



# The Art of Individual Decision Making

**A Competency Development Report for Nordic Film Commissioners**

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on behalf of  
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in partnership with  
**The Danish Film Institute**  
**The Finnish Film Foundation**  
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# Chapter 1

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The backdrop for this report is a wish to examine the potential of establishing joint induction training for film commissioners in the Nordic countries who will then get a more structured introduction to and ongoing update of the most important issues and problems concerning their work.

In introduction, the report examines the basic principles of the commissioner system and describes the commissioners' most important tasks and decision-making procedures. It analyses the most important aspects of the commissioner's role and the typical professional background of film commissioners. It indicates how case processing is perceived from an applicant's perspective, and it examines a film institute's obligations in ensuring the optimum operation of its commissioner scheme.

The report next provides a general outline of the most significant differences and similarities between the Nordic commissioner schemes, including the number of commissioners at each institute and their distribution across areas, and it describes current Nordic activities at the commissioner level.

As far as Nordic cooperation is concerned, the report concludes that there is no basis for establishing any pre-structured, joint Nordic induction training programmes, though it also judges that in some cases it would be expedient to bilaterally establish ad hoc partnerships on such training. As far as cooperation in continuing competency development is concerned, the report concludes that it would be expedient to establish joint Nordic activities when it comes to undertaking especially resource-intensive activities and giving commissioners a broader perspective on their work.

Finally, initiatives at the Nordic level are recommended for more systematic mutual exchange of knowledge and experience among the nations, and a comparison of best practices to enhance the continuing development and optimisation of each country's commissioner system. As a requirement for successful induction training, the report recommends ensuring a common foundation of understanding between the commissioner and institute already in the hiring process, and suggests elements to be included therein.

Moreover, the report looks at the elements that should be included in specific induction training programmes and the elements that should be included in continuing competency development. It proposes a five-module structure and recommends a "proximity principle" employing the institute's own employees as resource persons to the extent that they possess the necessary qualifications.

In conclusion, the report suggests each film institute to put a person in charge of competency development for its film commissioners.

# Chapter 2

## INTRODUCTION

The Nordic film commissioner system is a Columbus' egg. The system is simple, unbureaucratic and transparent, with a clear placement of responsibility. It provides differentiated and in-depth case processing and the optimum basis for an overall assessment of film projects. For the allocating authorities, the system ensures a professionally well-founded decision-making process, while the commissioner system is a filmmaker's best guarantee for an application process that takes into account the singular nature of the filmmaking process. The commissioner system is unique, it exists only in the Nordic countries and it is the envy of film institutes and filmmakers the world over.

As a step in the efforts to strengthen and further develop this model, and to ensure that film commissioners are optimally prepared for their job, the Nordic film institutes and Nordisk Film & TV Fond wished to examine the potential of establishing joint induction training and continuing competency development for film commissioners in the Nordic countries. This, in the awareness that none of the Nordic countries has an actual strategy in the area and knowing that Nordic film commissioners would greatly benefit from a more structured introduction to, and continuing update of, the most significant issues and problems relating to their work.

The different countries' commissioner schemes have only been very meagrely and summarily described. Accordingly, I have based this report chiefly on conversations with film commissioners, as well as with managers and producers/production commissioners at the five Nordic film institutes, and on oral testimonies describing the experiences that have been gained to date in this area. I have been met with great engagement and cooperation from all the parties involved, which has strengthened my faith in the validity of this initiative. In addition, I have drawn on my own experiences: I was employed by the Danish Film Institute for eight years (first as a feature film commissioner and then as head of New Danish Screen), I was charged with writing the first guide for commissioners, and I serve as an advisor on the subject in Nordic and international contexts.

In order to obtain a foundation for assessing the elements that should be included in induction training for film commissioners, I have analysed the basic principles of the commissioner system and how film commissioners feature into the system in relation to the two other, more important parties: applicants and film institutes. I have examined and analysed the differences and similarities between the commissioner schemes in the different Nordic countries, and between the challenges and dilemmas of the commissioners in their daily work, in order to assess if, and in what areas, a basis exists for creating specific joint Nordic induction training.

In my dialogues with the different nations, it quickly became clear that a decision on induction training cannot be viewed in isolation. It is part of a broader perspective that, at one end, includes a strategy for continuing competency development and, at the other end, includes collecting and processing the experiences with the function and work of the commissioner schemes.

In the report, I have prepared a catalogue of ideas

that can constitute a foundation for developing actual induction training and continual competency development for commissioners, both in documentaries and fiction films. There, I describe those subjects that should most expediently be included in a film commissioner's introduction to his or her job and those subjects that can more expediently be treated on an ongoing basis across a commissioner's term of employment. Moreover, suggestions are provided for instructor resources and pacing the training.

I did not find it expedient to prioritise individual subjects. For that, the differences between the individual needs of commissioners, the individual resources of institutes and special national needs are too great. The provided description, then, should more accurately be seen as a basic inspiration and guideline for the design of specific activities, allowing each country to adapt the training to its needs, and for commissioners to use as inspiration. The intention is that even training that takes the form of independent study will benefit from utilising this catalogue of ideas as a checklist of sorts.

The subjects can roughly be divided into two categories. One is an actual introduction to specific factual subjects, while the other deals with subjects relating to a fundamental, common understanding and knowledge of a film commissioner's role and tasks.

Where the latter is concerned, the institute's task begins already when a job is listed and continues during the actual procedure of selecting and hiring a candidate. It is paramount that spoken and written signals conveyed in the process correspond to the institute's policy.

Because the Nordic film scene is relatively small, it is difficult to find commissioners with optimum qualifications in all aspects of this versatile job. Because the employment is time limited and the filmmaking process slow, commissioners will only have limited opportunities to gain experience by seeing the effects of his or her decisions in the form of finished films. Moreover, commissioners are expected to operate at full speed from the moment they are hired, without first undergoing a "training programme." Consequently, there are numerous reasons for recommending a radical upgrade of the competency development for film commissioners.

No comprehensive descriptions of the commissioner system or the specific forms of the different Nordic commissioner schemes exist. Such descriptions also fall outside the scope of this report. However, it is my hope that systematic competency development will be a first step in the direction of securing an accumulation of knowledge and experience about commissioner schemes to lay a foundation for professionally qualified, continued development of the system.

**Vinca Wiedemann, August 2009**

## Chapter 3

# BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE COMMISSIONER SYSTEM

The film institutes' knowledge of the commissioner system is almost exclusively based on an unwritten transmission of experience, and the institutes are all hard put to find methods for collecting the concrete experiences that commissioners have made as "frontrunners" in executing a given film policy.

Viewed from a competency-development perspective, that is a problem. To ensure that it is precise and targeted, competency development should be viewed within an expanded framework of understanding for the basic principles of the commissioner scheme and the commissioners' work within that framework.

Moreover, the lack of a method is a problem in terms of relaying experience at the management level. Film commissioners are not the only ones whose employment is time limited. The tendency at the present film institutes is towards hiring executives and middle managers for fixed terms. Moreover, since many of them come from a professional background outside the film industry, in-depth knowledge of the commissioner system cannot be taken for granted.

Accordingly, I find it appropriate to start by providing a general outline of the basic principles of the commissioner system. A more detailed review falls outside the scope of this report.

### Individual decision-making

The commissioner system is constructed to help film institutes assess what film projects should receive subsidies for film development and production. The basic concept behind individual decision-making is that the decision to support a film project should be grounded in a personal, professionally competent quality assessment and not be marked by consensus decisions, which tend to gravitate towards safety and entail a risk of blocking the most daring and visionary projects.

The system, thus, is based on the principle of individual decision-making, as opposed to most other systems of selection in which a board of editors, council or committee have to agree on a decision, and as opposed to wholly or partially automated systems in which decisions are made on the basis of purely objective criteria, e.g., point systems or systems of tax-favourable write-offs – and in which no actual quality assessment takes place and funding does not express anyone's faith in the project.

The fact is that a film project's qualities can be hard to read at a point in time when the project is still in embryo – after all, the film hasn't been made yet! – still, that is the time when decisions on financial support are made. A film commissioner can familiarise herself with a project far more thoroughly than a board or committee can, in part because she has an ongoing dialogue with the people in charge of the film project. Moreover, the film commissioner often has a chance to follow a project's preproduction and, accordingly, will be able to form a more detailed picture of the project's potential and the filmmakers' ability to carry the project through to realisation.

### The sovereignty principle and the right of recommendation

Under the commissioner system, the decision has thus been made to delegate responsibility to a film

commissioner, who is charged with prioritising what projects should be supported. The film commissioner answers for her prioritisations and must be able to motivate and defend them. This lends the funding system simplicity and transparency, which can have a constructive effect back on the applicants – unlike committee decisions which usually come about as the result of negotiation and in which the rationale underlying a decision to award or deny a project subsidies may ultimately be impossible to track.

At the heart of the scheme is the principle that only the commissioner has the power to recommend a project for a subsidy from her commissioner scheme's funds. In most cases, the institute's management has the right to reject a recommendation (though it very rarely does so). However, funds cannot be awarded without the involvement of a commissioner.

### Quality/content assessment

The commissioner system is also based on a quality principle – that is, a prerequisite desire to support the best projects based on an assessment of quality content and artistic merit. The reasoning, plain and simple, is that, since quality cannot be measured, no objective foundation for assessment can be attained; any assessment will invariably be subjective, though it must be grounded in a professionally competent analysis and be capable of rising above private preferences and personal tastes.

### Distribution of power

To prevent the system from leading to an inappropriate concentration of power, there will in many cases be two commissioners at hand to ensure that rejected film projects can get a second opinion. Moreover, commissioners are normally hired on contracts with a maximum length of employment.

