



Poland's Incentives Boost Productions Filming in the Country

Christopher Vourlias | September 7, 2019



Six months after Poland unveiled a new 30% cash rebate at the Berlin Intl. Film Festival, a wave of applications have been approved for the incentive scheme, with the first projects to access the rebate going into production in recent weeks.

"The cash rebate is a game-changer for the Polish film industry," said Radosław Śmigulski, general director of the Polish Film Institute, citing an uptick in interest from foreign producers. "Poland has a very strong cinematographic tradition, amazing talents and great conditions for filmmaking, but it's the incentive program that makes us truly visible on the map of Europe."

The most high-profile project currently shooting in Poland is "Der Überläufer" (The Turncoat), directed by Academy Award winner Florian Gallenberger. Based on Siegfried Lenz's international bestseller, the historical drama is set in the summer of 1944, when a German soldier prevented from returning to the eastern front realizes he can only save himself by defecting to the enemy.

Krzysztof Sołek, who's servicing the project through Warrior Bear Prods., said he met producers Stefan Raiser and Felix Zackor, of Dreamtool Entertainment, shortly after the Polish

rebate was announced at the Berlinale. By March, they were already filling out an application form. "We fell in love and started making the film straightaway," he said.

Sołek said there's been "huge interest" in producing in Poland since the launch of the incentive scheme. "The change is really a reversal of 180 degrees," he said. "Usually, I have to go to the festivals, arrange all the meetings, knock on doors. Very rarely was somebody calling me or writing me. Now, it's happening on a regular basis."

Ten film and TV projects have been approved for the rebate so far, with a handful of international productions waiting to get the green light. The rebate is already having an impact on local productions as well, with the upcoming drama "Magnezia," co-written and directed by Maciej Bochniak, among some half-dozen projects that are currently shooting.

"Magnezia" is a gangster film set along the Polish-Soviet border in 1925 and produced by Leszek Bodzak of Aurum Film, who is in Toronto for the North American premiere of Jan Komasa's "Corpus Christi."

Bodzak said the rebate was crucial for boosting the film's production values, allowing him to add rich period details and costly shoot-out scenes. It also helped the producer to hire talent like Waldemar Pokromski, make-up artist for the likes of Michael Haneke ("The White Ribbon") and Steven Spielberg ("Schindler's List"), and Jan A.P. Kaczmarek, the Oscar-winning composer for "Finding Neverland."

"We had a chance to gain wonderful artists for this film, mainly because we were allowed to raise the budget because of the cash rebate," said Bodzak, who also has two projects in development with German, Israeli and Czech producers.

For Śmigulski, who noted the Polish industry's "years of tradition and heritage of great artists" like Andrzej Wajda and Wojciech J. Has, such projects are proof that the rebate scheme will help bring "more diversity and quality to Polish cinema." ■