

age those funds for maximum impact.

For example, they cap backing for a single feature-length film or television project at €150,000 (\$210,000), and at least 150% of the amount awarded must be spent during shooting in Apulia. The fund's organizers require that at least two weeks of filming must take place in Apulia, and that at least 30% of the staff used for the local shooting be local. But they also provide an array of inkind support options not included in the €150,000-cap, including discounted hotel rooms and meals, experienced location scouts, and access to the region's two "Cineporto" facilities more on that later.

Iarussi boasts about the nimbleness of the commission's decision-making process, which he says has no political agenda. And decisions come fast: Requests for access to the region's many cultural sites are fast-tracked, and applications for funding are processed within 60 days of the region's three annual deadlines at the end of January, May, and October.

"We think it all adds up to making Apulia a very attractive location for making films," Iarussi savs.

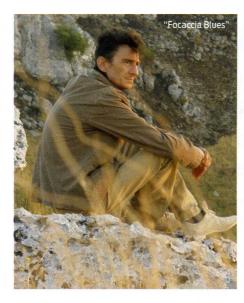
The two Cineporto facilities are the crown jewels of the region's cinema sector. As with the film fund, they were developed on a modest budget spent well. The 1,200-square meter (13,000 square feet) facility in the city of Bari opened Jan. 16, with the 600-squre meter (6,500 square feet) Lecce facility slated to open in late February. They were built with a combined €800,000 (\$1.1 million) in regional funding, plus another €350,000 (\$490,000) from other sources.

Once the location in Lecce opens it will make Apulia the only region in Italy with more than one Cineporto-type facility.

The Cineportos in Bari and Lecce are designed to serve a variety of purposes, ranging from high-definition film screenings, to help with makeup and costumes, to casting studios, to production offices, plus exhibition areas and a coffee bar and restaurant. Those working on films in the region have free access to the facilities.

'These facilities are really a strong part of Apulia's cinema heritage," says Silvio Maselli, the film commission director and one of the supervisors of the Cineporto projects. "The region has a young and creative population, and a these facilities can be a focal point for them as well as a new reason for filmmakers to be drawn to the region."

Maselli adds that the region opted to create two Cineportos rather than to consoli-



date their efforts and resources into or because of geography. Apulia is Italy's longest region from top to bottom, and between Bari and Lecce the facilities c two of the most significant and pictur cities in the region that are separated 1 nearly 100 miles of roads.

"Some people will use one facility o other, and some will use both, depend on the project," Maselli says. "Both pa the region have their own particular strengths."

Using funds from the European Uni budget for underdeveloped parts of th nation bloc, Apulia is helping to fund initiative at 20 local cinemas in the rearound a tenth of the regions total and ited to smaller cinemas with no more four screens. The idea is to make high quality films accessible and available curious public in Apulia.

Those factors, combined with its na and historical attractions, mean Apuli tainly seems to have attracted more th share of fans. Recent projects shot in t region include Ferzan Ozpeteck's "Mi Vaganti" (Loose Cannons), Davide Ba and Lorenzo Conte's "Fine pena mai" Nico Cirasola's "Focaccia Blues."

"I first came to Apulia nine years ag fell in love with it as a location," says Ozpeteck, who is finishing his latest p "Mine Vaganti," which was shot entire Apulia. The film will screen in Berlin.

"Ever since I came to Apulia I thoug that the next time I make a film with tl right kind of atmosphere, the beach, for and so on, that I would make it in Apul says. "The commission has done every it can to make the project a success." II