



EUROPEAN CINEMAS

30

years of the network

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December 2023

Special Birthday Issue

Network
Review
#42

Building
a European
network

Shared
Insights

The network
of European
auteurs



Rialto, Amsterdam, network member since 1992 © Bas Losekoot

EUROPA CINEMAS NETWORK REVIEW #42 – DECEMBER 2023

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is the first international film theatre
network for the circulation
of European films.

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Further reading on the Europa Cinemas website: Many Interviews to look back on the 30 years of Europa Cinemas – featuring Laurence Auer, Mark Cosgrove, Kirsten Dalgaard, Gianluca Farinelli, Juan Heras and Luz Delgado, Cristian Mungiu, Andrea Occhipinti, and Pascal Rogard – will be available online.

Editorial

by Nico Simon

I have been involved with Europa Cinemas from the very beginning. I was a teacher and represented Luxembourg within EFDO [European Film Distribution Office] during the first MEDIA programme. I had already been contacted by the European Commission during a conference where I represented exhibitors. In 1991, I was able to attend a meeting marking the expansion of the association founded by Claude-Éric Poiroux and a group of friends including François Duplat and Simon Simsi, an association that aimed to support exhibitors in showing European films. Later, when Claude Miller took over the presidency, I shared the vice-presidency with Ian Christie.

At the outset, Europa Cinemas primarily consisted of distributors and, in some cases, producers who were also exhibitors. They aimed to support production and distribution by providing an incentive for the screening of European films. Over time, the role of exhibition has been acknowledged for its true worth by the entire sector, and Europa Cinemas has evolved into a genuine network for exchange and training, by exhibitors for exhibitors.

Let's remember that, at the beginning of the last century, exhibition and production were dependent on the owners of cinemas who produced their own films to supply their cinemas, until such a time as they were prompted to separate these activities. The accumulation of these activities proved too complicated, and the principle of exclusivity prevented broader circulation and diversity. Exhibition was both the chicken and the egg of cinema, as well as the only direct link between films and their audiences. And audiences – there are many! This diversity, which Europa Cinemas defends, reflects the wealth of European cinema.

As a representative of what I would call a 'micro-country' (Luxembourg), I have always tried to ensure that larger nations did not impose their views. This is the primary guarantee of the diversity that should govern Europa Cinemas: that every voice is heard and, above all, understood. It was necessary to make the larger countries with enduring

Exhibition is the chicken and the egg of cinema

structural support understand that their smaller European neighbours do not always have such resources. As the original title of Werner Herzog's film, 'The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser,' aptly put it, 'Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle,' meaning 'Every Man for Himself and God Against All'. One must be creative, curious, set an example, but above all, never impose anything. This was also the stance defended by certain representatives such as the Belgian Jean-Marie Hermand or the Dutch Henk Camping, who were members of the Europa Cinemas board of directors from the beginning and for many years.

One of the accomplishments I am the proudest of while serving on the board was actively participating in the digital transition of the network's cinemas and resisting the temptation of convenience. Faced with the initial costs of installations, many voices were poised to adopt less expensive equipment that would have led the sector towards a split into two classes, a separation that had never existed for professionally equipped theatres, all with 35mm. This would have created an accessibility issue for more 'commercial' films, vital for some cinemas, whereas the uniformity of 35mm did not pose a technical barrier to access.



2013 Conference in Prague © Max Gyselsinck

Recently, the Covid-19 pandemic brought our profession closer together, thanks to the support of the European Commission, to whom we were able to explain the necessity and importance of cinemas for the survival of independent production in Europe and beyond. This crisis accelerated inevitable developments that had been postponed until then. It forced us to be more inventive. In some countries, independent cinemas have gained a younger audience, which is the most encouraging development, especially at a time when the hegemony of Hollywood blockbusters and the homogenization of franchises are being challenged by the often unique success of original, non-franchised films. However, it is essential to refocus around a film and support it well. Because it is the diversity defended by Europa Cinemas that reflects and perpetuates the wealth of European cinema through independent exhibition.

Within our association, there has also been the need for a smooth transition towards more transparency, participation, and openness, promoting the accession of a new generation of exhibitors to governance and decision-making bodies, seeking the guidance of their predecessors if necessary.

It seems crucial to me that the Europa Cinemas team gets more recognition and is acknowledged for its significance, given that its daily efforts contribute to the success of the network. I am very confident in our new CEO, Fatima Djourmer, who has been positively involved in the development of activities and in preparing for the current transition for many years. She will steer Europa Cinemas towards a bright future. She understands well that without a future, there is no past, and the last 30 years would have been in vain. But that will not be the case! Thank you, Fatima, thank you, Claude-Éric!



Executive Committees of Europa Cinemas and MEDIA Salles, 1994, Italy, Left to right : John Wilkinson, Elisabetta Brunella, Jens Rykaer, Henk Camping, Enrique Gonzales Macho, François Duplat, Fatima Djourmer, Colette Quesson, Isabelle Avargues, Claude-Eric Poiroux, Ian Christie, Nico Simon, Gabriele Röthemeyer © Dimitri Stoupiis

Interview with Lucia Recalde

Head of Unit Creative Europe / MEDIA

For over 30 years, the Europa Cinemas network has grown, thanks to MEDIA's continuous support. Network cinemas are now gradually recovering from the pandemic. How do you see the long-term evolution of the network's cinemas?

Let me first congratulate the Europa Cinemas network on this anniversary. Europa Cinemas has left a mark on the European audiovisual ecosystem over the last 30 years. The European Commission proudly supports this flagship initiative of the Creative Europe programme that aims to bring European cinematographic works to European audiences, including in the most remote areas of the Union.

I am glad to read that audiences are slowly returning to cinemas after the Covid crisis. However, the physical closure of cinemas accelerated the move of audiences towards online consumption. While theatrical windows are still very important, they are getting shorter. For cinemas, it has become crucial to maximize revenue quickly as well as to maximize audiences through diverse programming. As with the digitization of cinemas in the early 2000s, the challenges brought about by the pandemic would require the network transform the cinema experience and engage even further with their audiences.

To what extent is the role of the network's cinemas also evolving and how does this impact their interactions with other industry players?

Europa Cinemas has fully understood the importance of collaborating across the value chain to renew the cinema-going experience. The project "Collaborate to Innovate", that the network started three years ago, embraces this spirit of cooperation. Among the many very interesting proposals, let me cite the "Cineville" one. A strong collaboration between the distributors and exhibitors lies at the core of this innovative revenue-sharing model, which also helps



Europa Cinemas Conference 2017 © Ionut Dobre

coordinate communication efforts and community building around cinemas. It is an example of out-of-the-box thinking that can attract young audiences back into the cinemas. In addition, it provides precious data on audiences, their preferences and their habits, a precious tool for both distributors and exhibitors... and possibly a precious tool for the Commission also! I am glad to see that Cineville is slowly but steadily expanding, from the initial model in the Netherlands, to Belgium, Austria, Sweden and Germany. Who knows, perhaps one day an EU Cineville!?

Many cinemas in the network operate as independent businesses. What role does the MEDIA programme play in relation to the diverse players and structures, as well as the professionalization of exhibitors and innovation?

The strength of the Europa Cinemas network is to include a very wide array of members whose diverse experiences and contexts enrich the entire network. However, the challenges that the members face are broadly similar: declining audiences, notably the youngsters, shorter windows, increased competition from other entertainment activities, high-energy costs. Hence, sharing



Kino Rotterdam © DR

best practice and fostering exchange among the members of the network are key. Well-established initiatives such as the Labs organized on the periphery of festivals and markets, will soon be complemented by ad hoc training. Within the frame of the European Year of Skills, the Commission welcomes these training initiatives. Upskilling and reskilling of independent exhibitors are a must to address the challenges brought about by both digital and green transitions.

In spring 2023, the European Commission published a major study on the European audiovisual industry, “The European Media Industry Outlook”. What are the main takeaways of this study in your opinion?

The “European Media Industry Outlook” has provided a helicopter view of the European audiovisual ecosystem after the Covid crisis. The picture that emerged from the study is one of rapid change and consolidation of the market around larger players. Some elements are of particular interest for the cinemas and audiences. Firstly, indeed, the shift in consumption patterns, with fast growing figures for online consumption of audiovisual content. Secondly, the choices of

the audiences when consuming audiovisual content are also shifting, leaning towards new genres and popular cultural mediums like videogames.

What does this mean for the Europa Cinemas network? Engaging with the public requires a better understanding of the audience’s preferences and, for this, data analytics, social media campaigns and digital marketing are essential tools that the network should take advantage of.

I am particularly impressed by the work of Kino Rotterdam in this area, who have gathered an impressive set of data on their audience and who use social media traffic to engage with their young audiences.

Since cinemas have now to compete with new forms of entertainment, cinema-going must become an event on its own. The upcoming European Cinema Night event is a great initiative to create buzz and to help audiences from across the Union discover European gems.



Claude-Éric Poiroux © Nikos Katsaros

Building a European network

Europa Cinemas narrated by Claude-Éric Poiroux

“Exhibitors were the initiators and actors in the Europa Cinemas network, and they still are today.”

In a few introductory words, what triggered the creation of Europa Cinemas?

A new European context and professionals – exhibitors – who found it in their interests to join forces. It was the creation of the European Union's MEDIA programme, which began to take shape at the end of the 1980s and was officially adopted in 1992. It was a call for international projects designed to strengthen the European audiovisual

market by putting various players in the industry in contact and improving the circulation of European films. The acronym MEDIA stands for “European Measures for the Development of the Audiovisual Industries”. MEDIA focused on market and industry, not openly on culture, which was not a European focus at the time. This programme, led by Holde Lhoest and then Jacques Delmoly, immediately attracted a great deal of attention in the industry and triggered a large number of proposals.

I recall the involvement of Mrs. Colette Flesch, the Director-General at the Commission, at the Premiers Plans Festival in Angers, where she had clearly supported film professionals' desires to enhance the circulation of European films in cinemas. Europa Cinemas could thus begin a new chapter in the MEDIA programme strategy.

From the outset, the network was built directly with the exhibitors, without intermediaries. We didn't try to convince federations, unions or national groups at first; we went straight to the people in charge of cinemas. So, it was the exhibitors who, by bringing their cinemas together, were the initiators and actors in the network, and they still are today.

What were the first steps?

As an exhibitor myself, I went out to cinemas to meet my colleagues to convince them to create a new network with goals in line with Brussels' perspectives. As it so happens, the vast majority of them were independent entrepreneurs who made decisions about their own programming and who therefore had the power to commit to the heart of the project: increasing the space made for European films on their screens. I already had experience of one of the very first European programmes, EFDO, which



Colette Flesch, Claude-Éric Poiroux © Jean-Patrice Campion

Dieter Kosslick and Ute Schneider had just founded in Hamburg, and which was the first to be supported by MEDIA. As a distributor, I was on the Steering Committee alongside them and, as a result, we set up the first distribution support mechanism, that still exists and is now managed directly by Brussels. Along with François Duplat from Germany, who is also an exhibitor and distributor, we wanted to involve the exhibitors and so we laid the foundations for a project aimed specifically at cinemas. In our minds, it was not about financing the construction or management of cinema theatres but, rather, targeting what was going to be strategic for the market, i.e., programming: offering audiences the diversity of European productions and, specifically, mobilising young audiences. The exhibitor retains their programming independence but can claim Community support if they give priority to European films on their screens and carry out promotional activities.

We immediately had to overcome administrative and commercial obstacles: the question of subsidiarity and the issue of equal competition. Subsidiarity means that the Commission cannot substitute themselves for what already exists at the national level, such as support for cinemas, which is already in place in several territories. We quickly arrived at an answer: when a country subsidises its cinemas, it does so primarily to support national films. We therefore set ourselves the primary target of programming non-national European films and circulating films outside of their country of origin. As for competition, we had to create fair processes so as not to exclude certain cinemas from receiving the support from the outset. Hence the establishment of guidelines open to everyone, from single-screen cinemas to multiplexes, with the main criterion being a majority European programming effort. Exhibitors were free to choose their own strategy, concerning the choice of titles shown.

It was with these initial elements in mind that we consulted the French CNC and then the Commission. The CNC, its General Director Dominique Wallon and its Director of Exhibition Jean-René Marchand, clearly encouraged us to take our first steps with the MEDIA programme. The Commission took a positive view of this 'cinemas project', albeit with some initial doubts on our ability to unite professionals in such a vast and scattered sector.

What were your priorities and what was the timetable?

We decided to launch the network by starting with key capitals and cities in each national market. Of course, we wanted to build on what already existed, i.e., cinemas that were already making programming choices that aligned with our objectives. This gave us the opportunity to scout out around twenty towns and get to know exhibitors who had already been exemplary in their approach and results. We very quickly became a think tank and action group that was fairly representative of the independent cinema sector. I'm thinking of Georg Kloster and François Duplat in Germany, Thierry Abel, Peggy Heuze and Jean-Marie Hermand in Belgium, Peter Refn and Kirsten Dalgaard in Denmark, Enrique Gonzales Macho and Antonio Llorens Sanchis in Spain, Simon Simsi, Roger Diamantis and Jean-Jacques Schpoliansky in France, Peter Buckingham, Ian Christie, Andy and Pamela Engel in the UK, Pandelis Mitropoulos, George Skouras, Michel Demopoulos and Dimitri Stoupis in Greece, Neil Connolly, Marettta Dillon and David Kavanagh in Ireland, Lionello Cerri, Angelo Barbagallo, David Quilleri, Luigi Musini and Andrea Occhipinti in Italy, Nico Simon and Joy Hoffmann in Luxembourg, Henk Camping and Raymond Walravens in the Netherlands, Paulo Branco and Pedro Borgès in Portugal, This Brunner in Switzerland...

It was this first group of some forty operators that laid the foundations for a network of 45 Flagship Theatres and triggered the first round of support from the Commission: ECU 200,000 in July 1992, accompanied by the same amount from the CNC.

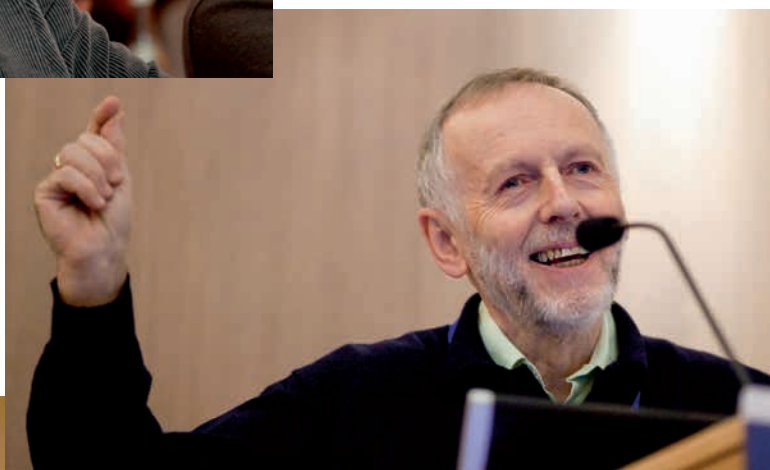
With this project, the MEDIA programme opened up to exhibition. All that remained was to extend the network to have a significant impact on the market and, of course, to demonstrate our results. Our small structure needed to be strengthened to cope with a rapidly growing task. The way forward was open, but we also quickly realised that, from the Commission's point of view, everything could be challenged with each new programme. This was the case with MEDIA 2 a few years later, and we had to mobilise all of our support (parliamentarians, professional organisations, national administrations) to ensure that the support programme for cinemas was maintained and developed. I have to say that Jean-Michel Baer and his colleagues in charge at the Commission quickly understood that such a sector needed a long-term strategy, which we have continually seen confirmed,



François Duplat © Damir Yusupov / Bolshoi



Henk Camping © Bogdan Movileanu



Ian Christie © Antoine Legend



Jean-Marie Hermand © Max Gyselinck



Jeanne Moreau, Claude-Eric Poiroux
and Claude Miller, 2005 © DR



Kim Foss, Kirsten Dalgaard, Costa-Gavras, 2006 © DR



Claude-Eric Poiroux, Claude Miller © Gerhardkassner.de



Nico Simon, Maddy Probst, Fatima Djoumer, Claude-Eric Poiroux © DR

without fail, to this day. In 2023, Creative Europe/MEDIA supports the network with more than €15m, and both Lucia Recalde and Harald Trettenbrein offer unwavering solidarity for European exhibition.

What were your first results?

For our part, we did not have to wait long to see the first results: the network quickly expanded to include medium-sized towns and even small cities, thanks to the mini-networks operating at a regional level. And programming targets were quickly exceeded, with European screenings reaching almost 60% instead of the required 50%, and over 30% of European non-national screenings being achieved instead of the initial 25%. Exhibitors agreed to our guidelines, and the expansion of the network to new cinemas and more countries has never weakened the programming percentages on the screens.

