



**European Children's
Film Association**

Association Européenne du Cinéma
pour l'Enfance et la Jeunesse

interviews

Atlas of the Universe

Weightless

Film in Hospital

Trad

Koschka

Journal

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DEALING WITH OUR LEGACY

As autumn brings the new festival season, the ECFA Journal lands back on your screens after a scorching summer for most of our members across Europe. Yes, the ECFA people took some days off, but they have been busy, regardless of the silly idea that “there is no news in August”. Umberto Eco was right with his ironic quip: the world won’t stop during summer, and there are things happening even when we are looking in another direction.

In our internal work, Felix Vanginderhuysen and the board have been in constant collaboration with our new host organisation in Brussels, in order to move forward with the technicalities and legal requirements of the transition. Meanwhile, we have been setting up new procedures to be implemented in 2027. These procedures aim to make our life simpler, our information more transparent, and our communication channels more powerful.

The Workshop Warehouse steering group has started preparing next summer’s event. ECFA’s open call resulted in around 30 proposals for workshops. Unfortunately, the event’s timeframe and budget won’t allow us to accommodate more than 8-10 presentations, but we could easily fill two Workshop Warehouse events with so many quality proposals! We clearly need to build upon this interest to create a more stable framework and infrastructure for future film education events.

At the same time, the board is following the Ago-

raEU news as it unfolds. The following months will be critical for the final arrangement of European Union funding for the next seven years (2028-2034), and the board will try to make sure that our collective arguments are on the table. In this direction, we’re preparing joint initiatives with our usual partner KIDS Regio and discussing how to deepen our impact (*see page 19*).

There is something I would like to point out: we have a new social media volunteer! Emilie Cerball, a media professional based in Brussels, has kindly volunteered to update, renew, and broaden our presence on social media. She will assist ECFA in building an identity on LinkedIn and Instagram and renewing our presence on Facebook. **Feel free to contact her at socialmedia@ecfaweb.org with material that is worth publishing on common channels.** We will soon be back with specific guidelines.

Last, but not least: As the academic interest in children’s films, children’s film festivals, and film/ audiovisual education is growing, ECFA’s contribution to this field remains scattered in the traces of our everyday work over the years. Isn’t it a pity that we don’t have a history of ECFA? As the first generation of ECFA is stepping back after 40 years of work, it seems to me that we need to build a proper way to deal with our legacy and its contribution to the current children’s film and film education field.

—
Pantelis Pânteloglou
ECFA President

Paul Negoescu on ATLAS OF THE UNIVERSE

“In most of my childhood memories, I’m alone”

Ten-year-old Filip and his father head to town to buy shoes, but circumstances force the boy to complete the mission on his own. A quirky mix-up – buying two right shoes – turns a simple task into an adventurous quest. He decides to fix the problem himself and sets off across the Romanian countryside. Over a two-day journey, filled with moments of minor fears and great courage, Filip finds an unlikely companion in a stray dog and overcomes his anxieties.

After its successful premiere at the Berlinale, many will have their first (or renewed) encounter with Romanian children’s cinema through a timeless story that deals in a rather understated way with powerful (and therefore clearly relatable for children) emotions: fear, loneliness and connection.

Is fear the biggest thing holding us back in life?

Paul Negoescu: At least for me. I remember when I used to go sailing as a child, I was afraid of strong winds. Every morning, I looked out the win-

dow, and even the smallest leaf trembling in the wind horrified me. In general, I have more fears now than when I was a child: the fear of change, of getting old, of death... Once you become more self-aware, you fear being judged by others. All these fears hold you back and keep you from enjoying life to the fullest.

Fear also controls your main character’s life.

Negoescu: Although Mihai Mincan wrote the story, it feels as if it’s based on my own childhood. While working on the script, I added my own experiences and all my fears.

Are you a city boy?

Negoescu: I was born in Bucharest, and I’ve lived there all my life.

But ATLAS OF THE UNIVERSE shows a strong connection with rural life. Even the rhythm matches that of country life.

Negoescu: When I was a kid, we spent our holidays in the countryside, in the deserted house where my grand-



father had grown up. I insisted on shooting part of the film in the area where I spent my childhood summers. When Filip goes to town, it is the same town I used to go to. During the Ceausescu regime, they built apartment blocks and factories, which all went bankrupt after the revolution, except the cement factory, which is still in operation.

Is there really a place called Grebenișu?

Negoescu: There actually is a village called Grebenișu, but I’ve never been

there. The town where we shot the film is called Fieni.

Filip’s journey there feels like an entire lifetime packed into a single day.

Negoescu: It’s the story of a boy mapping and expanding his universe. It’s like an odyssey - he travels maybe 20 or 30 kilometres. In fact, we never get to understand exactly how far it is; the scale remains unclear.

And you have the nerve to call your film ATLAS OF THE UNIVERSE! The



nicest thing for me is that in his universe, there are no bad people.

Negoescu: There are many challenges, but none of them are evil. That makes it an unconventional story. Things that seem threatening at first - like a blind man with a donkey, a stray dog, or kids playing football on the street - aren't really that scary.

Part of his odyssey is falling in love, though I'm not sure that's the right word.

Negoescu: He connects with a stranger. It's probably his first close encounter with a girl other than his mother. She's from the Hungarian minority in Romania; she doesn't speak Romanian, and Filip doesn't speak a word of Hungarian. Little by little, a bond grows, despite the language barrier. Through this connection, Filip understands there's no reason to keep people at a distance if you can also get to know and embrace them. In the end, we're all just people living on the same planet.

Despite all those people, he's often the only one in the shot. That's what touched me most: images of a small boy, with or without a dog.

Negoescu: Beyond fears and courage, this film is also about loneliness. That's what moved me in the script.



After all, in most of my childhood memories, I'm alone. Together with DoP Ana Drăghici, we decided to frame Matei Donciu (*who plays Filip*) alone as much as possible. Except for a few rare moments - like with the girl on the carousel, or with the kids in Grebenișu - he's completely on his own.

How are your memories so steeped in loneliness?

Negoescu: I spent my childhood in the '90s, which was a rough time in Romania. In a post-socialist world, there was no social safety net, and bringing food on the table was a struggle. Most parents had to work all day and

leave their kids home alone. Many products were hard to find. Even in Bucharest, you had to spend half a day searching to find shoes that fit. I remember buying a pair in the morning, and by evening they were ruined because of their poor quality. My sister and I were often left alone. When I came home from school, I often rode my little bike around the neighbourhood for hours, all by myself.

Is a child's existential loneliness different from an adult's?

Negoescu: We all have our own story. I'd forgotten about my lonely moments, but when I read the script, it all came back and made me feel very

emotional. It still lies somewhere deep inside me. The funny thing is, I didn't realise I was alone - I don't know if children really understand how lonely Filip is. That's why the best reactions so far came from adults.

Would you call this movie nostalgic, with all its references to your childhood?

Negoescu: There is indeed a certain longing, and the picture we paint of rural life is a bit fake. When we scouted locations in the countryside, I realised there were a lot more cars and people... We kept the atmosphere a bit desolate, to stay true to my memories. I remember feeling most lonely on Sundays; everyone was sleeping, Romanian TV didn't broadcast, so there was nothing to do except ride my bicycle around the block. No one was out on the streets; you could hear the birds chirping. That is the atmosphere we're striving for in *ATLAS OF THE UNIVERSE*, although our story is set on a Saturday.

Despite this timeless picture of a country where time seems to have stood still for 60 years, I'm sure Romania is more than just dusty villages and drunk fathers.

Negoescu: You're right about the villages, but I'm less sure about the fa-



thers. I think this is a typical Romanian father.

One that would leave his child behind without a blink, just to go to a bar? On top of that, he seems like a nice guy!

Negoescu: He is! He's not a good parent, but he's a nice guy. I wouldn't exactly hold Romanian fathers up as role models.

In this society, you don't throw away your bike just because it breaks. You don't throw away two left shoes.

Negoescu: In my family, we don't throw anything away until it's completely worn out. I have some shoes that have been broken for years, but I'm still keeping them. Maybe someday I'll find a way to fix them.

You only had 24 shooting days. Film-makers usually count on 30 days - sometimes even considerably more - because children are only allowed on set for a limited number of hours. Don't those regulations apply in Romania?

Negoescu: Yes, but do waiting periods between shots count too? Some days we were on set for many hours, but Matei's actual work didn't take that long; he had to wait for hours for the shot to be ready. He had his own

camper van; his parents were there, and between shots, he either slept or played with the other kids on set. The hardest part was the night shoots. We started setting up an hour before sunset and worked until midnight. The only scene that ran longer was the one where Filip is driven home in the car while half-asleep. When we shot that scene in the middle of the night, Matei was actually half asleep.

How did you manage to do the job in such a short time?

