

**Interview with Claude-Eric Poiroux  
General Director, Europa Cinemas**

**Écran Total - 30 November 2011 - Emma Deleva - Translated from French**

**"Europa Cinemas theatres have a strong identity"**

The General Director of Europa Cinemas (a network of 64 countries, 1057 cinemas and 2891 screens) calls for a unified European policy for preserving the diversity of film theatres, and for enhanced partnerships with alternative forms of distribution.

***Ecran Total:* The annual Europa Cinemas Conference, which was due to take place in Athens from 17 to 20 November, was cancelled. Why did you take this decision?**

*Claude-Eric Poiroux:* We had already signed several agreements, notably with the Hilton Hotel, but the growing number of transportation disturbances, including in air traffic, jeopardised the smooth running of a meeting with almost 500 professionals. Our members understood this decision perfectly well. Their replies confirmed that the conference is eagerly awaited each year. We will celebrate our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Paris in 2012 and will hold our 2013 conference in Athens.

***E.T.:* What did you plan to discuss at the conference?**

*C-E. P.:* Traditionally we deal with two broad themes: the changes inherent in the digital rollout and new communication practices, notably regarding young audiences. As a network of exhibitors we are highly committed to renewing audiences, and are convinced that the Internet and social networks are perfectly adapted to conveying the diversity of European cinema.

***E.T.:* How far along are the network cinemas regarding digitisation?**

*C-E. P.:* Whereas 50% of European cinemas are digitally equipped, we're still just shy of 30%. We lag behind in big markets like Germany, Italy and Spain, which haven't yet found a collective model like the one in France. Everywhere in Europe the small cinemas have a hard time financing the digital rollout and the distributors aren't always in a position to help. Europe lacks an ambitious, unified policy for safeguarding the diversity of these cinemas.

***E.T.:* Does digitisation help the dissemination of European films?**

*C-E. P.:* In the UK, where almost the entire network is digitally equipped and where our European percentages are growing, it's definitely the case. Elsewhere it's still too early to tell, but we're optimistic. The fact that American 3D films have been rather disappointing has benefited European cinema! But we can't remain on the defensive: of course digital technology must reinforce the role of the film theatre, but it must also inspire new partnerships, including with other distribution formats like VoD. The cinemas in our network have a strong public identity and their margin of initiatives regarding programming and activities will only increase.

***E.T.:* Do you still have any difficulties regarding this transition?**

*C-E. P.:* It is urgently necessary to find solutions for cinemas that benefit neither from VPFs nor from public support. In two years most distributors will no longer be supplying 35 mm prints, meaning cinemas unequipped with digital technology will be completely sidelined. The cinemas in our network are indispensable for European cinema. We strive to bring this fact home to all of our partners – distributors, public authorities, regional funds and even banks – which must remain confident in the future of the cinemas.