

2. moving away from the assuption that the wordwide reach of cinema is only due to cinematography, "pretending not to see the financial, commercial and even political armada required for it to conquer every port. Cinema is an art; it is also an industry... getting films to circulate beyond their borders requires a coordinated strategy and a strong political will. We have that will, now more than ever."

3. combining efforts "to give greater support to the distribution of films throughout Europe, whether they be recent works or heritage cinema... on every distribution medium in Europe... promoted and editorialized".

4. continuing co-productions of "common references, shared narratives and familiar faces".

They finally celebrated the power of European cinema collaborations. As they said, "Just recently, in the cinema and audiovisual sectors, we have demonstrated what we are capable of when we join forces: the films L'Enlèvement or The Square, the animated film Flow, the documentary Timestamp, the series Parlement or Kaboul are all gold nuggets born of European collaboration and proof that our filmmakers know how to do it all.”

Background

The letter came amidst a foggy climate as the 78th Cannes Film Festival got finalized with mixed feelings for the Europeans. Creators, sector representatives and policy-makers celebrated for the European films showcased. However, celebrations were shadowed by Trump’s announcement about tariffs over

European films, as well as by rumours questioning the future of the funding of European films by the Commission.

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