Negoescu: We were lucky with Matei! He could memorise his lines quickly; we never needed many takes, and the dog did a great job, too. The idea that children and animals slow you down didn't apply to us. It also helped that this was already my sixth film, so I do have some experience with efficiency. We started the project with a 36-day schedule, then it was cut back to 24 days. I told my producer: "We'll never pull this off, but we can at least try." It felt impossible, but we managed. We were rushing around the whole time. Sometimes we had time for only two takes before rushing to the next shot. But we were well prepared; we'd rehearsed thoroughly, and our fantastic team helped me work very quickly.

What does Filip's brother Andy



Paul Negoescu & Matei Donciu

stand for?

Negoescu: He is Filip's role model. Many children dream of becoming football players; it's their ticket out of poverty. Andy moved to Italy to play football, but he didn't make it and now works at a meat factory. That part connects to daily reality: many young people leave Romania to work in the West, where wages are higher. Andy's story is one of failure, but in Filip's small world, it sounds like a success story.

It had been a long time since we'd seen a Romanian children's movie. I only remember a few teen dramas.

Negoescu: Because all movie theat-

ers were closed after the revolution. Between 2000 and 2008, we had 20 cinemas nationwide for a population of 20 million. Then the multiplexes came, and now every city has a movie theater. But filmmakers still wonder why they would make a film if it can't be screened anywhere. Films were no longer made for the domestic market, although we used to have a strong tradition, supported by our national television, which produced children's films and programmes, but that was a long time ago.

-
Gert Hermans

Emilie Thalund & Marie Helweg Augustsen on **WEIGHTLESS**

“Can a 15-year-old give consent to a grown-up?”

“The festival’s richest mosaic was made up not only of the films, but also of the personal stories the filmmakers brought with them to Zlin. These face-to-face encounters are among the festival’s most valuable experiences.”

That’s how programmer Jaroslava Hynstova summarised this year’s festival experience. One of those memorable moments is undoubtedly the screening of **WEIGHTLESS**, a Danish film about Lea, an overweight girl who goes to a health camp. More than her physical condition, it is the personal advances of Rune, one of the camp leaders, that hurt her during her stay. Her roommate Sasha carries a very different kind of emotional baggage, but stands up for Lea nonetheless.

The Q&A following the film was memorable. A wave of compassion and understanding swept over the stage and inspired people in the audience to share their personal stories. The film, and above all the presence of director Emilie Thalund and lead actress Marie Helweg Augustsen, fostered not only empathy but also – and this is just as

remarkable – a courageous honesty.

WEIGHTLESS has a strong sense of physicality, which the opening scene explores as Lea changes clothes in the back seat of a car.

Marie Helweg Augustsen: It’s important to show different body types on screen, and by doing so right from the opening scene, you make it clear that there’s nothing wrong with the way this body looks. This is a normal body; it’s simply a larger body. I don’t consider presenting it this way to be particularly daring.

Emilie Thalund: It’s only daring because it rarely happens in films. One of our ambitions in making the film was to look at how young girls’ bodies are currently represented. We need a broader representation of what bodies can look like, and we show this one with respect, empathy, and beauty, which is still exceptional.

You’re anything but holding back. You’re literally right up against the characters’ skin, making physicality integral to your cinematic language.



Thalund: I wanted the audience to experience what it’s like to have the body of a 15-year-old girl, and I wanted our statement to be clear and outspoken. When you have such a privileged job as a filmmaker, and you are funded to capture people’s attention in a cinema, you owe it to society to say something meaningful.

What were the cinematographic consequences of this approach?

Thalund: Our amazing DoP, Louise McLaughlin, was very interested in the characters. She’s good at telling stories through images. I have a background in fine arts and architecture,

so my mind works very visually; I often think in symbols. Louise was the right person to add a bit of “punk” to that. Then the circumstances gave us some unexpected gifts, like the flowers in the closing scene.

The story is set in a “health summer camp”.

Thalund: It’s a fictional place, inspired by camps that were quite common across Denmark in the 1990s. Back then, they were mainly focused on weight loss. Today, it is generally accepted that focusing on weight is not healthy, so there has been a shift towards “health camps”, where children





come with a range of different issues. Lea is there because she has a larger body, and society has always told her she needs to change to be accepted. She has internalised that message. She thinks she needs to change herself to be seen, accepted, and loved.

Although it's a summer story, your colours are often soft and slightly melancholic, as if recalling a long-forgotten summer.

Thalund: There is probably a certain nostalgia involved. It shouldn't feel like an obvious 2026 film. I wanted it to have a timeless atmosphere that evokes memories for grown-ups, while still feeling fresh to a young

audience, striking a balance between both the excitement and the harsh brutality of being a teenager. That's the work of a great team: our production designer, the DoP, and our costume designer, who has a real talent for choosing fabrics, all helped make everything feel alive and part of the same whole. We didn't have the budget to shoot on film, but digitally, that's the feeling we were striving for.

A summer without cellphones!

Thalund: Aesthetically, cell phones are unappealing; I hate seeing those little screens flickering in a film. But that's the consequence of portraying a young generation. Not having a cell



phone isolates Lea even further and makes her more dependent on the people around her.

Like Sasha, Lea's roommate. I couldn't get my head around her. It took me a while to realise how brave she actually is, standing up for her friend.

Thalund: She's a hero! She's only 15, trying to find her way in life. The world is not particularly kind to young girls who take up space, either physically, by having a larger body, or emotionally, by being loud. From a very early age, you are taught not to be like that. Sasha and Lea become friends because they happen to be in

the right place at the right time. They find something in each other precisely because they're different.

Can you help me understand Sasha?

Thalund: It's all about the desire to be seen. That's only human; we all want to be noticed, loved, desired, and accepted, just like Lea and Sasha, in their own complicated ways. Sasha is a victim of the male gaze. She learned early on that her value could come from being desired by men. That's a toxic thing to learn. She'll do everything to find acceptance through male attention, and she is punished for it. Although she can't yet set boundaries for herself, she can recognise injustice



Marie Helweg Augustsen & Emilie Thalund

when it is done to others. She tells Lea that things aren't right, and confronts Rune about it.

What's wrong with Rune?

Thalund: He's like Peter Pan; he never grew up. He probably didn't get much female attention when he was young, but nowadays, people listen to him and flirt with him. He sees himself as one of the youngsters, having fun with them, and doesn't understand that being a grown-up comes with certain responsibilities. He doesn't realise he is in a position of power and

should actually be protecting these kids. For many people, that balance is hard to find. That's why these things happen; not because of a masked man hiding in a dark alley.

Rune is kind and respectful towards Lea, and asks for consent several times. And still a line is being crossed.

Helweg Augustsen: It's important to show what exactly happens in this kind of relationship. It's not as black-and-white as "he's a bastard" or "she could have said no". That's why the

film gives Lea the chance to speak up for herself and show how she feels.

Thalund: Can a 15-year-old really give consent to a grown-up? This shouldn't be happening: he's her teacher, he's older, and she doesn't really know yet. At several moments in the film, you might feel a line is being crossed, but we keep them nuanced and open for the audience to judge. But in one long, crucial scene, it becomes pretty clear that Lea and Rune are no longer on the same level. She has the right to have desires, but how could she even be capable of making that distinction yet? She's only 15! Most discussions about young girls in relationships with older men don't explore deeply enough why this can happen. **WEIGHTLESS** brings more complexity and nuance to questions of consent and the abuse of power. It encourages people to talk about these issues, rather than simply presenting them with facts and conclusions.

Thank you for making Lea such a likeable character.

Thalund: She's a complete person; she has her own desires and can be desired, not just by creepy older men. She doesn't settle for the first option that comes her way, but aims for the stars, just like Sasha does. Making this film, I felt a great responsibility to

be respectful toward the actors, the characters, and everyone for whom situations like this may feel familiar. So many films fail to do that.

Helweg Augustsen: It was easy to portray Lea because she reminds me so much of my 15-year-old self. Just like me, many people have struggled with the same issues: body dysmorphia, the way she experiences her body, and the idea that she's not good enough. She doesn't know any different because society keeps telling her this. She's so likeable because she's just a normal 15-year-old girl.

If that part was so easy, what was the most difficult part?

Thalund: We really wanted to give Lea some kind of happy ending - she deserves it. But in reality, happy endings are rare, and we also wanted to do justice to the way things really are. The final scene is, in itself, an anticlimax: is that all there is to it? But this is how it usually goes; you go home from camp and, maybe 20 years later, look back and think: well, that wasn't the best thing that could have happened to me. In several #MeToo cases, we saw that it can take years before you understand what really happened.

