

Inside Film Festival Networks

FIELD BOOK

**Meeting of European Film Festival Networks,
Think Tank and Public Discussion**

Kino Otok – Isola Cinema International Film Festival,
Izola, Slovenia,
11 and 12 June 2026

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

European film festival networks increasingly operate as cross-border infrastructures that complement individual festivals and strengthen the wider audiovisual ecosystem. This field book summarises what five Creative Europe MEDIA-supported networks have learned about **programming, audience engagement, collaboration** and **resilience** through the lens of **innovation**, as well as how these insights can inform future practice and policy.

Across networks, a shared direction is clear: festivals are evolving from short-term events into year-round cultural structures. Their ability to adapt and remain relevant depends on **meaningful participation, co-designed accessibility, digital-native formats, qualitative audience knowledge and organisational resilience**. These elements help festivals navigate limited resources, fragmented markets and shifting audience habits. As only festivals with a **strong individual identity** can engage in meaningful collaboration, Creative Europe MEDIA support for individual festivals is a prerequisite for quality European film festival networks.

Several cross-cutting insights stand out. **Meaningful participation** builds long-term audiences but requires mentoring and staff capacity. **Digital formats** extend context and reach but work best when they function as complementary layers rather than substitutes for the cinema experience. **Accessibility** works only when developed in collaboration with communities, not through technical compliance alone. Understanding audiences requires more than tracking attendance figures; festivals also need qualitative insights into **audience behaviour**, both during and beyond the festival. **Networks** create resilience: shared tools, peer learning and mutual support help festivals cope with limited resources and changing contexts.

The field book also highlights **what is less effective**. Symbolic participation does not build engagement. Technical accessibility measures without community partnerships often miss their target. Simply transferring physical events online produces limited value, and hybrid formats rarely recreate the festival experience. Reporting impact only through numbers weakens advocacy, while growing reporting requirements and coordination demands can stretch small teams.

From these insights, **several strategic directions emerge**. Festivals benefit from integrating audience work early, offering real roles to participants, co-designing accessibility, using digital formats purposefully and engaging in networks strategically. Networks benefit from documenting practical methods, tracking qualitative impact, budgeting coordination realistically, creating structured peer-learning cycles and translating evidence into advocacy. Funding bodies can strengthen the sector by recognising qualitative impact, supporting invisible infrastructure, enabling cross-network exchange and maintaining complementary support for festivals and networks.

Overall, the field book shows that European festival networks are not only project consortia but emerging cultural infrastructures. Their practices – when shared, adapted and supported – can help festivals remain relevant, resilient and connected in a rapidly changing audiovisual landscape.

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1. Purpose, participants and context

1.1 Purpose and framing of the meeting

The Meeting of European Film Festival Networks (Izola, 11–12 June 2026) brought together **five Creative Europe MEDIA-supported film festival networks** to reflect on how festivals collaborate, engage audiences and build resilience across diverse European contexts. With more than 80 festivals connected through 15 MEDIA-supported networks, cross-network exchange is becoming a structural part of the sector.

The aim of the meeting was to make **collaboration knowledge explicit**: which methods work, which are transferable, where networks face limitations and how their experience can inform future cooperation models as well as (inter)national funding priorities.

Hosted by **Motovila – Creative Europe Desk Slovenia** within the **22nd Kino Otok – Isola Cinema International Film Festival** and organised with **Creative Europe MEDIA desks** from **Belgium (Flanders office)**, **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, **the Czech Republic**, **Croatia**, **Denmark**, **Italy (Turin office)**, **Lithuania** and **Germany (Berlin–Brandenburg office)**, the meeting responded to networks' interest in more regular exchanges – an interest confirmed during the two EACEA-organised cluster meetings in 2025.

To encourage open discussion and genuine peer learning, the meeting was intentionally designed as a focused think tank for a deliberately small but diverse group of five networks' representatives (followed by a public presentation of shared insights to a broader public).

The insights collected in this field book are intended to support festivals, networks, Creative Europe Desks and policymakers in strengthening cooperation, audience engagement and long-term sector capacity.

1.2 Participants and networks involved

Five Creative Europe MEDIA-supported networks took part:

1. **European Network for Film Discourse (END)** – festival cooperation focusing on short film, 8 festivals, including FilmFest Dresden/Talking Shorts, DE/BE (coordinator), FeKK – Ljubljana Short Film Festival, SI (partner). *Representatives*: Niels Putman (network coordinator), Peter Cerovšek (FeKK festival director), Matevž Jerman (FeKK programme director).
2. **Moving Images – Open Borders (MIOB)** – generalist film festival consortium, 6 festivals, including Trieste Film Festival, IT (partner). *Representatives*: Nicoletta Romeo, Monica Goti.
3. **Network of Festivals in the Adriatic Region (NFAR)** – regional cross-border festival collaboration, 6 festivals, including Zagreb Film Festival – ZFF, HR, Ljubljana International Film Festival – LIFFe (partners). *Representatives*: Franka Bihar (festival coordinator, ZFF), Simon Popek (festival director, LIFFe).
4. **Northern Animation Network (NAN)** – representing animation-focused networks, 4 festivals, including Viborg Animation Festival, DK (coordinator). *Representative*: Sandra Brunkow Simonsen (head).
5. **Young Programmers for Young Audiences (Young4Film)** – specialising in young audiences, 6 festivals, including Kino Otok – Isola Cinema International Film Festival, SI (coordinator). *Representatives*: Tanja Hladnik (festival director, network coordinator), Ana Cerar (film educator).