In some cases, a commissioner's room to manoeuvre is also limited by the fact that she cannot personally determine the amount of funding, by the fact that the commissioner's recommendation must be supplemented by a technical/financial assessment by a producer and by the fact that the commissioner only has the right of recommendation, while management or the board of directors must approve decisions on subsidies.

### Limitations on sovereignty

A commissioner's prioritisation is based on a sovereign, personal assessment of a project's qualities, but the commissioner can never have ultimate sovereignty. A number of politically or practically determined conditions will always directly or indirectly affect the final prioritisation. This could include requirements for overall production volume, diversity, gender quotas, audience or nationality requirements and the like, whether these are described in specific guidelines, film accords or legal texts, and whether these requirements apply to individual films or the effect of the total film subsidies.

Moreover, in terms of form and content, the commissioners' artistic expertise is supplemented by producer expertise highlighting the financial and technical aspects of a project to perform a general assessment of a project's potential, as well as of the applicant's ability to see it through to realisation, plus (in some cases) to set the amount of the subsidy. Moreover, an evaluation of the project's market potential by experts advising the commissioner and management is often sought before a

## Chapter 4

# A COMMISSIONER'S TASKS & DECISION-MAKING PROCEDURES

### A snapshot

The documentary film commissioner is in a meeting with applicants to discuss their film project, which takes up a current issue in society. The conversation drags every time the commissioner asks the director how she intends to unfold the story in a film. How do you tell the story? The director hasn't given any thought to that yet. In fact, she may not even fully understand the question. The film's subject is urgently important – isn't that reason enough to make the film? The filmmakers will come up with a form for the story as they go. The commissioner is left with a nagging doubt: How do you find out whether the director's engagement and zeal are sufficient to carry out the project in a cinematically qualified way?

A dauntingly tall stack of applications, project descriptions and screenplays crying out to be read is crowding the feature film commissioner's desk. Her deadlines for responding have long since passed. The phone is ringing over and over, displaying the number of the producer who just received a rejection letter about his project that morning. In the hallway, another producer and a director are waiting for their meeting, their nerves on edge – their project will fall through unless they close their financing by the end of the month, but their screenplay still has an implausible ending. Will they be able to come up with a better one?

The children's film commissioner just finished reading the last screenplay in a disconcertingly short stack. Not a single one of the projects really got her enthusiasm up. All day long the phone is silent. Why don't some of the good filmmakers want to make a film for kids? What can you do to inspire someone to make a really good children's film?

### Introduction

The primary task of a film commissioner is to get acquainted with the film projects that are courting support. This mainly means reading screenplays, project descriptions, statements of intent regarding the filmic vision and, at times, extensive background material.

Next comes conducting a dialogue, primarily with the director, screenwriter or producer, to further illuminate the project and allow the commissioner to express her thoughts about the project's strengths and weaknesses. Project development naturally involves testing different development possibilities and strategies, and discussing them is often an integrated part of the dialogue. This dialogue can take place by telephone or at face-to-face meetings.

The commissioner's most important job is performing a general assessment of the project's strengths and weaknesses, checking the project against other projects under consideration and against general film-policy objectives, and placing the project within his or her overall prioritisation. If a project is in development, the commissioner will reassess the project on an ongoing basis and make a final assessment of whether the project has matured to the point where actual case processing regarding production subsidies (green-lighting) can take place.

Much of the communication involved in case processing is usually done in writing: 1) correspondence with applicants, in which the commissioner provides her

reactions and comments on the project/application, in approval or rejection letters, and during the case processing, e.g., in the form of meeting notices and summaries, 2) recommendations, etc., to the institution, describing and motivating the projects that the commissioner wants to recommend for subsidies.

### Assessing the content of a film project

As this report makes plain, the work of a film commissioner is multifaceted and highly varied. However, the single most important aspect of a film commissioner's work is undoubtedly the assessment of a film project's overall artistic quality potential. This is, so to speak, the commissioner's core task and the one task that sets the commissioner's work radically apart from that of any other film-institute employee – or most any other occupation for that matter. It can be difficult to relate to if you have not tried it yourself. Hence, a few words on the subject, primarily seen through my personal experiences as a commissioner in fiction films, although those experiences should be generally familiar to film commissioners in all areas.

As a film commissioner, you are entirely dependent on your gut feeling, your immediate instinct or seismographic impression of individual elements in relation to the whole. This does not just mean judging the quality of a finished film – which can be hard enough in its own right – but also assessing the intentions of an as yet not unfolded and far from realised idea.

Reading through a screenplay, the commissioner at once registers the actual content of the story (plot, theme, originality of content and singularity of storytelling) and the story's structure (i.e., how does the story develop, is it boring or compelling, are there unclear or boring passages in the beginning, middle or end?). Moreover, does the writer know how to write good individual scenes and dialogue? Do the characters seem authentic and organic? Are you curious to know more about them and how are relationships between the different characters described?

What is the filmmaker's underlying intention? (All too often, it is not consistent enough to be called a vision.) What is the core of the material as the writer sees it? What is the director's main driving force for making this film and are those forces apparent from the screenplay? Can the contours of a basic story be discerned? Are there too many stories or themes? Do the commissioner and the director consider the same things to be essential? Can a story that is too complex or broad be simplified without throwing the baby out with the bathwater?

To assess these elements and answer these questions, the commissioner needs to use her full range of emotionality, idiosyncrasy, analysis, intellect, knowledge and experience. She needs to be able to place the project in a context that separates plagiarism from originality. On the one hand, a film commissioner has to register whether she is bored or curious and engrossed. On the other hand, she has to assess whether the project will be able to engross others, even if it does not have that effect on her.

Finally, only as a project unfolds can you really start to judge its potential. Dramatic material is alive and organic, stories often develop in unpredictable directions and it is virtually impossible to predict at the outset whether a

good idea can be developed into a viable screenplay.

Another aspect of content assessment specifically involves assessing the project in terms of how far it has come in the development process, since different elements (including major plot structures, character work or dialogue) are assessed differently depending on whether we are dealing with a pitch, a treatment or the first, second or final draft of a screenplay. Assessing when a screenplay is ready for production and when it would benefit from another rewrite is a unique discipline.

Then, there are those certain conditions about a project that influence how a screenplay is perceived: Do the filmmakers have specific actors in mind for the different roles? What will the film's "look" be like? Do they plan to shoot handheld on location without lighting and props, on video with long takes and maximum attention on the actors? Or do they want to work with sophisticated set designs and complex lighting, with scenes told through cinematographically complicated setups? Does the way the scenes are written make them suitable for that specific form of shooting? Do the filmmakers aim for a big budget or a low budget? And does the director have the experience and the talent to shoulder the specific task in all its complexity or simplicity?

In fact, it is a cause for wonder that a commissioner ever feels certain enough about a project to recommend it for subsidies. Paradoxically, it is a help in that respect that the commissioner most often is torn between two considerations: on the one hand, critical assessment and elimination; on the other hand, the job is about recommending the best suited projects for subsidies to put film funding to work and finished films on screen.

### **The dialogue with the applicant as an element in case processing**

A lot of the elements described above can only with great difficulty be assessed based on the written application material. Accordingly, it's essential to the commissioner's work to be able to qualify the basis of her assessment by meeting the applicants and having a conversation with them.

First, it is exceedingly difficult to describe in words what, through an extended technical and artistic process of creation, will become action told in moving pictures and sound, a film experience. Second, very few filmmakers are trained in the written tradition at film school. (In fact, so many filmmakers have problems expressing themselves in writing, for reasons including dyslexia, that one wonders whether they were attracted to film because of their challenged relationship to the written word.)

Hearing a director, screenwriter and producer describe their project gives the commissioner factual information and a chance to experience the applicant team's chemistry. Often, specific questions by the commissioner will prompt applicants to provide a far more vivid and engaging image of their project, and their collaboration on it, than what was expressed in the application. Moreover, the commissioner can test the applicants' ability to view their project from different angles by discussing various development scenarios with them, which, in turn, will provide an idea of the direction in which they would truly prefer to develop their project.

Some meetings with applicants contain a great deal of potential conflict material, particularly when the commissioner has strong reservations about a project and does not find it suitable or mature enough to take it to the next development level.

It can be difficult to establish an open and trusting conversation about a project in development if the applicant is too singularly focused on being in a sales situation or is hampered by nervousness about the outcome of the meeting. Finding a proper framework for the meeting and a form of dialogue that supports the filmmakers' personal integrity, while also challenging them on their project, is almost an artistic project in its own right for the commissioner.

Because the commissioner has to continually account for his or her assessment of a project's development status to the applicants, the commissioner can get a central role in optimising a project during the development process. Coming from a position outside the project, the commissioner can look at a project with refreshing and challenging clarity. To boot, the commissioner often has wide experience in seeing projects through the development phase. Because the commissioner has no personal stake in the project, her assessment has a high "truth value" for the applicants. This begets a complex interplay between the commissioners' assessments and the filmmakers' artistic integrity. In that connection, it is essential for the commissioner never to take a managing role or have a hand in the actual working process where crucial decisions are made but exclusively to relate to the artistic options that the applicants present.

### **Meeting applicants without prior application**

At some film institutes, an applicant can get a meeting with a commissioner without having submitted a project application. This option is in great demand by filmmakers and has the added advantage for the institute of signalling an "open-door policy." Such meetings can be a problem, however, if the meeting's purpose is not clear and explicit, both to the commissioner and the applicant. In many cases, applicants welcome an occasion to say hello to the commissioner and air ideas for possible projects to get an informal clue of whether a given project is in the particular commissioner's "taste" – with the understanding, naturally, that any indication of interest is nonbinding. Nevertheless, an indication of interest is often mistaken for a commitment – at any rate, most applicants feel hoodwinked if they initially get a positive, informal reaction from the commissioner and are later rejected once the commissioner has had an opportunity to assess the project based on an application. Thus, switching around the stages of case processing can lead to problems.

