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## Co-production key for animation

### European animators gather at Cartoon Forum

By WILL TIZARD

PRAGUE -- Europe's broadcast animation sector depends on bridging gaps between nations and focusing on co-production -- so said many of the 700 industryites who flew to Sopot, Poland, for the 22nd Cartoon Forum, which wrapped Friday.

Nearly a third of the toons screened were co-productions.

"Bringing all the European producers, distributors and broadcasters together in one place, just to talk about cartoons, really encourages collaboration and communication," said Kenneth Ross Orion of Disney Europe, Middle East and Africa. "And both are essential since co-producing European content is a key mission for us."

The Cartoon Forum is part of an EU Media fund initiative to nurture and drive animation production in Europe.

Since the Cartoon Forum first kicked off, with its meetings, screenings, tributes, pitching sessions and Cartoon d'Or prize, major broadcasters from Western Europe, including Gaul's Canal Plus and Netherlands Public Broadcasting, have been won over by new artists.

"Cartoon Forum delivers a big slice of the best studios and their new work," Ross Orion observed, noting Disney has several European co-produced series now delivering for Disney Channel, Disney Junior and Disney XD.

In addition, the forum has provided sources of talent for the web's "strong and diverse development slate."

The choice of Poland as a venue was fitting in light of the recent blossoming in animation production there, said event director Marc Vandeweyer. "The quality of recent Polish short films exemplifies the emergence of a new generation, which leans on the experience of already renowned studios like Studio Miniatur or Studio Se-ma-for."

Although successful cartoons still come from the U.S., TV groups are frequently buying from Russia, Europe, Australia or Canada these days, said several scouts. The U.K., France and Spain produce the lion's share of toons in Europe, although activity in Poland, which brought five projects to the forum, is on the rise.

Some 19 countries turned out for the event this year, presenting 468 hours of animation, much of it in shorter segments, which is increasingly in demand. Nearly half the toons ran for 10 minutes or less.

Studios are lean and mean, too: The vast majority of toons cost well under \$15,000 per minute to produce, according to forum stats, with target auds for more than half the offerings aged 6 to 16. Some 30% of projects were in 3D.

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