—
Gert Hermans

Nordic Short Film Selection 2026: Bridging Differences

In a time marked by conflict and competing perspectives, this year's NoJSe short film selection explores the tensions, misunderstandings and acts of reconciliation that shape our everyday relationships. Through humour, warmth and imagination, the films explore what happens when people - and polar bears - collide and try to find their way back to one another. By focusing on challenges that can unfold between friends, family members and communities, the films offer young audiences a relatable way of reflecting on disagreement, empathy and reconciliation.

A table tennis shot that hits harder than expected, a dance partner who suddenly finds new friends, a best friend who feels betrayed, a girl who defies both house arrest and gravity, and, far to the north, two polar bears with very different views on what the future might hold. In this collection of Nordic short films, powerful emotions and contrasting perspectives emerge from everyday situations as relationships are put to the test, offering an intimate lens on the larger and more universal dynamics that shape human

interaction.

The five films from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Iceland and Finland bring us close to characters facing situations where being right isn't enough. Something must be explored, negotiated or forgiven before they can move forward. What begins as small tensions between friends, family members or communities points to something larger: the importance of listening, understanding and learning to live with different perspectives. In doing so, the films invite children to consider how conflicts arise, how they affect those involved, and how dialogue, curiosity and understanding can help create new paths forward.

At the same time, the film package offers a window into the Nordic region, its languages and cultures through contemporary storytelling and distinctive cinematic voices.

Films in the Selection:

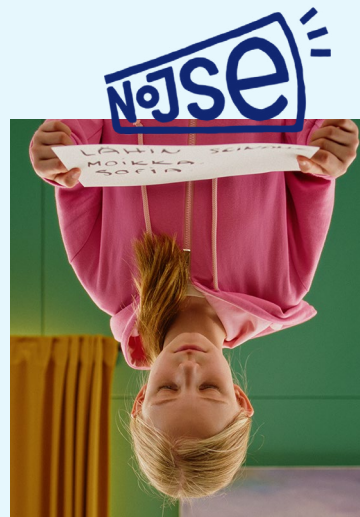
- Screw (2024, Denmark) by Magnus Hippe Brun
- The New House (2024, Norway) by Maria Alvsaker Næss

- Polar Night (2025, Sweden) by Gustav Littorin
- In Sync (2025, Iceland) by Hanna Hulda Hafþórsdóttir
- Feet Up (2024, Finland) by Olli Ilpo Salonen

For more information about the films and the NoJSe Nordic Short Film Selection, please contact NoJSe through the network coordinator, RADAR Film Festival (*previously BUSTER Film Festival*, see page 18).

The NoJSe Network brings together BUFF Malmö Film Festival (Sweden), BFF Kristiansand International Children's Film Festival (Norway), RADAR Film Festival (Denmark), Oulu International Children's and Youth Film Festival (Finland) and YouthRIFF – Reykjavík International Film Festival (Iceland), working collectively to strengthen knowledge-sharing and the circulation of children's films across the Nordic region and beyond. The NoJSe Network is supported by Creative Europe MEDIA.

–
Kine Bjaaland Dahl



FEET UP dir. Olli Ilpo Salonen, Finland

NoJSe - Nordic Junior Sessions Network consists of five Nordic children's film festivals: BUFF ICYFF, Sweden; Kristiansand ICFF, Norway; BUSTER Film Festival, Denmark; Oulu ICFF, Finland; and RIFF, Iceland.

FROM PLAY TO PLAY

How do children play when no adults are watching? Young filmmaker Mikoláš Arsenjev explored this question and built a film around it: a perceptive short documentary that shows children behaving exactly as they wish. The camera simply observes, neither judging nor directing. This remarkably restrained documentary approach is quite rare, especially in films about young children.

Throughout the film, we encounter many children, yet they are never formally introduced. We watch them interact with one another, with their toys, and with themselves, but we never learn their names. The games they invent in the absence of adults are diverse and often surprising: it is both amusing and absurd to see two boys playing the piano while rhythmically hitting each other's heads in time. At the same moment, it can feel unsettling to observe other kids building something that appears potentially dangerous, without knowing whether they might hurt themselves. Elsewhere, groups of children climb trees or immerse themselves in an energetic variation of something like

"Capture the Flag".

As adults, we may feel an almost constant urge to intervene: to stop what seems risky or, more pedagogically, to encourage more polite and less physical interaction. But here, we are asked to simply accept what we see. Young audiences, by contrast, respond very differently: they embrace the sense of freedom and anarchy on screen, laughing, shouting, and reacting with uninhibited enthusiasm.

FROM PLAY TO PLAY (Czech title: Ode Hry Ke Hře) is an unconventional children's documentary, as it avoids explanatory narration, voice-over commentary, or educational framing. We found this approach refreshing and presented the film to audiences aged six and up at the doxs! Festival, curious to see how they would respond and what they might take away from it.

As it turned out, there was no confu-



sion at all. For the children, the film felt natural. Some may even have felt a sense of envy toward the freedom enjoyed by the children on screen. Director Mikoláš Arsenjev, attending as a guest of the festival, went into dialogue with the young viewers and spoke about one special location where he filmed: a place close to the children's school, where they spent much of their time. And no, the children being filmed were not given any instructions at all.

At the festival, the film was presented with live dubbing, allowing younger audiences to understand the snippets of dialogue and spontaneous shouting. The audience seemed deeply en-

gaged, discovering a different kind of documentary experience. A favourite moment for many was the scene in which a coconut is transformed into something resembling an artificial chicken, racing against a real chicken. To understand how this works, you'll have to watch the film yourself.

Mikoláš Arsenjev is a student in the Documentary Department at FAMU.

Czech Republic, 2024, 7'55
 Director: Mikoláš Arsenjev
 Production: Tomáš Šimon

–
 Sina Musche

The Doxspot column is published with the help of the *doxs!* Festival for children & youth documentaries in Duisburg. www.do-xs.de.

doxs! DOKUMENTARFILME
 FÜR KINDER
 UND JUGENDLICHE

Rosa Ferro on bringing film culture into healthcare settings

“Blood tests tell you nothing about the results of our work”

What does it mean to bring film culture into Italian healthcare settings – like Rosa Ferro (Il Nuovo Fantarca) does – not only through access to films, but through creative participation, mediation and sustained collaboration with hospitals, schools and healthcare professionals? ‘Film in Hospital’ is a European collaboration (developed within the ECFA realm) bringing together organisations working across film exhibition, festivals and film education. Rosa calls it ‘the humanisation of care and health in general’.

How is the Film in Hospital project going in Italy?

Rosa Ferro: Very well. Already 37 hospitals have joined, and interest keeps growing, but there are always obstacles to face. The authorisation process to launch a project in an Italian hospital can take two to three years. Poor internet coverage in many hospitals is another problem, because our digital platform is crucial to the project. Bureaucracy and technology are our greatest obstacles.



What does your calendar look like? Do you follow the school year timetable, or does the project run on an ongoing basis?

Ferro: The platform, which is the digital component of the project, is available at all times. And during the school year, from September to the end of May, we work with the hospital schools. In Puglia, my region, we are also physically present in the hospitals: once or twice a week. On these occasions, we organise film screenings for groups of children, often

together with their parents. Afterwards, we run a workshop related to the film; it might focus on the central theme, a particular emotion, a colour... This gives children the chance to build relationships with others. When children are bedridden, we go from bed to bed to watch films or create animations with them individually. Sometimes we spend as long as two hours with one child.

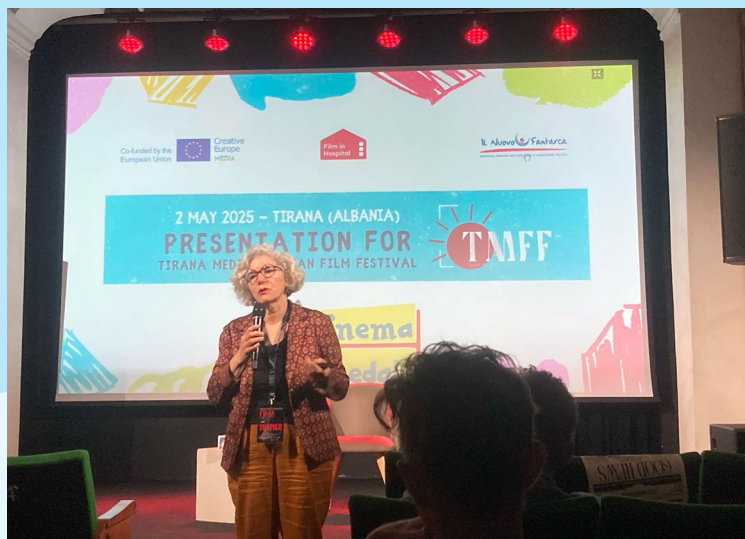
Hospitals are becoming increasingly impersonal places that can make

you feel completely ‘dehumanised’. What have you learned about hospitals as a place?