Let's take a look at how far we've come: in 30 years, under MEDIA, we've gone from 12 to 33 countries, from 24 to 744 towns, from 45 to 1,215 cinemas and from 106 to 2,852 screens! And today's audiences in Europa Cinemas cinema members (42 million admissions in 2019) is a real asset for European films of all origins and budgets. Let's not forget the €250m that our cinema audiences bring to the European industry (distributors, producers, technical industries, etc.) every year. The revival of our cinemas after Covid is excellent news for the entire industry, and especially for filmmakers for whom we offer the best conduit to the public.

How did you establish a presence beyond the borders of the European Community?

In 1993, the European Community consisted of just 12 countries. Beyond that, there was the Council of Europe, where Eurimages, the co-production support programme, was active. Its president at the time, Gaetano Adinolfi, got in touch with us in 1993 and suggested, without wasting any time, that we expand our network to cinemas into other European countries that were members of Eurimages, particularly those in Central and Eastern Europe and as far as Turkey. They then set up a support fund for cinemas to finance this new aim, which they entrusted to us based on a model very similar to that of MEDIA. As a result, we more than doubled the size of our network thanks to the countries that would be

at the very heart of MEDIA only a few years later. It was on this occasion that we met professionals who made a major contribution to our work in this part of Europe. I'm thinking of Roman Gutek, Stefan Kitanov, Éva Vezér, Ferenc Port, Krzysztof Gierat, Jelka Stergel, Michal Drobný and Ivo Andrić...

At the same time, we signed a contract with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Yves Rolland), giving us a substantial budget with which to support cinemas in the countries bordering Europe at the time: Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States, Belarus, Armenia and Kazakhstan... This initiative has enjoyed real continuity thanks to highly committed personalities like Laurence Auer, who supported us in Paris and Brussels. Today, in a different format, we are partners with the Institut Français to monitor the programming of its 70 cinemas managed by embassies around the world.

Very quickly, the network displayed a great diversity of cinemas, a vanguard of all the initiatives that would take place a few years later. It has to be said that, at that time, Eureka Audiovisuel existed, run by Sylvie Forbin, whose mission was to create cultural bridges between each of the territories that would gradually constitute the Greater Europe we know today. It's also worth pointing out that cinemas played a crucial part in these historic convergences, and that Europa Cinemas, with all of its partners, played an integral role.

What kind of response have you had from the industry?

As soon as we got the go-ahead from Brussels, we of course informed the industry in order to inspire applications from new cinemas and to explain our approach. Of course, the first steps in setting up a network are always modest, because you can't expect immediate results, and you can't decide to have a large number of cinemas overnight. But the objectives were well understood, as were the initial guidelines, which had been drawn up in line with the Commission's administrative rules and professional practices in the field. We needed to make ourselves known to the National Film Centres, the UNIC, the FIAD (the distributors around Gilbert Grégoire), the sales agents, the national exhibitors' federations and also to the Members of the European Parliament (thanks to Catherine Trautmann, Luciana Castellina, Ruth Hieronymi, Carole Tongue... who were particularly active on our side) who

would at one time or another have to give their opinion on our work and our results. The time was right and the momentum generated by the MEDIA programme was shaking things up in the industry.

How did the EC team, the Association and its governing bodies organise themselves internally, and what role did Claude Miller play?

Obviously, we had to structure ourselves, find offices and build up a team. We opted for the model of an association based in Paris because the CNC co-financed our work. At that time, we recruited several members of staff who have since become pillars of the team, including Fatima Djoumer (now General Director), Véronique Rascol, and Menem Richa. As for the association, it was organically constituted by a core group of exhibitors and cinema personalities who actively supported the project. After the foundation of the association was officially declared in June 1991, I became its president until Claude Miller took over in May 1993. This event deserves some explanation, as Claude was not an exhibitor. We were all aware that, over and above our own representativeness, it would be great for our influence if an internationally recognised figure were to become our chairman. Claude Miller, a filmmaker and producer who was active in the ARP, French Guild of Authors, Directors, and Producers (he was to become its Chairman in 1997), was one of our first supporters with the CNC and the Commission, along with the influential Pascal Rogard. He was finally convinced and was unanimously elected President of Europa Cinemas. This exceptional man worked alongside us for 20 years until his death in April 2012, and his role was essential for the unity and creativity of the network. As General Director alongside him, I was fortunate to work in perfect harmony with him, as we shared the same convictions. Our association, like his successors as Chairman, Ian Christie and Nico Simon, owes him a great deal!

How has the network expanded internationally through Euromed Cinemas, MedScreen, Africa Cinemas, MEDIA Mundus and Europa Cinemas International?

The model we were experimenting with in Europe has proved its viability and also its simplicity as a network. It also made it possible to imagine adaptations for other

parts of the world. The circulation of European films is not limited to the borders of our continent, their market is global. Hence the idea of identifying cinemas and distributors and supporting them to provide better opportunities for productions from all European countries. We took part in collective discussions that have led the Commission (Giorgio Ficarelli, very motivated, at MEDIA) and other institutions to come up with mechanisms to support foreign cinemas that screen European films. The first such initiative to be set up was Euromed Audiovisual, in February 2002, which brought Europe and the countries around the Mediterranean together. Two programmes followed one another and, over a dozen years, we supported the distribution of European and Mediterranean films on nearly a hundred screens in Maghreb countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia), the Middle East (Lebanon, Jordan, Syria), Egypt, the Palestinian Territories and Israel. Cooperation took place under the aegis of and with the resources of the Commission, in liaison with the national film bodies of several of these countries, notably Morocco under the particularly dynamic chairmanship of Nouredine Saïl, who passed away prematurely in December 2020.

A few years later, in 2003, a partnership was formed between the European Commission, the *Agence pour la Francophonie* and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to bring a number of African countries together under the umbrella of Africa Cinémas, whose activities had been unfortunately limited to three years because the infrastructure was still inadequate and the market too small in many countries on the continent.

Finally, in 2004, the Commission's External Affairs department launched an international programme to support films and cinemas across a large part of the world, in which we were involved under the Europa Cinemas International and then Europa Cinemas Mundus labels. This 10-year period was particularly rich in experience, thanks to the commitment of Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Australian, Brazilian, Argentinean, Colombian and Mexican exhibitors and distributors to show European productions in their territories. Six hundred film releases and 211 cinemas were supported in these countries outside of Europe. The Europa Cinemas conferences drew on this international diversity, and the exchanges were



Pascal Rogard, Michael Gubbins © DR



2010 Conference © Antoine Legend



Gianluca Farinelli © Antoine Legend



28 Times Cinema participants with Pawel Pawlikowski, Céline Sciamma and Rok Bicek, 2014 © Giornate degli Autori



Christian Bräuer © Eva Kofinková



Maddy Probst © Max Gysels



Harald E. Trettenbrein © Joana Linda



Nouredine Sail © DR



Daniela Elstner, Andrea Occhipinti © Joana Linda

particularly intense between professionals who may have been far apart geographically, but who were united by the same concern to find an audience for films that may not have had the global resources of US blockbusters, but were shaping world cinema in their own way.

And what about the United States?

It's true that we haven't supported cinemas in the United States, but we've always been in dialogue with very active independent exhibitors within the framework of Art House Convergence, whether at Sundance, where many of the network's exhibitors have been invited, or at our own conferences, which have welcomed US industry players on several occasions. I'm thinking first and foremost of Russ Collins, the head of Art House Convergence, who has become a regular member of our General Meeting. With him and his organisation, in partnership with Europa International, we launched the Tales of Europe professional platform in 2018, aimed at independent cinema programmers in the United States. As for Canada, they joined the network thanks to Eurimages in 2018.

Europa Cinemas doesn't just provide financial support, it also brings together exhibitors on a large scale. What role have the conferences played in the collective and professional debate?

From our fourth year of existence, we felt the need to create an annual event where the exhibitors in the network could get together and discuss issues amongst themselves: the Europa Cinemas conference. This was the case for the first time in November 1996 in Strasbourg, where there were already almost 200 of us, in the presence of the MEDIA programme managers and other professional organisations that were invited. The following year, we organized it in Berlin, then in Lisbon, Seville, Paris, Rome, Prague, Budapest, Bucharest, Warsaw, and Athens, et al. These conferences enabled us to get to know each other better, to keep each other informed, to share our experiences, to question each other on common positions to defend, which was the case during the great digital transformation in our projection rooms.

We were probably the only European group to reflect collectively on the decisions taken at each stage of this revolution: the opportunity to equip ourselves, the technological choices, the standards and formats, the sources of funding, the use of third-party investors, the adoption of VPFs on a European scale. We weren't identical, but what united us was enough to enable us to defend common objectives. What's more, every year we attracted more and more professionals from all fields to review the advances that were shaking up or dividing the sector. We also published a Digital Guide for the occasion, which was very useful in clarifying various discussions. The Commission paid close attention to our discussions, and MEDIA very quickly launched a programme of assistance for digital programming and equipment for cinemas in the network. More than 300 cinemas received support to acquire and install digital equipment. Our unity and shared vision made things much easier, and we emerged stronger from this episode, which could have ended up as a Tower of Babel! These conferences, which are now organised every two years, are increasingly popular (600 people in December 2022) and enable us to make collective progress on innovations to share, models to reinvent and new paths to propose to our partners.

Among them, sales agents have become key contacts, and each of our conferences welcomes them on our panels on the circulation of European films.

Winning back audiences after Covid and the major upheavals it triggered have mobilised exhibitors more than ever, who have never lost confidence and are becoming more and more creative. The whole industry can count on our cinemas to offer European films to a wide audience who, thanks to us, are renewing their interest and rediscovering a taste for cinema on the big screen!

What about sharing experiences and exchanging best practices: Innovation Labs – Next Change – Workshops – Surveys...

In addition to the exceptional events that are the conferences, Europa Cinemas is developing a wide range of collective actions to strengthen skills, improve practices in the field and invent new initiatives aimed at the public. This is the role of the Innovation Labs, which were set up in Bologna with

Gianluca Farinelli in 2004, and which now exist in several formats and in many countries (Sofia, Seville & Valladolid, Vilnius, Mantua, Cluj-Napoca, Graz, Thessaloniki, Leipzig, et al.) Almost 1,500 exhibitors have already benefited from the programme, returning to their own cinemas with the knowledge gained from several days of workshops around initiatives that have already been tested elsewhere. Thanks to all of the experienced professionals who have participated and passed on their skills!

With Next/Change, members of the network can visit their colleagues and share experiences that they would like to reproduce in their own contexts.

With the help of experts such as Michael Gubbins, we regularly publish surveys which aim to bring together case studies and knowledge provided by members of the network on topical issues or innovations that can be implemented in our venues. This was the case recently with the use of data to gain a better understanding of our audiences and their expectations and in 2023 with our survey on our social, environmental and community impact.

Today, the network goes even further by mobilizing working groups that collectively developed two Charters on "Inclusion/Diversity/Gender Equality" and "Energy Efficiency/Environmental Protection." It is a matter of promptly coming together for new goals related to behavioral changes, rethinking investments in our venues, and also sharing programming and debates with the public.

How does the network contribute to large-scale European initiatives?

From the early years, we have taken advantage of the network's ability to engage in collective actions through the creativity and dynamism of exhibitors, and we have launched international operations such as NetDays at the beginning of the Internet, Cinedays for young audiences, the "Open your Eyes" online game, the celebration of the Centenary of Cinema in 1998 with a trailer made with Terry Jones, and the Tour de France of European filmmakers inaugurated in Cannes by Jeanne Moreau in 2008...

But, over the past few years, we've extended this mobilization to many

partners, and contributed with them to numerous initiatives on a European scale. Alongside the Cannes, Berlin, Locarno, Venice and Karlovy Vary film festivals, we set up juries of exhibitors to award five Labels and promote European productions in the media and to professionals, the most important of whom are world sales agents, who are always influenced by the added value of a prize. We are actively involved in two European Parliament initiatives: 27 Times Cinema as part of the *Giornate degli Autori* in Venice (directed by Giorgio Gosetti) and the LUX Prize alongside the European Film Academy. We collaborate with the CICAIE (chaired by Christian Bräuer, an active member of the network) for Art House Cinema Day, and with Creative Europe MEDIA for European Cinema Night. In each of these events, our cinemas are particularly valuable for their ability to mobilize the public and local media.

You've just created a new support scheme, Collaborate To Innovate, which is crucial for investment in venues. What does this add to your activities?

After consultation and in agreement with our partners in Brussels, we created a new tool to encourage our members to invest in innovative and collaborative projects either within a single country or on a European level. For almost 30 years, we have supported exhibitors in their programming and Young Audience activities, affording them the means to progress by exchanging ideas and best practice and, in this way, contributing to the long-term progress of the sector. The results are there. We also know that exhibitors are entrepreneurs who sometimes invest heavily in strategic investments that are vital to their competitiveness and the development of their audiences. This is where Collaborate To Innovate comes in. We can work alongside them by co-financing their research, their innovations and their creation of new tools. The only condition is that the project has to be presented by several people, so it has to be a collective and mutually supportive effort from the outset. Our contribution of up to €100,000 is a decisive factor in the launch of many projects. I'm thinking of an initiative like Cineville, which originated in the Netherlands and which, thanks to the dynamism of the exhibitors and our support, is now being set up in Belgium,



Jeanne Moreau,
Enrique González Macho © DR



Iris Praefke, Emily Munro
© Antoine Legend



Claude-Eric Poiroux, Boglarka Nagy, Christophe Gigaudaut, Lionello Cerri, Agnieszka Balicka © Ionut Dobre

Tableau synoptique / Synoptic table

PAYS	VILLE	EXPLOITANT	SALLE	ECRANS	SIÈGES
ALLEMAGNE	BERLIN	G. Kloster	BROADWAY	4	198/116/86/64
ALLEMAGNE	BERLIN	T. Baumeister	LUPE 2	1	174
ALLEMAGNE	HAMBOURG	G. Holger Steinert	HOLI	2	420/160
ALLEMAGNE	MUNICH	S. Kochenreuther	ABC KINO	1	156
ALLEMAGNE	MUNICH	C. Boje	ATELIER	2	204/85
ALLEMAGNE	MUNICH	L. Anschutz	ISABELLA	1	165
ALLEMAGNE	MUNICH	M. Kirchner	THEATINER	1	164
BELGIQUE	BRUXELLES	T. Abel	ARENBERG - GALERIES	2	208/180
BELGIQUE	BRUXELLES	P. Heuze	VENDÔME	3	290/200/150
BELGIQUE	GAND	W. Vander Cruyse	STUDIO SKOOP	4	152/87/365/298/126
BELGIQUE	LIEGE	J.M. Hermand	LE PARC	1	409
DANEMARK	AARHUS	O. Bjorn Christensen	OST FOR PARADIS	4	130/86/55/43
DANEMARK	COPENHAGUE	P. Refn	GRAND	6	152/87/365/298/126
DANEMARK	COPENHAGUE	C. Brandt	POSTHUS THEATER	1	90
DANEMARK	COPENHAGUE	T. Wobgaard	VESTER VOV VOV	2	80/75
ESPAGNE	BARCELONE	J.L. Galvartano	CAPSA	1	409
ESPAGNE	MADRID	E. Gonzales Macho	RENOIR 4 CAMINOS	4	134/243/249/183
ESPAGNE	MADRID	E. Gonzales Macho	RENOIR PLAZA ESPANA	5	139/95/149/71/68
FRANCE	LYON	M. Arigau	CNP BELLECOUR	3	80/62/67
FRANCE	LYON	M. Arigau	CNP ODEON	1	300
FRANCE	LYON	M. Arigau	CNP TERREAUX	4	140/80/51/54
FRANCE	PARIS	S. Simi	EUROPA PANTHEON	1	300
FRANCE	PARIS	R. Diamantis	ST ANDRE	3	172/147/191
FRANCE	PARIS	C. Gérard	ST MICHEL	2	120/95
GRANDE BRETAGNE	CARDIFF	L. Pariser	CHAPTER	2	195/68
GRANDE BRETAGNE	EDIMBOURG	P. Buckingham	CAMEO	3	253/75/66
GRANDE BRETAGNE	EDIMBOURG	J. Hickey	FILMHOUSE	2	285/102
GRANDE BRETAGNE	LONDRES	P. Engel	LUMIERE	1	737
GRANDE BRETAGNE	LONDRES	T. Kirkhope	METRO	2	195/84
GRANDE BRETAGNE	LONDRES	P. Engel	RENOIR	2	251/251
GRECE	ATHENES	P. Mitropoulos	STUDIO	1	600
GRECE	SALONIQUE	G. Stefanopoulos	PALLACE	1	580
IRLANDE	DUBLIN	N. Connolly	LIGHT HOUSE	2	281/81
ITALIE	MILAN	L. Cerri	ANTEO	1	400
ITALIE	MILAN	D. Quilleri	COLOSSEO	3	666/198/191
ITALIE	MILAN	D. Quilleri	ELISEO	1	616
ITALIE	ROME	A. Barboglio	NUOVO SACHER	1	374
LUXEMBOURG	LUXEMBOURG	N. Simon	UTOPIA	5	300/200/145/84/79
PAYS BAS	AMSTERDAM	C. Koppies	CINECENTER	4	113/106/103/52
PAYS BAS	AMSTERDAM	K. Meerburg	DE UITKIJK	1	160
PAYS BAS	AMSTERDAM	R. Langestraat	DESMET	2	220/87
PAYS BAS	AMSTERDAM	R. Walravens	RIALTO	2	157/139
PAYS BAS	AMSTERDAM	B. Reijnhoudt	THE MOVIES	4	177/104/56/60
PAYS BAS	ROTTERDAM	L. Hannewyk	LANTAREN VENSTER	4	186/103/107/107
PORTUGAL	LISBONNE	P. Branco	KING TRIPLEX	3	166/119/137

SALLES-PAVILLONS 1993



Villes : 24

Salles : 45

Ecrans : 106 Sièges : 19 070

First "Salles-Pavillons" Guide, 1993



Fatima Djoumer, Claude-Eric Poiroux
© Gerhardkassner.de

Austria, Germany and, no doubt, in other territories soon, too. Collaborate to Innovate is becoming one of the main structural intervention tools for network members and their collective capacity for innovation over the long term.

