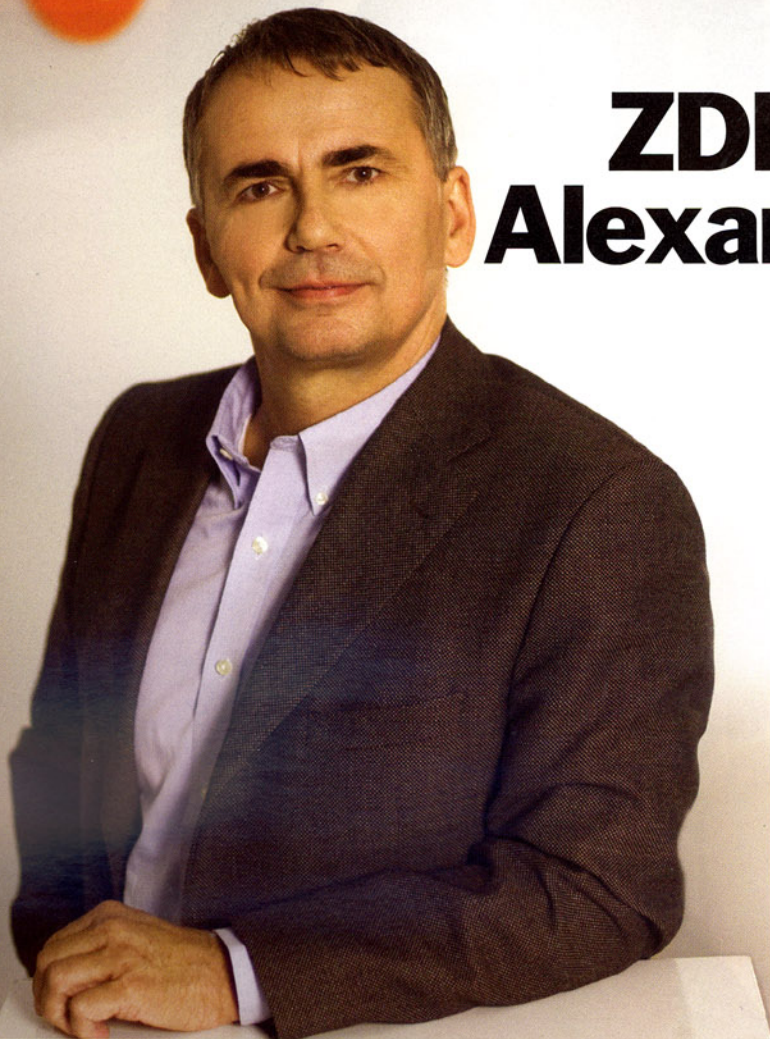




International Appeal

# ZDF Enterprises' Alexander Coridass



As the commercial arm of one of the world's leading public broadcasters, ZDF Enterprises (ZDFE) is able to offer buyers a wide range of high-end programming, spanning from drama series and TV movies to documentaries and children's. President and CEO Alexander Coridass talks about the benefits of a long-standing commitment to quality.

By Anna Carugati

**TV EUROPE:** What has been the strategy for ZDFE's growth?

**CORIDASS:** We started as simply the distributor of a major broadcaster, ZDF, but that equipped us with a pretty broad range of great product: top-quality German TV movies, drama series, documentaries and other genres. Then over the years we enlarged that original catalogue by acquiring additional genres, partly shot in English. The acquisition of rights of our own is a very important issue for us, particularly for children's cartoons and teenage live-action shows. So during the last ten years we have systematically enlarged our catalogue with programs from other sources, in particular high-profile international co-productions but also with acquisitions. We achieved that goal because national and international partners trust our distribution capacity and policies.

**TV EUROPE:** Are you finding a great demand for content on new-media platforms?

**CORIDASS:** It goes without saying that if you sell series or event movies or big documentaries you must offer Internet content—a B-to-C [business-to-consumer] website—so that television buyers can tailor it to their needs. This is an additional service, which is simply expected by our clients. And as long as clients are ready to pay for the content we offer,

that's good, because we have to invest tens of thousands of euros for the production of these Internet offerings.

We also produce original content for the web, based on our existing programming. We have a number of video clips, 90-second versions of our TV documentaries. For example, when Ramadan started, we offered ten clips of different aspects of Ramadan. The production of such clips is quite expensive, but we keep working on optimizing [it]. We sell them as straight deals or we agree on a share of the ad revenues. Our direction is very clear: we must offer this content and we will even enlarge the field of our activities, but I must add that the financial outcome of content on the Internet is still open and nobody has found the final business model yet.

**TV EUROPE:** Are you finding that in a tough economy, co-productions are becoming more necessary?

**CORIDASS:** I am always a little reluctant to say that if you have financial problems you should try to collect money elsewhere so you can complete your budget. That is never a strong enough reason for a co-production. First of all you have to bear in mind that co-productions are complicated. It starts with the different editorial priorities and it goes on with the production and legal aspects.

So co-productions are horrible but they are also awesome. It's so great to have different input and different styles of production. Of course, it's nice to have additional money, but the decisive point is: there must really be a synergy—one plus one must equal more than two. If it's only two and you have to divide by two you end up with one again. So there must be something—an actor, a plot, a location—that you wouldn't have [on your own].

**TV EUROPE:** What titles are you highlighting at MIPCOM?

**CORIDASS:** The main focus is obviously on children's programs. We have a range of very interesting and innovative new productions, some of them already internationally successful in previous seasons. These include *The Elephant Princess*, the third season of *H2O: Just Add Water*, both live-action series, as well as our new animated series *Ludovic*, *Tempo Express* and the third season of *Laura's Star*. In fiction, our focus is on new romantic TV movies based on books by well-known novelists such as Katie Fforde, Emilie Richards, Barbara Wood, Inga Lindström and Rosamunde Pilcher. We are also distributing two romantic soaps with more than 530 episodes altogether: *Hanna: Follow Your Heart* and *Forbidden Love*.

In documentaries, we will present the finished programs *License to Drill*, *Delta Divers*, *Hitler's Lost Battleship* and *Animal River Challenge*. For pre-sale we will offer the spectacular underwater-documentary *Adventure Ocean Quest* and we will be speaking to potential co-production partners about new projects in development: *The Last Yakuza* and *Where the Bombs Fell*.