Ferro: Children’s hospitals are different, because patients need a different kind of attention. The huge Giovanni XXIII hospital in Bari is dedicated exclusively to children. They come from all around southern Italy and even from war-torn areas, and every child receives a great deal of individual attention. Last year, we organised a series of themed activities focusing on ‘empowerment’ and their rights as patients. We found that they did not feel reduced to being patients, to being children with an illness; they were full of gratitude towards the doctors, nursing staff and volunteers. There is a strong sense of community. Our project is part of that community, and that is how we should approach it: not as a mission in itself, but as part of a larger whole, which you cannot and must not carry out on your own.

What has helped the project take root so strongly in Italy?

Ferro: We are making a difference by being present in the hospitals. As educators, we can meet the children we



Rosa Ferro

work with not only online. In remote hospitals, such as those in northern Italy or Sicily, we organise training for doctors, volunteers, and psychologists. We stay and work with them for a few days so they can observe our methods, and a few months later we check how things are going. This is a sign of respect for the community that you're a part of. You can't be part of a network from behind your computer screen.

You often emphasise: 'We're not health educators, we're not art educators, we are film educators,' but the project is about so much more than film education.

Ferro: All our workers are specialised in different aspects of media education: stop-motion animation, drawing, photography, music and voice recording (sometimes children dub one of the films or add voices to a film with no dialogue), editing or directing. Our system is very dynamic. We

use different methods for children who stay in hospital long-term, or for those receiving palliative care. This is different from working with children admitted for a shorter period.

You've listed all those specialisms, yet none of them specialise in child psychology!

Ferro: What we do is not cinema therapy! We all combine different roles, but every one of our educators is also a health worker. As a counsellor, I'm serving as a link between educator and psychologist. The hospital's psychologists are available to us, but we only call on them for specific assignments. For example, when we take children on a summer holiday. Last year, we took a group of 25 kids to the mountains, and this year, we were invited to sail on a boat run by Nave Italia – an educational inclusion project – with 12 teenagers. Together with teachers, doctors, psychologists and musicians, we organised a stop-motion workshop. Using our [Cinema in Ospedale platform](#), the teenagers created the animated short film *THE WIND IS NOT VISIBLE*.

What began quite simply with a few film screenings in a hospital has now grown into an initiative that is completely interwoven with the chil-

dren's lives. You are deeply involved in the entire hospital ecosystem.

Ferro: Our core area of expertise remains art and film; we facilitate encounters between children and art. In doing so, we can bring about significant change: the project reduces isolation, lowers anxiety, and improves the quality of life for children during their hospital stay, while also strengthening their internal support network. Another key benefit is that the project bridges the educational gap, as children who spend a long time in hospital tend to fall behind in their studies and see their learning abilities decline.

How important are individual stories to you within that bigger picture?

Ferro: Self-reflection is an important part of well-being. It forms part of the humanisation of care and health in general. Talking about your situation helps you accept it and experience it differently. This improves your well-being; scientific findings show this time and again. We're not doctors, and blood tests tell you nothing about the results of our work, however tempting that may sound. But we see that children feel better when they're together, having conversations or being creative in workshops.

That's the most important result.

Has that impact ever been quantified in terms of statistics?

Ferro: Two years ago, we asked the Università Cattolica in Milan to conduct a survey. They looked into which films were preferred, how patients were using the platform, and on which devices – mobile phones, tablets, etc. This yielded some interesting results. And, of course, there are the teachers. They mostly say that the project helps them take a more dynamic approach to teaching.

You don't just stick to regular screenings.

Ferro: In May, we organise the annual Cineo Festival. Children in all participating hospitals watch eight selected films and vote for their favourite. And on one particular day, we invite 200 people from the children's families, schools and wider social circles to the cinema, to build a bridge between the worlds inside and outside the hospital. This form of sensitisation helps children, teachers and parents understand the living conditions of children while they are staying in hospital.

Which type of films works best on the platform?

Ferro: Short films! The perception of



time in hospital is completely different from that in everyday life. Only older children prefer longer films, but the choice is limited. We have far more films for the 3–12 age group. There is still room for improvement for 14 to 16-year-olds.

On what basis do you work with film distribution companies?

Ferro: It was difficult at first; rights costs were often beyond what a hospital-access project could afford. It took many conversations to explain the audience and negotiate workable conditions. These days, we have strong relationships with many distributors. Sometimes they offer us a

film free of charge, or ask what fee is affordable for the project. We have around 150 films on the platform, mostly on long-term contracts.

When IL Nuovo Fantarca joined Film in Hospital, could you have imagined where the work would lead?

Ferro: Not at all. I knew nothing about the reality of life in hospitals. The first year we had just €9,800 in European funding, which we used to set up the platform and buy the rights to the first films. The project was first launched in Belgium by JEF, then joined by Kids Meet Art (Croatia) and BUFF (Sweden). In 2020, in the midst of the pandemic, Italy, Spain and Slo-

venia joined, followed by Germany and Greece. Each partner works in a different healthcare and cultural context, and learning from those different approaches is one of the strengths of Film in Hospital. When it dawned on me that we also had to go into hospitals and meet children there, that became a crucial part of our Italian practice – one experience we could bring back into the wider network.

—
Gert Hermans & Edita Bilaver

Is your organisation involved in initiatives focused on care or solicitude? Are you working towards more sustainable structures or fairer working conditions? Are you undertaking initiatives to provide opportunities to groups or individuals who are underrepresented? If so, we would like to give you a platform in a new section of the ECFA Journal so that you can inspire others.

Please, contact ECFA at journal@ecfaweb.org under the heading 'Cinema of Care'.

FEITO PIPA

“Memories of affection and vulnerability”

Film reporter Uta Beth was deeply moved by the screening of *FEITO PIPA* at the Berlinale's Generation and followed the film's successful run at various festivals.

One of the most beautiful films of recent years is *FEITO PIPA* (International title: *GUGU'S WORLD*) by Brazilian director Allan Deberton. Premiering at the 2026 Berlinale in the Generation Kplus section, it won the Best Film award from both the International and the Children's Jury and was praised for its “vibrant storytelling and often humorous and moving ways it addresses existential issues.” The outstanding interplay of images, colours and emotions and the space it leaves its audience, young and old alike, to work through complex questions and problems, is memorable.

FEITO PIPA means ‘flying paper kite’ in Portuguese, and like a kite - or butterfly - 12-year-old Gugu dances through his village on the shore of a reservoir in Ceará, in Brazil's northeast. In the relentless heat, the lake is slowly dry-

ing up. When the church tower of the flooded village breaks the surface, Gugu's grandmother Dilma cries out in despair for her daughter Eliane, a political activist shot dead in her fight to save her home village from the dam. Deberton's film portrays a self-assured queer boy on the cusp of puberty, raised by his spirited, generous, defiantly unconventional grandmother. Like her, he wears make-up and adorns himself with rhinestones and brightly coloured scarves. At the same time, Gugu is a gifted footballer who dreams of a sports career. He is loudly cheered on by two girls from his neighbourhood, who stand by him even when other children taunt him as a “sissy”. What they cannot protect him from, however, is his remarried father, who watches his son's development with suspicion and fear.

Out-of-place kids

FEITO PIPA is based on the childhood memories of screenwriter André Araújo, which he shared with director Allan Deberton. “I quickly found myself

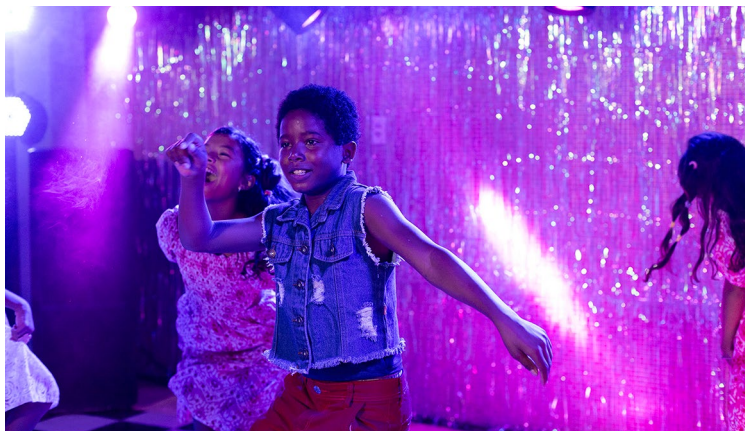


inside the same emotional territory,” Deberton told Variety. “*The two of us are from the same hometown, Russas, and we were both ‘different’, ‘out-of-place kids’, raised for much of our childhood by our grandmothers. The film’s energy comes from those memories of affection and vulnerability, from that space where care can be both shelter and the fear of losing it.*”

In *FEITO PIPA*, too, the joyously glowing colours of the opening gradually lose their radiance. Fear creeps up on the boy as he notices ever more signs of Dilma's rapidly advancing demen-

tia, which he tries to conceal from the outside world. Bravely and resourcefully, he fights for his paradise - the place where he can be what he is and what he feels - but in the end he cannot prevent his grandmother from being moved into a care home, nor himself from being taken in by his father's new family. The father, full of worry, struggles against the estrangement between them, and finally, to his son's delight, shows him how to ride a motorbike, on which Gugu, in the film's finale, rides to the care home and roars off with his grandmother. A dream? Perhaps. But if this scene shows an-





anything, it is that there is no need to worry about him.