What memories, good or bad, do you have of these thirty years?

The worst memory for the team was the cancellation of the Europa Cinemas conference in Athens in 2011. We had been preparing for it for several months, had booked 400 rooms at the Hilton, several meeting rooms, cinema theatres for screenings, with hundreds of exhibitors having bought their plane tickets and, by the end of October, the political climate in Greece had hardened, with strikes and massive protest marches in Athens, paralyzing business, local and air transport, and above all, jeopardizing the safety of the residents of Athens and foreigners who would have to travel to the heart of the capital. The Board of Directors and I thought it prudent to cancel the event just a few weeks away, and we were right. Fortunately, in November 2013, Athens welcomed us for a conference that quickly made us forget the vicissitudes of the cancellation suffered two years earlier.

As for the good memories, they are too numerous, given how productive and intense the journey of these thirty years has been between us and with our partners. I remember great moments with personalities who wished to share our adventure: Nanni Moretti welcoming us at the Rome Conference in 2001, Wim Wenders, Julie Gayet, and Thierry Frémaux on the stage of Balzac alongside Claude Miller in 2010, the new wave of Romanian filmmakers sharing our debates in Bucharest in 2007 and 2017 (Cristian Mungiu, Cristi Puiu, Corneliu Porumboiu, Tudor Giurgiu, Cătălin Mitulescu), but also Jane Birkin, Claude Miller, and Ademir Kenovic in Sarajevo in June 1996 for the reopening of two cinemas closed during the war and a few years later, in 2004, the inauguration of the Ariana cinema in Kabul, of which we were reconstruction partners with Claude Lelouch and the ARP [Auteurs Réalisateurs Producteurs].

Not to forget Jeanne Moreau's personal involvement alongside Commission President José Barroso in Budapest, Commissioner Viviane Reding, and Minister of Culture Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres in Cannes, but

also on stage, alone or with Costa-Gavras, presenting the Network's Best Exhibitor Awards to the luckiest among us!

You mentioned many names during this interview. Is it to highlight the collective aspect of the Europa Cinemas adventure?

Yes, absolutely. There is a lack of space to emphasize just how this network has been built in the long term thanks to the involvement of each exhibitor, in their cinema and environment. It's not easy to bring together people who do the same job but are miles apart, especially when they are tasked with keeping their venues open 365 days a year! All the joint activities we have taken have been the cement in our collective adventure. Not to mention the conferences where our ability to play a real role on a large scale was proven. I also remember certain premieres where distributors could anticipate the career of the film if entrusted to us. This was the case in November 2008 for the test screening of *Slumdog Millionaire*, where the enthusiasm of the 400 European exhibitors in the audience played a significant role for the rights holders in their international distribution strategy.

And, of course, I do not forget the importance of the bonds of friendship and solidarity that have been created during these 30 years, bringing more and more exhibitors together around common commitments in favor of European creation. This is what gives the inestimable value to our network: the sharing of our diversities that enriches our practices in the field and the quality of our connections with all audiences, our core business. And these hundreds of millions of viewers, gathered in our cinemas over the past 30 years, are the ones who guarantee the quality and sustainability of European cinema!

Interview with Jean-Philippe Guerand



Les 400 Coups in Angers turned 40 in 2022

30 years of Europa Cinemas

Timeline

1991 Origins

1991

February 1991

Declaration of the constitution of the Europa Cinemas Association in Paris by Claude-Eric Poiroux and Laurence Gavron

February 1991: 1st Board of Directors - President: Claude-Eric Poiroux (1991-1993).

Members: Laurence Gavron (General Secretary), François Duplat, Jean-René Marchand

First CNC subsidy

1991-92: Cinema scouting and visits to the 12 MEDIA countries

17th-20th October 1991: Rencontres cinématographiques de l'ARP in Beaune (Claude Berri, Pascal Rogard). Support from the European directors to the Europa Cinemas project



Europa Cinemas
members integration

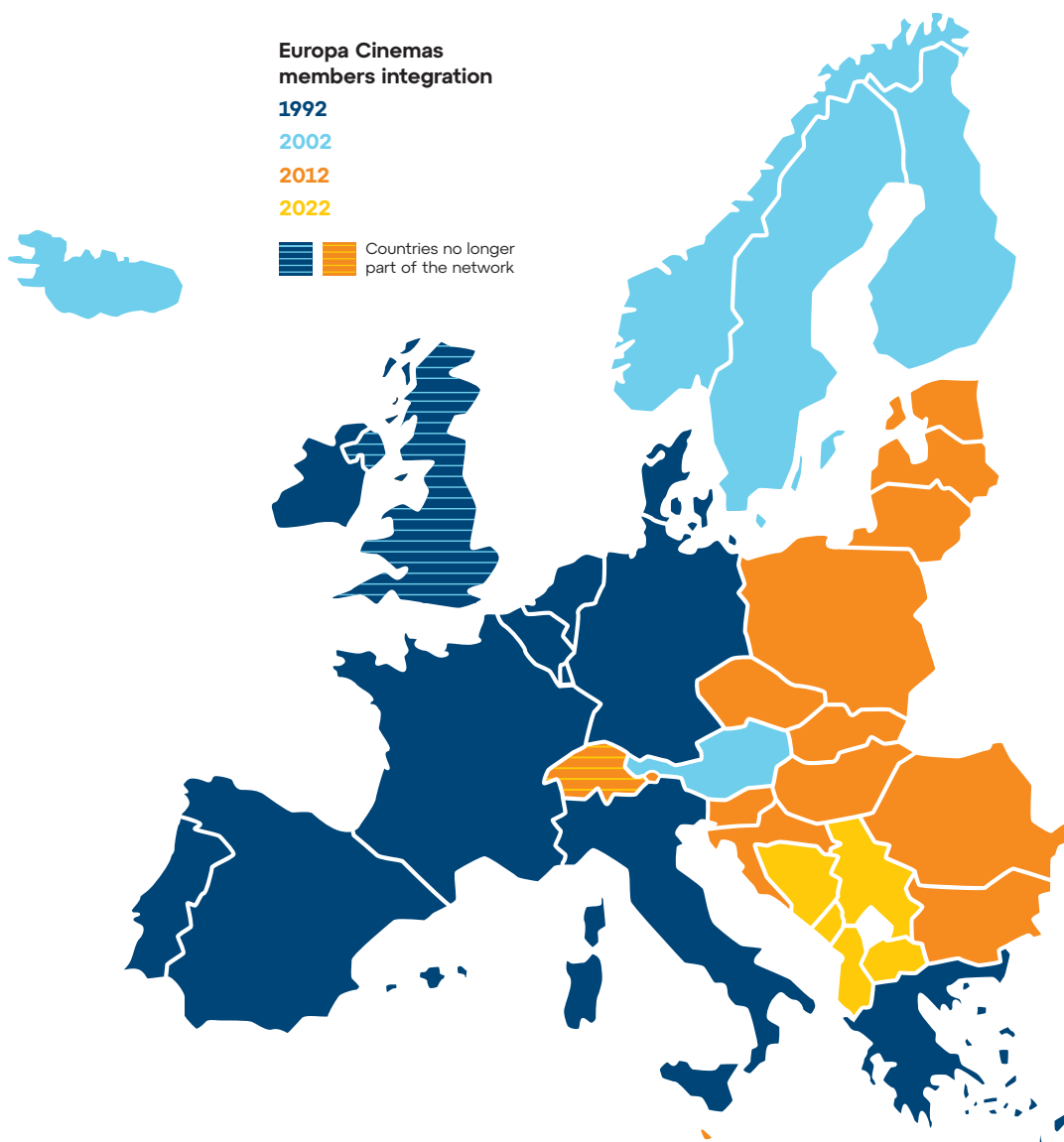
1992

2002

2012

2022

  Countries no longer
part of the network



1992 - 2000 The creation of the network

1992 First year of activity for Europa Cinemas

January 1992: Angers - Symposium of the PREMIERS PLANS festival - «Programming European films in European cinemas». A hundred professionals from all over Europe. With the presence of Mme Colette Flesch (CCE) and Dominique Wallon

August 1992: At the Board meeting, 24 new entries in the Association are made. It now has 28 members from 13 European countries

September 1992: 1st General Assembly of Europa Cinemas, Election of the first Board of Directors: Claude-Eric Poiroux President, Ian Christie and Nico Simon Vice-Presidents, Henk Camping General Secretary, Dimitri Stoupis Treasurer

October 1992: Signature of the 1st Convention with the European Community (Colette Flesch – Claude-Eric Poiroux) - subsidy of 200 000 Ecus until 31st December 1992 + subsidy from the CNC

First Meeting of EC's Board of Directors - Selection of the first network of Salles-Pavillons / Flagship Theatres (91 applications received)

NETWORK SIZE - After one year, the network includes 45 Salles-Pavillons / Flagship Theatres (106 screens) in 12 countries and 24 European cities

1993 April 1993: Release of the first «Salles-Pavillons» Guide

May 1993: During the General Assembly in Cannes, Claude Miller becomes EC's President (1993-2012) / Claude-Eric Poiroux General Director - Adoption of the new EC statutes

September 1993: Signature of the first Convention with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE). Extension of the network to cinema members in Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine (1993-2010)

December 1993: Signature of the partnership with Eurimages and opening in the countries of the Council of Europe

1994 EC Board of Directors - President Claude Miller, Vice-Presidents Nico Simon & Ian Christie, General Secretary Henk Camping, Treasurer Jean-Marie Hermand

1995 First Joint Activity - «The First Screening of the Lumière Brothers» (1995-1996)

1996 16th-17th November 1996: First Network Conference (Strasbourg)

1997 5th-7th December 1997: 2nd Conference (Berlin)

1998 Launch of Netdays (1998-2004)

27th-29th November 1998: Third Conference (Lisbon)

1999 26th-28th November 1999: 4th Conference (Seville)

2000 Launch of the EU Euromed Audiovisuel I Programme (2000-2004). Partnership between 12 Mediterranean countries and 15 EU countries (distribution, exhibition and festival support)

1st-3rd December 2000: 5th Conference (Paris)

2001 – 2012

Expansion and digitization of the network

-
- 2001** **23rd-25th November 2001:** First time digital screenings are discussed during the 6th Conference (Rome)
-
- November 2001:** First paper newsletter of the network, which will later become the Network Review. Editorial from Ms. Viviane Reding (European Commissioner for Education and Culture)
-
- 2002** NETWORK SIZE (10 years) - 352 cinemas (892 screens) in 200 cities and 17 countries
-
- 22nd-24th November 2002:** 7th Conference (Paris)
-
- November 2002:** First Europa Cinemas Awards (Best Programming and Best Young Audience Activities)
-
- 2003** **May 2003:** First Europa Cinemas Label at the Quinzaine des réalisateurs (THE MOTHER and KITCHEN STORIES)
-
- 27th-30th November 2003:** 8th Conference (Prague) - First European Film Previews
-
- November 2003:** First Best Entrepreneur Award
-
- Africa Cinemas Programme (2003-2005) in cooperation with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie and the European Commission
-
- 2004** **May 2004:** Enlargement of the European Union, with 10 new countries - Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia
-
- 23rd May 2004:** Official Opening of the Ariana cinema in Kabul
-
- September 2004:** First Europa Cinemas Label at the Venice Giornate degli Autori (DARWIN'S NIGHTMARE)
-
- 2004:** Beginning of the distribution support to Non-MEDIA countries (2004-2008), becoming in 2009 Europa Cinemas Mundus - From 2004 to 2015, EC develops its activities over 5 continents with the Commission's financing to support distributors and exhibitors of European films around the world
-
- 25th-28th November 2004:** 9th Conference (Paris)
-
- November 2004:** Launch of the «Open Your Eyes» game
-
- 2005** **February 2005:** First Europa Cinemas Label at the Berlinale Panorama (VA, VIS ET DEVIENS and CRUSTACES ET COQUILLAGES)
-
- May 2005:** Publication of the «Europa Cinemas Digital Guide», presented during the Cannes Film Festival
-
- 2005:** Launch of the Europa Cinemas support for programming European films in digital screenings (2005-2012)
-
- July 2005:** First training session in Bologna (first Lab), in cooperation with the Cineteca di Bologna (Il Cinema Ritrovato)
-
- 17th-20th November 2005:** 10th Conference (Budapest)
-
- 2006** **2006:** Euromed Cinemas 2 and Med-Screen (2006-2009). Support to distributors and to cinemas in Europe and in the Mediterranean
-
- July 2006:** First Europa Cinemas Label at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival (FROZEN CITY)
-
- 16th-19th November 2006:** 11th Conference (Paris)
-

-
- 2007** **January 2007:** EU enlargement to Bulgaria and Romania
-
- 2007:** RMC studies, for Europa Cinemas, on financing cinemas' digitization
-
- 15th-18th November 2007:** 12th Conference (Bucharest)
-
- 2008** **2008:** Tour de France of European filmmakers, on the occasion of the French EU presidency, with specific support from Orange, the CNC and several French Ministries
-
- 13th-16th November 2008:** 13th Conference (Paris) - Preview screening of SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE
-
- 2009** **2009:** MEDIA MUNDUS / EUROPA CINEMAS MUNDUS - Distribution and cinema programming support - Asia, Latin America, Oceania, the Mediterranean and Africa (2009-2015)
-
- 19th-22nd November 2009:** 14th Conference (Warsaw)
-
- 2010** **September 2010:** Launch of 27 Times Cinema in Venice, an initiative of the European Parliament, in collaboration with the Giornate degli Autori and Cineuropa
-
- 18th-21st November 2010:** 15th Conference (Paris)
-
- 2011** **17th-20th November 2011:** Preparation then cancellation of the 16th Conference (Athens)
-
- 2012** **NETWORK SIZE** (20 years) - 856 cinemas (2110 screens) in 514 cities and 32 countries
-
- 1641 MEDIA network screens (over 2110) are digitized, namely 77.7% of the network
-
- 5th April 2012:** Death of Claude Miller
-
- 26th April 2012:** Ian Christie EC President
-
- 22nd-25th November 2012:** 17th Conference (Paris)
-



Europa Cinemas Awards, L'Arlequin, Paris, 2012 © Antoine Legend

2013 – 2022

Consolidation of the network, innovation

2013 **August 2013:** First Europa Cinemas Label at the Locarno Film Festival (TABLEAU NOIR)

21st-24th November 2013: 18th Conference (Athens) - Preview screening of IDA

19th May 2013: Nico Simon EC President

2014 **March 2014:** First Sofia Innovation Lab (Sofia Film Festival)

November 2014: First Seville Innovation Lab (Seville European Film Festival)

2015 **27th-29th November 2015:** 19th Conference (Prague)

27th November 2015: Signature of the partnership agreement with the French Institute

2016 **9th October 2016:** First European Art Cinema Day in partnership with the CICAÉ

Launch of Next/Change, experience sharing programme, between network exhibitors

Launch of Collaborate!, a support programme for innovative joint projects (2016-2017)

LUX Days begin, in partnership with the European Parliament

First Day Labs (in Sarajevo and Tallinn)

2017 Publication of the first Europa Cinemas Survey (New Approaches to Audience Building)

24th-26th November 2017: 20th Conference (Bucharest)

June 2017: First Lab at TIFF in Cluj-Napoca

2018 **4th December 2018:** First European Cinema Night
In collaboration with Creative Europe / MEDIA

First Europa Cinemas Innovation Award (2018-2020)

Launch of Tales of Europe in the USA, in partnership with Europa International (2018-2019)

2019 **21st-24th November 2019:** 21st Conference (Lisbon)

2020 First Online Innovation Labs

2021 Emergency Covid-19 Support from the European Commission

Launch of Collaborate to Innovate

2022 NETWORK SIZE (30 years) - 1168 cinemas (2782 screens) in 707 cities and 33 countries

Effective exit of the UK from the network

1st-4th December 2022: 22nd Conference (Paris)



**Proud to partner Europa Cinemas since 1993
and to celebrate 30 years of enhancing the
programming and promotion of European films**

**We now jointly support 64 cinemas in 5 countries:
Armenia, Canada, Switzerland, Türkiye and Ukraine**

eurimages

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

The best way to walk

A tribute to Claude Miller (1942-2012)

"As a director at the helm of Europa Cinemas, I have always believed that European cinema should not be confined to its own borders but should play its role as an alternative to American cinema worldwide. Let's not forget that Europe enjoys international prestige for its quality and diversity, and its cinema is admired on every continent."

