

2.4. considers that the successor programme to Culture 2000 should focus its activities on local and regional level activities rather than major, large-scale actions in this way allowing increased participation;

2.5. calls on the Commission to ensure that regional and minority languages are integrated into mainstream programmes like Culture 2000 and its successor programme in the spirit of the upcoming EU language strategy and action plan;

2.6. judges that the future programme of cultural co-operation should not only allow but actively encourage interdisciplinary projects;

2.7. urges the Commission to simplify its administrative procedures in line with the principle of proportionality;

2.8. calls on the Commission to ensure that in future, promoters of selected projects receive EC funding quickly and are not subject to undue delays which can be disastrous for smaller operators;

2.9. requests that the project selection process be improved with the jury chosen on the basis of their being specialists in their field and projects selected only on artistic merit.

Brussels, 9 October 2003.

The President

of the Committee of the Regions

Albert BORE

Opinion of the Committee of the Region on:

- a **'Proposal for a decision of the EP and of the Council modifying Council Decision No 821/2000/EC of 20 December 2000 on the implementation of a programme to encourage the development, distribution and promotion of European audiovisual works (MEDIA Plus — Development, Distribution and Promotion)'**, and
- a **'Proposal for a decision of the EP and of the Council modifying Decision No 163/2001/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 January 2001 on the implementation of a training programme for professionals in the European audiovisual programme industry (MEDIA-Training) (2001-2005)'**

(2004/C 23/06)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

having regard to the Proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council modifying Council Decision No 821/2000/EC of 20 December 2000 on the implementation of a programme to encourage the development, distribution and promotion of European audiovisual works (MEDIA Plus — Development, Distribution and Promotion (COM(2003) 191 final — 2003/0067 (COD)));

having regard to the proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 January 2001 on the implementation of a training programme for professionals in the European audiovisual programme industry (MEDIA-Training) (2001-2005) (COM(2003) 188 final — 2003/0064 (COD));

having regard to decision of the Council of 5 May 2003 to consult it on this subject, under the first paragraph of Article 265 and Article 150 of the Treaty establishing the European Community;

having regard to the decision of its President of 23 January 2003 to instruct its Commission for Culture and Education to draw up an Opinion on this subject;

having regard to its draft Opinion (CdR 166/2003 rev.) adopted on 11 July 2003 by the Commission for Culture and Education (rapporteur: Mrs Susie Kemp, Member of West Berkshire Council (UK/EPP);

Whereas:

- 1) The Council and the European Parliament by Decision No 163/2001/EC established the programme MEDIA-Training, a training programme for professionals in the European audiovisual programme industry, to run from 1 January 2001 to 31 December 2005;
- 2) The Council by Decision No 821/2000/EC established the programme MEDIA Plus, a programme to encourage the development, distribution and promotion of European audiovisual works, to run from 1 January 2001 to 31 December 2005;
- 3) It is essential to ensure the continuity of Community policy for the support of the European audiovisual sector in view of the objectives followed by the Community under Article 150 of the Treaty,

adopted the following Opinion at its 51st plenary session, held on 9 October 2003.

1. Committee of the Regions' views

labour to fill new jobs within this highly dynamic and creative service activity;

The Committee of the Regions

1.1. welcomes the extension of both the Media Plus and Media Training Programmes for a further year with a view to establishing new programmes from 2007;

1.5. recognises the potential for the Media Programmes to encourage a greater understanding of the cultural diversity within the EU Member States and Regions which will be ever more important with the enlarged Union. Furthermore, the CoR recognises the significant potential for the promotion of linguistic diversity, particularly for minority languages;

1.2. shares the Commission's view that due to enlargement a number of important elements will entail changes to Community action in the audiovisual sector and future programmes must be adapted to take account of these changes. It is essential that the impetus of these programmes is not lost;

1.6. agrees with the continued Media Plus aim of enhancing the potential of countries or regions with a low audiovisual production capacity and/or with a limited geographic and linguistic area and recognises the continued importance of this aim within the extended programme;

1.3. recognises that the European Film Industry remains a minority industry and action through Media Plus and Media Training programmes are vital. There is a continual need for European Film, television and multimedia industries to become more competitive and for a favourable environment to be created in order to combat the ever increasing global competition. Fragmentation of the European Film Industry is a weakness and must be overcome through greater networking initiatives and cooperation between those involved in the audiovisual industry;

1.7. recognises and welcomes the opportunities that Media Plus offers to providing a rapid response to the dramatic speed with which technological changes are occurring particularly in the audiovisual and communication industries;

1.4. recognises the strong potential for growth identified in the Media Plus programme and the opportunity to create more than 300 000 extra highly qualified jobs in the audiovisual industry. It is hoped that this number will be increased by the extension of the Media Programmes as an important function of these Programmes is to ensure there is sufficient skilled

1.8. welcomes the continued commitment that the Media Programmes give to lifelong learning and EU wide vocational training. The extension of the programmes will continue to allow the training and skilling of people working within the audiovisual and communication industries;

1.9. believes there is still a need for better dissemination of information on Media Plus and Media Training and urges the Commission to consider ways in which the Media Desks can be enhanced and the numbers of the Desks increased. Local Authorities can be actively involved in this aspect through municipal buildings such as Libraries and Community Centres;

1.10. welcomes the increase in the proportional budget for the Media Plus programme but queries the less than proportional increase for the Media Training programme;

1.11. welcomes the forthcoming evaluation of both current programmes and looks forward to receiving the outcomes. The CoR will be particularly interested in the achievements of the programmes in respect of securing a significant number of jobs, evidence of achieving a much wider understanding of cultural diversity together with the promotion of minority languages.

2. The Committee of the Regions' Recommendations

The Committee of the Regions

2.1. underlines that the extended Media Plus programme must have a greater emphasis on disseminating information both in respect of attracting new initiatives but also publicising those projects which are currently underway;

2.2. stresses the need for Media Desks to continue to be developed and the number increased throughout the EU. A greater emphasis needs to be given to the collaboration between Media Desks and local and regional authorities to ensure local and regional industries are well aware of the opportunities that the Media Programmes offer and provide;

2.3. underlines that there is still a need for more involvement by local and regional authorities who can instigate greater collaboration between the different strands of the audiovisual industry. Regional consortia made up of those involved in the training, funding, production and distribution

of the industry should be promoted. Libraries, Community Centres and other Municipal buildings offer opportunities to raise awareness and offer public access to audiovisual material, both past and present. The CoR continues to call for consideration to be given under the Media Plus programme for the funding of IT in public buildings to facilitate this and proposes that in the new 2007 programme, pilot projects are considered;

2.4. calls for the Media Plus Website to be further developed. The CoR re-emphasises the opportunities that a Media Plus website could bring particularly with dissemination of information across the enlarged EU. The website should promote the network of European film and television schools, together with information on training and other opportunities;

2.5. continues to support the call for standardisation of vocational qualifications across the EU and hopes that the new Media Programmes which will commence in 2007 contain measures to move towards this;

2.6. stresses that greater development and promotion of EU wide training programmes, together with greater development of EU wide training bodies and initiatives, need to be achieved through the Media Training programme. The CoR recognises this can be continued through the extended programme but would hope the new 2007 programme will provide better measures to achieve more EU trainers;

2.7. calls for the Media Plus and Media Training programmes to continue with the basic principle of equal opportunities to encourage any initiatives to achieve a more equal gender balance;

2.8. recommends that the design of audiovisual material within the Media Plus and Media Training programmes takes particular account of persons with disabilities.

Brussels, 9 October 2003.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions
Albert BORE