All things considered, this dialogue form has produced positive experiences, especially when it is carried out within a fixed framework (as has been the case at New Danish Screen). Finally, Finland has special application formalities that entail a somewhat different form of practice for meetings.

### **The commissioner's writing requirements**

*Meeting notices and meeting summaries – approvals and rejections*

Experience shows that applicants in a meeting with a commissioner are often so nervous that they fail to retain a lot of the commissioner's more specific statements. Later, they simply cannot remember exactly what was said. For that reason alone, a summary of the meeting will be very useful to applicants and also pre-empt possible misunderstandings, while providing the commissioner's assessment of the project in no uncertain terms.

When it comes to giving notice of meetings, it is quite useful for applicants to receive a letter from the commissioner including a summary of the commissioner's reactions to the material submitted so far and a

description of the issues that the commissioner wishes to focus on at the meeting.

Finally, approvals and rejections should as a rule be announced in writing. As pleasant as it is to write a letter saying that a project has been found worthy of funds, as difficult it is to take up the pen and tell someone their project has been rejected. Precisely because rejection letters touch on the values of a project's content, most commissioners find them hard to write. Moreover, in your eagerness to defend your rejection, be sure not to kick someone who is already lying down. Phrasing a rejection so it is unmistakable without taking away an applicant's creative zest takes a lot out of the commissioner.

#### *Recommendations*

Most film institutes have written procedures for the formal decision-making process of awarding subsidies. In most cases, these require the commissioner to thoroughly account for the project's content as well as for the reasons why it was found worthy of funds. A recommendation is usually constructed around a plot summary, a project historic, an analysis of the project's strengths and weaknesses, an assessment and a conclusion. Written recommendations are usually followed by an oral presentation to the approving body, while recommendations subsequently often serve as an actual sales document that both the administrative authorities and the applicants can get to see.

#### **A commissioner's decision-making and prioritisation processes**

Commissioners are in a position of significant economic power as far as the individual projects are concerned. Moreover, not only major financial interests are at stake but also impassioned life's blood. As a result, the job involves a good deal of emotional confrontations fraught with anxiety and aggression.

The actual decision-making and prioritisation processes are among the elements that vary from country to country. The simplest process is found in Iceland, where the feature film commissioners single-handedly judge whether a project is worthy of funds, if the financial possibility of supporting it exists. In this case, the commissioner is the sole advisor to the CEO, who, in consultation with the production chief, sets all financial priorities, including the final decision about which of the recommended projects to fund.

Overall, it is the commissioner's job to prioritise individual projects for subsidies in relation to the available funds. The nature of this task varies according to how many films there is an opportunity to support – generally, when it comes to prioritising, there is a difference between the relatively uncomplicated process of awarding screenplay and development subsidies, where opportunities exist for supporting a large number of projects and, in turn, allowing them to further unfold their potential, and production subsidies, which entail a serious commitment. On this point, as well, there are major variations across the Nordic countries. For example, while a film commissioner in one country sometimes recommends just one or two feature film projects for production subsidies in a year, a documentary film commissioner in another country sometimes recommends 30-50 projects for production subsidies in a single year.

Whether and how commissioners are involved in setting the amount of subsidies varies greatly, not just among countries but also depending on the kind of subsidy that is awarded and in what areas of film. In addition come the different conditions that determine the amounts of subsidies (base financing, top financing or the concept of "responsible financing") and the different kinds of interaction with producers/production advisors in that

regard. (An actual description of this complex area falls outside the scope of this report.)

Commissioners often operate with a kind of elimination process and a pipeline of projects in various stages of development. In prioritising projects, the commissioner, beyond her artistic assessment, also needs to relate the projects to the parameters set out by the current film act, target results, etc.

When it comes to prioritising production subsidies, the commissioner's interaction with the film institute's producers/production advisors is especially essential. Without relevant advice, a commissioner could be walking on thin ice. Over the years, there have been countless reports of commissioners who make half-promises of specific subsidy amounts without having the necessary backing. Such situations are among the film institute's most difficult "problem children," as far as the commissioner schemes are concerned. Nevertheless, it is important to realise that a commissioner will invariably be touching on financial issues when discussing the visions for realising a project, since form, content and financing are inextricably linked. As important as it is for a commissioner never to mention specific amounts without prior expert advice, it is just as important never to support a project's development without first considering whether the financial framework for realising the project is even realistic. Not for anything, developing with economy in mind is a maxim in contemporary, professional project development.

Accordingly, it is a problem if the commissioner has no knowledge whatsoever about basic economic conditions. Many commissioners have trouble performing their role when they move into the intersection of content and technology/economy. When they are hired, many film commissioners have never looked at a budget before and don't know how to work an Excel spreadsheet, which can make it exceedingly hard to relate even to the budgets on which an institute's operation and funding are based.

#### **The commissioner's role**

To film institutes, the commissioners represent the applicants' "doorway" to the system. There is a pronounced expectation that film commissioners will be well oriented in and visible to the film community, e.g., by taking part in public debates or expressing themselves in writing – in the form of essays, opinion pieces and the like. Sometimes, commissioners are directly required to "cultivate" talent or personally initiate projects.

Commissioners have a double role: they are constructive dialogue partners, striving for open, trusting dialogue with applicants, but they are also the judge of the projects and, if you will, the "axeman." Because film institute funds are often essential to a project's fate, the commissioner is in a very powerful position in relation to the applicants, who often feel that they are at the commissioner's mercy.

In some countries, commissioners also play a central role internally at the film institute, as key persons for the other employees when it comes to case processing and as resource persons when it comes to special initiatives (film efforts, editorial partnerships, special funds, seminars, etc.) and in developing new strategies or case-processing procedures. At some film institutes, the film commissioner is the only holder of actual, practical filmmaking competence.

Commissioners almost constantly operate in the intersection of professional standards and politics. Most of the time, they work autonomously, that is, they alone represent the film institute to the film industry. Similarly, their most important job –

assessing projects – is a solitary process.

Commissioners often hold a special position within the organisational hierarchy, because they have a major influence on the distribution of subsidy funds without holding the management position that a comparable influence would entail in most other organisations. This can cause some uncertainty among board directors, middle managers and commissioners, also because commissioners have a tendency to “go around the hierarchy.” Who in the organisation can match the commissioners and meet them at their level? This question often presents a major challenge to the organisation.

## Chapter 5

# THE APPLICANT'S PERSPECTIVE AND THE INSTITUTE'S ROLE

### The applicant's perspective

From an applicant's point of view, there is a glaring paucity of information material regarding the day-to-day operation of specific commissioner schemes. Applicants, it would seem, are expected to have advance knowledge of how the system works.

To individual producers, a commissioner scheme is often just one among many application options, and when several different schemes exist side by side they tend to rub off on each other. Too many funds and subsidy schemes side by side can produce some uncertainty about which of the subsidy schemes it is relevant for an individual project to apply to. If some subsidy schemes operate with deadlines instead of ongoing case processing, that can lead to further delays.

For applicants, it is of major importance whether applications are processed on an ongoing basis or at fixed deadlines. In general, ongoing case processing enables a more continual development process, since a project is not submitted until the applicant has judged it to be ready. Fixed deadlines typically either delay or force the pace of the development process. Furthermore, a film institute's deadlines can spread through the entire financing system, tying up major resources in projects that are waiting for a reply to a subsidy application.

For applicants, the commissioner first off equals money. Any acknowledgement by the commissioner is read as an implication that the commissioner will fund the project. Film commissioners tend to underestimate the power in that.

For applicants, the wait can feel unbearably long. Hence, it is important to immediately let applicants know when they should be expecting a reply and inform them of any delays. In replying, it is important for fostering an open dialogue that commissioners, as well, are not afraid to let their personal opinions be known. Unfortunately, in most of the countries it is standard practice to call applicants to meetings where they do not know the agenda. Because such meetings often are the applicants' only opportunity to get some face time with the commissioner and explain their intentions, they see it as a problem that they are not able to prepare in advance of the meeting for whatever questions and points of focus the commissioner may have.

In a meeting with a commissioner, many applicants' nerves are on edge and, subsequently, they can have a highly subjective recollection of the meeting. Providing a summary of the commissioner's attitudes and opinions, clarifying any possible unclear aspects of what was agreed, can be crucial to prevent any future misunderstandings about the content and results of a meeting.

From a creative person's point of view, it is an essential quality of the commissioner scheme that the project is judged by a professionally competent person, along with the chance to have a direct dialogue with the commissioner about the visions and process of developing the project.

Applicants want to sell their project as best as they can; the commissioner wants an honest impression of the project. Establishing a trusting, creative space where applicants can share their artistic reflections with the commissioner is a unique opportunity of the commissioner scheme for the

creative applicant. Accordingly, one of the most important tasks is to ensure the best possibilities for establishing such a space.

### The institute's role

A film institute's most important jobs in relation to the commissioner scheme are:

#### *Institutionally*

- Ensuring that qualified commissioners are hired
- Clearly defining the framework (legislation, film accords, target figures, etc.) within which the commissioner will operate
- Striving to have financial funds of a size that truly makes them a priority
- Seeing to the best possible interplay between the commissioner scheme and other subsidy schemes
- Making sure that the institution's other employees and executives have sufficient knowledge about the basic principles of the commissioner scheme
- Ensuring that valuable experiences and ideas are collected in the institution, so that the commissioner system continues to develop and the system does not lose all of a commissioner's experience when that person leaves

#### *The commissioner's role*

- Backing up the commissioner in conflicts with applicants and securing the necessary peace to get work done
- Conducting a critical, professionally qualified dialogue with individual commissioners about their prioritisations
- Continually evaluating the performance and results of individual commissioners

#### *Applicants / the public*

- Informing the public about the commissioner scheme in general and ensuring available information about case-processing procedures.
- Making sure that commissioners are visible to the film community
- Continually developing application requirements and procedures, so that they target the desired group to ensure the desired quality of applications
- Making sure that applicants have avenues of complaint
- Making sure there is no nepotism or corruption

In relation to its commissioners, the institution's role is to ensure that the commissioners get the help and assistance they need in their daily work, to clearly define the commissioners' work, and to back up the commissioners, so that they gain maximum visibility, have peace to work and are protected, including in case of possible conflicts with applicants. Moreover, the institution should make sure that the commissioner is professionally prepared for the job and is continually updated with the latest knowledge. It should evaluate the commissioner's performance on an ongoing basis and make sure that experience accumulated in an individual commissioner is incorporated into the ongoing upgrading and optimising of the system.