**Claude Miller, Film Director
President of Europa Cinemas
from 1993 to 2012
November 2004**

"I personally appreciated Claude Miller's presidency. His authority was recognised both in Brussels and in other countries, where he earned great respect. He was not particularly interventionist but, if the need arose, whether on a French or European level, he took a stand."

**Dominique Wallon,
General Director of CNC
from 1989 to 1995**



Claude Miller, Europa Cinemas Conference, 2008 © Antoine Legond



Wim Wenders, Claude Miller, Julie Gayet, Claude-Eric Poiroux, *Le Balzac*, 2010 © Antoine Legend

"A conscious filmmaker concerned with the venues showing his films, Claude deeply believed in the cinema experience. He was a genuine cinephile who humbly bridged the glorious days of the New Wave and our future across multiple platforms."

**Ian Christie, Professor of Film and Media History
President of Europa Cinemas
from 2012 to 2013**

"Claude Miller had a love for cinema and perfectly fit the profile of Europa Cinemas, which supports high-quality arthouse cinema aimed at an audience without being strictly commercial. He was practical but not interested in politics per se. The filmmaker's notoriety impressed exhibitors, contributing to the credibility of the decisions we made. He supported concrete actions and highly valued discussions with exhibitors initiated by Europa Cinemas. Whenever there was communication to be made to exhibitors or the cinema audience, Claude willingly lent his creative acclaim to the cause. European cinema owes him a lot because no one is better placed than a great creator to convey to policymakers the conviction that public action is essential to preserve the diversity that enriches our cultural heritage."

**Pascal Rogard, General Director
of SACD**

"Claude had boundless love for films, caring for them at every stage of the cinematic chain. He was particularly attached to the cinema experience, and his frequent travels for the presentation of his films taught him to love cinemas from all corners of the world. He visited us on several occasions starting from *La petite voleuse* and even dedicated the book he participated in, *Le milieu n'est plus un pont mais une faille*, to me with these words: "Like friendship, cinema brings us closer." All this to emphasize that it's not just films but culture and human relationships that mark you forever."

**Kirsten Dalgaard, Exhibitor
& Distributor, Grand Teatret,
Camera Film, Nordisk Film**

Dominique Wallon

Back to the origins

Dominique Wallon had been the Director-General of the CNC for two years when the Europa Cinemas project emerged. The CNC has always supported the organization. Dominique, who was also a crucial member of the Expert Committee, reflects on the creation of the network.

I assumed the role of director at the National Centre for Cinematography [CNC – Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée] in 1989, a year that coincided with the European Audiovisual Conference in Paris, featuring a memorable speech by Jacques Delors. It also marked the introduction of the Television Without Frontiers directive amidst the ongoing GATT negotiations. Consequently, the atmosphere prompted the CNC director to develop a keen interest in various European and international matters. Adding to the context, cinemas were facing a dire situation at that time, reaching the nadir of a decline that had commenced a few years prior.

Cinemas posed a significant challenge, not only within a European context but also on the global stage.

Against this backdrop, in early 1991, I met with Claude-Éric Poiroux. The project he was developing immediately struck me as fitting, given its objective. The underlying question was the cinema programming of European films, preferably those that were non-national. The technical framework he was already envisioning seemed clear and coherent as a step towards the cinemas' objective. Additionally, there was the establishment of a predominantly European network. Claude-Éric left with a grant of 400,000 French francs at the time [60,000 euros]. The Director of Operations at the CNC, Jean-René Marchand, served as a personal member on the initial board of Europa Cinemas and remained so for a year.

At the European Commission, the Director-General of Culture and Communication was Colette Flesch, a wonderful woman – very

direct, intelligent, active, and decidedly non-bureaucratic. She participated in both conferences I attended as the CNC president within the framework of the Angers Film Festival in 1992 and 1993. During a time when France was almost the sole country with enthusiasm, I inevitably became a member of the ad hoc committee in Brussels on MEDIA projects. Additionally, there was a fund that was not initially fully targeted in the MEDIA programme, with the goal of doing something for cinemas. We gave a favourable opinion on the Europa Cinemas programme. In 1992, I took the initiative to gather all of the European directors of cinema centres and other equivalents of the CNC for the first time, and Europa Cinemas was one of the topics we discussed.

Claude-Éric possesses a keen political sense that allowed him to accomplish remarkable work. He went everywhere, met with everyone who mattered in the decision-making process, and secured the support of the ARP, notably Pascal Rogard, who is himself a superb lobbyist. Élisabeth Flüry-Hérard monitored its progress on behalf of the CNC. So, in 1992, the programme was included in the convention signed by the European Commission, who granted its delegation to Europa Cinemas.

France, through the CNC, had developed co-production agreements with all the peripheral countries and former states of the Soviet Union. In 1993, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs granted special assistance to Europa Cinemas to facilitate the integration of these cinemas.

Claude-Éric built a strong team, capable of extensive flexibility in action. He immediately understood the importance of the support system managed by Europa Cinemas and that it required complete transparency and visibility of the cinemas, starting with statistics and information. Association project coordinators managed designated

geographical areas and, as a result, maintained relationships with the cinemas, even though there weren't many in the beginning; they had a precise understanding of their history.

Europa Cinemas' strength lies in its network, fostering solidarity among its members and bringing together members who individually did not wield significant influence in Brussels. Even though I left the CNC in 1995, I already sensed respect for this institution from Brussels managers like Jacques Delmoly, Jean-Michel Baer, and others, providing necessary and justified support, albeit with a certain level of detachment.

I was not aware of any pressure from the representatives in France of Hollywood majors, who are accustomed to the support fund deducting a percentage from their film revenues, with the CNC redistributing this money to finance our production.

The success of Europa Cinemas thus relies on a constantly nurtured, reinforced, and monitored network.

Unlike EFDO (distribution), whose members were involved within the structure, proving unmanageable, at Europa Cinemas, the managing entity serves the network but possesses a certain autonomy crucial for making important decisions.

I served for four or five years on the Europa Cinemas expert committee, predominantly comprised of network exhibitors and board members, meeting in various European capitals. I personally interacted with Pascal Rogard and the Spanish critic José Maria Riba. We reviewed all the cinemas, and any issue prompted an open, informed, and very free discussion. As a former inspector of finances, I knew that, in the eyes of the European Commission, I was an expert who could guarantee good management.

It remains rare for a project to endure, staying on the same course, illuminated or deepened, for 30 years.

Interview by Jean-Philippe Guerand



Dominique Wallon © Lola Contal

Innovation, Collaboration and Diversity

A look back at the network's joint initiatives with Fatima Djoumer

Europa Cinemas has always been putting exhibitors in contact at heart, and enabling them to share best practice with each other. Hundreds of professionals have profited from the network's conferences and labs, improving their skills and evolving through the digital projection revolution and the global pandemic.



EC Conference in Paris, 2012 © Antoine Legond



Bologna Lab, 2023 © DR

Europa Cinemas had already existed for three years, and continued expanding, when Claude-Eric Poiroux asked me to join his team in 1994 as Head of International Relations and of the network's actions. It was the beginning of a great adventure, one with the ambition of developing an exhibitors' network in Europe and strengthening the links between them.

In Europa Cinemas's history, the first 10 years corresponded to the construction of the network, going from Flagship Theatres to the creation of the first mini-networks across Europe. From 2003 to 2013, it was about digital development. Then, during the last decade, Labs and exchanges were ramping up (Next/Change starting in 2016, our exhibitors' Erasmus), enabling exhibitors to visit cinemas, to meet colleagues and to learn new processes.

First joint activities

The very first joint activity implemented coincided with the celebration of the Cinema Centenary in 1995. The first screening of the Lumière brothers, restored by the



Zacharias Ioannidis, Géke Roelink and Bohdan Sláma © Eva Kofírková



Broadway Cinematheque in Hong Kong © DR

French Cinémathèque as part of the Cinema Centenary Mission and accompanied by voice-over from Michel Piccoli (for its French version), consisted of the 10 short films screened at the *Café de la Paix* in December 1895. We offered to take care of the distribution of this 10-minute programme in every cinema and city of the network (around 80 venues) and to make our own versions by recruiting emblematic European actors (and voice talent): Otto Sander, Monica Vitti, Youssef Chahine, Terry Jones and Victoria Abril.

Immediately after, 1996 became the year of the launch of one of the most important meetings for the network: the first Europa Cinemas conference. It was organised in Strasbourg where Pierre-Henri Deleau (director of the *Quinzaine des réalisateurs* at that time) had just founded a new festival.

Other actions followed including NetDays in 1998, initiated by the European Commission to promote the use of the Internet. For six years, when we developed the very first Europa Cinemas website ourselves, we had been partners in this initiative, which was set up through the organisation of a huge online

“goose game” that encouraged network exhibitors to create their own website where the public could log in to answer questions about cinema. It was even possible to win prizes: cinema tickets, plane tickets, cameras...

Over the years, the network grew by betting on burgeoning cinemas in European cities and countries, with a growing budget, but also by setting up new joint activities every year, such as Innovation Labs, Europa Cinemas Label juries, the partnership with the LUX Award and the European Parliament (in particular with 27 Times Cinema), and the European Cinema Night co-organized with the European Commission. We have also been partners in the campaign for the European elections for around 15 years.

27 TIMES CINEMA

Annually, since 2010, 27 Times Cinema has enabled young people from EU countries to participate in the Venice Festival, in partnership with the LUX Award of the European Parliament, the Giornate degli Autori, and Cineuropa.

In addition to publications such as the Network Review and Network Surveys (the last one studying the social, economic and environmental role of network cinema members in their communities), conferences and labs play a crucial role.

During our conferences, exhibitors travel to meet each other, to be informed, and to communicate around important subjects like the challenges of the development of multiplexes during the '90s, or the digitisation of cinemas in the 2000s. In 1999, a workshop dedicated to digital technologies was organised as part of our meeting in Seville. Since then, our conference thus became fundamental owing to the debates taking place, but also to the answers it brought to the questions and challenges network exhibitors faced, as well as many other industry professionals. Expertise, best practice and data sharing have all been facilitated, with speakers tackling their experiences and point of views on daily challenges ranging from the very important relationship between distributors and exhibitors, the Virtual Print Fee scheme for independent cinemas during the period of digitisation and, of course, the topic of audience development.

Labs

The financial incentive for programming and young audience development is essential for network exhibitors. But labs aim to improve participant skills and further benefit several hundred of exhibitors each year. It should be noted that Madeleine Probst (Watershed, UK) played an important role in the development of the format of the labs.

We went from one to three labs a year, in Sofia, Bologna, and Seville and, as of this year, Valladolid. Then we launched the Innovation Day Labs, which enable participants to tackle and solve local challenges. Notably, we organised one in Graz during the *Diagonale*, with Austrian exhibitors and distributors, and in Leipzig during the AG Kino meetings, to discuss issues concerning digital marketing and use of social networks. The growing popularity of the latter has led us to encourage cinema operators to adapt their communications to the evolving habits and engagement of the public. Attendees at our conferences are becoming younger and, as such, are more embracing of these new strategies.

Over 30 years, these joint activities have allowed us to develop solidarity across borders and to encourage exhibitors to meet.

Europa Cinemas Labels

The Europa Cinemas Label's juries were launched in 2003 in Cannes during the *Quinzaine des réalisateurs*, then during Berlin's *Panorama*, and the *Giornate degli autori* in Venice, with Karlovy Vary and Locarno following suit. Five times a year, four exhibitors from different countries meet and choose a film that will benefit from a programming bonus, enabling it to reach a wider public and extend its theatrical 'career'. The Label also contributed to strengthening our relationships with sales agents and distributors.

In addition, these initiatives allow us to identify speakers whose experiences can be shared during labs or our conference.



Jean-Marc Lalo © Eva Kofírková



Bologna Lab, 2017 © DR



Next/Change - Andres Kauts and Sigrid Butlers from Tartu to Vilnius © DR

Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent cinema closures forced us to organise online labs as early as 2020, responding to the isolation people were experiencing at home. During this time, within the European Commission, Lucia Recalde, Harald E. Trettenbrein and their teams were very responsive to the crisis as it was transpiring. They knew that, with cinemas closed, venues did not have any revenue coming in and, despite not being able to release funds instantly, – which they did one year later, providing four million euros –, they decided to pay 50% of the cinema support as early as June 2020, as an advance payment. This made us, and of course the European Commission, the first in Europe to apply such a responsive measure.



EC Label - MUSTANG, 2015 © Quinzaine des Cinéastes

Collaborate to Innovate

Over the past three years, to support cinemas in their initiatives to win back their audiences, the 2021 budget was the first to include a newly created 1 million euro fund allocated to innovation activities. That's how Collaborate to Innovate was born, with guidelines defined by network exhibitors within the framework of a Focus Group, members of whom gathered multiple times over Zoom.

2024 will mark the fourth edition of Collaborate to Innovate, which now has a budget of €1.5m. We proceed at the beginning of the year with a Call for Applications. The responses are then submitted to a group of five independent experts, chosen according to defined criteria. And we do not intervene. The contract is signed at the beginning of May and recipients have a little over a year to make their project a reality. The maximum award is €100,000, 70% to 80% of which come from Europa Cinemas. It is thanks to this initiative that the Cineville project – developed in the Netherlands in 2007 – has been able to reach Belgium, Austria, soon Germany and possibly also Sweden.

Among other actions developed within the network is Secret Cinema, which consists of organised screenings in unusual locations, and the High School Ambassadors programme.



Bologna Lab, 2016 © DR

FOCUS GROUPS

Since 2020, focus groups, which consist of network exhibitors, have been created to respond to issues, initiatives and challenges ahead. The network's actions and reflections on its development have been addressed within the framework of these 'think tanks', notably in 2022 with the simultaneous introduction of two Charters, one on diversity and inclusion and the other on the environment. These are now an integral part of the contract we sign with venues each year.

Internationalisation

At the end of the 1990s, we decided to extend our action to cinemas and distributors of European films in countries around the Mediterranean, thanks to funding from the European Commission and within the framework of Euromed Audiovisual, which covered Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Turkey and the Palestinian Territories.

In 2004, the MEDIA programme decided to extend its action to what is called Third Countries. We had already established contacts with professionals in these countries. We therefore proposed to support cinemas and distributors in Latin America and Asia, based on the model we had already developed through Euromed, even though each country had its own specific characteristics. We established contacts and identified cinemas country by country. We organised regular meetings at the film markets, in Cannes and Berlin, and then



EC Mundus - TRICKS in Argentina © DR



Next/Change - Kino Nowe Horyzonty from Wroclaw to Manchester © DR

went on location. This is how cinema networks were created and how professionals found themselves involved in a movement to defend quality European cinema.

We made similar progress on the Asian and South American continents, meeting the local players with whom we had made contact at the film markets. We gave up to €25,000 to support release costs for distribution, subtitling, print runs, marketing and promotion, and up to €10,000 for exhibition, depending on the number of screenings scheduled, which represented significant sums for some of these countries and improved the visibility of the films. The cinemas were awarded the Europa Cinemas Label.

We initially excluded the United States, because it was a huge single market that encompassed too many distributors and cinemas. At the same time, we organised labs in Japan and Mexico, bringing together European speakers and exhibitors from other Latin American countries, thanks to local partners. In return, they attended our conferences and labs, establishing fruitful exchanges. Europa Cinemas Mundus funding came to an end in 2014 because the new MEDIA programme no longer included an international strand, which unfortunately meant that we were unable to continue our work with these countries. However, we have kept in touch with them and some of these professionals continue to attend our conferences and labs.



