



DIGITAL PRODUCTION CHALLENGE II

Digitisation of cinemas in Poland

With: Renata Pawlowska-Pyra (PISF – Digitisation Coordinator, responsible for Digital Roll-out in Cinemas) and the distributor Marek Poznerowicz (Spectator);

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NB: The presentation is based on 2012 figures and statistics.

The total population of Poland amounts to 38,5 Mos inhabitants. The average price ticket is 4,48€. The first cinema to be equipped with a digital projector was in Warsaw and it was in 2007.

In 2011, the Polish Film Institute decided to have a pro-active strategy in terms of digitising art-house theaters in the country to support the digital roll out and thus to avoid a too significant and dangerous equipment unbalance between multiplexes and independent cinemas. In 2 years, PISF supported 130 cinemas for a total grant amounting to 3,5 Mo Euro.

In 2013, on one side Polish multiplexes represent 757 screens, all digital and 513 equipped for 3D, on the other side, local theaters gather around 420 screens, 180 of which are digital and 150 equipped for 3D.

This digitisation programme encouraged art-house cinemas to be turned into modern, cultural places with high quality standard of screening and to join forces by developing a collaborative network of theaters (the Polish Digital Cinema Network, the members also being part of the Art-house Cinemas Network) with a wide film offer. The aim is to increase the programming of European movies, especially Polish ones, to try to appeal to a younger audience, to develop film education.

Most of the time, an art-house cinema is supported for its digitisation process at 50% by the PISF and at 40% by local institutions or bank loans – the 10% remaining being its own contribution.

Regions gradually develop strategies to support their local cinemas in this digitisation process such as the Malopolska Digital Cinemas Network, an initiative carried out by the Krakow-based Cinema Development Foundation. The project started in 2010 and was divided in three phases: 1) Equipment investment 2) Management Skills Training so that the local cinemas could diversify their programming and becoming a wider cultural venue (with operas, ballets etc.) 3) Development of an Educational and Cultural programme.



For sure, the digitisation process has important consequences on the market: it changes the film offer since more films can be available in more cinemas from the first week of release. It becomes increasingly challenging for distributors to create an awareness on art-house films. On another hand, the arthouse theaters supported by the PISF for their digitisation process have programming obligations to keep on screening Polish and European films; besides, they are part of a collaborative national network encouraging the diversity of quality films and several of them are also members of Europa Cinemas.