

# German and French film producers meet to discuss projects at Paris Rendezvous

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A dramatic comedy with Holocaust survivors, a horror film set in Morocco and a Balkan Romeo and Juliet love story were among 25 projects presented to potential production partners at this year's German-French Film Meeting in Paris (Nov 23-24).

Denis Carot and Chloe Souchet of Elzevir Films were looking for a German partner to start the financing structure for their €5.8m [Auschwitz – Les Bains](#), to be written and directed by Jean-Jacques Zilbermann [pictured] about three former deported women to the death camp in Auschwitz who decide to go on holiday together 25 years after the end of the Second World War.

Angelika Schouler of Glaam Media Invest was in Paris to pitch the €4m *Leaving Sarajevo* by Claudio Faeh which is based on the true love story of the Bosnian Muslim Admira Ismic and the Serb Bosko Brkic who tragically died in the Balkan war in 1993. Their deaths became a sad symbol of the senseless civil war and the couple became known as the 'Romeo and Juliet of Sarajevo.'

Meanwhile, Munich-based producer Rose-Marie Couture of the recently created Reel Couture told ScreenDaily that she had a "good response" and "concrete interest" to her presentation of French Canadian Lewis-Martin Soucy's debut feature *La Bete* which already has Hicham Hajji and Hamad Herraf's Casablanca-based H-Films onboard as co-producer.

Described as "a classic, suspenseful horror film with a mysterious, threatening creature", [La Bete](#) is due to be shot at locations in Morocco in 2012 with an ensemble cast which already has French actors Marc Andreoni, Julien Oliveri and Jean-Christophe Bouvet as well as Moroccan actors Mourad Zaoui and Khalid Maadour and well-known local musician Younes Megri attached.

The projects ranged from Félix von Boehm's €350,000 documentary portrait of the veteran French producer Marin Karmitz through two animation films – Sacrebleu Productions' €8m [Longway North \(Tout en Haut du Monde\)](#) by Rémi Chayé and Manny Films' €12m father-son 3D comedy [Ziggy](#) by Oscar-nominated director Samuel Tourneux – to Mes Films' \$15m drama *Tina – A Dangerous Life* about the enigmatic photographer, artist and activist Tina Modotti which has already attracted Mexico's Naofilms and Italy's Jean Vigo as co-production partners.

In addition, Sven Schnell of Stuttgart-based make a move was looking for French partners for Brazilian filmmaker Alex Carvalho's drama *La Salamandre* based on the book of the same name by Jean-Christophe Rufin, while actor Christopher Buchholz pitched his bittersweet vampire comedy *To Bite Or Not To Bite* which he describes as "a mixture of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, *The Witches Of Eastwick* and *The Royal Tenenbaums*." The English-language film would be Buchholz's fiction film debut as director after co-directing the documentary *Horst Buchholz...mein Papa* in 2005.

Meanwhile, Cologne-based producers Jonas Katzenstein and Maximilian Leo of augenschein Filmproduktion told ScreenDaily that the project they pitched at last year's Film Meeting in

Heidelberg, the feature documentary [Tour du Faso](#), has recently finished shooting in Burkina Faso and is now in postproduction.

The project by Wilm Huygen, a graduate from Cologne's Academy for Media Arts (KHM), about Africa's biggest cycling race across the desert had found its French partners – producers La Huit and distributor Jour de Fete – during the Film Meeting and had been able to access funding from Film- und Medienstiftung NRW, the German Federal Film Board (FFA), the German Federal Film Fund (DFFF) and France's CNC.

The German-French Film Meeting was organised for the ninth time by uniFrance films and German Films with their partners, and this year gave the 300 participants from Germany, France and further afield an opportunity to reflect on the first ten years of the German-French “mini-traité” co-production fund since its signing in Cannes in 2001.

The Film Meeting's president Alfred Hürmer revealed that a total of 90 projects from France and Germany have now been supported by the “mini-traité” which has annual budget of around €3m.

The latest four projects to be funded were selected by the “mini-traité” funding committee in Paris on Wednesday morning ahead of the Film Meeting and include veteran German director Edgar Reitz's fourth visit to his *Heimat* saga in [Die andere Heimat](#) (working title) which will again be located in his native Hunsrück region, but set this time in the years between 1840-1843 when several thousand chose to emigrate to Brazil as a way to escape the curse of famine and poverty. Margaret Menegoz's *Les Films du Losange* will co-produce the project which goes into production next spring.

In addition, funding was granted to the French-German-Belgian co-production [The Nun \(La Religieuse\)](#) by Guillaume Nicloux, starring Isabelle Huppert and Martina Gedeck, to be produced by Les Films du Worso with Germany's Belle Epoque Films and Gifted Films and Belgium's Versus. Le Pacte will handle international sales.

In a review of the first 10 years of the “mini-traité,” CNC president Eric Garandeau pointed out that, thanks to this co-production fund, the number of co-productions between Germany and France had more than doubled – from 11 in 2002 to 23 in 2010 - while his opposite number at the German Federal Film Board (FFA), Peter Dinges noted that producers should not regard the fund as a “mini-Eurimages or as a piggy bank for German or French films for the case where they are unable to access the national funds. The ‘mini-traité’ is clearly for co-productions.”

Looking to the future, both sides are continuing to work at boosting the fund's budget by up to €150,000 each so that joint development of projects by German and French producers could be supported, Dinges said.

Meanwhile, Christopher Buchholz – who has also been serving as the director of the French Film Days in the south-west German town of Tübingen since last year – announced in Paris that a new sidebar dedicated to German-French co-productions will be introduced to his festival programme for the 2012 edition.

Producers from both countries made up the bulk of the delegates at the two-day event which included roundtables on digitisation of cinemas, VOD business models, co-production case studies and transmedia storytelling. However, the Film Meeting was also attended, among others, by sales agents Philippe Bober (Coproductio Office), Stelios Ziannis (Aktis Film International), Tanja Meissner (Memento Films International), Rita Dagher (Wild Bunch),

film funders Kirsten Niehuus (Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg), Gabriele Röthemeyer (Medien- und Filmgesellschaft Baden-Württemberg, Roland Teichmann (Austrian Film Institute), Daniel Waser (Zürcher Filmstiftung), and Grégory Faes (Rhone Alpes Cinema) as well as TV commissioning editors Meinholf Zurhorst, Holger Stern and Andreas Schreitmüller, and film lawyers Volker Otte, Stefan Rüll and Lou Gerstner.

The 10th German-French Film Meeting will be held in November 2012 in Berlin.