Young Audience Initiative at Kinodvor, Ljubljana © DR

The American period

In 2016, we launched 'Tales of Europe' with exporters Europa International. Russ Collins, an American exhibitor from Ann Arbor in Michigan, founded Art House Convergence, a group of several hundred arthouse exhibitors who met every year before the Sundance Film Festival. Russ first came to one of our conferences in 2012. The following year, at Art House Convergence, an exhibitor explained to us how difficult it was to gain access to European arthouse films due to a lack of local distributors. As we didn't have the rights to the films, we got together with the newly-formed sales agent organization to discuss a platform that would enable us to organise the distribution and circulation of a 'collection' of 10 European films a year at a rental rate of \$350 for two screenings. This enabled us to organise various activities in the

United States by sending European exhibitors from the network. The Tales of Europe operation came to an end in 2020-2021.

Over the years, all of these exchanges with the network's exhibitors have contributed to professionalisation through innovation and the introduction of new processes. Today, particularly through the focus groups, the network's exhibitors are fully involved in the development of our governance including the rejuvenation of the Board of Directors and the General Meeting.

**Fatima Djoumer,
with Jean-Philippe Guerand**

The challenge of the digital transition

Europa Cinemas conferences were an essential meeting place for the transition to digital projection. In the mid-2000s, the debate centred on the projection format. The adoption of 2K was far from clear-cut, given the high cost of digital projectors. Europa Cinemas wanted to move this debate forward and called in a consultancy firm, RMC Medien Consult, which had set up a working group of independent exhibitors and carried out studies to analyse changes in business models and draw up new proposals. Using the programming data for the cinemas in the network available to Europa Cinemas, we tried to determine the business model to be put in place. A Virtual Print Fee (VPF) project was drawn up for the use of independents and we proposed it at the following conference.

At the time, we refused to opt for e-cinema and instead opted for 2K, following the SMPTE* standards, because we wanted the network's exhibitors to benefit from the same technological equipment as the major circuits, so that none of the network's

cinemas would be left behind. The problem was also to convince the most reluctant exhibitors to replace a traditional projector, whose lifespan seemed almost eternal, with digital equipment that would become obsolete after 10 or so years.

Nico Simon played a key role in this transition. Working groups from the United States and England dedicated to these issues attended our conferences and presented their advancements. Our role was to bring exhibitors together, to inform and encourage, not only on the latest digital developments, but also on the new economic models for distribution. The European Commission understood this and granted us an additional budget in the form of a 'digital bonus', which was extended until 2012.

Little by little, the VPF business model was put in place, in step with requirements in the various countries and through a series of negotiations.

* SMPTE standards: technical standards for DCP established by the *Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers*.

Shared Insights

The voice of exhibitors

What will tomorrow's cinema theatres look like? In the wake of the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic, this question deserved to be asked to the driving forces behind Europa Cinemas: the exhibitors, who keep the network alive, promoting shared European values through European cinema and ensuring that non-national European films are shown in their cinemas. This question provides an opportunity to take stock of a formidable initiative, and to look to the future, imagining what tomorrow's cinema will look like, and the means that cinemas

will use to build audience loyalty and continue to attract new generations of viewers.

To answer these questions, we asked some 30 members of the network to celebrate Europa Cinemas' 30th anniversary in their own way, by projecting themselves into another dimension. Some conversed with each other, others expressed themselves individually. All let their passion, commitment and imagination flow around a few fundamental questions...



Thessaloniki FF, Olympion © DR



Tamas Liszka © Francesco Clerici

Contemporary challenges

Shaken by the Covid-19 pandemic, then galvanized by the famous *Barbenheimer* syndrome of summer 2023, Europa Cinemas network members remain, more than ever, at the forefront of cinema exhibition. They intend to build on their initiatives to survive and to renew their offer against the threats they face, in the short to medium term, due to the simultaneous screenwriters' and actors' strike in the US and its impact on the production and promotion of blockbusters, intended to boost worldwide attendance and bring younger audiences back to cinemas. It's a problem with many unknowns, giving rise to various observations and proposals. "In a year's time, says **Michele Crocchiola**, successive strikes by American screenwriters and actors will lead to a recession in creativity. "There will be a dearth of US content because of the current strikes. We will need strong European films."



Monica Naldi and Paola Corti © DR



Kim Foss © DR



Frank Groot © DR

"I'm convinced that, in the decades to come, the cinema will remain a screen, a dark room, with armchairs and people watching a film", declares **Laurent Dutoit**, who nonetheless points to a concrete threat: "One of the major challenges of the next few years lies in the fact that the great auteurs of the '70s and '80s - Clint Eastwood, Ken Loach, Woody Allen, Pedro Almodóvar, Nanni Moretti, Aki Kaurismäki... - are all more or less coming to the end of their careers. But there aren't many young directors that people can identify with. Audiences won't go to see these directors' films on the strength of their name alone. Christopher Nolan and François Ozon are among them, and we had the impression that Xavier Dolan could have been another, but he has now decided to look elsewhere. We'll see if someone like Ruben Östlund can fill this niche, but there are fewer and fewer "bankable" authors. And yet, they're the ones who make up our DNA."

For **Frank Groot**, it's crucial to keep an eye on Hollywood production, because "Successful franchises are drying up, and it's time for a new wave or movement to come from Europe. It's not a strategy to do things differently. I like the course we are on. It's about responding to what's happening in filmmaking waves and amplifying it."

Metka Dariš is resolute: "I have no fears for the future of cinema... We don't have to reinvent it. We just have to remember what it is and what it has been. The core thing hasn't changed since the start... Innovation has to do with thinking that cinema is not just a space where you put a product on the screen."



Javier Pachón © DR

Innovation, platforms... New uses?

Metka Dariš continues: "Nothing compares with viewing a film in the cinema: whether in terms of technical quality or communal experience as a whole. Endless streaming is just content coming in and going out. It's bingeing, and you don't remember what you saw. Cinema is a heightened sensory experience, in better detail."

"One thing that has changed, **Wiktoria Pelzer** points out, is that people think everything is available all the time: curated cinema can be an antidote to doom scrolling." For **Frank Groot**, it is the contrary: "Streamers are a blessing for some cinemas. If the infrastructure is right and there are enough cinemas in the vicinity – enough venues and a library to watch – then you can have a very movie-literate audience



Jan and Alzbeta Macolovi © DR



Benoît Thimister © DR

Cinemas need to offer curation, to give the audience “a helping hand”. When Netflix, for example, offers an infinite black box with its most-viewed content being its homepage, where there are 10,000 answers to any viewing enquiry, cinemas need to offer the ‘one’ answer.

Javier Pachón

and streamers can help to educate them in different cinematic languages... you don't have to do all the education at your cinema anymore. As cinemas, we have a cultural identity and we use it to curate like no other streamer can.”

Streaming platforms and television do not appear to be competitors per se, but other components of what can be described as the attention economics. However, competition with streaming is still undefined, as Amazon and Netflix are still in the experimental phase: “For us exhibitors, it's about concentrating on the experience that we are selling,” continues **Jan Macola**. “We're cautious and it is a potential threat to us, but it's not a big wave that is killing the cinema experience.”

“Some cinemas have even gone so far as to open their own streaming platforms to prolong the life of a film,” add **Marynia Gierat** and **Alexander Syllaba**. “We tried to implement a streaming platform on our website,” says **Jan Macola**, “but it didn't work. There are many small video-on-demand platforms around, but not a business model for us at this time. It would require a huge investment and it would have to come either from an institution or a private investor, and I don't see it coming or want that in our company.”

Virtual reality (VR) does not seem to be suitable for cinemas, as it is not a collective experience in the strict sense of the word. “We've seen cinemas trying VR and other alternative, immersive forms of entertainment,” explains **Kim Foss**, “but it's extremely expensive. We're trying to fish

out customers who might go to the cinema, so it is deluding our profile by trying to accommodate those people. VR is not communal.” As **Mathias Holtz** points out, “We have done several projects involving games and VR. It’s a fun one-off but I don’t know that it ever necessarily connects with what we do on a regular basis when it comes to identity and who we want to be in the eyes of the audience.”

Another case in point is the Cinevate project developed in Ireland, Sweden and Slovenia, a post-Covid programme funded by Creative Europe, which attracted new audiences through VR and video games. But there has been no follow-up to see whether these new audiences are also going to the cinema. According to **Maeve Cooke**, “Young adults were coming to venues they had never been in before and then they were able to introduce what else that venue does... We hope to keep it as a regular activity on offer but not as a replacement for cinema. VR and streaming are at a particular point. “It’s very challenging for cinema to progress and we need to embrace the changes and incorporate them, but embrace doesn’t mean changing the model. The technology can be used to reach out to those audiences. The cinemas we work with might be seen as slightly elitist by younger people, who don’t want to hang out there... Broadband is not strong enough in rural areas. Netflix is the only one that is a challenge for us.”

However, as **Pedro Borges** points out, “In Lisbon, a cinema ticket costs €7, but it’s €7.99 a month for a Netflix subscription, which is especially challenging for attracting a younger audience.”



Laurent Dutoit © DR



Metka Dariš © DR

Nevertheless, although the trend is towards subscription models, **Javier Pachón** asserts, “The audience is missing the concept of property – a tangible thing. Even with apps, you pay for a subscription to the app. Nothing is yours and that can backfire.”

“DVD didn’t die because of VOD,” explains **Kim Foss**, “it died because of the price war. Once you lower prices, it’s difficult to go back up.” The Grand Teatret in Denmark is discussing discounts for students, but is worried about a downward slide when competitors also lower their pricing, which can result in a price war. The economic argument remains a major obstacle: “Ideally, we should be able to explore these new ways of interacting,” says **Javier Pachón**, “the problem is that our structures are so limited that we have enough with short-term issues like restaurants and jazz concerts. Only a few cinemas have the resources to explore things like Twitch and other platforms.” In countries where the population is older, there is less concern, but there is also a feeling that it can be useful to adapt and use technology to reach new audiences.

Everyone agrees that communication is essential. “We’ve tried TikTok and other platforms,” explains **Marijana Bosnjak**, “but those campaigns – while successful on the platform itself – haven’t translated very well into cinema-going.”

Wiktoría Pelzer adds: “It’s difficult to innovate when you’re relying on changing technologies. For example, our cinema wrote a tender for YouTube workshops, but by the time we had written the tender and secured the funding, YouTube was no longer the key communication channel.”

Another initiative in Austria, Non-Stop Kino (which is an adaptation of the Cineville model in the Netherlands) is affecting a psychological change in audience behaviour: "We had to convince the distributors," explains **Wiktoria Pelzer**, "which was a lot of work, but we had to take the streaming logic and use it for us: to spend one amount of money and then it feels like you're going to the cinema for free."

**I have a problem with the word 'innovation'.
The word is 'creative' because you have to
be creative to get the audiences.**

Mira Staleva

Faced with these new competitors, creativity is essential! **Mira Staleva**: "The biggest challenge is that new generations are coming in with a new language, a new grammar and a new way to deliver emotions. We have to make them come for something they like and can come back to."



Yanaki Dermendzhiev © DR

Audience changes, loyalty, concentration

"Over the last ten to fifteen years," says **Pedro Borges**, "changes have been communications-based and how to instantly reach audiences. But the problem is now over-information. Europe is in overproduction of films, there are constant new film festivals cropping up, which do attract audiences, but they are occasional cinema-goers. What's needed is the dedicated audience who come every week."

"The audience is a constantly changing mass of people who are so diverse," emphasises **Maris Prombergs**. "Every spectator is different and has different motivations. The audience is not a definitive thing, it is in flux, so if the numbers go down, we can pick up and focus on certain segments of the audience. If they didn't come yesterday, maybe they need to get the habit back. It is not lost and done."

Laurent Dutoit explains: "Our natural audience is predominantly female and aged over 45, and a quarter of our cinema-goers have a Senior card. However, cinema remains a popular cultural outing that people enjoy at very different rates. So, we need to find the right balance between the regular cinema-goers, who we need but who make up a small minority of our audiences, and those who come less than twice a year. Not only do the latter need to like the film, they also need to enjoy the experience. The challenge for exhibitors is therefore to arouse the curiosity of audiences by attracting the youngest among them in an attempt to stimulate them and build their loyalty. The proportion of students and under-20s attending certain films is therefore significant."

"When it comes to building loyalty," says **Marynia Gierat**, "I would also add the importance of communication. During our summer film festival, we ask the audience which films they want to see and, for a month, we get their ideas."

We can also approach the various communities directly to bring them in, in neighbouring towns or villages where there isn't a cinema, for example: "To get a new audience, we have to go out and get them", says **Măra Căbere**.

Mathias Holtz, for his part, advocates building a relationship with audiences over time through recurring events and programming that combines new films with classics. The longer-term aim is to "make arthouse cinema fun again."



Lucky Home Cinema, Plovdiv © DR



Luz Delgado © Francesco Clerici

"Attendance is a concept that is not taken into account in most of the countries covered by Europa Cinemas," says Élise Jalladeau, "even though it is a key factor, even before the circulation of European cinema. Films by auteurs do very well at festivals, but not when they are released. It is essential to take the audience into account from the writing stage and put them back at the centre of the creative process. There is a lack of understanding of the audience on the part of the creators themselves. Sometimes you end up at the end of the chain without knowing for whom the film was made. Unlike the Americans, we have a supply-side policy rather than a demand-side policy, but perhaps the latter should be taken into account to some extent."

Javier Pachón explains that CineCiutat have run focus groups with an open space for members and non-members to speak, inviting community leaders to feed back. "We've had many conversations with the community, and it's our responsibility to give space to blockbusters, but in their original language. We navigate a grey line over which ones to show and which auteurs to follow."



Mathias Holtz © DR



Alexander Syllaba & Viktoria Schaberger © Francesco Clerici

"The other problem with bringing audiences back is access to films," insists **Benoît Thimister**. "If some of them don't attract anyone, distributors will take fewer and fewer risks. There is a strong trend towards American films rather than European productions, even if the latter remain attractive. In the past, 50 or so films accounted for half the attendance at Les Grignoux, but we're now down to under 30, which reflects a certain concentration and seems to accredit a tendency on the part of the public to focus on sure values, particularly through the word-of-mouth generated by certain films."

Frank Groot is optimistic: "We can cater to audiences as long as they want quality and, by doing that, we can get them inside, show them what we want them to see and build from there."

Europa Cinemas, the strength of a network and the weight of a symbol

The general consensus is that belonging to the network means benefiting from the organisation of conferences, laboratories and numerous initiatives to share best practice, reflect on the issues facing the sector, meet and work with colleagues from other countries, it also means exhibitors do not feel alone and benefit from a collective impulse.

Small cinemas and groups of cinemas benefit from the support of this international and European network when they approach local authorities, governments and other institutions to obtain funding or other types of support. The same is true of when they contact rights holders or organise events. So much so that, according to Slovenian exhibitor **Metka Dariš**, "Being a member of a large European network carries weight in the country, which means you can get more money if you apply for support at national, regional or local level."

"As cinemas," adds **Jan Macola**, "we have to know how to adapt, to do more and use the space in a more varied way, diversifying our programming, content and space. Playing quality mainstream films is important but we are also trying to come up with new initiatives. For example, we tried a series of horror films... which didn't work. People come with new ideas and we have to try them. The Europa Cinemas network conferences are a great tools for stealing ideas – the right way."

For Élise Jalladeau, "Europa Cinemas' initiatives have also had an impact on other territories. It's both an economic and a political battle that has played a big part in the emergence of a cinema that is not just European, and has raised awareness among those responsible for culture, of what is possible when you have the political will." As **Pedro Borges** points out, "For the national cultural authorities, being part of the network, gives us more power to discuss" and is "very significant."

The network represents a real gift for the European Union because it makes the distribution of those films possible. It's important for European culture.

Luz Delgado

The experiences of others are used to feed a broader reflection. “[By] joining the network,” explains **Monica Naldi**, “it was the first time – at the conference and the labs – that we felt we were not alone. We found connections with Italian cinemas as well as wider Europe. It helped build the network in Italy in lockdown.”

According to **Marijana Bosnjak**, “When we joined the network, there were no multiplexes in Croatia and most of our programming consisted of commercial films. We were the first to replace those films but, without Europa Cinemas and our network colleagues, I would not have been encouraged to undertake this work of education and audience development.” She also points out that “The letters of support from Europa Cinemas have contributed to the survival of our cinema,” the Kino Urania. For **Jan Macola**, “We realised the size of the network when we went to the conference in Lisbon. It’s only when you see the size of the network that you see and understand it as an international business and knowing you’re in a wider culture.”

As **Mira Staleva** is keen to point out, Europa Cinemas is a living community that does not always have an equivalent in your own country. Another fundamental

Europa Cinemas makes the word ‘European’ synonymous with both ‘arthouse’ and ‘quality’.

Mathias Holtz



Pedro Borges © Ionuț Dobre



Le Caméo, Namur © DR



Kino Pod Baranami, Kraków © Emilian Aleksander



Eva Demeter © DR



Erika Borsos © DR

point emphasised by **Alexander Syllaba** is that winning a Europa Cinemas Award helps your people in your local context understand what cinema can achieve. "In the Spanish context," **Javier Pachón** explains, "Europa Cinemas is important in pointing out to Spanish political leaders that there are things being done outside of Spain, and in letting us know what other countries are doing."

