

Eastern European Acquisition Pool adds Slovenian partner.

Martin Blaney in Berlin

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Berlin-based Eastern European Acquisition Pool (EEAP) has expanded its influence in the Central and East European market with the Slovenian media company Cinemania Group coming onboard as a new shareholder with a 26% stake.

The agreement was signed by Cinemania's general manager Sreten Zivojinovic with EEAP's other shareholders, Berlin-based A Company Consulting & Licensing and Munich-based ProRom Media Trade and will open up the markets of ex-Yugoslavia to EEAP's activities as a buyer of licenses from international independent producers and distributors.

Speaking to ScreenDaily.com, Zivojinovic explained that Cinemania is one of the leading distributors in the area of theatrical, TV and home entertainment in the ex-Yugoslavian countries and Albania, and is planning to set up new companies in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania in the future to follow existing affiliates already established in Serbia and Croatia.

Alexander van Duermen, CEO of A Company, explained that EEAP, which was founded in 2003 and picks up 20-30 new titles each year, plans to extend its acquisition strategy from focussing on US independent fare such as *A Sound Of Thunder*, *Beginning Of Wisdom* and *Madhouse*, to also target the European and - in particular - the German market in future.

The first German titles to be released through the EEAP network will include the German comedy *7 Dwarves (7 Zwerge)* which has distribution in place for Poland, the Czech and Slovak Republics, ex-Yugoslavia and Hungary, while Til Schweiger's latest directorial effort *Barefoot (Barfuss)* will be distributed through all of Eastern Europe including CIS.

"We had acquired the rights for *Barefoot* directly from the film's producer and aim to pick up five or six German titles a year directly from the producers," van Duermen said. "Other pickups at this year's Berlinale included *Thank You For Smoking* for all of Eastern Europe, including CIS, and *Keeping Mom*, starring Rowan Atkinson, for CIS only."

To date, the distribution partners in EEAP's network are Poland's ITI Cinema and kino swiat; Vilnius-based GPI Garsu Pasaulis Irasai which distributes in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania; Zagreb-based Discovery Film and Video Distribution (in cooperation with new shareholder Cinemania); and Hungary's leading independent distributor Budapest Film Distribution.