A very common feature of all the institutes is a certain reluctance to tinker with their commissioner scheme. This is to some extent both natural and appropriate, because a commissioner's job is different than the other

employees': artistic assessment takes a whole other set of skills and often is associated with a different temperament or mindset. Since there are no objective criteria for artistic assessment, it is impossible to measure results and performance in the same way as for ordinary case processing. Moreover, the commissioners are often alone in having an artistic and creative approach to filmmaking, on top of which comes the commissioners' generally strong personal integrity, which was one of the reasons they were hired.

The risk of this, however, can be a somewhat awkward interface between the institution and the commissioners, either because the institute (out of misdirected respect) leaves its film commissioners to their own devices, when what they really need is support and contest, or by presenting changes and new decrees to the commissioners as done deals. A classic challenge for institutions is finding a way to have an ongoing dialogue with the commissioner about their pipeline of projects, while also finding a way to ensure qualified opposition for the commissioner that does not impinge on their fundamental sovereignty but can serve as damage control and thus prevent possible inexpedient behaviour.

Finally, the job's inherent autonomy represents a special challenge to management in terms of securing a dynamic back and forth between management and the commissioner group on experiences gained from the daily practice. (In Denmark, an effort has been made to bridge this gap by establishing an informal meeting forum between the commissioner group and management, where central issues can be discussed without an agenda.)

## Chapter 6

### THE PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND OF FILM COMMISSIONERS

The commissioner system asks a lot, both professionally and personally, of the people who are hired as commissioners. Assessing film projects that are still in embryo takes considerable insightfulness and, preferably, hands-on experience with the processes of developing and producing films, as well as a focus on, and a talent for, decoding issues of creativity and content. Personal integrity is essential, as are good verbal skills, both oral and written. On top of that comes an ability to independently judge when the overall assessment of a project requires the commissioner to obtain advice on aspects that lie beyond his or her area of expertise, as well as an ability to manoeuvre in the twilight zone between private tastes and professional quality assessment.

In the Nordic countries, there is no education programme that prepares for the film commissioner position or the like. Generally, the film institutes consider a commissioner's core qualifications to be the ability to perform artistic assessment, personal integrity and the ability to have a dialogue with applicants about those subjects.

The film institutes mainly locate candidates for the commissioner position in two groups:

One group has personal experience with the film production process, typically as screenwriters, directors, producers or editors.

The other group has experience from what are considered to be related professions: dramaturges, playwrights, journalists, prints editors, writers, stage directors, TV reporters and TV producers.

The individual institute's policy determines whether there is a desire to fill the commissioner posts with filmmakers. Some countries put a premium on film commissioners having filmmaking qualifications. Other countries like their film commissioners to come from "outside" to stamp out any tendency towards nepotism.

All things considered, there can be no doubt that film commissioners without a background in actual filmmaking face a difficult challenge, since the singular form of project development used in film production has no parallels in journalism, literature or theatre, and the technical and organisational aspects are likewise of a whole other order of complexity. For commissioners without a filmmaking background, there will invariably be an increased risk that their decisions are dictated by personal tastes and not by professional and competent analysis.

## Chapter 7

### NORDIC COMMISSIONER SCHEMES – DIFFERENCES & SIMILARITIES

Working on this report, I examined differences and similarities in the design and operation of commissioner schemes in the Nordic countries in order to assess whether there is a basis for developing or/and carrying out joint induction training/competency development training in all or some of the Nordic countries.

The Nordic film institutes currently employ a total of 28 commissioners, distributed as follows:

#### *Denmark*

Commissioner scheme: 3 commissioners for features and 3 for shorts and documentaries (including 2 dedicated to children's films). New Danish Screen: 2 commissioners, both covering fiction shorts and features, plus documentaries.

#### *Iceland*

2 commissioners for short fiction and documentaries and 2 commissioners for features and TV fiction.

#### *Norway*

3 commissioners for features (including one dedicated to TV drama), 2 for documentaries, 1 for shorts and 2 screenplay commissioners.

#### *Finland*

1 commissioner for features and TV fiction, 1 commissioner for features and minority co-productions, and 1 commissioner for documentaries, short fiction and TV animation.

#### *Sweden*

2 commissioners for features, 1 for children's films, 1 for documentaries and 1 for shorts.

#### *Number of commissioners in different areas*

A total of 17 commissioners deal with feature-length fiction.

A total of 12 commissioners deal with documentaries.

A total of 11 commissioners deal with shorts (including fiction shorts).

Almost all the commissioners theoretically have the possibility to deal with the children's film area.

14 commissioners exclusively deal with short fiction (including some who deal with fiction films for TV).

11 commissioners deal both with fiction films (though some only with short fiction) and documentaries.

3 commissioners exclusively deal with documentaries.

2 commissioners have a special focus on children's films and 1 exclusively deals with children's films (both fiction and documentaries).

2 commissioners are exclusively dedicated to screenplay development for features.

#### **Differences**

There are conspicuous differences between the Nordic commissioner schemes. In that regard, it is important to bear in mind that some of the schemes are far more recent

than others (Denmark was the first nation to introduce a commissioner scheme, in 1972, and Iceland was the last to do so, in 2003).

The film institutes' basic political and economic circumstances vary widely, in terms of both operating and subsidy funds. In turn, the film institutes are quite different in size, and the level of administrative procedures and structures in their commissioner schemes varies greatly. The institutes' internal operating structures, in which the commissioners are part, vary greatly, as do their affiliated professional and administrative expertise.

The amount of money administered by the commissioner schemes varies a lot, as do the economic structures of which those funds are part. In turn, the interaction with regional funds, TV stations and international financing varies greatly.

All the film institutes are governed by either annual or multi-annual economic and political agreements, and so the commissioners' working conditions and areas are subject to changes over time and are far from static.

There are big variations between the commissioners' competency areas. To name a few: In Iceland, feature-film commissioners solely assess whether a project is worthy of funding. They do not actively participate in the final prioritisation of funds among worthy projects. In Sweden, the commissioners single-handedly determine and award screenplay and development subsidies. In Denmark, the commissioners make written recommendations and motivate all prioritisations to management.

The degree of a commissioner's autonomy may also vary within each country, e.g., depending on whether a commissioner prioritises within his or her own budget, or whether a funding cap is in place. Likewise, the amounts of the different funds within which prioritisations need to be made vary greatly, as does the affiliated producer expertise and the interplay between the expertise and the commissioners.

Caseloads vary widely, from a low of 10-20 applications for one commissioner and the record to date of 700 applications for another.

Application procedures also vary. In Finland, the feature film commissioners' dialogue with applicants largely takes place before a formal application is submitted. In other countries, the written application is the starting point for a dialogue with the commissioner. The requirements for a commissioner's written communication likewise vary greatly.

Within each country, there are big variations, as well, in terms of whether a commissioner follows a project through the various stages of the development process or simply considers subsidy applications once. Furthermore, political attitudes vary greatly in terms of the role that the internal production expertise should play in relation to a commissioner's competency area, as does the form of a commissioner's dialogue with applicants.

Commissioners come from different professional backgrounds, though they primarily involve knowledge of film production. In several of the countries, however, this is a fairly recent tendency.

The commissioners' internal networks vary greatly, as does the degree to which commissioners see themselves as a group, meet as one and are able to draw on one another's experience. Likewise, the scope of the dialogue between commissioners and management varies a lot in terms of whether the commissioners' experiences are visible to the organisation and systematically collected, as does the scope in which the commissioners' work and roles are formally described and continually debated. Finally, the degree to which commissioners are provided with induction training and competency development during the period of their employment is seen to vary greatly.

### **Similarities**

All these differences notwithstanding, every commissioner's work is fundamentally the same. Assessing the content of individual projects is at the heart of every commissioner's job. Though the number of applications and funds to be prioritised varies from commissioner to commissioner, they all have to read screenplays/project outlines and obtain supplemental information about a project's content and practical characteristics. They all have to prioritise the projects they find most worthy of support. Moreover, since most subsidy systems award both development and production subsidies, commissioners have an opportunity to follow a project through its development process. Likewise, commissioners are expected to follow their projects' realisation and thus serve as the film institute's safeguard for content.

The challenges and dilemmas that film commissioners face have myriad points of similarity:

These include the basic challenge of being both dialogue partner and perceived "axeman"; dilemmas of doing outreach work and cultivating talent; how to psychologically handle the pressure from applicants; how to help raise the level of applications and ensure that the awarded subsidies also serve to optimise projects; dilemmas of understanding and limiting a commissioner's sovereignty; writing skills, especially where rejections and recommendations are concerned; the need to understand general film-policy mechanisms and the financing mechanisms for films in which a commissioner via her work is a part; dilemmas of the green-lighting process; the demand to be visible to the filmmaking community; and, at times, the need to raise the commissioner's visibility internally in the organisation.

Finally, almost every commissioner has an expressed wish for more training and competency development and almost everyone thinks having a collegial forum would strengthen them in their work.