Participants included network coordinators, festival directors, programme managers, educators and curators, covering expertise in short film, animation, youth programming, regional festival collaboration, intercultural programming, criticism, sustainability and accessibility (for their detailed presentations, please see Annex 1).

1.3 How to read this field book

This field book is a practical **overview of methods, challenges and learning points** drawn from the experiences of five Creative Europe MEDIA–supported festival networks. It is not a transcript of the meeting, but a synthesis of what networks have learned about programming, audience engagement, collaboration and resilience.

The document is intended for festivals, networks, Creative Europe Desks and policymakers seeking clear, practical insights into what works, what is transferable, where limitations appear and how network experience can inform future cooperation and policy reflection. Case studies, tables and concise summaries highlight patterns that can support programming decisions, strengthen organisational capacity and guide strategic planning.

1.4 Topics through the lens of innovation

Discussions focused on two interconnected areas, **both viewed through the lens of innovation:**

1) Film programming, audience engagement and community building

How networks are rethinking their relationship with audiences in a rapidly changing environment, from shifting assumptions and programming choices to new engagement strategies, participatory formats and digital tools.

2) International collaboration, sustainability and resilience

How networks collaborate across borders, share knowledge and resources, define impact beyond numbers, and balance innovation with long-term sustainability.

Innovation was understood broadly: not only as the use of new technologies, but as new ways of connecting with audiences, collaborating across borders, organising work and sustaining communities. In this sense, innovation and long-term sustainability were seen as closely linked.

2. Topic 1: Film programming, audience engagement and community building

2.1 Rethinking the relationship with the audience

All participating networks view audiences as **active contributors** to the festival ecosystem. The discussions confirmed a sector-wide shift: festivals increasingly tend to design programming, communication, accessibility and audience engagement as **one integrated process**, rather than separate activities.

This shift moves festivals:

- from spectatorship to **participation**,
- from attendance numbers to **community building**,
- from isolated events to **long-term audience relationships**,
- from generic outreach to **contextualised, curated and co-created formats**.

Networks emphasised that audience engagement begins at the **programming stage**. Programme architecture, thematic strands, contextual framing and moderation shape how audiences enter complex programmes and connect with curatorial intent. This integrated approach is essential in specialised fields (short film, animation, youth programming) where providing **context** can make complex or unfamiliar content more **accessible**.

Innovation was understood pragmatically: new ways of involving audiences, designing formats, using digital tools and building community relationships that support long-term sector resilience.

2.2 Case studies and transferable practices

Case 1 – Young4Film: From young audiences to young programmers

Young4Film involves young people directly in programming through shared viewing, discussion and collective selection. The format builds engaged audiences and early professional pathways.

- **Transferable practice: Treat participation as a structured process:** viewing, discussion, contextualisation, selection, moderation and reflection are adapted to different age groups.
- **Unexpected challenge: Meaningful youth participation requires structured educational work:** the more responsibility young programmers receive, the more festivals need to invest in age-specific guidance, preparation, follow-up and coordination with schools or youth organisations. This is not only a question of time, but of pedagogical expertise and continuity – something many small teams struggle to sustain year-round.
- **Learning point:** Young people become invested and loyal audience and even long-term collaborators when they are given **real responsibility, not symbolic tasks**.

Case 2 – END: Discourse as audience infrastructure

END strengthens audiences for European short film through criticism, curating and public discussion. Talking Shorts extends this work online and keeps film discourse active beyond festival dates.

- **Transferable practice:** Use criticism, essays and curatorial writing as audience-development tools, integrated into how festivals shape context and guide viewers. Connect emerging critics with multiple festivals.

- **Unexpected challenge:** Workshops, criticism, interviews and curatorial writing generate a continuous editorial workload: editing, quality control, publication workflows and coordination across festivals. As more participants stay involved, the **demand for editorial oversight and cross-festival circulation grows** faster than the available staff.
- **Learning point: Audience development and professional formation increasingly overlap.** Emerging critics, curators and moderators often return as collaborators, turning discourse formats into early professional pathways. This strengthens continuity in the sector, but also means networks need structured mentoring and coordination models to support growing alumni groups without overstretching their capacity.

Case 3 – NAN, NFAR and MIOB: Accessibility through co-design

Festivals achieved the strongest accessibility results when working directly with specific communities – neurodiverse audiences, disability associations and refugee groups – shaping both programming and communication together.