Europa Cinemas has also been essential in supporting access>CINEMA in Ireland, which was the first mini-network to apply and join the network. access>CINEMA members are part-time cinemas with a mixed, predominantly commercial programme. "This makes Europa Cinemas crucial in supporting an independent programme that shows European films," says **Maeve Cooke**.

"If Europa Cinemas can play the role of mediator between distribution and exhibition," says **Yanaki Dermendzhiev**, "smaller countries will benefit from a larger catalogue of content, which will be a decisive advantage over multiplexes." And the Bulgarian exhibitor points to the fate of Dom na Kinoto (Cinema House) in Sofia, which "survived the hyperinflation of the post-communist era largely thanks to a subsidy from Europa Cinemas. When arthouse cinemas are afloat, it means they can develop through festivals and special programmes which, in turn, increase



Maris Prombergs © DR



Kinodvor, Ljubljana © Domen Pal

interest in cinema and help independent cinemas to survive. So it's a positive virtuous circle."

Another argument put forward by the contributors is that it is a privilege to be selected to represent or collaborate with Europa Cinemas, as a member of the jury or for the LUX prize campaigns. "It is an honour to be highlighted among the network," says **Eva Demeter**. It is also an opportunity to enrich the experience of working in an independent cinema. "It's also a way of supporting a cinema that is an outlier in its own context," **Anacleto Salciccia** says.

Cinemas offering independent European content are much more resilient than multiplexes.

Yanaki Dermendzhiev

As far as the public is concerned, the link with the network is more tenuous, but viewers react to its promotional spot as if it were an identified marker of quality cinema: "The sound identity of the trailer means that something great is about to happen," **Marynia Gierat** enthuses. **Pedro Borges** adds: "Small children aged six and under clap when it plays in Lisbon."

Exhibitors increasingly committed to young audiences

According to **Maeve Cooke**, "The demographic of our network is slightly older than average, and young people have not developed the same habits... They have a different experience in consuming cinema."

When you're young, it's essential to have a cinema experience. "Then, notes **Mathias Holtz**, it doesn't matter what kind of movie you watch." European cinemas can then encourage this positive experience and "use that to keep the cultural identity and diversity that we want. This is our mission and our livelihood."

"Initially, explains **Benoît Thimister**, the Grignoux were a group of associations pooling their strengths. They formed the basis of the "Écran large sur tableau noir" network, which offers schools a range of activities in the field of image education, recognised for its educational virtues by the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. Of the 150,000 pupils who benefit from this scheme, we welcome around 55,000 to our four cinemas alone. We publish brochures called "educational challenges" which are intended for teachers, not pupils, to give them tools they can use around the theme of the film."



Ramiro Ledo © Joana Linda



Marijana Bosnjak © DR



Marynia Gierat © Edyta Dufaj



Māra Cēbere © DR



Elise Jalladeau © DR

"Our programming for young audiences does not include any major films, not even Pixar or Disney," explains **Stephen Bonato**, "but, rather, European and French productions, past and present. What's more, as part of all the French departmental, regional and national schemes, we take part in "École et cinéma", "Collège au cinéma", "Lycéens et Apprentis au cinéma", three nationwide programmes. When classes come with their teachers, we try to talk to them for a few minutes before the screening, to introduce them to the film they are about to see. In the various Utopia cinemas, there are also film-snacks, activities with practical work, film-concerts and many other one-off initiatives."

Cinema is the most accessible art form and we need to make it more accessible as an art form, but also in terms of price and what's on offer, listening to young people and what they're interested in.

Maeve Cooke

"It's a good thing to educate and reach as many people as possible," admits **Frank Groot**, "but education is something we do on the side if you have the time and capacity in your team. It's great that Europa Cinemas has an extra focus on this. It keeps you attentive within your daily grind and you learn from your colleagues."

"It's clear that we need a younger audience to watch more sophisticated films," says **Māra Cēbere**. There are programmes for dancing, singing and drawing organized by the municipality in Latvia, so the cinema must therefore join in with those activities. "The centre is known to them," **Cēbere** says, "so it's the best way to get them to come to us. We support the centre's activities with our programme and the children can attend free screenings to improve their knowledge."

There is no official education programme in Hungary, Latvia and the Czech Republic, for example. Cinemas therefore organise film matinees and activities. However, it is easy to see from the statistics in the network's analyses that cinemas in countries with official programmes are able to show more national films to younger audiences. In Hungary, they watch more US films.

"In Hungary," explains **Eva Demeter**, "visual education for young people is very important. There is no media education integrated into the education system for primary or secondary school students. If we want them to watch national and European films, then we need to teach them that these kinds of films exist."

Another pitfall sometimes observed: it can be difficult to attract teachers and get schools to come to the cinema. It is easier to just present "content" in schools.

In Austria, **Wiktoria Pelzer** explains, there is a program supported by MEDIA called Cine-Mini aimed at children aged three to six, which begins with 30 minutes of short films and includes experimental film programmes. These have worked well, and include a facilitator who speaks to the children in between the screenings.

Poland has a well-established educational programme that supports film education from around age three through to adolescence. However, students were not previously taken to the cinema, leaving a gap, which Kino Pod Baranami cinema filled with their Young Ambassador programme, an idea that was inspired by another cinema's presentation at a Europa Cinemas conference. 'A Night at the Movies' is another programme, aimed at teenagers, which allows them to "sleep over" at the cinema, bring blankets and participate in an all-night movie marathon, without teachers and parents present.

The Portuguese Ministry of Education and Culture have developed a national cinema plan for secondary schools, for students to watch and discuss films at school, but it is not in the cinema. There is therefore a gap for cinemas to fill.

Pedro Borges

A distinction must be made between young children and young adults. The former are taken to the cinema by their family, while the latter discover their own tastes and the existence of European arthouse cinema on their own. One of the challenges lies



Wiktoria Pelzer © StadtkinoPresse



Stadtkino im Künstlerhaus, Wien © StadtkinoPresse

in the attitude of young people to cinema and therefore the habit of cinema-going. Indeed, if we are to believe **Eva Demeter**, “Teenage students come in and out of screenings and can’t sit for an hour and a half... content on YouTube or TikTok lasts five minutes or less.” This is why her cinema presents 20-minute short films as part of their Summer Film Camp, with a feature film screening on the following day, to see if the story itself is strong enough to entice them to stay.

“The Irish Institute has a remit around education and supporting schools with a film curriculum,” explains **Maeve Cooke**. access>CINEMA does not focus on education but talks about “film appreciation”, offering content other than commercial films. The ongoing challenge concerns parents and European films with subtitles. “It’s about overcoming the preconceptions of adults rather than those of children. We don’t want to dub films.” One advantage of streaming subtitled films is that audiences are increasingly accepting of them, but this has not yet fully trickled down to younger audiences. The recent success of *The Quiet Girl* has opened minds and access>CINEMA is looking to work with Irish distributors to bring local films to younger audiences. And, if a cinema shows a more commercial film, they can pair it with a short film first.

Another option given is offering free screenings to schools and young audiences in cinemas, not in educational establishments, even if the screenings are not profitable. With support material for the screenings, as well as introductions and discussions, younger audiences can gain an arthouse cinema-going habit.

Erika Borsos mentions the possibility of working with an influencer to lead discussions, while **Anacleto Salciccia** suggests establishing partnerships with university film clubs.

Mira Staleva recommends starting at the age of four so that children become familiar with the place and form a connection.

Film education is both visual literacy and brain broadening.

Metka Dariš

“One out of three visitors are young children,” says **Māra Cēbere**, “but the question is: what are they watching? Mostly Hollywood animated movies. We need to show them French or Italian animation.” Latvian youth don’t have the money for cultural activities. There is therefore a problem of economic viability and the ticket price is important.



Stadtkino im Künstlerhaus, Wien © StadtkinoPresse

Another suggestion from **Erika Borsos** is to offer free screenings for economically disadvantaged children, even if it means making no profit for the cinema, or tickets at a reduced, token price of €2.50 for some screenings, so that they are still able to understand the culture of cinema as something that has a paid ticket. But, as **Mira Staleva** points out, "It takes work. Resources must be balanced. Cinemas can't do everything themselves. And they must be brave because different generations are under attack from different stimuli everywhere. What will bring new generations to the cinema is talking." According to **Benoît Thimister**, "These spectators will constitute the public of tomorrow. We invite students who participate to become our ambassadors. They can have a passport that allows them to access films at a lower cost. These different measures constitute approximately 15% of our public. We feel the immediate effects on certain films. It is a gateway to a different cinema."

"For our kind of cinema and the films we show," says **Pedro Borges**, "it is between the ages of 18 and 25 when spectators choose, or not, to see different films. This is the age range of the population that we must insist on attracting, because it is in adulthood that cultural things seed. Young people are more choosy and it is less compelling for them to go to the cinema."

According to Élise Jalladeau, "We have been offering image education for 40 years: children go to the cinema when they are little and when they reach adolescence, they disappear, except for school screenings. We welcome 20,000 of them to our theatres each year, whether they come to see films or participate in cinema education workshops. But perhaps we should follow them over the long term to see if this education really works and what its real impact is."

Young people form a community apart. "[They] use a different language and it is essential to find other modes of communication," according to Marijana Bosnjak. "There is an ephemerality to their communication, it is more provocative and meme-based, but even between 13 and 24-year-olds there is a gap.'" Using platforms like TikTok, they have created a new way of promoting films. "But it's difficult to talk to them when they come in," **Bosnjak** continues, "as they speak so differently. They need alternative communication. They are not looking for web banners or posters; they want a scene or something that can be made fun of. What they create is ephemeral: it's there for five to 10 minutes, and then it's gone.."

From Maeve Cooke's point of view, "The future is about trying to engage more with these young adults, and working with members to make the spaces more attractive to these audiences so that, in 10 years' time, when the current audience decreases, there is



Kino Bize, Riga © Reinis Krastins

a succession plan. [It's about] opening young people's eyes to that world. Because their first language is English, the go-to is always commercial cinema." For **Anacleto Saliccia** it is as simple as offering good customer service in an otherwise online world, "The younger generations will come if you give them a service."

Circulation: between offer and demand

For **Erika Borsos**, "The future lies in diversified programming, to personalize offers and programming, to stick to arthouse and heritage cinema."

Mathias Holtz recommends developing local collaborations and partnerships and turning to classic, repertory and archive content, because they are more numerous and more affordable than in the past.

Eva Demeter suggests listening to audience needs to respond to situation-specific requirements. For example, in Hungary, many people lost their jobs during the pandemic or suffered a reduction in their salaries. As such, "Offering free screenings on the cinema terrace or discounted tickets for the cinema helped to bring this community together."

"Surveys and feedback are useful, but the films audiences want are not always available in our region," **Mira Staleva** says of Bulgaria. "We need geographical separation so that the small countries don't disappear." Concerning repertory cinema, **Erika Borsos** recommends a collective rights manager to help with screening fees from distributors such as Park Circus, which is working well.

According to **Monica Naldi**, there is a problem with the new politics of distribution concerning the lack of content and diversity of films available. "Pulling together rights across Europe would be helpful," she says. **Mira Staleva** confirms how the availability of films remains a fundamental issue: "Sales agents could offer more recent, but not new films, one to two years old. Furthermore, it is expensive to subtitle in Bulgaria." **Javier Pachón** specifies that, "Spain is an overly dubbed country. We opened the only original language cinema in the Balearic Islands."

MEDIA support of Europa Cinemas is vital for what we do.

Ramiro Ledo



Cines Van Dyck, Salamanca © DR

Being recognized and identified as important on a European scale, explains **Stephen Bonato**, "is also a way of defending oneself against American power, which devours everything near it." In other words, explains **Frank Groot**, the network makes it possible to keep in mind the safeguarding of cultural identity in the face of the implacability of everyday life, against the management of operations and the fight against the soft power influence of American trade.

"The network guarantees films receive as much attention as American productions," insists **Eva Demeter**.

Places to promote diversity

"As long as arthouse cinemas remain diverse cultural spaces that offer more than just a film screening, people will come," says **Eva Demeter**. Cinema is a place of learning and entertainment, but also "the most accessible artform," explains **Frank Groot**. "We bring more to an evening than just having beers with friends." It is therefore appropriate to preserve the fundamentals, whether it is "bringing people together", as he recommends, or developing "curation, to ensure the quality of programming and diversity", as **Mathias Holtz** asserts. "The European and arthouse perspective is super important in maintaining the idea that you are doing something for the community... Being the only cinema in a small town or rural setting means taking on the responsibility of a cultural institution."

"Cinema remains the most effective form for entertaining the public," says **Anacleto Salciccia**. "The experience and the smallest details are important." Faced with young audiences who are revitalizing the sector, it is crucial to return to curation, in particular by "bringing talent – filmmakers and actors – into venues, for Q&As and events," as **Mathias Holtz** points out. He also suggests cinemas can play an active role in production.

It is important to create events around films so that they are much more than an ordinary screening: an experience where audiences can meet the filmmakers in a quality environment. More generally, it is important to facilitate and design that experience, from purchasing the ticket to leaving the cinema. Another unanimous observation: it is important to build the



Kino Bize, Riga © Reinis Krastins

identity of the place, to see trailers and posters for other independent films, and to integrate them into screenings for mainstream films. "We need strategies to strengthen diversity," **Erika Borsos** says.

"We are not selling tickets, we are selling emotions," **Stanislav Ershov** nicely sums up.



Stanislav Ershov © DR

Sense of community and local roots

"In Denmark," notes Kim Foss, "what worked before the pandemic works now: curation, passion, energy and an audience focused approach... People are hungry for life and experience." For **Javier Pachón** the post-pandemic context "was a reminder that we like doing things as a community."

Wiktoría Pelzer agrees, "Since Covid, I am a little less interested in watching films at home. [Cinema] is an experience that will never die." In other words, as Mira Staleva surmises, "Cinema is about sharing curiosity and emotion."

It can even offer catharsis, that allows you to fully experience your emotions, "I like to cry in front of movies," admits **Eva Demeter**. "It's therapy for me sometimes. If you're feeling down, you either laugh or cry. I would be more likely to enjoy even a bad movie on a big screen than on a small screen." For **Marynia Gierat**, "It's a matter of magic and meeting strangers; and these strangers looking in one direction, who have nothing else but this goal in common... It's an escape as well."

"At its best, cinema is magic," says **Maeve Cooke**. "It's what I view as complete immersion in something whether it's a story or a world, or a person's life, or an idea. For two hours or more, you don't escape but go into another world." It's also "the sharing of an experience that is truly unique which almost supersedes what you're seeing on screen."

For **Pedro Borges**, it is "an art form or a cultural experience where you can have the illusion that we are all equal as human beings, which is spectacular. A show that you watch collectively, through more democratic means, where everyone can pay the same price and there is no segregation with VIP seats." It is also "an art form that accompanies people all through their lives, more intensely than literature or other art forms."

"Cinemas have to be like movie advisors," explains **Māra Cēbere**: choosing for customers. "It's complicated by a huge offer and not [always] of the highest quality, but in the local community, we can choose and offer what quality [there is]." A cry from the heart by **Jan Macola**, "A cinema is a cinema is a cinema... What we want to do is play film for our audience in the cinema. The big screen experience is crucial for us. This is what we want to do. Before, during and after Covid, this is still our mission." A concept shared by **Frank Groot**: "We will focus on what we're good at, which is bringing people together in a dark room, a café after. We should be compared with other leisure activities - theatre, night clubs and restaurants - and sports, not content. They are our biggest competitors at this moment, in the cities at least."

From **Michele Crocchiola's** point of view, it is imperative to "build communities. We therefore tried an experiment with an external cinema in a small city, screening two days a week, with films three to five weeks out of their release. We asked six or seven people to personally invite people to the screenings and, within two months, we had 50-100 people attending. Cultural life is about people coming together."

Cinema needs to be part of daily life, to be visible. However, as **Ramiro Ledo** is keen to emphasise, "In Spain, there are many towns of 100-200,000 people that are without cinemas." "We must try piloting different things," maintains **Luz Delgado**. "If we have to use other forms of media to attract new audiences to align with our cultural aims, then we must try it." For **Kim Foss**, "Audiences know when we do stuff for economic gains only and recognize when we do it for the passion of the films... Our enemy is the weather and content is king. I am very optimistic about overall business but we should keep trying to innovate."

The Covid-19 pandemic led to the prolonged closure of cinemas in most countries, and the

main problem for exhibitors was to maintain a link, however tenuous, with their audience, often requiring a restrictive health protocol when venues were allowed to reopen. The initiative taken by the Czech exhibitor **Jan Macola** shows a proactive approach to re-engaging with the community: "We showed films when we could and were selling beer from the cinema window when we couldn't have them inside the building."

