



Members of the European Parliament

Ms Mariya Gabriel
Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
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Subject: Blocking of finances in the Slovenian national Film production

We, the undersigned Members of the European Parliament, are addressing you to **express your concern and propose action to help to unblock financing for Slovenian national Film production enforced by Slovenian Government, which are against European democratic values and freedom of creativity.**

In the times, when the whole world is fighting the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic, and the European countries are announcing their lockdowns, most citizens are relying on various television platforms to entertain them while managing to outlast the second wave in their homes. As the whole cultural sector, the sector of the film industry and audio-visual sector have been immensely affected by the pandemic, resulting in loss of income all around the European Union.

While we have seen some positive actions take place within the European Union in regards of allocating more funds, Slovenian Government maintains the intense economic repression with bureaucratic obstacles against the public agency of the Republic of Slovenia - The Slovenian Film Centre, by blocking the majority of their intended transfers from the financial state budget. Over 30 feature films are waiting for the financial support based on valid agreements with the Slovenian Film Centre, while the production and post-production processes in Slovenia are currently entirely blocked, as the majority of filmmakers and film professionals, actors and independent film producers are still waiting for their payments for the work completed in November 2019. The loss of income has caused independent producers to be unable to fulfil their co-production obligations towards their international partners, jeopardizing films and co-producers from France, Germany, Italy, Austria, the Netherlands, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Croatia, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo. Even projects with the support of the Creative Europe MEDIA Programme and Eurimages are put on hold.

During the first wave of COVID-19, more accurately in March 2020, The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia gave a recommendation to The Slovenian Film Centre to stop publishing new funding support calls for the development and production. Furthermore, they were instructed not to take any additional financial obligations based on the calls published before the pandemic.

Even though the management and the Board of The Slovenian Film Centre and The Slovenian Federation of Filmmakers' Guilds have been addressing the issue to the Members of the Slovenian Parliament, the Prime Minister, Government, Minister of Culture and Minister of Finance, there has been no improvement, and the financial blockade remains in place. Furthermore, the two proposals for inclusion of ten and twenty-one projects in the current Plan for Development Programs for years 2020-2023, have been submitted to the responsible Governmental committee. They are being halted under the pretence of not being sufficiently inter-ministerially coordinated; while at the same time the Minister of internal affairs, who is chairing said the committee, is openly twitting, that in his opinion, the Slovenian film industry does not deserve funding. Moreover, the Minister of Culture said, the no cultural field has been negatively affected by the pandemic while at the same time admitting severe budget cuts in the cultural field.

The (non-)actions of the leading political figures in Slovenia, and their constant avoidance to take the responsibility, while continually making excuses, pointing fingers at everyone else, has brought several filmmakers to be put in severe, unbearable personal and social conditions.

The most crucial facts that remain open:

1. Almost complete termination of the film production planned for 2020;
2. Most of the pre-production and the production for the next two years are put on hold;
3. Since November 2019, hundreds of freelance filmmakers and independent film producers have not been paid for completed work;
4. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, the Slovenian Government has not yet created any special relief funds or programmes to protect and boost the film and audio-visual industry.

Film and audio-visual industry are based on new creations, cultural expression and promotion of European ideas and values. They are essential parts of the culture in the European countries, and they deserve to be treated as such. **We need to ensure sufficient funding for them, allowing them to express themselves while being able to make a decent livelihood from their work, showing them, no one will be left behind.**

Yours sincerely,

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