

# **Training programme for professionals in the European audiovisual programme industry (MEDIA-Training): extension until 2006**

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The Council held an exchange of views on the basis of the Commission's mid-term evaluation of the MEDIA Plus and MEDIA Training audiovisual programmes (2001-2005) and on the basis of a Presidency document. That document noted the lack of coherence between the different audiovisual policies and the serious consequences for this sector, as competition from third countries in Europe resulted to a considerable extent from the lack of investment by the industry in the distribution, exploitation and development of works. The European industry was in some disarray faced with the multiplication of audiovisual services brought about by the introduction of digital technologies. The Presidency submitted three topics for discussion by the Council: - integration of the new Member States into the mainstream actions of the MEDIA programme (training, development, distribution): the acceding States, supported by a majority of Member States, wanted positive discrimination in favour of the future Member States, in the form of more flexible eligibility criteria for funding audiovisual programmes, particularly in the field of training, and preferential transitional measures for the acceding States; - incorporation of digital technology in MEDIA actions through the development of the current pilot projects: the majority of Member States noted the importance of digital technology in the audiovisual sector and the speed at which it was developing; - access to finance by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the audiovisual sector in partnership with the European Investment Bank; a majority of Member States noted how difficult it was for SMEs to gain access to this sector, emphasising the precarious nature of their financial situation, which frequently depended on the success of a single project. Commissioner Reding said she would be presenting a proposal for a "new generation" Decision for in the first quarter of 2004 which would cover regulatory aspects and support policies for the audiovisual sector for the period 2007-2013 (MEDIA). She emphasised the importance of this instrument in the past, noting that in recent years 90% of films distributed outside their country of origin had received MEDIA support. Two proposals for Decisions extending the current MEDIA Plus programme for a further year (2006) are currently being considered by the Council and the European Parliament.