## Chapter 8

### NORDIC COOPERATION AT THE COMMISSIONER LEVEL

#### **Nordic meetings today**

To date, the Nordic film institutes have had no real cooperation on film commissioners or developing commissioner schemes in the Nordic countries. Norway and Sweden, however, have established experience exchange with other countries in relation to restructuring and establishing new subsidy schemes, and as part of their goal to put a special focus on the commissioner's role.

Nordisk Film & TV Fond has regularly provided opportunities for the Nordic film commissioners to meet (in various constellations, primarily between documentaries and features) in connection with Nordisk Panorama, the festivals in Gothenburg and Haugesund, and the Nordic Talents film-school event. Some of those meetings have centred on exchanging information about the situation in individual countries, and they have been an important forum for commissioners, especially at times when they or their film institute have been under political pressure or media fire. Other meetings have mainly been inspirational, such as the master classes, and highly rewarding as well. Both types of meetings have afforded commissioners important opportunities to expand their network and obtain an overview of the general Nordic situation.

In recent years, the function of feature film commissioners has gradually changed, as, in several countries, Nordic co-productions have been at least partially taken away from the commissioners' sphere. Moreover, a number of opinions have been voiced on the value and expediency of including commissioners in specific negotiations on projects applying for co-production subsidies. In some countries, commissioners have at times found such negotiations to be offensive in terms of the sovereignty principle and the principle of airtight walls between commissioners. All the same, the continued exchange of information regarding big Nordic co-productions in the different countries' pipelines is recommended.

Again, it bears mention that what is perhaps the most valuable benefit of meetings under Nordic auspices is the fact that they bring commissioners together face to face and the opportunities for discussing film-policy issues from a film commissioner's perspective. Interesting topics to share and discuss include political changes to the commissioner schemes, major affairs involving the media, changes to the schemes, the big film accords, etc.

#### **Nordic cooperation on specific induction training**

Considering the many differences between the commissioners' as well as their institutes' specific work, I see no basis for establishing pre-structured, joint Nordic induction training. For one, training subjects are largely determined by local conditions. Moreover, the priority should be on grounding commissioners in the practice of their own countries and focusing on establishing collegial cooperation within their own organisation. Even so, in my judgment, it would be beneficial to make ad hoc bilateral agreements on joint induction training in specific areas, in the same way that this report has benefited from drawing on ideas and visions from every country that has a commissioner scheme.

#### **Nordic cooperation in continuing competency development**

As far as continuing competency development is

concerned, there would obviously be good synergies to be gained from seminars – on international conditions, special areas such as animated films, and the whole cluster of subjects relating to artistic inspiration. It also seems obvious to examine the possibilities of organising training activities that include more opinion-oriented discussions about film-policy, especially if such events are incorporated into the individual institute's efforts to develop its practices and procedures. That would give the events a broader perspective and enable activities that would be too resource intensive for one country to manage on its own.

#### **Collegial forum**

Nordic cooperation would produce benefits in several respects: like other professionals, commissioners need and benefit from having a forum of their colleagues, where they can share experiences and compare practices. It helps put their work in perspective, which is especially important in a position that is otherwise quite independent.

In a broader perspective, the Nordic film institutes would benefit from an ongoing dialogue with the aim of developing their own best practices. Since the different countries have different conditions and resources in most areas, and historical developments have greatly shaped their film policies and potentials for development, it is important for such dialogue and cooperation to be inspirational in nature. Central questions of joint interest can be discussed collectively, while conclusions can be drawn and consequences inferred only by the individual country.

#### **Activities under Nordisk Film & TV Fond**

Nordisk Film & TV Fond is recommended to continue its meeting activities for commissioners, and commissioners are recommended to continue using them to strengthen their internal network, to gain an overview of major Nordic co-productions in the pipeline and to be updated on the Nordic film-policy situation. To make sure that commissioners take a stake in these meetings, it is recommended to continue to include commissioners in planning them, so that Nordisk Film & TV Fond is primarily seen as the host and facilitator of the meetings.

Moreover, Nordisk Film & TV Fond is recommended to organise annual inspirational seminars that also touch on more complex issues of mutual interest and relevance to film commissioners, along with master classes and seminars at an international level to strengthen commissioners' professional skills.

In planning both types of activities, it is recommended to continue to operate with different constellations of commissioners, primarily with a division into fiction and documentaries.

Finally, Nordisk Film & TV Fond and the management of the Nordic film institutes are recommended in partnership to initiate a discussion regarding the expediency of developing and exchanging methods for gathering and implementing commissioners' experiences in the organisation, and to consider initiatives for a more systematic exchange of knowledge and experience, as well as a comparison of best practices, in order to help strengthen the further development and optimisation of each country's commissioner system.

## Chapter 9

# CATALOGUE OF IDEAS FOR ESTABLISHING COMMON KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING IN THE HIRING PROCESS

An institute's task in relation to its film commissioners starts as soon as a job is listed and continues into the actual selection and hiring procedures. In this regard, it is crucial that spoken and written signals transmitted in the process correspond to the institute's policies.

### The commissioner candidate

Very few of the institutions have detailed, publicly available descriptions of the film commissioner's work and role. Accordingly, it should be assumed that applicants for a film commissioner position only have very general knowledge about the specific work involved in being a film commissioner. In turn, the first phase of induction often takes place in the hiring procedure. Already at this early point, it is a good idea to make sure to "bust" any possible incorrect and inappropriate myths. A detailed written job or role description can be useful in that regard. It is likewise expedient to touch on those points in conversation during the actual hiring procedure. Here, a distinction should be made between the information one wants to make sure the applicant receives and other possible conditions that need to be examined in terms of the commissioner candidate's abilities to live up to them. At this point, it bears mention that some countries operate with a hiring committee, not all of whose members have detailed knowledge about the film commissioner's job and role, which entails a risk of conveying false perceptions to applicants. For the same reason, it is important to restate and follow up on possible information about any special conditions that apply to individual commissioners.

Important issues to take up in the selection phase:

- The film commissioner's competence area
- Principles of the position's sovereignty and interaction with film accords, performance-based contracts, diversity principles, etc.
- Opportunities for, and limitations on, the commissioner's setting his or her own agenda, doing outreach work, etc.
- Commissioners' interaction with the film institute, existing case-processing procedures.

Other elements that should be tested include the applicant's skills at reading and assessing the quality of screenplays and projects from an artistic and process-oriented perspective, the applicant's writing skills in that regard and his or her ability to conduct a creative dialogue with applicants. In Denmark, a test program has been developed that asks candidates to read a screenplay and assess it, write a letter of reply and conduct a simulated meeting with an applicant. Moreover, Danish candidates take an actual psychological test, mainly on the issue of their personal integrity, before a final hiring decision is made.

### New commissioners

Film institutes try their best to hire the best qualified candidates for the job. In some countries, however, it is very limited what job candidates are told about a commissioner's role and tasks. In many cases, there also seems to be a link missing between the hiring procedure and the actual hiring: in several instances, commissioners have been hired despite the obvious shortfalls of their professional qualifications with no subsequent steps being taken to bring the commissioners up to snuff in those areas. In other instances, the commissioner candidate

in a job interview will describe her visions for her future work, but later find that the institution does not follow up with feedback on her proposals. It is important to amend such shortcomings to avoid any misunderstanding as to whether such proposals constitute some sort of ideological foundation of agreement. In actual tests of the applicant, the institute should make sure to provide the applicant with general feedback, so that both the institute and the commissioner already at this point have a shared understanding of the commissioner's potentials as well as of any possible special challenges.

Several of the institutes are currently undergoing a development of implementing actual induction for new commissioners. Often, however, it has been limited to an introduction to co-workers, a tour of the workplace, an introduction to computer and archiving systems, plus a brief written or oral presentation of ongoing projects. Very few of the film institutes have written induction materials or an actual description of the commissioner's tasks, and only a few provide a more systematic induction that also involves the other commissioners and draws on their experiences.

New commissioners frequently have the experience of being thrown into the job and having to grope around in the dark. In general, it would appear that the institute considers the commissioner's role and tasks to be a lot more obvious than they look to the commissioner (a detailed review of useful elements to include in induction training is found in the following).

A trait of all the film institutes is that they imply a common understanding and knowledge of the film commissioner's role. Moreover, there is a widespread perception among film commissioners that it is up to them to define their role. Commissioners who once found themselves in the role of subsidy applicant to a great extent draw on that experience in defining their role. This entails a risk of "perpetuating bad habits," and for this and other reasons it is important from the outset to establish a dialogue between the commissioner and the institute. At the same time, a commissioner who is new in the job will typically incorporate experience from her past jobs. This is a condition that markedly affects an individual commissioner's perception of her role, though neither the commissioner nor the institution is particularly aware of it.

The following suggestions for the content and structure of induction and competency development build in part on experiences that have already been collected over the years at the various institutions.

Important subjects to take up at the start of employment At the start of employment, be sure to take up points that were mentioned during the hiring phase and describe certain points more closely. In part, this is to make sure that the commissioner remembers and understands these points, which may only be a few among many points mentioned during a demanding job interview. Also, the interview may have taken place a relatively long time before the commissioner starts her job.

Before the first day of employment, it is important that the film commissioner gets acquainted with the formal regulations, agreements and administrative framework within which he or she will be acting. The institute can

accomplish this in part by providing the commissioner with the documents she needs. The DFI and the NFI have compiled these documents into a folder that is provided to the commissioner shortly before her first day of employment. This information is also available in digital form.

The folder might include:

Phone list, film institute regulations, film accords, reports, organisation diagrams, subsidy terms and conditions, general guidelines, descriptions of case processing routines, administrative rules, financial directives, ethical guidelines, guidelines on disqualification issues, commissioner guidelines, job descriptions, travel guidelines, etc.

Bear in mind that, because of their professional background, many new film commissioners will not be used to reading this type of material. It is relatively common for folders of such material to remain on the shelf largely unread. Consequently, at the start of employment, such written materials should be supplemented with an oral presentation of the main points of these formal matters.