Compassion & admiration

A quiet tragedy hangs over this sensitively crafted film, which leads the viewer gently, and with a fine sense of humour, into its complex web of relationships, confronting us with a wealth of emotions: exuberant cheerfulness, unbridled joy, mounting worry and fear, and a grief that grows ever quieter and deeper. What emerges is compassion for virtually every character, the father included, and deep admiration for the strength with which Gugu defends his childhood

idyll and conjures away all worries about his future.

Making silence feel alive

Gugu is played by Yuri Gomes, celebrated by critics as a “radiant queer coming-of-age charmer from Brazil”. In an intensive casting process, Deberton looked at more than 600 children before finally discovering Yuri in Bahia, where he was taking part in a children’s arts project. *“We were looking for a child,”* Deberton said at the Berlinale, *“with a rare combination of fragility and strength, sweetness and a very alive inner energy. Yuri Gomes came with all of that. He can hold emo-*



tion without performing emotion, and he makes silence feel alive, which was essential to the film’s language.”

A stroke of luck, as is the entire cast, with two of Brazil’s most highly regarded actors: Lázaro Ramos as Gugu’s father and Teca Pereira as his extraordinary grandmother, for whom this film is, by her own admission, a love story. The film was shot over six weeks, largely without a script, so that the relationship between the boy and the old woman could first take shape slowly and playfully. Teca Pereira, for her part, visited a home for people living with dementia to prepare for her role.

Adoption

Allan Deberton — whose short films alone have won 76 prizes at more than 150 national and international festivals — is now working on his next project: a feature film about adoption, an experience that has profoundly changed him since he and his partner became fathers themselves. FEITO PIPA opened in Brazilian cinemas last week.

—
Uta Beth

500 Miles



Feature, Ireland, UK, 2026

Directed by Morgan Matthews
Prod.: Minnow Films, Origin Pictures, Port Pictures

World Sales: Beta Cinema
Phone: ++49-89-67-34-69-828
beta@betacinema.com
www.betacinema.com

Angel Seekers

Feature, Italy, Switzerland, 2026

Directed by Leopoldo Pescatore
Production: Settembre Prod., Rough Cat, RSI,...

World Sales: Filmexport Group
Phone: ++39-06-52-20-74-32
info@filmexport.com
www.filmexport.com

Another League

Feature, Spain, 2026

Directed by Marta Díaz de Lope Díaz
Prod.: Cine365 Films, Nadie es Perfecto, Ciudadano Ciskul,...
World Sales: Filmmax Int'l
Phone: ++34-933-36-85-55

filmmaxint@filmmax.com
www.filmmaxinternationalsales.com

Back to Tottori

Docufiction, Norway, 2026

Directed by Arild Østin Ommundsen & Silje Salomonsen
Prod. & World Sales: Chezville
post@chezville.no
www.chezville.no

Blaise



Animation, France, 2026

Directed by Dimitri Planchon & Jean-Paul Guigue
Prod.: KG Prod.
World Sales: BFF - Best Friend Forever
sales@bffsales.eu
www.bestfriendforever.be

Born in the Jungle!

Animation, Latvia, Poland, Czech Republic, 2026

Directed by Edmunds Jansons
Prod.: Atom Art, Letko, Hausboot
World Sales: Dandelooo
Phone: ++33-9-72-64-46-01

sales@dandelooo.com
www.dandelooo.com

Bugboy

Documentary, Greece, France, Denmark, 2026

Directed by Lucas Paleocrassas
Prod.: Anemon, Flach Film Prod., Toolbox Film
World Sales: Autlook Filmsales
Phone: ++43 -67-02-08-78-81
welcome@autlookfilms.com
www.autlookfilms.com

Children of Liberty



Animation, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, 2026

Directed by Rémy Schaepman & Léahn Vivier-Chapas
Prod.: Folivari, Tchack, Melusine Prod.
World Sales: Urban Distribution Int'l
Phone: ++33-1-48-70-46-56
us@urbangroup.biz
www.urbandistrib.com

The Crystal Planet

Animation, Czech & Slovak Republic,

Croatia, 2026

Directed by Arsen Anton Ostojić
Prod.: Alkay Animation, Filmosaurus Rex, Česká Televize
World Sales: Sola Media
Phone: ++49-711-96-89-44-40
post@sola-media.com
www.sola-media.com

Evolution



Animation, Spain, 2026

Directed by Zayra Munoz & Julio Soto
Prod.: The Thinklab
World Sales: Kapers Animation
info@kapersanimation.com
www.kapersanimation.com/

If Luck Will Come

Documentary, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, 2026

Directed by Camille Bildsøe
Prod.: Elk Film, Akkeri Films, Point of View
World Sales: Elk Film
Phone: ++45-28-70-07-49
contact@elkfilm.dk
www.elkfilm.dk

In Waves

Animation, France, Belgium, 2026

Directed by Phuong Mai Nguyen

Prod.: Silex Films, France 3 Cinema,

Gao Shan Pictures,...

World Sales: Charades

Phone: ++33-6-29-87-45-04

sales@charades.eu

www.charades.eu

Iron Boy

Animation, France, Belgium, 2026

Directed by Louis Clichy

Prod.: Eddy, Beside Prod.

World Sales: Playtime

Phone: ++33-1-53-10-33-99

info@playtime.group

www.playtime.group

Just Call Me Frida



Feature, Germany, 2026

Directed by Katja Benrath

Prod.: Neos Film

World Sales: Beta Cinema

Phone: ++49-89-67-34-69-80

beta@betacinema.com

www.betacinema.com

Lucy Lost



Animation, France, 2026

Directed by Olivier Clert

Prod.: Xilam

World Sales: Goodfellas

Phone: ++33-1-43-13-21-87

sales@goodfellas.film

www.goodfellas.film

Morten

Feature, Estonia, Lithuania, 2026

Directed by Ivan Pavljutskov

Prod.: Kinokompanii, Fralita Films

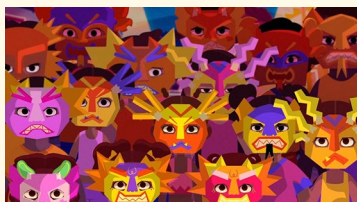
World Sales: Kopli Kinokompanii

Phone: ++37-2-55-62-20-41

anneli@kinokompanii.ee

www.kinokompanii.ee

MU-KI-RA



Animation, Spain, Colombia, 2026

Directed by Estefanía Piñeres Duque

Prod.: Letrario, Abano Prod.

World Sales: Latido Films

Phone: ++34-915-48-88-77

latido@latidofilms.com

www.latidofilms.com

Paradeisa



Feature, Germany, 2026

Directed by Marleen Valien

Prod.: Kurhaus Prod., Filmakademie

Baden-Württemberg

World Sales: Kurhaus Prod.

Phone: ++49-7-22-13-02-19-06

office@kurhausproduction.de

www.kurhausproduction.de

Smartie and Me

Feature, Poland, Slovak Republic, 2026

Directed by Kacper Lisowski

Prod.: Alluvium Prod., Wandal Prod.

World Sales: Studiocanal

Phone: ++33-1-71-35-35-35

www.studiocanal.com

The Summer That Ended Twice

Feature, Italy, 2026

Directed by Matteo Incollu

Prod.: Mommotty

World Sales: Lights On

team@lightsonfilm.org

www.lightsonfilm.com/

Viva Carmen



Animation, France, 2026

Directed by Sébastien Laudenbach

Prod.: Folivari, La Garde Montante

Films

World Sales: Global Constellation

Phone: ++44-20-77-02-06-05

info@globalconstellation.eu

www.globalconstellation.eu

www.folivari.com/en/projet/viva-carmen/

More information on all these films you will find on our website:

www.ecfaweb.org/european-childrens-film-network/feature-films

RADAR Film Festival

A new chapter for children's film in Denmark

After 25 years as Denmark's international film festival for children and young audiences, BUSTER is entering a new chapter. From 2026, BUSTER becomes RADAR Film Festival, building on its long-standing commitment to bringing strong and diverse cinema to young audiences while responding to the rapidly changing media landscape in which they are growing up.

RADAR will present fiction, documentaries, animation and new forms of storytelling from around the world. Film remains at the festival's artistic core, complemented by conversations, encounters and creative activities that connect the stories on screen with the world children and young people are part of – encouraging curiosity, critical reflection, hope and a sense of agency. This approach is also central to RADAR's extensive school programme. At the same time, children and young people will play an even more active role in shaping the festival through conversations, Q&As, panels and creative participation.

