

European Filmmakers' Manifesto to European Institutions

We, European filmmakers, create in a particular place. Our films reflect our European cultures in all their diversity and specificity. Our images, our languages, and our narratives are our wealth. Our past and present history is the fertile ground of our works. Today, we call for a “Europe of Culture”!

Because this culture is in danger. Cinema and the audiovisual sector are in danger.

Cinema is an art. In this, it carries a responsibility: to offer at once a point of view, a thought, and a spectacle. In Europe, since its invention by the Lumière Brothers, cinema has carried a cultural mission, an integral part of our rich heritage. To support this cultural actor, we have built an industry. It is now strong and dynamic. It is in this sense that we consider cinema both as an art and as an industry.

European cinema has developed and flourished over the decades. Faced with Hollywood’s economic hegemony, European filmmakers have, with much less money, offered an incredible diversity of viewpoints and a vibrant freedom of expression.

Today, in the context of an economic war with the United States – Donald Trump having personally wished for the weakening of European legislation to strengthen American digital players – the European Commission tends to neglect the cultural dimension of cinema, thereby risking reducing policy for this sector to mere market regulation, disregarding its cultural and artistic specificity.

Yet, considering cinematographic and audiovisual works as mere commodities, subject solely to market rules, would mechanically favor American productions. This would be disastrous – for our profession, for the diversity of films offered to audiences in Europe and around the world, and for the plurality of narratives and viewpoints necessary for democratic life and the flourishing of individuals.

We demand that the legislation and support mechanisms of the European Union continue to recognize and frame cinema and the audiovisual sector as cultural sectors – including in their commercial dimension – through the maintenance of the principle of Cultural Exception. In Europe, each film is a prototype, a unique proposition that does not necessarily respond to a market demand. This has never prevented great commercial successes.

This is how we conceive of the 7th Art. As an art – a risk, a renewed proposition each time. And as an industry – which sustains thousands of Europeans. These principles have made us highly competitive: European cinema is the third largest in the world and the leading cinema when it comes to co-producing the works of filmmakers from other continents.

The economic war launched by the USA is also a cultural war! We, European filmmakers, declare ourselves mobilized, ready to defend without wavering the cultural specificity of cinema and the audiovisual sector.

In the current context, we understand that the European Union may wish to strengthen its action in the fight against disinformation or in promoting media pluralism. But we refuse that this dynamic be used as a lever to extend its regulatory competence over cinema and the audiovisual sector as cultural sectors. Already governed by European instruments, these areas must not become bargaining chips in trade negotiations. They are fully part of the European cultural exception, which is our collective responsibility to preserve.

European culture is not negotiable!

The role of the European Union is to defend our values, our identities, our wealth, our languages, our freedom of thought, our expressions through our art.

Thus, to respect the beautiful diversity of our 450 million citizens. We, filmmakers from all countries in Europe, call for a renewed Europe of Culture!