

## France

### **Making more room for docs**

by: Kelly Anderson

France has long been a go-to country for non-fiction producers looking for financial options beyond those available at studios and broadcasters. The French government is very supportive of its film industry, but interested producers take note: your project will need to increase the French elements to benefit from the numerous government-appointed funds for films.

French film and television projects have many avenues from which to draw money, most notably from the Centre National de la Cinematographie, or CNC. The CNC falls under the Ministry of Culture, but the money it uses to fund projects comes from the market. While the CNC contributes 50% of the budget when French participation in the project is higher than 80%, the project must have 30% of the final cost financed by French participants in order to be considered at all. For television productions, the CNC has an initiative called COSIP. COSIP's money comes from the broadcasters.

One producer broke down a typical coproduction budget of €400,000 (US\$591,000): at least €100,000 (\$148,000) would come from the French broadcaster, and an additional €36,000 (\$53,000) would be from the CNC. The top-up financing would come from different organizations, such as regional funds (of which France has many), and 30% would need to be found outside of the country with international partners.

Coproductions are so frequent with France that there are agreements in place with 44 countries (not including the us or Japan). For these international copros to access CNC funds, they must understand the somewhat complicated requirements that allocate points based on such things as crew nationality and locations. The higher the points, the more likely it is filmmakers will receive more funding from the cnc. However, this ranges with each individual project, and depends on the total budget of the program.

The CNC also has a credit system in place, whereby revenue from past projects is counted as a credit for the next project. These automatic subsidies, called Le Compte de Soutien, give the producer's next film a revenue share from each ticket sold from their last, as well as money from DVD and TV sales. This credit is also determined by the amount of French crew, locations and actors.

According to 2006 numbers, CNC accounted for an average of 18.2% of individual documentary budgets. For their part, French broadcasters stepped in to finance an average of 46.3%. While French broadcasters are required to give a minimum of 25% of the financing to a project, it's more likely that broadcasters will contribute around 35% to 50% of the budget for bigger, landmark projects.

Some of those broadcasters had a tumultuous 2005, when the heads of documentaries at France 2, 3 and 5 changed almost simultaneously. But two years later the dust has settled, and new documentary slots have been announced by those broadcasters.

For its part, France 5 is commissioning environmentally themed projects, with 25 hours devoted to that genre. While France 5 has the most hours dedicated to non-fiction fare, France 3 and 2 are attempting to close the gap with more non-fiction programming.

France 3 has traditionally favored domestic programming, but that's not likely to remain the case for long, as the channel has expressed more interest in international projects for this year. It also has a monthly offering for a contemporary social issues strand.

The France Televisions channel with the least hours of doc programming is France 2, but it has announced an expansion of documentaries through commissioning performing arts docs, creating a new strand for classic docs and acquiring theatrical docs for an existing strand. It is also now focusing on history documentaries.

Besides the France Televisions Channels, another possible broadcaster filmmakers might turn to for funding is ARTE. The pan-Euro network began a new science strand at the beginning of 2007.

Pay TV channel Canal+ also has bigger slots for docs and good money, according to one producer. With over 100 documentary slots a year, 70% of the programming is coproductions.

But, perhaps most importantly, savvy producers looking to partner in France will begin to focus on French culture. Worried that French culture is on the decline, the CNC has a new fund to try to preserve French diversity. The Images de la Diversite fund was created with the partnership of the National Agency for Social Cohesion and Equality of Opportunity (ACSE), which has the dual role of integrating immigrants into France and combating discrimination. The Images de la Diversite fund, set up last year, gives money to projects promoting French cultural diversity and equal opportunities. It has a budget of €10 million (\$14.7 million) and 500 projects are chosen each year. The subsidy will cover all development and distribution stages.

## French links

### **Centre National de la Cinematographie**

[cnc.fr](http://cnc.fr)

### **Commission Nationale de Film France**

[filmfrance.net](http://filmfrance.net)

### **Regional Funds**

**France has many regional funds that offer assistance, ranging from location scouting and acquiring permits to searching for local crew and lodging. What follows is a sample of the regional funds available. For more information on regional funds, [filmfrance.net](http://filmfrance.net) has details and links on each one.**

#### **Aquitaine Film Commission:**

[aquitaine-image-cinema.fr](http://aquitaine-image-cinema.fr)

#### **Auvergne Film Commission:**

[filmauvergne.com](http://filmauvergne.com)

#### **Languedoc-Roussillon Film Commission:**

[languedoc-roussillon-cinema.fr/](http://languedoc-roussillon-cinema.fr/)

#### **Loire Valley Film Commission:**

[centreimages.fr](http://centreimages.fr)

#### **Paris Film:**

[parisfilm.fr](http://parisfilm.fr)

#### **Rhône-Alpes Film Commission:**

[comfilm-rhone-alpes.fr](http://comfilm-rhone-alpes.fr)