
THE EUROPEAN AUDIOVISUAL OBSERVATORY

A goldmine of information on the audiovisual industries made in Europe ...

Alison HINDHAUGH

Information Officer, European Audiovisual Observatory

- L'Observatoire européen de l'audiovisuel est une mine d'or d'informations sur les industries audiovisuelles en Europe. Cinéma, télévision, vidéo et services à la demande sont analysés d'un point de vue économique et juridique. Découvrez quels types d'informations vous pouvez obtenir auprès de cette institution unique qui fait partie du Conseil de l'Europe à Strasbourg.
- Het Europees Audiovisueel Observatorium is een goudmijn aan informatie over de audiovisuele industrieën in Europa. Cinema, televisie, video en on demand diensten worden er geanalyseerd vanuit een economisch en wettelijk gezichtspunt. Vind uit welke informatie je kan verkrijgen van dit uniek instituut dat deel uitmaakt van de Raad van Europa in Straatsburg.

History

Whoever is looking for facts and figures on the audiovisual industries in Europe – cinema, television, video and on demand services, need look no further nowadays than a beautiful Art Nouveau villa in Strasbourg's "European Quarter" (Fig. 1). It is here that the European Audiovisual Observatory was created in 1992 and attached to the Council of Europe in the Alsatian capital in the North East tip of France, bordering Germany on the banks of the Rhine. The early nineties saw a Europe-wide realisation that the so-called audiovisual industries were going to be an increasingly significant economic sphere in Europe and that strengthening this sphere required cross-border collaboration.



Fig. 1 : The Villa Schutzenberger, Headquarters of the European Audiovisual Observatory (© Francisco Javier Cabrera Blázquez, 2010).

However, no one at the time was able to quantify the various industries involved or indeed provide any reliable or comparative information about the performance of these industries in each country within Europe. The fruit of a common political will

and encouragement from the various industries themselves, the Observatory was therefore set up to provide information about the so-called audiovisual industries in Europe. And indeed this Strasbourg-based institution has become an absolute reference for information on the media in Europe over its more than twenty years of existence.

So how does the Observatory deal with the herculean task of providing information on forty different countries as well as pan-European analysis with a team of around twenty committed Europeans from eight different countries? Whilst in addition providing most of this information in three languages: English, French and German?

The Observatory's information is produced by its two different Departments: the Department for Legal Information and the Department for Information on Markets and Financing.

Department for Legal Information

The Department for Legal Information follows very closely the developments in European media law at a national and pan-European level. Its work covers some of the most significant challenges facing European legislators at the moment: copyright, the protection of minors from harmful content or indeed barrier free access to content for disabled people, to name but a few.

The Legal Department makes its information available in the form of a free monthly *IRIS* newsletter¹ which provides short reporting on recent legal developments and case law in the Observatory's forty member countries. Recent topics covered in *IRIS* newsletter include the European

Commission's publication of their Digital Single Market strategy for Europe or indeed French broadcasters' actions to combat piracy of their content on *Facebook* and *Twitter*. All short reporting articles from this newsletter are archived and full-text searchable in the *IRIS Merlin* database² which, as it offers all content in English, French and German, equally serves as a fantastic legal glossary for these three languages.

Our Department for Legal Information also produces four free *IRIS plus* reports each year, each one dealing with a specific and current hot topic. The first issue of 2015 deals with "The Protection of Minors in a Converged Media Environment"³. Other subjects we've recently covered in *IRIS plus* include "The Influence of New Technologies on Copyright"⁴ or indeed "Enabling Access to the Media for All"⁵ for disabled users. The new format of *IRIS plus*, which has just been re-worked, aims at providing valuable background context to each subject covered, before analysing European then national legislation in each respective field, and finally providing an up-date on the current state of development in related legislation.

More in-depth analysis of legal topics is provided by our yearly *IRIS special* report which has recently dealt with themes such as advertising in an online environment – "New Forms of Commercial Communications in a Converged Audiovisual Sector"⁶.

These publications are complemented by various *ad hoc IRIS themes* or *IRIS bonus* publications which, in some cases, provide information supplements such as a very valuable table of legislation on protecting minors against harmful content in the *IRIS bonus* publication⁷ on "Comparative tables on the protection of minors in audiovisual media services".

Forthcoming publications for the Observatory's Department for Legal Information this year will include two *IRIS special* publications which will look at online content on public service media, followed by a publication on audiovisual media consumption and data protection. Two *IRIS plus* publications will deal with the subjects of territoriality in the audiovisual sector and also the enforcement of copyright protection.