## Chapter 10

### CATALOGUE OF IDEAS FOR INDUCTION TRAINING: THE FIRST FEW DAYS

#### The commissioner's situation

The commissioner will likely be overwhelmed by everything being so new to her. Many commissioners come from a life of freelancing, with hiring by project and hands-on, specialised work. Very few have experience with regular working hours, their own desk and government requirements for administration, documentation and set routines. New commissioners are likely to have a lot of notions about what their work will be like and how they want to leave their mark. Visions and opinions are plentiful, and experience is yet to be gained. Even new commissioners who have experience from similar jobs will run into unfamiliar practical realities – the job of film commissioner is unique in each country. The commissioner typically has already formed an opinion about a commissioner's sovereignty and powers, which needs to be adapted to the actual facts.

#### Goals of induction training

- Providing a structured introduction to the workplace and tasks.
- Providing an initial introduction to the commissioner scheme's goals and organisation, and to the film commissioner's role and collaboration with his or her closest co-workers.
- Defining the limits of the sovereignty concept in terms of the national film act, objectives, performance targets, etc., and introducing the commissioner to the special responsibility that comes with the powers of the position.

#### Contents

It has proved expedient to carry out a structured induction to the practical conditions of the workplace, even those conditions that may seem quite trite to other co-workers. Again, it is important to bear in mind that the film commissioner may never have had a steady job with an own office, etc., before.

The office layout, telephone (including transfer functions), business cards, name plate, mobile phone and computer, possible intranet, calendar and electronic meeting notices, pigeon-hole, office assistant/security function, possibilities of working from home, introduction to filing systems, databases, document templates, word-processing programs, spreadsheets, payroll procedure, cafeteria, personnel handbook (especially if it is only available online), coffee clubs and lock and key systems. Please note that the commissioner should have screenwriting software installed, for instance Screenwriter or Final Draft.

- An overview of the regular, internal meeting schedule, with indications of meetings that the commissioner is expected to attend and possibly contribute to.
- Introduction to the closest partners: the other film commissioners, plus coordinators, producers, production advisors, administrative assistants, etc. Introduction to managers, etc.
- Tour of the organisation.
- Handover of active projects.

This refers to projects whose development was supported by the new commissioner's predecessor and are expected to land on the new commissioner's desk with applications for further support. It only seems natural to be informed about the status of such projects. However, certain inherent dilemmas apply: on the one hand, there is the

need to secure a project's continued momentum and to avoid any delays caused by the change of commissioners. On the other hand, the commissioner needs to have a free hand with regard to assessing the desirability of moving on with a project or pulling the plug on it. Handover practices vary a lot from country to country and depending on individual circumstances. In some cases, the handover is kept to a very formal level. In other cases, the handover is used to give the new commissioner an introduction to case processing. Sometimes the departing commissioner is in charge of the handover, sometimes a producer or production advisor handles it.

- Gaining an overview of a project's path through the system from application to finished film – diagrams are always helpful!
- Filing systems – personal files and records – basics of using them.
- Do commissioners have their own system for managing their tasks? A log, reading lists, priority lists? It is recommended to construct simple systems based on those of the commissioner's needs that the existing databases, etc., do not accommodate. On this point, film institutes can advantageously exchange ideas for systems. Institutes are also recommended to develop methods for assessing their commissioners' workloads, mainly incoming screenplays and applications.
- Set routines – get the day-to-day under control. This includes setting regular hours for reading, capping the number of daily meetings and possibly setting regular "consultation hours" for phone calls and e-mail. Addressing the dilemma of how to be visible to the film community and available to the organisation, while finding time for a commissioner's primary tasks, all at the same time.
- When do I start reading "active" projects and new applications and how do I concretely go about it?
- When to begin the written and oral communication with applicants?
- When does the institute expect the first prioritisations and recommendations to be made?

#### Form

Several institutes kick things off with a welcome breakfast in the department, and the next few days can profitably be structured with a scheduled sequence of meetings and short meeting days. Most commissioners cannot wait to start reading projects, which may vary in number from very few to a truckload. After the first few days, it will be expedient to limit induction to a few hours of the workday to allow time for reading.

#### Resource persons

This should mainly be handled by the commissioner's closest co-workers and managers.

# Chapter 11

## CATALOGUE OF IDEAS FOR INDUCTION TRAINING: THE FIRST FEW WEEKS

### The commissioner's situation

Within the first few weeks, the commissioner will sit down at his or her desk and get into assessing individual applications/projects. Some institutes throw an official welcome reception of some sort for commissioners. The commissioner will have her first meetings with applicants. In some instances, the commissioner will already start writing her first rejections or recommend her first projects for subsidies. In Denmark, the commissioner receives a folder from one of the sitting commissioners with examples of rejection letters, recommendations and meeting summaries to use as inspiration.

### Goals of induction training

The commissioner should be introduced to basic issues concerning the communication with applicants and basic knowledge of the film landscape in which the applications typically originate. Moreover, the commissioner, according to need, should be updated with basic knowledge about the economy, financing and phases of film production.

### Contents

- Meetings with each of the other commissioners.

It is recommended to schedule these meetings in a way so that the other commissioners see them as mandatory and they are not left to chance. The point of the meetings is to provide specific insight into the differences and similarities between the various commissioners' ways of handling their jobs and to offer opportunities for (laying the foundation for) a direct exchange of experiences among commissioners.

- Writing requirements I: Written correspondence and written recommendations.

This is a basic rundown of the institute's requirements for the scope of written correspondence as well as the special requirements for written correspondence in a government institution; special requirements for e-mail correspondence, written meeting summaries and notes from phone calls; general etiquette for official letter writing; formal requirements for recommendations; the purpose of recommendations.

- Rejections.

Most commissioners are acutely aware of this subject because it concerns one of the most contentious aspects of their work. There is no easy answer to how best to phrase a rejection letter to make it both clear and unequivocal and friendly and constructive. How do you put it if you do not personally wish to support a project but think someone else should? How do you spin it if you like everything about a project but do not think the director is up to realising it? Should you refer to a lack of available resources as a reason why a project is being rejected? How do you cope the first few days after a contentious rejection? Should subsequent meetings about rejected projects be held? Should rejections be made orally or in writing? What position do you take if a director or producer keeps submitting new projects that are all deemed unworthy of support?

- The film institute's workflows.

Describing an individual project's path through the system of the commissioner's "own" subsidy scheme, this subject refers to an orientation about the institute's workflows concerning the actual administration of the

different subsidy schemes and any existing operating activities. The goal is to provide the commissioner with an image of the institution's overall activities, including her own commissioner scheme. Here, as well, it is important to bear in mind that the commissioner often has no previous experience with, or knowledge of, how a government institution works.

- The further progress of production-subsidised films through the institute's subsidy system.

This subject primarily aims to provide a sense of the resources spent on a film for promotion, sales, festivals, distribution and possible efforts on the Web or in the form of written materials. Secondly, it aims to provide a sense of existing opportunities for backing films in their future life, foster an understanding of the larger context in which the commissioner's prioritisations are part and foster understanding of the interplay between developing new film projects and the possibility of finished films finding an audience.

- The commissioner's case processing procedures – what are the established standards and what is up to the individual commissioner?

At this point, the commissioner has made her first experiences with case processing. The purpose of this subject is to foster an understanding and awareness of the purpose of the various procedures, and of where the commissioner has room to find his or her own way of doing things. The intention, moreover, is to provide a sense of the purpose of the processing procedures, as seen from the applicants' and the institute's perspectives.

- Division of roles between the commissioner and the producer/production advisor.

On this point, there are big differences between individual institutes and between the different areas, particularly between the documentary and fiction areas. The purpose of this subject is to describe how the cooperation and division of roles works between the commissioner and the affiliated expertise, and to ensure a clarification of the involved parties' competence areas, not least with regard to the green-lighting processes.

- Presenting the film commissioner to the filmmaking community.

The purpose here is to ensure the commissioner's visibility in the filmmaking community, an element that is often specified in job descriptions and general objects clauses but not every film institute has a strategy for executing. One possibility is to do an event that is an opportunity for the institute to present the commissioner to the film community (the DFI holds actual farewell and welcome receptions for departing and new commissioners). Another possibility is to invite the filmmaking community, or segments of it, to "end-of-day meetings" or including the commissioner in a bigger event. "Company visits" are also an option, having the commissioner visit industry organisations or production companies, or participate in events for directors or producers. In those contexts, it is recommended to clearly state ahead of time that the commissioner cannot discuss specific projects in order to prevent any confusion as to whether actual case processing has begun. It is also important to ensure that the commissioner does not otherwise find herself in situations where promises will be demanded from her or she is taken to task for

conditions she has not been adequately introduced to yet. In Denmark, commissioners are advised not to make company visits early on. Finally, it is recommended that the institute and the commissioner together discuss the pros and cons of the commissioner's possible desire to make manifestos.

- Mapping the film industry's players: production companies/studios, producers, directors, screenwriters. The purpose of this mapping is to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how small or big the group of potential applicants is, and in turn provide a better basis for prioritising early on. Please note that this mapping should be centred on the commissioner, possibly include other commissioners or producers/production advisors and take place only in a confidential setting.

- Other subsidy schemes. A rundown of other possibly subsidy schemes for film development and production besides the commissioner's "own" subsidy scheme.

- Film production economy: How to read a budget and a production plan. A rundown of a standard budget from the commissioner's area. Bear in mind that many commissioners have never read a budget before. Basic principles of Movie Magic or similar standard programs. Introducing basic concepts such as "breakdown."

- Film financing I: How to put together financing, typically in the commissioner's area (e.g., short fiction, documentaries, features, low budget).