The name RADAR reflects this ambition. A radar both sends and receives: the festival looks outwards, bringing young audiences stories and perspectives they might not otherwise encounter, while also turning the radar towards children and young people themselves – what they see, feel, think and care about.

The transformation from BUSTER to RADAR also marks an expanded ambition for the festival's international industry activities. Building on BUSTER's legacy, RADAR INDUSTRY will strengthen and further develop its position as an international meeting place with a Nordic starting point and wider European relevance. The ambition is to bring young perspectives and industry insight into the conversation. In a media landscape shaped by global platforms, new forms of storytelling and a constant flow of content, RADAR INDUSTRY asks a central question: How can film and media continue to play a meaningful role in how children and young people understand themselves, each other and

RADAR*

FILMFESTIVAL

the world?

RADAR will also continue as the coordinating festival of NoJSe – Nordic Network for Young Audiences, bringing together the five leading Nordic film festivals: RADAR Film Festival (Denmark), BUFF Malmö (Sweden), Kristiansand International Children's Film Festival (Norway), Oulu International Children's & Youth Film Festival (Finland) and YouthRIFF (Iceland). Working together in a network strengthens the circulation, accessibility and visibility of Nordic films.

From 2027, RADAR will take place alongside CPH:DOX. While sharing the same overall mission and organisa-

tional infrastructure, the two festivals will retain their distinct programmes and audiences. The team behind RADAR is looking forward to continuing the international conversation and collaboration with its European sister festivals!

The first full edition of RADAR Film Festival takes place 10–21 March 2027 in Copenhagen.

–
Kine Bjaaland Dahl

From Policy to Screen - European Children's Film and AgoraEU

A KIDS Regio session in cooperation with ECFA

What does the future of European children's film look like? Join KIDS Regio and ECFA in Brussels to explore the upcoming AgoraEU programme and its potential impact on the children's film industry. Together with voices from across the film industry and the political field, we will discuss current challenges and needs, and explore the industry's expectations regarding the next EU funding programme, to ensure children have access to diverse, high-quality European stories.

How much do you already know about the AgoraEU programme, which is due to come into effect in January 2028? And how much does AgoraEU know about you? ECFA understands your curiosity and has joined forces with KIDS Regio for a joint session at 11:30am in Brussels on 4 November, hosted by the Film'On Festival.

Funding landscape

For children to discover diverse European stories, those stories first need

to be imagined, written, developed, financed, produced, and successfully circulated. Hence, children's audiovisual culture is significantly shaped by European audiovisual policy.

In 2025, the European Commission presented its proposal for the next multiannual financial framework for 2028-2034. A key component of this proposal is the AgoraEU programme, which marks a new direction for the European funding landscape. As a new programme to support culture, media and EU values, it, among other things, aims to provide better access to audiovisual content for EU citizens.

Being an equally important part of the EU's citizenry, we think children have a right of access to high-quality European stories, cultural participation, and representation in film. Together with representatives from various sectors of the film industry and the political field, we want to discuss the current state of European children's film, the associated needs and challenges, and what elements the



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industry would like to see included in the AgoraEU programme.

Speakers

KIDS Regio and ECFA have planned an open session in Brussels on 4 November. Speakers will include, amongst others, Pantelis Panteloglou (ECFA President), Karolina Śmigiel (Andrzej Wajda Center for Film Culture, Poland) and Louise Bailly (European Commission Policy Officer - Creative Europe Programme / MEDIA); the moderator is Elisabeth Wenk.

This debate is being hosted as part of the Film'On Industry Programme, which features several other interesting sessions (including one on representation and research in children's films, featuring EXTRAORDINARY director Marina Andree Skop, and one on the relevance of youth film festivals, featuring Renate Zylla, Barbora Kyas, and many others).

Registrations can be made via the online [Film'On Industry page](#).

Lance Daley about TRAD

“Trying to touch the flame, as all music should do”

Not everyone in the cinema is a fan of Irish folk music; I myself am the most obvious example. But as I sit next to director Lance Daley in the back row for the final scene of TRAD, I see a swaying crowd before me. The audience has to restrain themselves from clapping and stamping their feet to the rhythm... but in the end, they do it anyway. During their visit to the Zlín Festival, the TRAD crew are the film's best ambassadors. Everywhere they go, they unpack their drum and banjo to entertain the festival-goers, and as a familiar face from GAME OF THRONES (in which he plays the iconic villain Littlefinger), actor Aidan Gillen is the most sought-after guest at the festival.

Shóna grows up in a family of traditional Irish musicians. Her mother, in particular, is adamant not only about the right musical interpretations, but also about the correct dance steps and traditional dress. Shóna is brimming with talent, but feels stifled by folkloric constraints. Together with her brother Mickey, she joins a group

of travelling musicians, under the mentorship of the non-conformist Harky, for a journey full of adventure, romance, and musical exploration.

Whenever I watch a film about Irish folklore (and we've had quite a few recently), the same question springs to mind: What makes the Irish so special? When Bavarians put on lederhosen, or Tyroleans start yodelling, we think it's terribly uncool. But when the Irish start blowing their tin whistles, we find it hyper-authentic.

Lance Daly: I think yodelling is cool! But I don't know if yodelling is a detailed ancient culture being passed down, whereas music is definitely part of Irish culture that has survived. When the Empire affected the language and changed many aspects of Irish culture, the music remained a through-line. Like Shóna says: *“I grew up with that old shite; it was bet into me.”*

But the *shite* in TRAD is different. At least, the way it is played is. It's



much wilder and freer.

Daly: These guys are playing around the tune, as if they're jamming. It isn't entirely accurate, and it's not the sort of thing you'd present at a music conference. When some musicians first heard it, they wondered, "What are you doing to The Congress Reel?" That's the name of the tune they're playing. Only when they saw the movie did they get the point: young people who know this music might try to change it, but it's usually so strongly formed over a long time that it changes them. Mickey, playing the whistle and rapping over the song, is trying

to find a youthful expression for the same old music.

They call it “*peak post-modern Trad fusion with an eclectic drip.*” I'm sorry I couldn't memorise it – I had to write it down.

Daly: None of the actors could memorise it. When we were auditioning, every actor said it wrong. Francis O'Mahony, playing Ash, was the first one who came in and said “peak post-modern Trad fusion with an eclectic drip” in one go, and I was like, “You're hired!” It sounds tongue-in-cheek, but again, they are trying to

find a modern expression for something ancient.

What is being referred to with the term *diddly-eye*?

Daly: That's a derogatory term for traditional Irish music, referring to the triplets and ornamentation. One of our musicians called it "a colonial put-down", a mean way for the British to label and dismiss our music – "*It's only diddly-eye.*" But the whole film is a conversation about music, and we're trying to represent all sides of that conversation.

Here's another musical quote from the film: "*Modern music is just people begging for attention. Trad isn't trying to sell you anything.*"

Daly: There are two sides to it. Shóna's mother represents the side that packages Irish culture for tourists, and then there's the other side, where people sit around playing the music, trying to touch the flame, as all music should do. When we were making the movie, my son shared that observation with me and offered those lines to Ray: "*It's a way, it's a path to follow,*" which is something people are looking for at that age. But Shóna isn't planning to go down that path.

People often use the excuse that



Aidan Gillen, Dallán Woods & Lance Daly

they can't sing because they're too shy to sing in public. It seems to me that the Irish aren't particularly shy about singing.

Daly: And they're not afraid to dance either, but they might need some Dutch courage, though. They're more afraid to dance and sing without a drink. Drinks are part of the social culture. And there's something musical in the language anyway, and in the way the ancient stories from Irish mythology are told.

Like the story Ray tells by the fire.

Daly: That's the great Irish myth called *The Táin*. The Irish *Iliad*, so to speak, a mythic epic, written down by monks in the 10th century. That's the ultimate dream movie that I want to make.

In *TRAD*, interactions between characters often revolve around glances and stares. It builds up throughout the film, and the final scene turns into one big celebration of...

Daly: ...of looking. In 2008, I made a film called *KISSES* about two kids who run away from home, and it ended with a scene without dialogue; it

was just them looking at each other. There's something cinematically pure about building up a climax with no talking. In a good action movie, the big battle at the end is not just people fighting; it's a summary of the whole film, and everything that happened between the characters determines who should get the upper hand, and why. I tried to do the same with music; that final scene is a big action scene, with characters playing music against each other instead of fighting.

Shóna and Ray both go through a physical change throughout the movie. Ray evolves from a typical teenager with arms too long for his body into a charismatic young man.

