Ralf Rückauer ZDF Studios

Founded nearly 30 years ago, ZDF Enterprises rebranded earlier this year as ZDF Studios to better reflect the company it has evolved into—one that produces in addition to distributing and that has grown to have nearly 30 subsidiaries, including the factual producer and distributor Off the Fence. ZDF Studios works with subsidiaries such as Off the Fence, as well as factual indies, from the development stage of a project to financing and distribution, explains Ralf Rückauer, VP Unscripted at ZDF Studios, who spoke to Anna Carugati, *World Screen*'s group editorial director.

As the global media industry has changed over the years, so too have the ways and means of collaborating with companies for co-productions. "The co-production

game is getting more and more complicated because, in ancient dinosaur times, we used to collaborate with U.S. networks—the likes of Discovery and National Geographic, A&E, Smithsonian—but these times are definitely over," says Rückauer, who explains that the shift is due to companies now demanding worldwide rights for their own platforms instead of just for one or two markets.

"We have had so many big events over the last couple of years that people are getting more interested in factual and news."

In part because of the new challenges, ZDF Studios "decided to create shows more on our own and become more of a production company," says Rückauer. And the company still manages to find co-pro opportunities, particularly with partners in Europe. "We just launched *Africa from Above*. It's a co-production between ARTE, ORF, ZDF and UKTV. Things like that are still doable."

Another reason for those in the factual space to remain optimistic is consumer demand. "We have had so many big events over the last couple of years that people are getting more and more interested in factual and news," says Rückauer, who sees the biggest growth in demand for wildlife, science and history titles. "This is also what the industry, broadcasters and streamers, are telling us." ■