- The film commissioner's prioritisations over the various development phases. This subject, and its relevance, varies depending on the subsidy scheme's form and aim, and is primarily aimed at commissioners who have the power to recommend projects for development or production subsidies. The subject aims at discussing how commissioners can adjust their priorities on an ongoing basis; project development as a race of elimination; the fact that each new subsidy also presents an opportunity to abort; how to avoid becoming hostage to subsidies awarded in the past; the time schedule as a tool; written correspondence as a tool; pros and cons of letting applicants know their place in your prioritisation or whether you intend to recommend them for production subsidies.

### **Form**

Good experiences have been made extending the induction over the first few weeks. This allows the commissioner to get acquainted with her work and concurrently be introduced to relevant subjects, for instance in the form of three to four meetings of two hours each. Company visits.

### **Resource persons**

Primarily internal co-workers: other commissioners, possibly the departing commissioner, a producer/production advisor, the nearest manager.

## Chapter 12

### CATALOGUE OF IDEAS FOR INDUCTION TRAINING: THE FIRST FEW MONTHS

#### The commissioner's situation

The commissioner is now operating at a full level of activity, reading applications/projects, holding meetings with applicants, writing rejection letters and recommending projects for subsidies. As far as project development is concerned, the first supported projects are starting to come back with the results of the project subsidies. Results in the form of finished films are rarely available, and then only in shorter formats. At this point, the commissioner's portfolio of projects will still largely consist of projects that were taken over from the previous commissioner and less so of projects that the commissioner personally identified at first-time application. The film commissioner is attending her first festivals and possibly making her mark publicly, in speech or writing. The commissioner has had her first experiences with most aspects of a film commissioner's job, and both the institution and the commissioner may now have a need to share and discuss those experiences.

#### The aim of induction training

Ensuring that the commissioner has the necessary tools to handle her tasks and ensuring the necessary factual, professional knowledge. Please note that all subjects that involve defining and discussing the commissioner's role are located in the subject box under Continuing Competency Development, which may to some extent overlap with the first few months of induction training.

#### Contents

##### *The Commissioner's Tools*

- Speed-reading.

In Denmark, for one, courses in speed-reading have been held with great success, radically increasing commissioners' reading speed. It is recommended to hold such courses in partnership with, or by delegation to, professional expertise in the area.

- Writing requirements II: Written communication. This subject is a follow-up to Writing Requirements I. It is recommended to cover the subject in two sections, the first in the nature of an introduction and the second more closely relating to the commissioner's own experiences with the writing aspects of her work. It is recommended to maintain an ongoing dialogue with the commissioner – after the induction as well – about the wording of her correspondence and recommendations. Generally, this subject concerns factual knowledge as well as a more opinion-oriented dialogue about the commissioner's role in relation to applicants and about the applicants' and the institute's requirements and needs for written communication; using summaries, analysis, assessment and next steps; written correspondence to document the commissioner's assessment across the course of development; how to point out weaknesses in a project while keeping a constructive tone; expressing oneself clearly, unequivocally and courteously; a discussion of the target group/users of the written communication and their perspective; constructive critique of the individual commissioner's written communication. Please note that this should take place in a confidential space.

- Conversations with applicants.

The aim of this subject is to discuss the commissioner's role in conversations with applicants; the meeting seen in relation to the meeting notice and summary; discussing reflections on the meeting's purpose and who will

attend it; how to create the best possible framework for creative dialogue; the commissioner as host and meeting manager; the conversation viewed from the applicant's perspective; how to avoid making decisions at a meeting or being "taken hostage" to a project. The purpose here is to challenge the commissioner's understanding of her own role and power position, and discuss the dilemmas of the commissioner as a sparring partner – inasmuch as the commissioner seeks to encourage the applicant's creative openness – and as a potential "axeman" – because the decision on further subsidies is in the commissioner's hands.

- Coaching – how to optimise the role of sparring partner.

The aim of this subject is to discuss and provide inspiration for how the commissioner can handle the role of creative dialogue partner. How can the commissioner, who will invariably be touching on creative aspects of the project, best help to optimise, not weaken, the project? Interview techniques. Silence as a tool. Where do you draw the line for the commissioner's interference? How do you prevent applicants from developing the project in a certain direction "because the commissioner said so"? How do you maintain the applicant's creative ownership? How do you ensure that the commissioner does not inappropriately discourage the applicant?

##### *Initiating, Selecting, Developing And Optimising Projects*

- Screenplay/breakdown vs. project.

The purpose of this subject is to identify the elements of a project that lie outside the screenplay/breakdown – that is, ideas for realising the project, including financial dimensioning, methodics of production and shooting, elements of style, music use, crew and cast, plus discussing how to best gain insight into the director's visions for realising the project.

- Project vs. talent.

The purpose of this subject is to discuss the commissioner's dilemmas in situations where an applicant's screenplay/breakdown is assessed as having potential, but where it is difficult for the commissioner to see how the applicant intends to realise the project or the commissioner questions whether the crew is up to the challenge.

- Debutants vs. established talent.

The purpose of this subject is to discuss the overall prioritisation among applications from debutants and established talent, e.g., in relation to possible general, political objectives, but also to focus on possible unconscious mechanisms producing an over- or under-prioritisation of debutants.

- Cultivating talent – outreach efforts?

The purpose of this subject is to discuss whether and how commissioners can contribute to "cultivating talent" in their area, including the pros and cons of outreach efforts, special initiatives (e.g., competitions), informal talks (without prior application and, possibly, at the commissioner's initiative) and actual requests to the filmmaking community (or specific filmmakers) to make certain films.

- Where is the line between a commissioner influencing or interfering in a project?

The purpose of this subject is to discuss how far the commissioner can go in her dialogue with applicants about their project and its development potential. How does the commissioner avoid becoming controlling, taking over the producer's role or in other ways taking creative or financial responsibility away from the filmmakers?

- The time schedule as a tool.

The aim of this subject is to employ the time schedule for the project's development and realisation as an important benchmark for the commissioner to avoid development dragging on unnecessarily and to gain a clear sense of the project's momentum.

- Early concept development.

The purpose of this subject is to give the commissioner the tools to conduct a constructive dialogue with applicants during the earliest phases of concept development.

- Green-lighting – when is a project production ready? How does the commissioner conduct economic and financial discussions with applicants?

The purpose of this subject is to discuss methods for, and dilemmas in, assessing when a project is ready for production. Moreover, to discuss the collaboration between the commissioner and the producer/production advisor in this process and any dilemmas that may involve. Primarily, the commissioner often needs to have a general dialogue with the applicants early on about the project's overall economic framework, though this often leads to problems later on because the applicants have taken such a discussion to imply a promise for subsidies or specific subsidy amounts.

- Case processing procedures for production subsidies. Please note that this point should be broken down to the commissioner the first time he or she recommends a project for production subsidies and can be repeated at a later point in time, at least to those commissioners who only rarely make recommendations for production subsidies (mainly feature film commissioners).

- Gender quotas.

The aim of this subject is an in-depth discussion of possible legislation or general objectives concerning gender quotas, as well as the practical dilemmas of upholding the intentions of the law.

#### *Filmmaking Topics*

- The filmmaking process.

A broad orientation to ensure that the commissioner has adequate and updated knowledge about the different stages of the filmmaking process from early concept development to finished film.

- Film production economy II: What is low budget? A point-by-point comparison of a low-budget project and a film with a normal budget, preferably a case story. The intention is to raise the commissioner's awareness of alternative production forms.

- Film financing II: Basic concepts of film financing (for beginners!).

- International financing.

A broad orientation about the most active international financing partners in the commissioner's area, plus, if possible, a peek at related areas.

#### *The Film Landscape*

- The food chain of the national film landscape.

A breakdown of all the film schools, public activities, film workshops, private initiatives, industry activities, etc., that

add up to a pipeline for the nation's filmmaking talent.

- National and Nordic organisations and institutions. An orientation about organisations and institutions in the other Nordic countries, including private and public TV stations, Scandinavian Films and Nordisk Film & TV Fond, plus the interplay among them.

- The European film landscape, including organisations, institutions and the interplay among them. A broad orientation about the main European players in the European film landscape, the most important production companies, TV stations (e.g., Arte) and distributors, plus Media, Eurimages, EFAD, the European Film Academy, the European Think Tank, etc.

- National TV stations and the interaction with them. The purpose of this subject is to provide insight into and discuss the national TV stations and the film institute's interaction with them, primarily within the commissioner's area.

- Regional funds and interacting with them. This subject mainly aims to provide an orientation about possible regional funds that have a bearing on film production in the commissioner's area, and the possible interaction with them.

- The future life of the finished film (interplay of target audience assessment, promotion, distribution, cinemas and international sales) and the film institute's role therein.

- The film festival landscape.

An orientation about international A-list festivals and other relevant festivals in the commissioner's area. Plus, a discussion of the commissioner's possible participation in these festivals, their frequency, the film commissioner's possible tasks at festivals (watching films, taking part in meetings, representative functions, network-building – and prioritising these activities), plus the economic framework and other practical concerns relating to the commissioner's festival activities.

#### **Form**

Series of two-hour seminars, e.g., on the same day every week.

Seminars of half a day to a day.

Field trips, e.g., visits to national TV stations, regional funds or other film institutes.

One- to two-day retreat.

#### **Participants**

Certain subjects may also be relevant to other film institute employees and decisions-makers in similar posts at other institutions or organisations. Certain subjects may be relevant to commissioners from other Nordic countries.

# Chapter 13

## CATALOGUE OF IDEAS FOR CONTINUING COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT

### The commissioner's situation

After the first few months on the job, the commissioner will have made her first experiences with all typical tasks and been confronted with central dilemmas, but very few commissioners will as yet, to any significant degree, have had the opportunity to see the results of their decisions.