- **Transferable practices: Start with a community partner** or mediator before designing the screening conditions or communication language. Treat accessibility as programming, communication and audience relations work, not as a technical adjustment only.
- **Unexpected challenge: Accessibility requires specialised knowledge and long-term relationships:** working with neurodiverse audiences, disability associations or refugee communities demands expertise, trust building and continuity. Small festival teams often lack the time or specialised skills to maintain these partnerships year-round.
- **Learning point: Dialogue with communities sharpens curatorial precision.** When programming is shaped together with the audiences' festivals aim to reach, curatorial choices can become more targeted and/or culturally sensitive, resulting in screenings that are genuinely accessible in practice, not only in form.

Case 4 – NAN, END, Young4Film, MIOB: Digital formats that extend the festival

NAN's online video interviews with animation artists illustrate a digital-native approach: the format is designed for long-term online circulation on platforms where viewers already expect such content. END's Talking Shorts similarly functions as a living archive for short film discourse. Young4Film uses online screenings to reach rural or economically under-resourced contexts where school visits to cinemas may be impossible (*cinema deserts*). MIOB uses surveys and digital tools to better understand audiences.

- **Transferable practice: Ask what the digital format adds:** reach, archive, education, data, access to cinema in *cinema deserts* or professional visibility.
- **Unexpected challenge: Digital formats require dedicated workflows and realistic expectations.** Producing interviews, editorial content, online screenings or audience-insight tools demands technical skills, editing capacity, platform management and coordination across partners. Without clear workflows, digital formats can become fragmented or underused.
- **Learning point: Digital-native formats extend programme lifespan and sector memory.** When designed for online environments, digital formats reach audiences beyond festival dates, support specialised fields such as short film and animation, and create shared resources that circulate across festivals.

2.3 What works vs. Main challenges

Area	What works	Main challenges
Programming as audience development	Curated strands, guest curators and clear contextual framing help audiences understand curatorial intent and navigate complex programmes. Moderation and guided conversations deepen interpretation and create shared meaning.	Programme categories without explanation leave audiences unable to grasp thematic logic, reducing engagement and weakening the festival's narrative.
Participatory formats	Age-appropriate approaches for children, teenagers and adults; structured processes (viewing, discussion, contextualisation, selection, moderation) that build skills and continuity. Over time, these formats function as early professional pathways.	One-off juries or isolated workshops create short-term excitement but no lasting skills or community. Without mentoring and follow-up, participants remain guests rather than contributors.
Accessibility and inclusion	Co-design with associations, educators and mediators ensures relevance, trust and higher participation. Accessibility becomes part of programming, aligning content and logistics with real needs of targeted audiences.	Technical adjustments alone (sign-language interpretation or audio description, ramps, relaxed screenings ...) are not enough and can lead to overlooking cultural habits, trust gaps and communication barriers – which means that screenings may remain inaccessible in practice.
Digital formats	Digital-native formats (online screenings, interviews, editorial platforms) extend reach, deepen context and support audiences unable to attend in person. They also create shared resources that circulate across festivals.	Livestreams or hybrid formats that replicate physical events feel flat and fragmented online. They fail to use digital strengths (asynchronous viewing, editorial depth, interactivity) and can dilute the core festival experience.
Audience data	Surveys, interviews and qualitative feedback reveal motivations, barriers, habits and local impact. This knowledge supports relevant programming and long-term audience relationships.	Attendance figures alone encourage volume over relevance and offer no insight into cultural or social value of festival activities.
Impact assessment	Broader impact indicators (should) capture qualitative aspects of film festivals and their networks' effects: e.g. cultural value, community building, professional growth and long-term sector capacity building.	When measuring impact stays narrowed down to numerical indicators only (attendance, reach, number of events etc.), it damages the real effect of broader qualitative contributions and undervalues community relationships and professional and sector development.

3. Topic 2: International collaboration, sustainability and resilience

Festival networks operate as **cross-border infrastructures** that complement individual festivals. They enable films, knowledge, professionals, audiences and organisational practices to circulate across fragmented audiovisual markets and uneven institutional contexts. This is particularly important where European works have limited circulation, festival teams are small and specialised fields (short film, animation, youth programming) struggle to maintain visibility.

Across discussions, collaboration emerged not only as joint delivery of activities, but as **organisational capacity**: a way to strengthen continuity, reduce isolation, share expertise and build resilience in diverse political and institutional environments. At the same time, networks add coordination work, reporting pressure and the need for ethical and operational alignment across territories.

3.1 Impact measurement beyond numbers

The question of **impact measurement stood out strongly** in the group discussion.

Networks agreed that many of the most meaningful effects are not well captured in existing reporting systems, which leaves **important parts of their work undervalued and harder to communicate**:

- ✓ **Audience and community impact** emerges in motivations for attending, changes in cultural habits, repeated participation and the sense of belonging audiences describe.
- ✓ **Professional-development impact** is visible when participants return as collaborators, when new critics and curators emerge and when peer learning shapes shared skills.
- ✓ **Organisational impact** includes improved workflows, shared standards, continuity despite small teams, reduced isolation and, importantly, wellbeing of teams and collaborators as a key factor in sustaining year-round work.
- ✓ **Territorial and ecosystem impact** appears in the circulation of non-national European works, in reconnecting fragmented regions (NFAR) and in cultural spillovers such as Trieste's guided walks.
- ✓ **Policy impact** comes from translating local experience into policy needs and generating qualitative evidence that strengthens advocacy.