"Cinema is from over a century ago," explains **Pedro Borges**, "the venue is what it is and you can do some things differently – offer popcorn or not, make the theatre more comfortable, etcetera, but it is relatively static." Cinema is an "exit" in the fight against the attention economy and from the sun, for **Mathias Holtz**: "I've always said that we're contending with the bowling alley or opera or the new restaurant that people want to try."

Maintaining cinema on a big screen, in theatres or outdoors, is essential for small towns that do not have a dedicated venue, "Otherwise they are completely cut off from cinema, only watching it on other platforms," says **Mira Staleva**.

Arthouse cinemas "offer something different from other cinemas in the city," emphasises **Monica Naldi**, suggesting that the cinema experience is akin to visiting a temple. "It

offers an experience of movies, and not *just* movies..." It is also a living art which offers a live experience that you cannot have at home. A collective pleasure, even if you are alone, cinema enables you to feel the presence of other people in the audience. "You can feel alone, but you can also feel them," muses **Māra Cēbere**.

The cinema theatre can even sometimes be a real place of worship which requires establishing an atmosphere: curtains which open in a ceremonial way, presenting a temple of the cinematographic experience which offers what the other cinemas in the city cannot, much like the 'golden age' of the seventh art. And a second home of sorts. A cult celebrated by "an underground and supportive community" for **Marijana Bosnjak**, cinema places an emphasis on critically acclaimed films that also offers "an opportunity to discuss taboo subjects."

According to **Stanislav Ershov**, "Cinema is the simplest way to share emotion, and the right feelings and ideas." It can build a bridge between cultures, ideas and people. Certain exceptions confirm the rule and not all European exhibitors are in the same boat. For example, as **Erika Borsos** states, "Cultural affairs doesn't seem to be a priority for the Hungarian government. Arthouse cinemas show films that can convey values, and what you show can have a big social impact."



Kino Pod Baranami, Kraków © Emilian Aleksander

This is where belonging to the wider Europa Cinemas network can help bolster smaller venues in smaller towns, as **Mathias Holtz** attests, “Rural cinemas can position themselves as a cultural institution and not just a countryside institution.”

“The idea behind the MEDIA programme is that we see each other’s films,” explains **Kim Foss**, “but there’s no emphasis on local product in the support we get.” For **Ramiro Ledo**, “It is important for local identity to be built by many other cultures, so that citizens of any country feel part of it and so that it is diverse.” A specific example given by **Maris Prombergs**: “Europa Cinemas is essential for European film in Latvia, where the industry strategy is heavily focused on local film but not European film. Kino Bize is “exclusive” in Riga and creates community at the cinema.”

Yanaki Dermendzhiev notes: “If the trend in restaurants and bars is more towards artistic creation to the detriment of comfort, it is the opposite in cinemas: people want the comfort of their home, while being able to see the face of their favourite actor on a screen more than 30 metres wide.” But for **Stephen Bonato**, it is to the contrary, “The survival of independent cinemas depends on their ability to continue what they do, to continue to offer diversity and to enliven the theatres by offering debate evenings and presentations, in drawing on everything that happens in Europe, but also in Africa, South America and Asia, while making the cinema a real place of life.”

“In Latvia, **Māra Cēbere** explains, we are very concerned about national identity and less about European identity, which was one reason I thought we needed to be part of Europa Cinemas, to get that balance... We need to expand to show more European films and broaden our horizons, and not be afraid of what to expect.”

Another fundamental observation widely shared, as **Jan Macola** voiced, is that “During Covid, Europa Cinemas was the first institution to help us with financial support. The people at Europa Cinemas really care about cinema and they understand our challenges.”

Interviews by
Tara Judah and Jean-Philippe Guerand

Speakers

Stephen Bonato,
Utopia Bordeaux
(France)

Pedro Borges,
Cinema Ideal
(Portugal)

Erika Borsos,
Budapest Film Zrt.
(Hungary)

Marijana Bosnjak,
Kino Urania (Croatia)

Māra Cēbere,
Auseklis (Latvia)

Maeve Cooke,
access>CINEMA
(Ireland)

Michele Crocchiola,
Cinema Stensen
(Italy)

Metka Dariš,
Kinodvor (Slovenia)

Luz Delgado
and Juan Heras,
Cines Van Dyck
(Spain)

Eva Demeter,
Tisza Mozi (Hungary)

Yanaki
Dermendzhiev,
Lucky Art Cinema
(Bulgaria)

Laurent Dutoit,
Le City/Les Scala,
(Switzerland)

Stanislav Ershov,
England Cinema
Lounge (Russia)

Kim Foss,
Grand Teatret
(Denmark)

Marynia Gierat,
Kino Pod Baranami
(Poland)

Frank Groot,
Kino Rotterdam
(Netherlands)

Mathias Holtz,
Folkets Hus och
Parker (Sweden)

Élise Jalladeau,
Olympion/Warehouse
1 (Greece)

Ramiro Ledo,
Duplex Cinema
(Spain)

Jan Macola,
Kino Pilotu
(Czech Republic)

Monica Naldi,
Cinema Beltrade
(Italy)

Javier Pachon,
CineCiutat (Spain)

Wiktoria Pelzer,
Admiral Kino/
Stadtkino im
Künstlerhaus
(Austria)

Maris Prombergs,
Kino Bize (Latvia)

Anacleto Salciccia,
Kadiköy Sinemasi
(Turkey)

Vladan Sretenovic,
Cadmus Cineplex
(Montenegro)

Mira Staleva,
Sofia Film Fest on
the Road (Bulgaria)

Alexander Syllaba,
Cinema Paradiso
(Austria)

Cathleen Tanti,
Cinema Spazju
Kreattiv (Italy)

Benoît Thimister,
Les Grignoux
(Belgium)

The network of European auteurs

Journeying between continuity and discovery

From the early 1990s to the 2020s, Europa Cinemas members from within the MEDIA countries have witnessed the emergence and careers of many European auteurs. What follows is a geographical overview of the filmmakers and films that have and continue to shape the identity of Europa Cinemas.

Beyond the diversity of national cinemas, a possible definition of “European” cinema is one of respect for filmmakers as auteurs and films as works conveying a worldview. Each exhibitor or programmer in the network, from the early '90s to today, takes pride and pleasure in creating “useful” work through sharing their tastes and discoveries.

Flashback

At the very start of the '90s, when the network is created, it is with an awareness of the changing era. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the USSR dissolves. The Bosnian War and the siege of Sarajevo begin in early '92. In cinemas, it's the start of the multiplex era. In France, in 1990-91, the top 30 films in cinemas are exclusively American or French films. Superhero and animation films are virtually non-existent. Film sequels are rare.

The concern, then, and one of the reasons for creating the network, is that talented European filmmakers might not find their audience. American auteur cinema circulating in independent theatres is well represented by the now aging names from the '70s: Scorsese, Coppola, and Spielberg; and the still relatively young names of Zemeckis, Burton, the Coens, Van Sant, and Lynch; as well as significant defectors like Paul Verhoeven and Ridley Scott. James Cameron takes on a new status with *Terminator 2*. The upcoming digital revolution in the field of imaging is booming, further solidifying the dominance of American cinema in entertainment. *Toy Story*, the first fully computer-animated film, is released in 1995.



Pedro Almodóvar, *Volver* © Pathé

45 cinephile theatres

In 1992, the 45 “flagship theatres” that make up the network share a keen cinephilia and, of course, a determination to showcase European filmmakers. In their programming, we find works by French directors such as Carax (already), Annaud, Pialat, Tavernier, Chabrol, Rohmer, Corneau, Assayas, Caro and Jeunet, Wargnier, Philippe Garrel, and the emerging Desplechin. From the UK and Ireland, a beautiful panorama of British and Irish cinema of the time is presented by Greenaway, Loach, Mike Leigh, James Ivory, Neil Jordan, Kenneth Branagh, Minghella, and Stephen Frears. From Germany, Italy, and Spain, distinguished names include Schlöndorff, Wenders, Marco Bellocchio, Bertolucci, Gianni Amelio, Almodóvar and Carlos Saura. From Northern Europe, a few filmmakers circulate: Bille August, Lars von Trier, and the young Kaurismäki brothers. Mentions should also be made of Polanski, Jaco van Dormael, Kusturica, Kieślowski, Agnieszka Holland, Manoel de Oliveira, Milos Forman, Chantal Akerman and Alex van Warmerdam.



Yorgos Lanthimos, *The Lobster* © DR



Maren Ade, *Toni Erdmann* © DR



Radu Jude © Pyramide Distribution

The network's members double their efforts in 1992 to highlight European cinema, whether through retrospectives of filmmakers like Fassbinder at the Parc in Liège and the Vester Vov Vov in Copenhagen, Kubrick at the Utopia in Luxembourg, Antonioni at the Europa Panthéon, or contemporary cinema, as done by the Festival of new Portuguese cinema at the Rialto in Amsterdam.

The network grew rapidly in the '90s from 45 to 288 cinemas in 1997, and its influence would play a role in the circulation of European films.

Some of the mentioned filmmakers have left us during the 30 years of the network's existence, including Chabrol, Minghella, Kieślowski, Akerman, Antonioni, as well as Agnès Varda, Godard, Johan van der Keuken, Angelopoulos and Bergman. However, what stands out when reading the very first "top 50" films of the network is that

few filmmakers, and films that circulated at the time, have been forgotten today. Furthermore, we can observe the continuity of the work of filmmakers who have subsequently built their careers over the past 30 years. They were in their thirties or forties and are still very much present today with films that resonate, such as Aki Kaurismäki and Almodóvar.

British and French films have constituted the two main European market shares in the network throughout this period.

It's an understatement to say that we have been missing **British films** since Brexit, as they have been a cornerstone of the network's success. In the '90s, several significant filmmakers emerged, such as Mike Newell (*Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Into the West*), Danny Boyle (*Shallow Grave*), and Michael Winterbottom (*Jude*), not to mention Nick Park and Aardman Animations (Wallace and Gromit adventures). With three *Palme d'Or* awards (two for Ken Loach and one for Mike Leigh), two Golden Lions in Venice for *The Magdalene Sisters* (Peter Mullan) and *Vera Drake* (Leigh), major commercial successes (25 million admissions for *The Full Monty* in Europe, 21 million for *The King's Speech*), British cinema continuously brought us hugely successful films. The Europa Cinemas Label juries also chose a British film three times (*The Mother*, *Control*, *The Selfish Giant*), a sign that the country also produced less "commercial" films, akin to the major works of Andrea Arnold, Lynne Ramsay, and Steve McQueen. It is even more disappointing not to be able to encourage cinemas to programme these films as several filmmakers seem to have promising years ahead, such as Martin McDonagh, Tom Hooper, Charlotte Wells, and Asif Kapadia.

The image of Irish cinema, for its part, is somewhat disturbed by its status as a co-production country, as seen, for example, in its collaboration on the last four feature films by Lanthimos. Nevertheless, we can mention significant contemporary Irish filmmakers, starting with Jim Sheridan and Neil Jordan in the '90s. Paddy Breathnach, Lenny Abrahamson, and John Carney have also subsequently directed films that have circulated widely. More recently, from the animated films of Tomm Moore and Nora Twomey to the horror films of Lorcan Finnegan, as well as films by John Crowley and Colm Bairéad, Irish filmmakers excel in various genres.

From Northern Europe, several major auteurs emerged in the '90s, starting with the creators of Dogme95, Thomas Vinterberg and Lars von Trier.

In Denmark, Vinterberg and von Trier have consistently elevated cinema with successful films (*Breaking the Waves*, *Melancholia*, *The Hunt*, *Another Round*...), inspiring the success of other filmmakers like Lone Scherfig, Susanne Bier, Anders Thomas Jensen, and Nicolas Winding Refn. They have also identified a generation of "bankable" actors (Mads Mikkelsen, Trine Dyrholm, Sidse Babett Knudsen). There is a Danish cinema financial model that inspires other countries, as well as film schools, where figures like Jonas Poher Rasmussen and Iranian Ali Abbasi are now prominent.

From Sweden, the highly acclaimed directors in recent years, Ruben Östlund and Tarik Saleh, contribute to a landscape that has seen diverse cinema ranging from social dramas by Lukas Moodysson to comedies by Felix Herngren, and horror films like *Let the Right One In* by Tomas Alfredson, as well as a certain inclination towards crime drama.

Similar genre diversity is seen in Norway, with the emergence of filmmakers inspired by both the auteur cinema of the French New Wave and American disaster films. Five Norwegian films have received the EC Label, starting with the very first, Bent Hamer's *Kitchen Stories* in 2003. Erik Skjoldbjærg (*Nokas*, *Pioneer*) also deserves mention. However, the standout figure is undoubtedly Joachim Trier, along with his screenwriter, Eskil Vogt, who is also a major film director (*Blind*, EC Label, *The Innocents*).

From Finland, the notable names include the Kaurismäki brothers and a few others who have had less exposure internationally (Aku Louhimies, Klaus Härö), before the recent emergence of Juho Kuosmanen (*Compartment N°6*).

All the way up north, let's conclude with the delightful surprise of seeing the number of directors who have emerged in Iceland in recent years.

First, there was Baltasar Kormákur with *101 Reykjavík* (2000), followed by Dagur Kári (*Nói albínói*, 2003). Sólveig Anspach is another important director, albeit more for her French films. Especially, from the mid-2000s, we witness the emergence of several strong personalities: Rúnar Rúnarsson (*Sparrows*), Benedikt Erlingsson (*Woman at War*), Grímur Hákonarson (*Rams*), Hlynur Palmason, whose first film *Winter Brothers* received the EC Label (*Godland*), and Valdimar Jóhannsson (*Lamb*). Icelandic cinema is perhaps the most original in Europe currently.

It will be challenging to synthesize Belgian cinema in a few lines, given the uniqueness that has seen the emergence of very diverse talent over the past 20 years. Jaco van Dormael, Chantal Akerman, and the Dardenne brothers were particularly notable figures in the '90s and 2000s. The films of Joachim Lafosse, Sam Garbarski, duo Dominique Abel and Fiona Gordon, Stijn Coninx, Yolande Moreau, and Lucas Belvaux have subsequently demonstrated an ability to bring forth original voices. Five Belgian films received the EC Label, including two films by Bouli Lanners, *Eldorado* and *The First, the*



Thomas Vinterberg, *Another Round* © Ohsten

Last, and, of course, Felix Van Groeningen's *The Broken Circle Breakdown*, which left a lasting impression. Belgian filmmakers find success in various genres, including thrillers (Michaël R. Roskam), horror (Fabrice Du Welz), and animation (Ben Stassen, Arnaud Demuyne). More recently, the films of Lukas Dhont, Laura Wandel, and the duo Adil El Arbi and Bilall Fallah testify to this ongoing vitality.

In comparison, Dutch production is less prolific, despite being one of the most dynamic countries for art-house exhibition. Few names have emerged, outside of Paul Verhoeven, Alex van Warmerdam, and Johan van der Keuken. Nanouk Leopold, Mischa Kamp, and Sacha Polak are among the few Dutch filmmakers whose films have circulated recently.

From the vast cinema landscape of Germany, we remember, at the turn of the 2000s, a first "electric shock" sparked by Tom Tykwer and his *Run Lola Run* (1998), followed by major successes such as *Good Bye Lenin!* (2003), *Downfall* (2004) and *The Lives of Others* (2006). However, the directors of these films have remained relatively less identified by the European audience because their careers had no continuity, with the notable exception of Fatih Akin (*Head-On*, 2004). Wenders, the last representative of a kind of golden age, had a surprising trajectory, making him a champion of documentaries (*Buena Vista Social Club*, *Pina*...). In the realm of auteur cinema, many new names emerged during this period, including seven who received the EC Label, but few have transcended a niche. Especially noteworthy is the movement initiated by the Berlin School, whose emblematic figures today include Christian Petzold and Maren Ade, as well as Angela Schanelec, Valeska Grisebach, and Ulrich Köhler.

In Austria, two major figures made their mark during this period, Michael Haneke from the '90s and Ulrich Seidl from the 2000s. Stefan Ruzowitzky, Götz Spielmann, and Jessica Hausner also emerged during this time, before Marie Kreutzer established herself as a new voice. Austrian filmmakers have also excelled in documentaries, notably Nikolaus Geyrhalter, Michael Glawogger, Erwin Wagenhofer, and Hubert Sauper, who received the EC Label for *Darwin's Nightmare* (2004).

Let's shift our focus further east, from the Baltic countries to the Balkans.

The Romanian New Wave certainly deserves special attention.

From the mid-2000s onwards, a multitude of talents emerged in Romania, starting with Cristi Puiu, Corneliu Porumboiu (EC Label for *12:08 East of Bucharest*), Tudor Giurgiu, Catalin Mitulescu, and, of course, Cristian Mungiu (Palme d'Or winner in 2007 for *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*). Adrian Sitaru, Radu Muntean, Alexander Nanau, among others, contributed to the flourishing of this wave, as did Radu Jude, who asserts himself film after film as a major director.