Department for Information on Markets and Financing

The Observatory's Department for Information on Markets and Financing produces a panoply of reports and manages on line databases in the same way. However the emphasis is on solid

economic analysis of the various sectors of the audiovisual industries in Europe. The various forms of financing of these sectors are also explored. This information takes the form of comparative statistical tables with the accompanying analysis and contextual explanation. It is thanks to the work of this Department that the Observatory's target groups can obtain unparalleled comparative market intelligence on the situation in forty countries as well as pan-European facts and figures.

This Department produces two flagship publications every year:

- The Yearbook - Television, cinema, video and on-demand audiovisual services in Europe⁸, which provides data on these industries in the member countries of the Observatory. 2015 marks a turning point for the Observatory in this sense as the Yearbook which has been available in print since 1995 will "go electronic" and all data and textual analysis will be available on line to subscribers.
- The Focus World Film Market Trends⁹, published by the Marché du Film Cannes Film Market which runs parallel to the world famous Cannes Film Festival. The content for this publication is prepared each year by the Observatory and the final publication is distributed to over 5,000 film market goers in Cannes each year. It offers a one stop snapshot of all film market trends in the previous year.

In addition to these key publications, the Observatory's Department for Information on Markets and Financing produces a large range of thematic reports on very specific subjects which are felt to be of key interest to the audiovisual industry at any particular point in time. This is why the Observatory keeps abreast of the major debates and concerns of the cinema, television and video industries in Europe. Recent examples of successful reports include "Female Directors in European Films"¹⁰, "Impact analysis of fiscal incentives schemes supporting film and audiovisual production in Europe"¹¹, or indeed "Fiction on European TV channels (2006-2013)"¹². The Observatory also produces an annual report on the audiovisual industries in Russia, alternating between the film industry one year, and the television and VoD industries the next. These reports are presented every year in Moscow at a public workshop organised by the Observatory.

The Observatory has just launched the first ever major European-wide study of the animation industry in Europe. The first much awaited report – "Focus on Animation"¹³ – is free for download and was presented at a successful workshop at

the MIFA animation market in Annecy in June 2015. A second, more comprehensive report will be published this autumn and presented at a Paris workshop.

This Department also manages and updates three major access free databases: LUMIERE¹⁴ offers admission figures for all films released in Europe since 1996; MAVISE¹⁵ which gives key profile information on television channels and on-demand services currently in operation in Europe; KORDA¹⁶, provides information on public funding schemes for audiovisual works in Europe.

For the second half of 2015, we can look forward to publications from this Department on subjects as diverse as the theatrical export of European films, on-line advertising in the EU, Subscription Video on Demand (SVOD) services: Market developments and strategies of players in the EU, online audience measurement and European works in Video on Demand (VOD) catalogues.

Finance and governance

As a structure the Observatory is financed by membership contributions from its forty member states and the European Union represented by the European Commission is also a member. Representatives of these various countries and the European Commission form the Observatory's Executive Council which meets twice a year in order to discuss and greenlight the organisation's Action Plan and budget. One member holds the Observatory's rotating Presidency from January to December and it is Montenegro which holds the Presidency for 2015. A second "governing body" of the Observatory is the organisation's Advisory Committee which brings together 41 different interest groups¹⁷ which represent the various branches of the industries: from film producers to internet service providers, from video publishers to authors. In terms of "grass roots feedback", the Observatory's Advisory Committee keeps the organisation up to speed with the most recent

and burning concerns and information needs of the audiovisual industries in Europe.

Naturally, the Observatory's information is heavily used by the members of its Executive Council, coming from the various Ministries of Culture, Communications, Telecoms, the national film centres or the regulatory authorities from each respective country. The European Commission uses the Observatory's information very regularly and indeed often commissions individual reports and news round-ups for internal use. The industry professionals are not only the very group, for whose needs the Observatory has been designed and that guide them on the selection of topics through the Advisory Committee but they are also avid consumers of data and intelligence produced by the Observatory. Other target groups include consultants, journalists and the academic sphere.

The Observatory's information is partly available free of charge due to the organisation's public service mission, and partly paying as the Observatory must cover part of its budget via the sale of its information products and services.

Further information

Further information on the European Audiovisual Observatory can be found on the organisation's website¹⁸. All free content is available on this website and access to the Observatory's shop in order to purchase paying content can also be found there.

Alison Hindhaugh
European Audiovisual Observatory
Allée de la Robertsau 76
67000 Strasbourg
France
alison.hindhaugh@coe.int
<http://www.obs.coe.int>

June 2015

Notes

- ¹ European Audiovisual Observatory. *IRIS* [online]. <<http://merlin.obs.coe.int/newsletter.php>> (consulted on 29 June 2015).
- ² European Audiovisual Observatory. *IRIS Merlin* [online]. <<http://merlin.obs.coe.int/>> (consulted on 29 June 2015).
- ³ European Audiovisual Observatory. *IRIS plus 2015-1* [online]. <<http://www.obs.coe.int/documents/205595/8261963/The+protection+of+minors+in+a+converged+media+environment.pdf/7b590454-a03f-40e8-b460-e2b5e6b0bc28>> (consulted on 29 June 2015).
- ⁴ European Audiovisual Observatory. *IRIS plus 2014-4* [online].