Together, these dimensions show that festivals create layered, long-term and relational effects and that capturing them requires methods that go beyond numerical indicators.

3.2 Case studies and transferable practices

Case 1 – All participating networks: Sharing resources and tools

Networks develop shared tools that increase visibility, reduce duplication and strengthen specialised fields. Examples include **END's Talking Shorts** editorial platform, **MIOB's Green Charter** and audience surveys, **NAN's joint submission and accreditation systems**, **NFAR's online programme extensions** and **Young4Film's structured mentoring formats** for young film programmers.

- **Transferable practice: Shared tools work best when they are practical, modular and adaptable** to different partner capacities, allowing both large and small festivals to participate meaningfully.
- **Unexpected challenge: Shared tools need maintenance, ownership and realistic expectations.** They require updates, coordination and clarity about who is responsible for what. Not all partners can contribute equally, and expecting identical involvement can create pressure.

- **Learning point / trend: Shared resources turn individual limitations into collective capacity.** When tools are well maintained and clearly owned, networks create infrastructure that no single festival could build alone.

Case 2 – NFAR: Regional circulation as repair infrastructure

NFAR operates in a post-Yugoslav region with fragmented markets, limited circulation of European works and uneven institutional capacities – conditions that make regional collaboration essential. They developed programmes combining circulation, professional exchange and audience development: *Cinephile*, *54+ Workshop*, *Young Critics Workshop*, *Manaki's Heirs*, *Adriatic Audience Award*, *Adriatic Film Awards* and *Winter Edition*.

- **Transferable practice:** Use networks to identify circulation gaps and build shared programming and online extensions that respond directly to those gaps.
- **Unexpected challenge: Fragmented markets require continuous coordination and sensitivity.** Different institutional realities, political contexts and audience habits demand ongoing trust-building and careful alignment.
- **Learning point: Networks can rebuild cultural space, not only distribute films.** By reconnecting regions and audiences, NFAR strengthens cultural continuity in territories where circulation has been historically disrupted.

Case 3 – MIOB: Values-based cooperation, green tools and local impact

MIOB was founded during the Syrian refugee crisis, initially without external funding, driven by the idea that festivals have a responsibility to amplify cultural perspectives and support access to diverse cinema. The network developed awards, journalism labs, audience surveys, engagement formats and sustainability initiatives, including the *Green Charter*. It also prioritised access in contexts with limited exposure to European art-house cinema.

- **Transferable practice:** Develop practical tools that can travel beyond the consortium and be used by festivals with very different realities. MIOB's *Green Charter* is an excellent example: it has been adopted widely across Europe, not only by MIOB partners.
- **Unexpected challenge:** Values-based cooperation requires continuous alignment across diverse political and institutional environments, which can be demanding over time.
- **Learning point / trend:** Audience surveys are a great tool capturing attendance and user behaviour, both within and beyond the festival experience, revealing how visitors engage with museums, guided walks and other cultural offers thus providing strategic evidence for strong(er) positioning in local cross-sector collaboration and policy frameworks.

3.3 What works vs. Main challenges

Area	What works	Main challenges
Knowledge-sharing & peer learning	Regular online and in-person exchanges, joint trainings and mentoring formats help partners address programming, communication and organisational questions. These interactions make it easier to compare approaches, troubleshoot issues and	Knowledge-sharing requires continuous coordination and time investment. Differences in organisational culture, communication habits and expectations can slow alignment. Tacit knowledge (practical know-how that is not easily

	refine working methods across different contexts.	documented) often needs repeated interaction to be transferred effectively.
Sharing resources & expertise	Shared tools such as editorial platforms, sustainability frameworks, audience research and joint submission systems streamline workflows and reduce duplication. They allow festivals to test new approaches without developing tools from scratch and support more consistent practices across territories.	Shared tools need ongoing care: they must be maintained, updated and adjusted to fit different partners' capacities. Not everyone can contribute at the same level, and expecting identical involvement can create unnecessary pressure. Without clear ownership and realistic expectations, these tools can end up underused or become an administrative burden.
Organisational resilience	Sharing responsibilities across partners, keeping shared documentation up to date and staying connected with alumni networks helps festivals cope with changing workloads and staff turnover. Networks also give teams a place to discuss everyday operational dilemmas and offer informal support during demanding periods.	Collaboration inevitably adds coordination tasks, which can stretch already small teams. If coordination roles, wellbeing and knowledge management are not clearly recognised and properly resourced, network participation can increase pressure and lead to burnout.
Policy learning & advocacy	Networks help turn practical experience into policy-relevant insights . By comparing realities across countries, they reveal structural gaps, highlight emerging needs and provide evidence that can inform both European and national cultural strategies.	Policy environments differ a lot from one country to another. When national and European funding priorities do not match , it becomes difficult for festivals to put shared recommendations into practice appropriately. And because the work film festival networks do is still not properly recognised in evaluation systems, their impact is often overlooked in policy discussions.
Measuring impact	Combining quantitative indicators with qualitative evidence (audience motivations, professional pathways, organisational learning and the wider effects festivals have on their surrounding communities and regions) gives a more accurate picture of how festivals contribute to cultural ecosystems. This broader approach strengthens strategic planning and advocacy.	Current reporting systems focus (too) heavily on short-term numbers , which makes it difficult to show long-term cultural, professional and societal impact. Qualitative results need time, continuity and context to document properly – and most existing impact assessment frameworks do not support that.