From Hungary, in the early 2000s, there was a belief in a similar wave led by Béla Tarr (*Werckmeister Harmonies*). Several names emerged at that time, including György Pálfi, Nimród Antal, Ferenc Török, Szabolcs Hajdu, Benedek Fliegauf, Ágnes Kocsis. Today, it seems that a trio dominates with films that circulate, consisting of Kornél Mundruczó, László Nemes, and Ildikó Enyedi, without a distinct Hungarian school having really registered in the viewer's consciousness.

From Poland, and again, we don't get the sense of having witnessed a 'wave' that would have followed in the footsteps of Wajda, Kieślowski, and Holland (who herself remains very present). However, several directors have had their films travel across Europe, starting with Pawel Pawlikowski (*Ida*, a favourite of exhibitors at the 2013 Conference), Jerzy Skolimowski, Malgorzata Szumowska and, more recently, Jan Komasa (*Corpus Christi*, EC Label in 2019) and Agnieszka Smoczyńska. Other names that emerged in the 2000s and 2010s certainly deserve to be rediscovered, including Piotr Trzaskalski and Andrzej Jakimowski, whose beautiful *Tricks* received the EC Label in 2007.



Pawel Pawlikowski, *Cold War* © DR

Elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe, the names that have circulated seem more representative of themselves than of nationally identified schools for the public, such as Stephan Komandarev, Kristina Grozeva and Petar Valchanov from Bulgaria, Czech filmmakers Petr Václav, Alice Nellis and Bohdan Sláma, Estonian Ilmar Raag and Veiko Õunpuu, Lithuanian Sharunas Bartas, and Alanté Kavaïté. In Serbia, beyond Emir Kusturica, some filmmakers have produced significant works (Srđan Golubović's *Circles*, screened at our conference in 2013). Also at our conference, in 2019, the documentary *Honeyland* by the Macedonians Tamara Kotevska and Ljubomir Stefanov proved to be a significant film of its time. Finally, from Bosnia, Danis Tanović, Aida Begić, and Jasmila Žbanić have emerged in the wake of a dramatic era.

In Italy, contrary to the widespread idea of a crisis after a golden age, there has been a constant renewal of auteurs.

At the turn of the 2000s, disregarding highly successful Italian films that did not circulate outside the country, notable directors included Giuseppe Tornatore, Roberto Benigni, Bertolucci, and Nanni Moretti. Subsequently, Emanuele Crialese initially, followed by Marco Tullio Giordana, Sergio Castellitto, and Daniele Luchetti, among others, saw some of their films circulate in Europe. Matteo Garrone, Alice Rohrwacher, Paolo Sorrentino, Pietro Marcello, and Luca Guadagnino can now be considered filmmakers identified with the art-house audience. Beyond these prominent names, the 10 Italian films that have received the EC Label attest to a wider pool of talent, including Jonas Carpignano, who received it twice for *A Ciambra* (2017) and *A Chiara* (2021), while films by Laura Samani, Jasmine Trinca, and Laura Bispuri reflect an increase of films directed by women.

From Greek cinema, the dominant figure in the '90s was Theo Angelopoulos. Greek-French filmmaker Costa-Gavras, is considered a French director, even though his more recent films indicate a return to Greece. Among the new voices emerging in the 2000s as part of the new Greek 'weird wave', Panos H. Koutras and later Yorgos Lanthimos, asserted themselves. Athiná-Rachél Tsangári and Sofia Exarchou, more recently, also have their films distributed abroad.



Alice Winocour, *Proxima* © Pathé Films

In Spanish cinema, it is worth noting that, from the '90s, it brought forth immediately identifiable filmmakers as diverse as Almodóvar, Alejandro Amenábar, Álex de la Iglesia, and Julio Medem. In a landscape slightly more oriented towards genre cinema than in other European countries, these filmmakers continued to produce, joined in the 2000s by Fernando León de Aranoa, Jaime Balagueró, Paco Plaza, Icíar Bollain, Isabel Coixet, and J.A. Bayona. Spanish cinema has diversified, and new names emerged in the 2010s: Pablo Berger, Alberto Rodríguez, and Albert Serra, among others, added their voices to this development that now includes young authors followed by an international audience, such as Jonás Trueba and Carla Simón.

Portuguese cinema asserts itself through the prominent Manoel de Oliveira, João César Monteiro, and Raúl Ruiz, who renewed it in the '90s, alongside the rather radical figures of Pedro Costa and Teresa Villaverde. From the 2000s onwards, Miguel Gomes, and João Pedro Rodrigues have further enriched this landscape.

Let's conclude with French cinema, which now constitutes the largest national cinema within the network. It will be challenging to list the numerous filmmakers who have travelled over the years: from the highly productive François Ozon to the more infrequent Leos Carax; from Cédric Klapisch to Arnaud Desplechin; from the innovations of Michel Gondry to those of Jean-Pierre Jeunet; from the radicalism of Claire Denis to that of Xavier Beauvois; from Paris, seen by Christophe Honoré to that of Jacques Audiard.

One of the most significant fact of the last decades, Danny Boon's *Welcome to the Sticks* made waves in 2008 by contradicting the rule that a national comedy could not circulate outside its country of origin. Boon's film was a European success, especially in Germany, Spain, and Italy, and it paved the way for the

explosion of *The Intouchables* by Toledano and Nakache (with over 500,000 admissions in 10 European countries), to date the most-watched film in the network.

For about a decade, we have witnessed the recognition of French women directors, highlighted by the two Palme d'Or wins for Julia Ducournau and Justine Triet, as well as Audrey Diwan's Golden Lion.

In 2015, Deniz Gamze Ergüven, with *Mustang*, one of the EC Label films that was a European hit, was one of the first to see the spotlight, which includes at least fifteen others who have all proven themselves and have a promising future. Alice Winocour, Lucie Borleteau, Céline Sciamma, Rebecca Zlotowski, and Mia Hansen-Løve are perhaps the most well-known. Houda Benyamina, Claire Burger, Marie Amachoukeli, Mati Diop, Stéphanie di Giusto, Marie Amiguet, Alice Diop, Léa Mysius, Katell Quillévéré, and Céline Devaux are also well-established new voices.



Rodrigo Sorogoyen, *Madre* © Manolo Pavón, LE PACTE



Olivier Nakache, Eric Toledano, *Intouchables* © DR

European filmmakers of the Future

Beyond these French women filmmakers who have many counterparts throughout Europe, we sought to identify filmmakers who are currently between 30 and 45 years old, the same age as those who, 30 years ago, shaped the identity of the network over the years.

They too are already well-represented, and we can be sure that they will achieve great European successes in the years to come: Hlynur Pálmason, Lukas Dhont, Carla Simón, Kristoffer Borgli, Thomas Cailley, Jonas Carpignano, Louis Garrel, Kristina Buozyte, Colm Bairéad, Marie Kreutzer, Jan Komasa, Agnieszka Smoczyńska, Ladj Ly, Rodrigo Sorogoyen, Arthur Harari, Juho Kuosmanen, Ali Abbasi, Oliver Laxe, are all names whose creativity and ambition pique our curiosity.

This profusion of new talent, not to mention those expressing themselves in animation and documentary cinema, allows us to have an optimistic outlook on the future of European cinema. Their unique voices have found a place in cinema theatres over the past 30 years, in an era marked by the revolutions of the Internet, digital projection, and social networks. Beyond the fear of seeing VOD siphon off such talent away from cinemas, we see that many have worked on series, also embedded in our cinephilia, but continue to move back and forth between cinemas and home entertainment.

Our conviction: when a filmmaker continues along the same vein, enriches and deepens their message, they find an audience who will follow them and even live a bit of their worldview. For the audience, cinephilia evolves, as evidenced by the astonishing, curious, versatile, uninhibited engagement of hundreds of young people involved in 27 Times Cinema in Venice. We have no doubt that these new audiences will also follow these filmmakers of the future on the big screen, near them.

Jean-Baptiste Selliez

Europa Cinemas and the French Institute

A look back at eight years of partnership

For the past eight years, the French Institute and Europa Cinemas have been working together to promote film diversity by showcasing French and European films across all continents.

This partnership relies on an exceptional network of cinemas equipped with digital projection facilities throughout the French cultural network abroad. This network undergoes continuous monitoring with a bi-monthly steering committee (MEAE-CNC-IF and UNIFRANCE), regular working groups, and dedicated training sessions.

The network of digitized cinemas within the French cultural network has consistently expanded and currently consists of 70 cinemas in 44 countries, including 33 cinemas on the African continent. These 70 cinemas, operating like arthouse theatres, welcome French and European films to their screens, as well as national productions, whilst engaging in outreach efforts directed at universities and educational institutions.

Collaborating with Europa Cinemas is, above all, about sharing common values to unite these cinemas around audience renewal and attracting younger viewers. School screenings have quintupled in the network's programming, with impressive performances in Djibouti, Dubai, London, Casablanca, and Italy.

The past eight years have been challenging. The IF network cinemas, like others, have had to reinvent themselves to cope with the health crisis and to regain their audiences. Some notable initiatives since 2020 include: the takeover of the Cannes Film Market at IF Beijing in 2021, the creation of a traveling projector in Morocco, *IF Sous les étoiles*, to reach new audiences in peri-urban areas, the simultaneous screening of Mathieu Vadepied's film *Tirailleurs* with Omar Sy on January 26, 2023, in 13 theatres across the African continent, and the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Critics' Week in 2022

in Tunis, Athens, Thessaloniki, Prague, and Senegal, with workshops for young critics led by Charles Tesson.

In December 2022, the Europa Cinemas Conference in Paris saw the participation of 35 cinemas (half of our network) to share future programming and audience development strategies, drawing inspiration from innovative collaborations within both networks.

French Institute and *Alliance Française* cinemas often adopt highly creative approaches to find local partners and establish professional collaborations, such as the opening of the first MK2-IF in Madrid — a new exhibition model where MK2 Spain programmes some of its screenings — and Ciné Paris in Berlin managed by a German exhibitor. The Elvire Popesco cinema in Bucharest stands out, having won the Europa Cinemas Award for Best Programming in 2017 for its performance and its ability to attract a large and discerning audience.



Elvire Popesco, Bucharest © DR



New cinemas have emerged and are set to emerge, including within the *Alliance Française* in Delhi, the French Institute in Bamako, the French Institute in Bujumbura, and the Alliance Française in Vancouver.

The French Institute and Europa Cinemas remain convinced that the magic of the cinema, as a collective experience, can continue to thrive. The dedicated and passionate joint efforts of exhibitors, distributors, and programmers to attract new audiences constitute a source of hope for the cinema.

Stéphane Ré – Director Support for the French cultural network, worldwide department



Europa Cinemas from the inside

The commitment of a team

What does Europa Cinemas stand for?

Simon Briot-Romer

Coordinator (Collaborate to Innovate)

"Europa Cinemas is a network with everything that can include in terms of solidarity, benevolence and a desire for exchange; an idea of mutual aid and community. Its members can use it to develop their skills and exchange their experiences and best practice with their European counterparts. Such participation in the network is particularly effective for small ventures."

Thibault Desmoulin

Executive Coordinator
(Creative Europe / MEDIA)

"I came back to France after 14 years in Quebec, which enlightened my perception of the European territory. I was much more French when I left than when I returned. Above and beyond the mandate of Europa Cinemas, which brings us all together, with the idea of circulating and promoting European films across the continent, working here is, for me, a reappropriation and rediscovery of this territory, with increased curiosity and a different perspective. It's also a way of restoring what I've garnered from all of my previous experiences."

Irene Angel Echeverri

Project Coordinator (MEDIA, 27 Times Cinema, Young Audiences, LUX Audience Award) - Spain, Portugal, Greece, Cyprus

"Europa Cinemas is a meeting place, a space for sharing values, best practice and cinephilia, where films are discussed, sometimes with very important messages that go beyond their strictly aesthetic nature through their values and political commitment."

Nicolas Edmery

Deputy Coordinator, Research & Statistics Officer – Denmark, Ireland

"Europa Cinemas is one of those rare organisations that tries and succeeds in not only having a multicultural impact on Europe, but also in having a "European" cultural vision, not only a national one. It succeeds in being in contact with European citizens, and in transmitting European values directly to them."

Eduardo Guaman

IT Manager – Member Zone

"Europa Cinemas marks the success of a European project that has maintained and expanded a network of cinemas over a long period of time, including going through changes such as the switch to digital technology and surviving several crises, including the Covid-19 pandemic."

Mathilde Narros

Project Coordinator (MEDIA) – Italy, Malta

"For me, Europa Cinemas embodies two main values: meeting people and uniting them. The team is made up of people from a diverse range of nationalities who all work for Europe. I fully realised our impact and our role as mediators when I saw the relationships that were forged at the Bologna Lab between exhibitors who are very far apart geographically and whose companies often have major structural differences."

Bianca Popistas

Project Coordinator (MEDIA) – Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden

"My first interaction with Europa Cinemas was through its logo, which I discovered in a movie theatre. On a day-to-day basis, we share a common passion for cinema, a common mentality, a way of life and an international outlook that gives all Europeans access to films produced by their continental neighbours."

Adrian Preda

Project Coordinator (MEDIA, Next/Change, 27 Times Cinema, LUX Audience Award) – Benelux, Romania

"I discovered Europa Cinemas through its trailer when I was still living in Bucharest. I was then drawn to the international nature of its team, who speak multiple languages on a daily basis. Finally, I value the support for cinemas, particularly in countries where there is no formal support in place. For a cinema, belonging to the network is recognition of their work. And that's concrete!"

Lisa Püscher

Executive Assistant (Europa Cinemas
Label, Network Conferences)

"Europa Cinemas brings together and defends with conviction and passion a great diversity and wealth of cultural venues. The network creates links and reproducible models between different players in the sector around a shared cause, with personal as well as professional exchange. For me, it's also the culmination of a shared dream and energy by an international team."

Nathalie Reuter

Administrative and Accounting
Assistant

"Europa Cinemas is inextricably linked to its founder, Claude-Éric Poiroux, whose charisma and vision are a daily inspiration for his committed team and its new director, Fatima Djoumer. Our aim remains to unite cinemas so that they support each other through creative ideas and initiatives that promote European cinema. In addition to the economic support, the network's events are vital. It's also an opportunity for the smallest and most remote cinemas to feel less alone, while establishing a link between an artform and the spectator."

Menem Richa

Coordinator
(MEDIA, Eurimages, Institut Français)

"I met Claude-Éric Poiroux when Europa Cinemas was looking to establish partnerships between Europe and the southern shores of the Mediterranean. He asked me to take charge of this programme and together we went to Lebanon, where I'm originally from. It was during this trip that I realised to what extent a film only exists if it is shown. Europa Cinemas is a network of cinemas that displays great diversity and allows arthouse cinema to breathe, by establishing the right connection between the industry and the need to show arthouse works that demonstrate genuine uniqueness. If my day-to-day technical work were not underpinned by this conviction, it would be meaningless."

Jean-Baptiste Selliez

Deputy Coordinator, Website - France

"Europa Cinemas has allowed me to delve into the richness of European cinema way beyond the celebrated auteurs. It has been a journey through films, whether fiction or documentary, which I sometimes value more for their distinct identity than their artistic quality. Through its mechanism for supporting the circulation of European films, the network is, in its essence, an invitation to connect with others, who may be geographically close but remain distant in our awareness."

Alexandre Tchernookov

Project Coordinator (MEDIA) –
Central and Eastern Europe

"At Europa Cinemas, I've found a meaningful mission through my role in supporting cinemas in Eastern Europe. The Europa Cinemas network, comprised of committed, multitasking individuals from different backgrounds, is a fundamental force for good that brings European countries closer together."

Véronique Rascol

General Administration and Accounting

"Europa Cinemas is already the challenge of managing thousands of transfers, every year, across Europe! Beyond this work, I have a lot of pleasure to meet the exhibitors at the network conferences and in Cannes. They all have strong personalities and fight in their places to defend a beautiful idea of exchanges around the films."

Porto Dublin Maastricht Reykjavik
 Brügge Strasbourg
 Ljubljana Bologna Bordeaux
 Bilbao Marseille Genova
 Bari München Salzburg Yerevan
 København Podgorica Košice Schaan
 Oslo Lille Köln
 Firenze Lyon Zagreb
 Essen
 Athína Magdeburg
 Cork Ptuj
 Tallinn Poznań
 Budapest Malmö
 Bratislava Cluj-Napoca Valencia
 Stuttgart
 Lisboa Vilnius
 Split
 Amsterdam Graz Torino
 Linz
 Aarhus Napoli
 Luxembourg
 Málaga
 Sofia Kraków
 Coimbra
 Düsseldorf

38 countries

786 cities

1279 cinemas

3160 screens

EUROPEAN
CINEMA



Creative
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