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## **The Ticino Film Commission creates a fund for the promotion of the Italian language in Swiss cinema**

**During Solothurn Days, the Ticino Film Commission presented a new fund for the promotion of the Italian language in Swiss cinema. The project aims to improve the exchange of film culture in Switzerland and to facilitate the financing of films linked to the region and culture of Italian-speaking Switzerland.**

Despite its status as an official language in Switzerland, Italian all too often still represents a barrier for ideas, projects and exchanges at a national level. Yet, Italian in Switzerland is spoken as a native language by about 730,000 people, and to these can be added about 2 million who, with often varying skills, speak or understand Italian as a foreign language and are potentially interested in greater access to this language in cinema. Moreover, multilingualism is not only a prerogative and objective of Italian-speaking Switzerland; Switzerland as a whole is keen to promote exchanges between language regions in order to promote national unity and all Swiss languages and cultures beyond the language regions concerned.

In this sense, cinema can play its part: audiovisual make it possible to access language directly, without the need for intermediaries, and to listen to the spoken language, understanding its meaning even without basic knowledge through subtitles. Films, documentaries, and TV series are a very important potential vehicle for national unity, especially today that - due to the pandemic - travel has decreased significantly while the consumption of audiovisual products via online streaming and on TV has grown dramatically. Unfortunately, however, this potential is little exploited. Suffice it to say that out of 104 films presented for the Swiss Film Award 2022 (including fictional films and documentaries, animations and short films) only 10 have Italian subtitles (9.6% of the total).

### **The Fund for the promotion of the Italian language**

In its first pilot phase, the fund aims to promote the Italian language in Swiss cinema. A fund, therefore, that brings greater exchange in the field of cinema between linguistic regions; that facilitates financing for films that are wholly or partially spoken in Italian or dealing with issues relating to Italian, Ticino and Italian Grisons immigration in past and present-day Switzerland. A fund, ultimately, that contributes to the spread of Swiss cinematographic works from and for Italian-speaking Switzerland.

**A fund that becomes a vehicle for Italian-speaking culture and its region, to support the culture, society and economy linked to the Italian language in Switzerland.**

On a practical level, the fund will be able to support the translation of screenplays from Italian into other national languages, to contribute to the cost of subtitling Italian-language films in other national languages, or to allow works intended to be shot partially or entirely in Italian to receive support for the adaptation of the screenplay. Other projects included in this fund are in fact also dedicated to the opposite process, i.e. the translation into Italian of German, French or Rhaeto-Romance scripts, if the films (or parts of them) are shot in Italian-speaking Switzerland, and for the improvement of the translated scripts and the production of subtitles in Italian.

The fund will be administered and brokered by the Ticino Film Commission; it will therefore be based on an organisational structure and pre-existing professional figures in the audiovisual sector, thus avoiding additional costs for the management of the fund. At the same time, the Ticino Film Commission will acquire a new instrument to facilitate the production of films shot in Italian-speaking Switzerland and new means to promote the work of Ticino-based professionals active in the sector.

The budget for the pilot project is initially just under 100,000 Swiss francs. As mentioned, 2022 will be a first pilot year during which the Ticino Film Commission intends to monitor the needs of production companies and artists so as to be able to significantly increase in the following years both the number of Italian language films within the national film scene and the funds dedicated to it. The fund is currently supported by the two copyright management companies **SSA** and **SUISSIMAGE** as well as **RSI Radiotelevisione svizzera**. Participation remains open for all partners - including German and French Swiss - interested in promoting multilingualism in Switzerland.

Thanks to this fund, but also to other projects announced in recent months (such as the Mendrisio Film Fund and the Collection in collaboration with the Cinémathèque suisse), the Ticino Film Commission is becoming more and more of a facilitator for Italian-language audiovisual companies, promoting linguistic and cultural exchange in Switzerland.

**Speakers:** Niccolò Castelli, Director Ticino Film Commission,  
Denis Rabaglia, Chairman of the Board of Directors Société Suisse des Auteurs

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