4. Key insights from the two topics

- **Programming as audience development**
Curatorial decisions, programme structure and communication form a **single ecosystem**. Clear thematic strands, guest curators and contextual framing help audiences navigate complex programmes and understand why films belong together.
- **Community emerges through active roles**
Audiences become part of a festival community when they take on **meaningful responsibilities**: selection, moderation, criticism, discussion. Continuity and responsibility matter more than one-off activities.
- **Young people as future professionals**
Experiences from Young4Film and END show that audience engagement can also be **early professional formation**. Young programmers, critics and moderators often return as collaborators, strengthening continuity in the sector.
- **Accessibility goes beyond technical measures**
Effective accessibility comes from **co-design with communities**, educators and mediators. Technical adjustments alone (subtitles, ramps, relaxed screenings...) do not address cultural habits, trust gaps or communication barriers.
- **Digital tools as complementary layers**
Digital-native formats – interviews, editorial platforms, online screenings – extend reach, context and programme lifespan. They work when designed for online environments, not as replicas of physical events.
- **Qualitative audience knowledge as a core standard**
Networks increasingly prioritise motivations, barriers, habits and values. Even festivals with limited resources can develop a better understanding of who they reach and how audiences experience their programmes. Networks help turn shared practice into shared capacity.
- **Networks as professional support systems**
For festivals with small year-round teams, networks function as a **permanent group of colleagues**. Regular contact reduces isolation, supports continuity and builds trust – one of the most valued assets highlighted by participants.
- **Knowledge-sharing as infrastructure**
Joint meetings, trainings, mentorship, editorial collaboration, shared sustainability tools and accessibility practices form the **mechanisms that make long-term cooperation possible**, creating shared standards and organisational learning.
- **Resource sharing increases capacity**
Shared platforms, audience research, workflows and specialised expertise reduce duplication and allow festivals to experiment beyond their individual capacity. Networks help smaller festivals access tools they could not develop alone.

- **Qualitative impact requires two levels of evidence**

Networks generate both **audience/community impact** and **professional/organisational impact**: changed habits, career paths, skills, peer learning, local ecosystems and cross-border circulation. This dual evidence is essential for policy reflection.

- **Resilience includes wellbeing and governance**

Collaboration reduces isolation but also increases coordination load. Sustainable cooperation requires **recognised coordination roles**, flexible task allocation, knowledge continuity and explicit attention to team wellbeing.

- **Advocacy as an emerging practice**

Networks increasingly translate local experience into European policy discussions. They provide practical evidence for future funding priorities and act as intermediaries between local realities and European cultural policy.

5. Conclusion and strategic directions:

What European film festival networks reveal about (the future of) the sector

European festival networks reveal a structural shift in how festivals operate: collaboration, shared tools, qualitative audience knowledge and co-designed accessibility are becoming core infrastructure for the sector. These developments show that festivals increasingly function as cultural ecosystems rather than isolated events, while networks provide complementary structures that support and extend this evolution.

What emerges across networks is not only a set of effective practices, but a clearer understanding of what festivals need to remain relevant: continuity, community relationships, qualitative insight and organisational resilience. These capacities are rooted in the work of individual festivals, but are strengthened through shared learning spaces, cross-border collaboration and tools that circulate across networks.

Three strategic shifts are essential for the sector:

1. **Treat audience relationships, accessibility and digital formats as long-term infrastructure.** Not as project activities, but as core capacities that shape how festivals connect with communities and how European works circulate.
2. **Recognise networks as engines of sector capacity.** Networks enhance the work of festivals by generating shared standards, professional pathways, organisational learning and cultural continuity – especially in regions with fragmented markets or limited institutional support.
3. **Strengthen the evidence base for qualitative impact.** Motivations, habits, community effects, alumni pathways and cultural spillover are central to understanding the value of festivals. They must be reflected in evaluation and funding frameworks.

The findings suggest the following strategic directions for festivals, networks and funding bodies.

For individual festivals:

- **Integrate audience development into programming** from the start, connecting curatorial choices, communication, mediation, accessibility and data.
- **Move from participation to responsibility**, giving young people and other audiences real roles in selection, moderation, writing or hosting.
- **Co-design accessibility** with communities before defining technical or communication measures.
- **Develop digital formats for digital use**, focusing on access, archives, education, visibility and data rather than hybrid replication.
- **Use network membership strategically**, translating local challenges into shared European knowledge.