Daly: Cahill is actually quite a handsome guy. The spots, the braces, and the crazy hairstyle all help make him more of a character. In the first half, Shóna doesn't really notice him; he emerges slowly from the group, and then, by the end, he's fully present in her life.

There is a question I probably shouldn't ask, if you don't want every mystery to be revealed: what's Harky's game? Is he a pervert? Is he the ultimate anarchist? The film doesn't give an answer, so I'm not sure if you should.



Daly: His non-conformist persona is a mockery of traditional Ireland and the lives we're living, not even looking outside our own parish. The Irish want to get away to England or America, but when they're there, they miss home and dream of returning. Shóna comes from a traditional family, where people do things a certain way, and here's this lateral thinker coming in, raising suspicion. People like Harky have broken free from narrow-mindedness; they have seen the wider world and made the most of financial opportunities. They don't go to work every day; they've found a different way and are simply being themselves.

He's based on a real person, apparently.

Daly: Absolutely, and the man on whom Harky is based built the house where we filmed, gave us his clothes, and actually used to drive that Jeep. People all have the same questions: What's his name? How did he make his money? They sometimes spot the guy in Dublin and then send a picture to Aidan: "We saw Harky sitting on a bench in the park!"

The actor Aidan Gillen evolved from GAME OF THRONES to GAME OF PHONES, seasoning the film with an anti-phone crusade. Did you expect people to drive home from the cinema and nail their cell phones to the dashboard?

Daly: I thought audiences might dig it. TRAD marks the start of a sort of

cultural movement, an epidemic of destroying our phones and being free to play music.

What's the next step? Everyone dancing naked around the old oak tree?

Daly: That's a dangerous response because it invalidates the act of destroying phones! I think destroying cell phones is completely valid, and it doesn't mean that you're a mad hippie. It's a good message for a film addressing a young audience. Harky calls it the *"insta-shite; it's not living, it's not loving, it's just looking."* Those words speak to a girl who is trying to rethink and re-understand who she is, and nailing her phone to the dashboard is a big part of becoming a new person and making choices.

At the festival, I don't often hear people mention a film about Irish identity; I mainly hear that it's "the film starring GAME OF THRONES star Aidan Gillen."

Daly: I'll tell you something about Aidan. I didn't feel really supported when I started this project, and I sat down with Aidan, talking about making a movie for €10,000, with 10 people driving around in the back of a van, and he said, "That's fine; I'm in." I'm immensely grateful for that! He

didn't call his agent first; he's just an artist who said, "Let's do it." Also, Sarah Greene and Peter Coonan, playing Shóna's mum and dad, are well-established actors. All three of them said, "Yes, we're with you," before I had anything, so that helped me to cobble together what meagre resources we had to make the movie. In the industry, everybody's transactional, everybody's asking, "What's it going to be worth?" It's wonderful to have just this vocational deal, with people saying, "Call me, and I'll be there." That's top! Now he's here in Lzín; he doesn't have to be, but he came over, and he's sitting in the cinema, watching people and enjoying their responses. He's just about the work and what the work means and what value the work has beyond the wages you get paid. I've made some very ambitious movies, but now and then, I want to do a small, beautiful piece of cinema and don't have any aspirations beyond that. With TRAD, I was trying to make a movie that not a lot of people are going to see, but it will mean a lot to those who actually do see it.

—
Gert Hermans

Bernd Sahling about KOSCHKA

“Unless there’s a cat on my desk”

Bernd Sahling has a reputation for his work with young actors. Human actors, that is. Does he bring out just as much in young cats, or is it the other way round? The filming of KOSCHKA would reveal the answer.

When Jan brings home a stray cat, his father reluctantly agrees to let her stay, only for her to give birth to a litter of kittens the next morning. As Jan grows increasingly attached to the cats, family life becomes more complicated, especially when it turns out that he is allergic. KOSCHKA tells a tender, melancholic story about the bond between a boy and animals, and about learning to let go.

You’re known for your accurate portraits of growing children, but this time your main characters are very young indeed!

Bernd Sahling: During the shoot, the children were around eight. Working with children that age was new for me. They can be super wild, riding a bike so fast and leave me standing there wondering what we’ll do if they

fall badly. We couldn’t afford to wait three weeks for the recovery of an actor while the kittens continued to grow. The insurance company might pay for him, but not for our movie - that would be the end of our shooting after many years of preparation.

Did you come across even more unforeseen challenges?

Sahling: German children are allowed to shoot for three working hours a day, and almost everything counts as working time: listening to my instructions, queuing for costumes or make-up, and so on. For children of that age, even three hours of concentration is a lot. We soon realised that it’s often impossible for young actors to keep working after lunch; they just can’t focus anymore. Even with 40 shooting days, scheduling all the scenes was difficult.

You can feel the summery atmosphere throughout the movie. Was it actually shot in summer?

Sahling: Most kittens are born in May, when kids are still supposed to be at



school. If your lead actor has to be on set for 39 days, a school would hardly allow that. Our main actor’s parents had already decided to move abroad, so they took him out of school and made sure he joined internet classes. That made it possible for him to be on set for such a long time. In general, when shooting with children, finding a way to avoid having to go to school is problematic.

They’re still so young, but this adventure seems to make them grow up fast.

Sahling: I always notice how quickly children grow up during a film shoot. The work is so intense and goes on for such a long time. Look at Bella

(playing Martha); how much more she became - how should I say? - visible. You see her developing as a movie character, and as an individual, just like Sebastian (playing Jan) and Ilkay (playing Sami). After we finished TOMORROW I’LL BE BRAVE, the actor’s father came to thank me for the way his son had matured during his time on set.

Which puts even more responsibility on your shoulders. You have to deliver a good film and a responsible child.

Sahling: When you make a film with children, you’re also a kind of teacher, sometimes even a social worker. I’m very aware of that.



I was actually admiring Jan for the way he talks with his father. Their conversations sound very mature and respectful.

Sahling: My protagonists are facing a serious situation. A cat is looking for a safe place to give birth, and when the children offer her that place, they end up with a responsibility that goes beyond what they're used to. I didn't think this story called for lots of jokes and silliness. The humour comes from them doing things they've never done before: vacuuming, using a washing machine... Taking children seriously also means allowing them some quietness. They don't have to be funny all the time.

In your case, I would call it melancholy.

Sahling: Because life often feels that way to me. And children have the right to feel that, too. There's a moment when all the cats are gone, the apartment is empty, Dad is with his new girlfriend, and Jan is all alone, playing his piano. Then he suddenly finds the little puppet the cat always used to play with. That's when he realises what he has lost, and that's tough. I know what I'm talking about: a few years ago, five cats were raised in my house, until we had to give them away. When people came to pick them



up, it was heartbreaking.

The boy and his piano add to that sense of earnestness, too.

Sahling: In the beginning of the film, Jan tries to play a new piece, and obviously, the cat enjoys him practising. Finally, after he has practised enough to play the whole piece, the cats are gone. It's sort of a circle.

Martha brings a different dynamic to their little group.

Sahling: Both boys are obviously very fond of Martha, but they don't know how to invite her over. Could you think of a better alibi than three little kittens? She's more interested in the kittens than in her classmates, but she

also helps bring the story to an optimistic ending. My films don't usually have standard happy endings, but I always ask the children about it during my Q&As, and they're convinced this is a happy ending. Partly thanks to Martha.

The film also pays tribute to the magic of bedtime stories.

Sahling: When I was writing the story, probably eight years ago, my girlfriend and I read to our son almost every night, and I really appreciated those peaceful moments. It might sound old-fashioned, but I prefer that to simply handing your child a tablet. Of course, the bedtime story is woven into the film's narrative. Initially,

I wanted to use Henning Mankell's *THE CAT WHO LIKED THE RAIN*, but we couldn't acquire the rights. Our daughter did us the favour of writing the bedtime stories for the film.

How did you manage to fill that waiting room at the vet's? Did you just ring all your friends?

Sahling: The hardest person to convince was the tattooed owner of that big dog. I saw him from behind the wheel; we stopped the car and jumped out: "You have to be in my film!" He answered, "I'm a firefighter. I don't act in films. How much would I earn?" When you see him with that huge dog, it shows just how brave the children are. They don't run away; they try to overcome all these obstacles.

It's not often that you can persuade a TV channel to support one of your projects. This time, though, it worked out.

Sahling: I always have problems selling my films to television. TV executives prefer a lot of conflict. My question is always: would that help the story? Usually not. But with *KOSCHKA*, I was able to win them over, and I'm very grateful for that. It took us years to finance the film. Everyone kept telling us: because your main character is





eight years old, older children won't watch it, so we can't finance it. My producer tried everything. She went to m:brane; she tried a Dutch co-producer who couldn't get the funding, and then a Belgian co-producer who couldn't get the funding either. Finally, we looked for co-producers in Germany, and we managed to convince ZDF. They have been very generous! Generally speaking, though, it has become impossible to make live-action films for such young audiences. Not a single one has been released for several years. And yet it's a pleasure to work for them because their response is so direct. KOSCHKA is quite an intense movie - 70 minutes, long takes, little dialogue, little music - but even

among the youngest children, we observed a silence in the theatre that proves how much they are focused and moved.