### Objective

Ensuring that the commissioners' case processing takes place at the highest possible professional level, ensuring that relevant issues and problems are regularly taken up in the commissioner group, so that they continue to be part of the institution's common mission statement and professional foundation, and ensuring opportunities for commissioners to exchange experiences.

### Content

#### *The Commissioner's Role*

The aim is to ensure continuing discussion of the dilemmas of the film institute, the commissioner scheme and its applicants and the individual commissioner in relation to the below subjects, which are all described, in varying detail, in the opening chapters of this report.

- Defining and discussing the commissioner's role and the sovereignty concept.
- The commissioner's personal tastes – the commissioner as arbiter of taste.
- The commissioner's double role as referee and coach, "axeman" and midwife).
- Operating in the intersection of politics and professional standards (certain goals of a film accord may conflict with the quality criterion).
- The commissioner as inspiration for the film-policy debate.
- The commissioner's role versus the production company's role.

#### *The Commissioner's Tools*

- Evaluating the commissioner's performance. Every institute should develop a strategy to ensure that the individual commissioner evaluates his or her own performance. Elements to be evaluated include: written correspondence, written recommendations, the dialogue with applicants, the results of prioritisations, finished films that the commissioner supported, plus possible problems involved in making decisions or rejecting projects, and problems of upholding or restricting the commissioner's sovereignty. Please note: It is essential that such evaluation take place on an ongoing basis and on the commissioner's terms, i.e., the purpose is to give individual commissioners the best conditions for performing their job in an optimum manner. Accordingly, actual conflicts or complaint cases concerning the work of individual commissioners have no bearing on this point but should be treated separately. Moreover, evaluation should take place in confidence, just as it is essential to carefully consider who will be taking part in the evaluation in order to ensure an open and trusting dialogue.

- Stress management.

Several countries have affiliated professional expertise, e.g., organisational psychologists, who hold regular courses in stress management. This subject should be viewed on the backdrop of the fact that no country at present has a clear overview of the individual commissioner's workload.

- Mentoring plan, coaching plan and psychological counselling for commissioners. Several institutes offer commissioners a mentoring plan with past film commissioners or counselling from a professional coach. Moreover, several institutes provide individual psychological counselling, if judged necessary. In Finland, this is included in the institution's general health policy and can be requested by the commissioner personally. Please note that such programmes are handled by professional expertise with knowledge of the film business and the film commissioner's special area of work.

- Management training courses, including meeting management and negotiation techniques. Many of the people that a commissioner works or negotiates with have extensive experience from management training courses, including in meeting management and negotiation techniques. Providing similar training to film commissioners makes them aware of tools and methods that their counterpart may be employing. The aim, moreover, is to give commissioners optimum tools for managing meetings. Please note: if at all possible, the course instructor should have knowledge of the film business and film commissioners' special area of work.

- Crisis and conflict management. Denmark and Sweden have both held courses with professional expertise. The subject should be seen in relation to the many confrontational conversations a commissioner handles alone, not least concerning rejections.

#### *Initiating, Selecting, Developing And Optimising Projects*

- Developing special genres and formats. The aim of this subject is to offer insight into the distinct characteristics of developing documentaries, feature films or shorts, or for children or other specific target groups. This includes the special characteristics, e.g., of developing adaptations, one-man-one-camera, animated films, auteur-initiated vs. screenwriter-initiated vs. producer-initiated projects or TV series. The subject should target the commissioner's own area of subsidy.

#### *Filmmaking-Related Subjects*

- General film-technical insight, including digital and analogue film techniques in shooting and post-production.
- Animated films. This subject aims to provide insight into the special conditions that apply to developing and financing animated films, a special genre with a unique process of creation.
- Interactive formats. This subject aims to provide an overview of the special genres of interactive storytelling, plus some insight into their creative processes.

- The digital future and its consequences for financing and distribution.

The aim of this subject is to provide an overview of both the national and the international status in the area, including a particular discussion of the political and artistic consequences of the digital upheavals.

#### *The Film Landscape*

- Inspiration from other subsidy schemes – best practice.

The intention here is to seek inspiration and challenge ingrained habits of thinking by striving for the best practice in related subsidy schemes, both nationally and at the Nordic level. Please note that this process can suitably be carried out in joint with the institute's management and production expertise as a step in the continuing development of the commissioner schemes.

- Implementing film acts and film accords.

This subject is aimed at discussing the most significant dilemmas a commissioner faces in the intersection of politics and professional standards, e.g., upholding quality parameters against audience parameters, the size of the different funds when to making sensible prioritisations, the concept of responsible financing and the issue of gender quotas. Other aspect of this subject include meeting performance goals, strengthening interaction and cooperation between individual departments or areas in the organisation, and making sure that subsidy areas do not overlap or conflict. Please note: This training should be based on the specific day-to-day operations of the individual institute and can suitably be carried out in cooperation with the institute's management and production expertise.

#### *Artistic Inspiration*

The purpose of the below subjects is to provide general inspiration for the commissioner's artistic work. Please note: Since commissioners are often experts in these subjects themselves, course instructors should be of international high standards.

- The latest trends – state of the art.

New trends in genres and styles in cinematography, production design, sound design, editing and film scores, and the interaction among them, plus new trends of convergence between genres and film forms. Please note that this subject is conceived as a supplement to the commissioners' festival participation, which is a requirement for keeping up to the speed on the latest trends.

- Advanced dramaturgy.

This subject takes aim at special conditions, including the interplay of characters and plot, and, in extension, a discussion of the conventional distinction between a story as being either character- or plot-driven, plus special storytelling forms on the borderline of film as narrative.

- Film as art and entertainment.

This subject is aimed at discussing the conventional division of films into either art or entertainment, or into mainstream or "independent." The subject, moreover, aims at discussing a film commissioner's dilemmas in terms of to supporting films that will find only a very limited audience, and the related artistic and film-policy perspectives, plus challenging the individual commissioner's concept of quality.

# Chapter 14

## THE PACE & FORM OF TRAINING, INSTRUCTORS

### Scope of training

Individual institutes are recommended to set a strategy for the percentage of working hours it wants to spend on induction training and competency development. Expect to set aside more time for training for commissioners than is the organisation's usual average. Commissioners have more need for training, because their employment is briefer.

### The general pace of training

The institution is recommended to establish a series of regular modules for continuing competency development and set a pace for its training.

Regular elements in such a series might include

- A series of two-hour lectures, possibly on a set day of the week, with a set number of lectures per half year
- End-of-day meetings or evening events
- Seminars of half a day to a day
- A one- to two-day retreat
- Company visits and similar field trips

The training should be planned in relation to the organisation's other meeting structure and peak periods of activity.

### Setting times for individual training courses

For most institutes, it is a challenge to find the right time for its training courses, because commissioners tend to start and depart at staggered times. Moreover, some of the factual subjects vary according to whether the commissioner works in documentaries, TV series, shorts or features. Hence, institutes are recommended to prepare an overview of the total group of persons who will be completing these courses.

### Who will participate?

If several personnel groups are included in a training course, it is essential to clearly define the goals of the course and its possible primary target group. It is valuable for commissioners if they are able to relate the new knowledge or the involved issues directly to their work already while the course is going on.

Most of the subjects of the actual induction training can most expediently be handled internally at the individual institute. For one, specific tasks and work relationships vary widely from institute to institute. For another, the courses also tend to have a general teambuilding effect internally in the commissioner group, the department or the organisation as a whole. Moreover, induction training tends to have the added benefit of giving the organisation's commissioners an opportunity to meet by themselves and discuss the subjects as seen from the unique perspective of their group.

### The form of training

I have not found it expedient to go in and define more specific forms of instruction for the individual subjects, since that will depend entirely on the specific situation and the number of subjects an institute elects to cover at a time.

In general, depending on the character of the subject, instruction will take the form of lectures, conversational instruction, collective discussion, case reviews, film screenings, company visits and fact-finding missions. As mentioned, some of the subjects can also be covered by independent study or be included as agenda items in connection with the institute's other meeting structure.

However, it is a general wish, and recommended, to make the courses both mandatory and scheduled to ensure that they are not lost among all the regular day-to-day business.

### Instructors – in-house resource persons & outside expertise

When it comes to instructors, the institutes' opportunities for using internal resources vary greatly. I would recommend primarily using internal forces in the initial training, because they have in-depth knowledge of the commissioners' specific day-to-day work and specific national circumstances. Plus, as mentioned, there could be an added teambuilding bonus. Here, it will be expedient for the individual institute to identify which subject areas should be taught by internal resource persons, which subjects can be covered by some form of independent study, internally in the commissioner group or with the participation of the departing commissioner, and the possibility of bringing a larger group together for certain subjects. Regarding the initial training, it is recommended to apply a "proximity principle" to make widest possible use of in-house resources, as deemed expedient.

As far as more opinion-shaping subjects are concerned, it can be an advantage to call in outside forces who can help expand the scope of the work being done. In that regard, it is recommended to primarily use people with specific experience in, and knowledge about, the special conditions of the film commissioners' areas of work.

When it comes to bringing in outside filmmakers, be aware of the potential problems of employing someone who in another context might appear before the commissioners as an applicant. Experience also indicates that past or departing commissioners should be used with care. On the one hand, they may possess valuable insight and knowledge about a commissioner's work. On the other hand, there is a risk of that knowledge pointing backwards and not ahead in terms of the continuing development of the commissioner's area.

### Putting a contact person in charge

Because the training activities are so individually conditioned, not just from country to country but also depending on the specific time of the training activity, each institute is recommended to put one person in charge of planning induction training and competency development for commissioners. This person could also be the contact person for the other Nordic countries when it comes to planning bilateral or joint Nordic events. Moreover, it is recommended to make that person responsible for keeping a log of the institute's activities in induction training and competency development. Finally, commissioners are recommended to keep their own logs to gather knowledge and inspiration for others.

THE END