For festival networks:

- **Collect and share practical methods.** Document approaches in a clear, usable way: what they aim to do, what they need, who is involved, risks and what evidence shows they work.
- **Track qualitative impact.** Follow community effects, alumni pathways, peer learning, organisational change and cultural spillover.
- **Budget coordination realistically.** Treat management, documentation, accessibility and wellbeing as core work that requires time and resources.

- **Create regular learning spaces.** Use meetings for focused exchanges on accessibility, sustainability, audience data, editorial work, digital tools, youth participation or advocacy.
- **Translate evidence into advocacy.** Turn what networks learn into clear messages for national and European policy framework debates.

For funding bodies:

- **Support networks alongside (and not instead of) single festivals.** Networks add European value, but they cannot replace stable support for festivals, especially in low-capacity regions.
- **Provide a framework for recognising qualitative impact.** Allow evidence of short- and long-term effects on cultural professionalisation (e.g., alumni pathways, peer learning, new professional roles...), local cultural behaviour (e.g., repeated participation, new audience groups, community spillover...) and organisational resilience (e.g., improved workflows, continuity in small teams, reduced isolation...) to count in applications and reporting.
- **Fund the less visible work:** coordination, shared tools, knowledge management, accessibility mediation and basic wellbeing measures that prevent overload in (small) teams.
- **Enable cross-network exchange.** Support light mechanisms for sharing tools, methods and advocacy messages across MEDIA networks.
- **Allow contextual openness.** Where needed, cooperation should include relevant partners beyond programme countries, especially in places with limited access to European cinema or where cultural dialogue is essential.

Annex I: Festival networks and their representatives present in Izola



Festival networks and their representatives present in Izola

European Network for Film Discourse (END)

Coordinator: FilmFest Dresden (Germany)

Partners:

1. FeKK Short Film Festival Ljubljana (Slovenia)
2. VIENNA SHORTS (Austria)
3. Lago Film Fest (Italy)
4. Kortfilmfestival Leuven (Belgium)
5. Vilnius International Short Film Festival (Lithuania)
6. Curtas Vila do Conde (Portugal)
7. Bucharest International Experimental Film Festival (Romania)



Founded in 2017 and continually evolving, the **European Network for Film Discourse (END)** is a multifaceted, dynamic cross-border collaboration among European film festivals dedicated to strengthening discourse on European cinema. Its core mission is to strengthen the **visibility of European short films, promote critical engagement with film**, particularly among younger audiences, and build sustainable communities through a combination of editorial, educational, and curatorial activities.

At the centre of the network is the **online magazine Talking Shorts**, which publishes film criticism, interviews, and essays, and reaches around 10,000 users monthly. Complementing this editorial work, the network organises **European tandem workshops for film criticism and curating**, connecting emerging writers and curators with multiple festivals across Europe each year. The **New Critics & New Audiences Award** further strengthens this approach by linking a screening and discussion programme of six short films with an online audience vote, fostering direct engagement among films, critics, and viewers. Through high-quality editorial work, participatory formats, professional training, and capacity

building, the END makes European film culture more visible, accessible, and connected, and actively supports the next generation of critics, curators, and audiences.

Website: <https://talkingshorts.com/the-end/>

Representative in Izola:



Niels Putman (network coordinator) is the artistic director and coordinator of [yanco](#), a magazine and streaming library for short-form moving images. He is also a co-founder and co-editor of [Talking Shorts](#), and project coordinator of the European Network for Film Discourse (END). As a freelance film programmer, Niels is affiliated with [De Cinema](#), Antwerp's local repertory cinema embedded in the Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp's audiovisual strand. He is also a member of the selection committees for Film Fest Gent (BE) and the video-on-demand platform [Avila](#) (BE). Previously, he has served on (pre-)selection committees at film festivals in Dresden (DE), Baden (CH), and Busan (KR), and has contributed as a guest curator to events in Quebec City (CA) and Poznań (PL). His writing has appeared in outlets such as Sabzian, Etcetera, and Fantômas. He is also a member of Vlaams Audiovisueel Fonds's short film commission (2024–2026), the board of European Short Pitch, and the board of oKo, a sector federation for professional arts.

Moving Images – Open Borders (MIOB)

Coordinator: Scanorama Film Festival (Lithuania)

Partners:

1. Les Arcs Film Festival (France)
2. Trieste Film Festival (Italy)
3. Crossing Europe Film Festival (Austria)
4. European Film Festival Palic (Serbia)
5. Film Festival Cottbus (Germany)

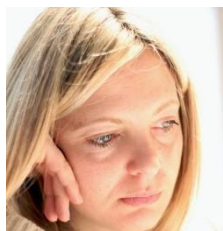


Moving Images – Open Borders is a collaborative platform of audience-driven European film festivals that promotes quality innovation, cross-cultural cooperation, and sustainable development within the European film industry. Established in 2017, during the Syrian refugee crisis and initially without external financial support, the network was created through the shared commitment of its members to highlight the **responsibility of film festivals as amplifiers of cultural perspectives and critical consciousness**, raising awareness on key socio-political and environmental issues through the artistic expression of cinema.