Let's talk about the superstars of your film: the cats!

Sahling: They have a will of their own. That's what they're known for, and that's probably why some of us like them. We tried to film the kids separately from the cats as much as possible, but we didn't always manage it. In front of a camera, kittens do exactly what they always do, so that's easy. Adult cats, on the other hand, never do what you ask them to do - or what's in the script. We had reserved one day without the children to shoot

the scenes involving only the cats. In one scene, the cat had to sit still on the sofa. All morning, she refused. We spent two hours on that simple scene and still weren't sure if we had captured it properly. At our wits' end, we went for lunch. When we came back, the cat did exactly what we wanted. They're unpredictable.

Are you good at handling unpredictable elements on set?

Sahling: We often observed what the cat was doing and adapted the scene to her actions. The scene where the cat knocks the photo off the wall wasn't in the script. But she did it, so we reshoot the boy's reaction and made it fit. We put little barriers up everywhere to stop the cats from dashing all over the flat, with us running after them. We did have a trainer for the raven - that was a trained bird. It was supposed to be a squirrel, but apparently squirrels can't be trained at all, so we went with a bird instead. And we had a wonderful lady taking care of the cats. They lived in a flat on the same floor where we were filming, and she made sure they were fed and had toys and a clean litter tray. After the shoot, we found each of them a good home.

Are you planning to shoot a sequel



Bernd Sahling & actor Benjamin Kramme

with dogs, perhaps?

Sahling: I would never make a film with dogs. When I was a child, I went for a bike ride, and a dog sank its teeth into my trousers. Cats can be mean too; they're wild animals, after all. You just have to find a way to live together. My cat gives me inner peace. As a person with ADHD, I can't spend all day writing a script. Unless there's a cat on my desk. Then I don't feel that urge to leave the computer and do something else.

—
Gert Hermans

The Summer Film School Festival - Industry Programme

The Summer Film School has been held in Uherské Hradiště for more than 50 years, making it one of the Czech Republic's oldest and largest film festivals, characterised by its intergenerational, keenly debating audience and its fresh approaches to film and audiovisual education. Building on this tradition, the international Industry Programme of Film and Audiovisual Education was launched in 2018 and has since been organised by the National Film Museum NaFiM. It connects the festival's focus on archive and arthouse films with current approaches to audiovisual education for film professionals, teachers, educators and anyone interested in film literacy.

Putting Participation into Practice

This year's 8th edition (25 - 28 July) combined panel discussions with participatory workshops for children and young people, now one of the programme's defining features. These participatory workshops are open to the festival's general audience, allowing educators to experience the atmosphere by either taking part in or

observing the action. This year, Elfi de Vos (JEF, Belgium) explored responsible and sustainable approaches to the use of AI as a creative tool in animation. Acclaimed French animation director Michel Ocelot introduced the youngest participants to animation and encouraged them to create their own films.

One workshop highlighted a rather original participatory approach to film education: *Vadí? Nevadí! Film Experiments with Věra Chytilová*, led by Annis Joslin and Claire Wearn (Corridor, UK), explored a participatory model in which the facilitator becomes a co-creator, rather than simply assigning creative tasks. Inspired by Věra Chytilová's *DAISIES* (1966), participants experimented with filming, stop-motion and visual composition to create fragments that the facilitators brought together into a collective audiovisual collage, premiering at the end of the workshop. The emphasis was on process, collaboration and active engagement with film heritage rather than on a predetermined outcome.



DAISIES



Opening New Conversations

The industry programme's second pillar consists of panel discussions with international experts. One key session explored film education across Europe, focusing on educational practice and the policies that enable it. Responding to the ongoing integration of film education into the Czech school curriculum, the discussion brought together Merel Gilsing from Filmhub Midden (the Netherlands), Michael Jahn from Vision Kino (Germany), Elisa Giovannelli from Cineteca

di Bologna (Italy), and Núria Aidelman from A Bao A Qu (Spain). They all highlighted the need for organisations that advocate for structures connecting schools with formal and non-formal education providers.

A similar aim of opening a broader debate guided the discussion on "Inclusion and Accessibility in Film Education". One interesting example came from the Cinema Without Barriers initiative, launched by CK Zamek (Poland). The project showed how cultural accessibility can be addressed



systematically by supporting cinemas and cultural organisations in developing more inclusive programmes, while raising broader questions about how such programmes can remain accessible and receive sustainable support.

Both discussions highlighted the need to continue the dialogue on accessible and inclusive film education. This conversation will continue during the next edition of the Industry Programme in 2027. Organisations developing accessible educational programmes are welcome to join this

exchange and contact NaFilm.

–
Martin Černý

KET & DOC

The new intake

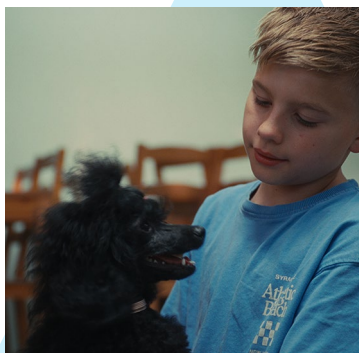
Ket & Doc is a well-known Belgian initiative that inspires filmmakers and funding bodies across Europe: an annual training programme for young directors in producing youth documentaries. Ket & Doc is a collaboration between the Flemish Audiovisual Fund (VAF) (training), Ketnet (public broadcaster) and JEF (distribution). The films produced as part of this programme are all 15 minutes long, and ensure a steady supply and renewal of youth documentaries in Belgium. The initiative has firmly put youth documentaries on the map in Flanders, and has put Flanders on the European youth documentary map.

Over the years, the Ket & Doc films have evolved from classic portraits into increasingly inventive short films, both in terms of content and form. JEF also provides a limited educational framework for each film. The project has not escaped the current recession and has had to tighten its belt, with the number of films falling from five a year to four. However, there is no compromise on quality. We

briefly present this year's selection (2025–2026), while in the background

NEXT MOVE

Director: Florence Boone



Lars, a 10-year-old boy, explores his identity through his diverse hobbies. Lars loves playing football, but he has another secret passion: dog shows. The film delves into Lars's world: from the football pitch, where friendship and competition take centre stage, to the dog training school, where he feels at home with his family and his faithful poodle, Noortje. Training sessions, shows, school... all together, it soon becomes too much. Lars is in doubt: ball or beast?

Educational: Making choices in life.

you can already hear the cameras rolling for the next edition, which will

DAD = (NOT) BAD

Director: Petronella Van der Hallen



Alias is a small figure who dares to ask big questions. He is brought to life by a boy using scissors, glue, and a lot of imagination. The boy wants to tell his story, but without others knowing who he is. His dad did something wrong and is in prison. Together, Alias and his creator go in search of answers. Is dad bad? Is feeling sorry enough? And when will dad come home? 16,000 Belgian children have a mum or dad in prison. They often don't dare tell their friends or classmates. In this documentary, a

premiere in February 2027 at the JEF Festival and on public television.

10-year-old boy gives a voice to these children, who are rarely heard.

Educational: Exploring right and wrong.

IN BETWEEN WAVES

Director: Britt Vanhaelen



Along with 10 other children, Sana (11) is taking part in a surf therapy programme. It soon becomes clear that learning to surf isn't easy. Sana goes under several times. But she learns to wait for the right wave. Sana shows great perseverance. She is determined to learn to surf at any cost, because this is something she would never have been allowed to do in her

home country of Afghanistan, simply because she is a girl. That makes every attempt, every fall, meaningful. Her surfboard becomes a source of courage and pride, and a way for her to show that girls have the same rights as boys.

Educational: Self-confidence and perseverance.

FORGED IN FIRE

Director: Jules Mathôt



Mila and Amélie share a special hobby: they are both members of the youth fire brigade. There, they train to master the challenges of the fire-fighting profession. During intense exercises, boundaries fade, and Mila and Amélie lose themselves in the imagination of the job. They extinguish fires, find their way through smoke, and learn resuscitation. In an environ-

ment where cooperation and trust are central, their friendship grows with every drill.

Educational: Working together under time pressure.



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ECFA's goal is to support cinema for children and youth in its cultural, economic, aesthetic, social, political and educational aspects. Since 1988 ECFA brings together a wide range of European film professionals and associations, producers, directors, distributors. ECFA aims to set up a working structure in every European country for films for children and young people, a structure adapted to Europe's multicultural interests.

For more information and memberships (€ 250 per year):

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Databases on children's film festivals, sales agents, distributors and

TV-programmers interested in European films for children.

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