- <http://www.obs.coe.int/documents/205595/7944996/IRIS+plus+2014-4_EN_LA.pdf/bc5d8e22-ccad-44c6-9966-b0fbda2458aa> (consulted on 29 June 2015).
- 5 European Audiovisual Observatory. *IRIS plus 2014-3* [online]. <http://www.obs.coe.int/documents/205595/7944996/IRIS+plus+2014-3_EN+LA.pdf/6212170a-bd35-48e8-99f7-b4b1cba2f1b5> (consulted on 29 June 2015).
- 6 European Audiovisual Observatory. *IRIS Special 2014* [online]. <http://www.obs.coe.int/shop/irisspecial/-/asset_publisher/A0cy/content/iris-special-2014-new-forms-of-commercial-communications> (consulted on 29 June 2015).
- 7 European Audiovisual Observatory. *IRIS bonus 2015-1* [online]. <<http://www.obs.coe.int/documents/205595/8234567/Comparative+tables+on+the+protection+of+minors+in+a+audiovisual+media+services.pdf/8e16a00e-5723-4549-a54b-5e842224cb8c>> (consulted on 29 June 2015).
- 8 European Audiovisual Observatory. *Yearbook 2014* [online]. <http://www.obs.coe.int/en/shop/yearbook/-/asset_publisher/ip2J/content/yearbook-2014?_101_INSTANCE_ip2J_redirect=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.obs.coe.int%2Fen%2Fshop%2Fyearbook%3Fp_p_id%3D101_INSTANCE_ip2J%26p_p_lifecycle%3D0%26p_p_state%3Dnormal%26p_p_mode%3Dview%26p_p_col_id%3Dcolumn-1%26p_p_col_pos%3D2%26p_p_col_count%3D3&_101_INSTANCE_ip2J_articleResourceGroupId=205595&_101_INSTANCE_ip2J_articleResourceArticleId=8084458#p_101_INSTANCE_ip2J> (consulted on 29 June 2015).
- 9 European Audiovisual Observatory. *Focus 2015* [online]. <http://www.obs.coe.int/shop/focus/-/asset_publisher/5Z0m/content/focus-2015?_101_INSTANCE_5Z0m_redirect=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.obs.coe.int%2Fshop%2Ffocus%3Fp_p_id%3D101_INSTANCE_5Z0m%26p_p_lifecycle%3D0%26p_p_state%3Dnormal%26p_p_mode%3Dview%26p_p_col_id%3Dcolumn-1%26p_p_col_pos%3D2%26p_p_col_count%3D3&_101_INSTANCE_5Z0m_articleResourceGroupId=205595&_101_INSTANCE_5Z0m_articleResourceArticleId=8242710#p_101_INSTANCE_5Z0m> (consulted on 29 June 2015).
- 10 European Audiovisual Observatory. *Female directors in European films* [online]. <http://www.obs.coe.int/shop/marketreports/-/asset_publisher/9JfH/content/female-directors-in-european-films> (consulted on 29 June 2015).
- 11 European Audiovisual Observatory. *Impact analysis of fiscal incentive schemes supporting film and audiovisual production in Europe* [online]. <http://www.obs.coe.int/shop/market-and-finance/-/asset_publisher/F1Nx/content/impact-analysis-of-fiscal-incentive-schemes-supporting-film-and-audiovisual-production-in-europe> (consulted on 29 June 2015).
- 12 European Audiovisual Observatory. *Fiction on European TV channels 2006-2013* [online]. <http://www.obs.coe.int/en/shop/marketreports/-/asset_publisher/9JfH/content/fiction-on-european-tv-channels-2006-2013->> (consulted on 29 June 2015).
- 13 European Audiovisual Observatory. *Focus on Animation 2015* [online]. <<http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/news/focus-animation>> (consulted on 29 June 2015).
- 14 European Audiovisual Observatory. *LUMIERE* [online]. <<http://lumiere.obs.coe.int>> (consulted on 29 June 2015).
- 15 European Audiovisual Observatory. *MAVISE* [online]. <<http://mavise.obs.coe.int/>> (consulted on 29 June 2015).
- 16 European Audiovisual Observatory. *KORDA* [online]. <<http://korda.obs.coe.int/>> (consulted on 29 June 2015).
- 17 European Audiovisual Observatory. *Advisory Committee* [online]. <<http://www.obs.coe.int/about/advisory-committee>> (consulted on 29 June 2015).
- 18 European Audiovisual Observatory. [online]. <<http://www.obs.coe.int/>> (consulted on 29 June 2015).