Through jointly developed initiatives in programming, curatorship, training, communication, and audience engagement, MIOB strengthens European collaboration while promoting **democratic values, cultural dialogue, mobility, innovation, and social progress**. Its activities include the MIOB New Vision Award and MIOB in Shorts Award, as well as audience surveys, innovative engagement formats, and journalism labs. The network also contributes to a healthier, greener, and more inclusive European film ecosystem with the **Green Charter platform** and other sustainability initiatives, as well as workshops and internal resources dedicated to **gender equality, inclusion, and professional development**.

Website: <https://www.miob.info/>

Representatives in Izola:



Nicoletta Romeo (Trieste Film Festival, partner) holds a BA in Foreign Languages and Literatures (University of Udine) and an MA in Cinema and Multimedia Translation (University of Bologna). She coordinated the International Film Critics' Week at the Venice Film Festival and worked as an artistic consultant for the Thessaloniki International Film Festival and the Festival des 4 Écrans. She is the artistic director of the Trieste Film Festival. In 2012, she co-founded Mansarda Production Srl, producing, among others, the documentary *L'ultima spiaggia* (*The Last Resort*), presented in the Official Selection–Special Screenings at the Cannes Film Festival (2016). She has curated retrospectives, served on international juries, and collaborated as a tutor for training programmes, including Midpoint Feature Launch, First Cut+, and Czech Film Springboard. In 2023, she contributed to the volume *Nuova Storia del Cinema. Dalle origini al futuro* (*A New History of Cinema: From Origins to the Future*), published by Hoepli. She is a member of the European Film Academy.



Monica Goti (Trieste Film Festival, partner) graduated in Political Science with a specialisation in International Politics. She is General and Programme Manager of the Trieste Film Festival, with which she began collaborating in 2005. From 2006 to 2016, she worked with the Venice Film Festival, collaborating with its press office and co-organising press conferences. In 2016, she was appointed Head of the Programming Office of the Trieste Film Festival, and since 2018, she has been serving as President of Alpe Adria Cinema, the association that organises the festival. She also works as a freelancer with Italian and international press offices, promoting films selected at major international festivals, and with cultural institutions such as the Venice Biennale in the organisation of the Venice Film Festival. Following a training programme in environmental sustainability and accessibility of cultural events, she was appointed Green Policy Manager of Alpe Adria Cinema.

Network of Festivals in the Adriatic Region (NFAR)

Coordinator: Sarajevo Film Festival (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Partners:

1. Ljubljana International Film Festival (Slovenia)
2. Zagreb Film Festival (Croatia)
3. Auteur Film Festival (Serbia)
4. Montenegro Film Festival (Montenegro)
5. ICFF Manaki Brothers (North Macedonia)



NFAR operates in a region marked by fragmented audiovisual markets, limited circulation of non-national European works, and uneven institutional capacities. In the post-Yugoslav space, film festivals are **essential infrastructures for audience development, professional exchange, and the visibility of European cinema**, often serving as the primary access point for non-national European films and the most consistent advocates for their promotion and contextualisation. NFAR's mission is to strengthen the circulation of European audiovisual works across the region, deepen audience engagement, and reinforce member festivals through shared knowledge, coordinated action, and new tools and practices.

NFAR contributes to sustained cross-border audience development and professional exchange through programmes such as **Cinephile**, which brings together young participants from across the former Yugoslav region, as well as the **54+ Workshop for senior film critics** and the **Young Critics Workshop**. Manaki's Heirs, a film literacy programme

for audiences aged 15–18, has been adapted for use in four additional territories. The network strengthens the visibility of European works through initiatives such as the **Adriatic Audience Award** and the **Adriatic Film and TV Awards**, and extends the life cycle of films beyond festival screenings via the **Winter Edition**, which promotes regional co-productions through coordinated online access across all six territories.

Website: <https://www.sff.ba/en/news/11882/network-of-festivals-in-the-adriatic-region-presents-winter-%20edition->

Representative in Izola:



Franka Bihar (Zagreb Film Festival, partner) is Festival Coordinator at the Zagreb Film Festival, where she has worked since March 2024, starting as a Production Assistant. After completing her undergraduate studies in Visual Communications (School of Design Zagreb), she graduated in Media and Communication Studies (University of Malmö), with an emphasis on Culture, Collaborative Media, and Creative Industries. From October 2021 to July 2022, she completed an internship as a Graphic Designer at Degordian and worked as a freelance designer until moving to Brussels in October 2023, where she undertook a production traineeship in the Audiovisual Service of the European Commission.

Alongside her work at Zagreb Film Festival, she is also involved in other creative production projects, including contemporary photography and music festivals in Croatia.

Northern Animation Network (NAN)

Coordinator: Viborg Animation Festival (Denmark)

Partners:

1. REX Animation Film Festival (Sweden)
2. BLON Animation C Games Festival (Lithuania)
3. Fredrikstad Animation Festival (Norway)



The Northern Animation Network provides **comprehensive coverage of animation in the Nordic and Baltic countries** through the four festival platforms involved. Animation is not only a film medium; the industry also spans games, visual effects, explainer and communication formats, extended reality, including virtual reality and augmented reality, and emerging technologies, which makes it a particularly distinctive field. Animation also plays a major role in children's content and is often young people's first contact with media culture.

NAN collaborates across **smaller geographical territories** to benefit filmmakers, producers, and audiences through **joint accreditation and short film submissions**, while also developing a shared year-round **digital platform** featuring interviews, animation programmes, and curated content for wider Northern European audiences. A series of **online video interviews** with animation artists will promote Nordic and Baltic artists, their work, and the art form. Internally, the network provides **forums for knowledge-sharing** to make festival organisations more sustainable, organised, and resilient.

Website: <https://weanimate.dk/articles/nan/>

Representative in Izola:



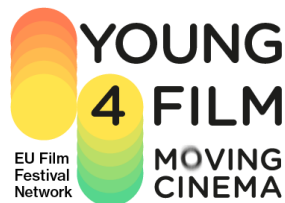
Sandra Brunkow Simonsen (Viborg Animation Festival, coordinator) is currently working as the Head of Film at Viborg Animation Festival, where she is employed by The Animation Workshop. Her career in animation started at the Copenhagen-based VOID International Animation Festival where she curated films and industry events. She holds an MA in Cultural Mediation (University of Copenhagen) and has previously worked in advertising, product merchandising, and building museum exhibitions for art and cultural institutions.

Young Programmers for Young Audiences! European Film Festival Network (Young4Film)

Coordinator: Kino Otok – Isola Cinema (Slovenia)

Partners:

1. Beldocs International Documentary Film Festival (Serbia)
2. Cinehill Film Festival (ex Motovun) (Croatia)
3. Piccolo Grande Cinema (Italy)
4. Vilnius Short Film Festival (Lithuania)
5. Valladolid International Film Festival – Seminci (Spain)



Young Programmers for Young Audiences! European Film Festival Network aims to overturn a common festival practice, where young audience programme curation is done exclusively by grownups. In contrast, their main mission is to actively include young people in the creation of six established international film festivals as **Young Programmers** of festivals' onsite and online programs. The network was created 2023 and it brings together three general and three specialized European film festivals (documentaries, shorts, young audiences).

Young4Film's approach of developing **participatory activities for young audiences** is based on the original **Moving Cinema** methodology for discovering, appreciating, and enjoying European cinema, that has been since 2014 cultivated by a Barcelona-based cultural organization A Bao A Qu in collaboration with several international partners. As an important innovation in the field of young audience development, the network is also focusing on **sustainability and social awareness** by following their own **Sustainability and Social Awareness Charter for Young Film Audiences** and by creating an **action plan** for awareness-raising work across the festivals in the network.

Website: <https://kinootok.org/en/young4film/>

Representative in Izola:



Tanja Hladnik (Kino Otok – Isola Cinema, coordinator) entered the field of visual arts nearly two decades ago and later focused on arthouse AV works, working continuously as writer, editor, curator, and manager. In 2011, she joined Kino Otok – Isola Cinema IFF and Otok Institute team, and in 2016 took up the role of festival director and artistic co-director. She regularly attends national and international arts and culture events as invited speaker, advisor, or jury member. She holds a BA degree in Journalism and Comparative Literature (Slovenia), and a MA degree in Cultural Policy, Management and Education (The Netherlands) with specialization in art curating and cultural education. In 2021 she completed TorinoFilmLab training for Story Editors for fiction feature films as part of ScriptLab workshop and has been since then active as independent script consultant and script development workshop mentor. In 2025 and 2026 she served as independent expert evaluator for EACEA Creative Europe MEDIA calls *Skills and Talent Development* and *Markets and Networking*.

Credits and editorial note

Prepared by **Sabina Briški Karlič**, **Nika Mušič** and **Tanja Hladnik**, on behalf of Motovila (Creative Europe Desk Slovenia) and Kino Otok – Isola Cinema International Film Festival.

The document was developed within the cooperation among **Creative Europe Desks** following the **Meeting of European Film Festival Networks** held in Izola on 11–12 June 2026. The gathering was hosted by Motovila (Creative Europe Desk Slovenia) during the 22nd Kino Otok – Isola Cinema International Film Festival and organised together with Creative Europe MEDIA Desks from Belgium (Flanders), Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Denmark, Germany (Berlin–Brandenburg), Italy (Turin) and Lithuania.

Its preparation was supported by AI-assisted tools used for structuring materials, organising inputs and identifying preliminary thematic patterns across contributions. All analytical work, interpretation, synthesis and editorial decisions were carried out, reviewed and validated by the project team. Human expertise, sector knowledge and professional judgement remain fully central to the final text.

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Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

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Ljubljana, September 2026