

European films for next generation, Serbia

Interview with Ivona Kopilovic,
Bioskop EuroCinema

by **Stjepan Hundic**

Ivona, can you tell us more about yourself and your partners involved in the project?

The coordinator Eurocinema was founded in February 27th, 2010 within the Open University Subotica (OUS), a company with 68-years' experience in non-formal education and cultural event organization. In that time, the Eurocinema programme was enriched with special screenings, guest appearances, and educational activities aimed at young audiences. For our "European films for next generation" project, Eurocinema is responsible for the marketing strategy and activities, acquisition of films for planned events, and the overall coordination of the project. Our partners, Cinema Fontana and Cultural Center of Novi Sad, will be responsible for the organization of the training programme for cinema staff and elementary and secondary school teachers, as well as for the engagement of lecturers (directors, screenwriters, critics, actors, etc.) who will present

special screening for school students. The Cultural Center of Novi Sad has a long history of organizing cultural events and education. They contribute to the growth and popularization of film and cinema culture by organizing film forums and non-commercial art cinema programmes. In this project, they will be responsible for selecting films for the film marathon and special screenings.

Why did you choose to launch this project?

All the partners are focused on the promotion of European cinema, and on creating new audiences for European films, but the general trend has been decreasing audience numbers, even before the pandemic. In addition to this new challenge, we have identified poor participation of children and youth in our general audiences, as well as a lack of participation across other demographics. Children under the age of 10 are into kids' animation, mid-late teens tend to only watch blockbusters, while pre and early-teens are somehow missing from cinemas altogether. It's our primary motivation to engage pre and early-teens in cinema-going culture and to popularize artistic European films among these young audiences to create a new generation of our audience, who will be familiar with the quality of European cinema.

What was the need for it in your country?

All participating cinemas have, to some extent, educational and marketing activities aimed at increasing young audience engagement and the circulation of the European films. However, these occasional workshops, lectures, special screenings, and media campaigns are not sufficient to make significant and lasting results. It is necessary for this form of activity to be realized over a longer period of time, and for it to be evenly scheduled, promoted, and implemented. Developing a habit requires continuity and the constant presence of this type of activity. For a long time, feature films for kids were unfairly neglected. In European cinema, we have excellent feature films for children, but, unfortunately, even if they are distributed it is usually without marketing support from the distributors, so they are not seen widely enough. Our aim is to change this. Documentaries, except at festivals, are also almost impossible to find for cinema distribution. Teenagers are completely uninterested in documentary film, even though the form is engaging and their various topics could be of interest to this age group. This is why it is very important that, through education and organized



screenings, we introduce young people to this entertaining and educational mode of film. In order to achieve these objectives, a joint and larger-scale involvement, and activities are needed. Therefore, we have decided to join forces, experiences, knowledge, and skills.

Please elaborate on planned activities to increase young audience engagement in the European cinema.

To create a joint marketing strategy and campaign targeting young audiences to popularize and raise awareness of the diversity of the European film. Part of our planned activities is to organize a one-day film marathon simultaneously in all 3 cities and cinemas on the 14th November, on the occasion of the European Arthouse Cinema Day. The target group will be young adults. We will also organize special screenings of European children's films and documentaries with a lecture on film art (introduction to the artistic and technical characteristics of audio-visual production) for primary school students, four lectures per cinema, and one lecture quarterly for one or two classes. To ensure the sustainability of the project, and to strengthen capacity for our partners, we are also organizing a two-day training programme for cinema staff and elementary and secondary school teachers aimed at educating the people who will facilitate young audience engagement.

What are your expectations?

After the implementation of our planned activities, including the marketing campaign, we will be a step closer to building the "next generation", bringing them closer to European cinema, and all its diversity. By educating cinema staff and elementary and secondary school teachers we are including film in the educational curriculum for children, to obtain knowledge of the artistic and technical characteristics of



audio-visual production. This will, in the short-term, provide an enriched cinema experience for the target group and, in the long-term, will lead to an increased audience engagement in European films, and thus, to the increased circulation of European films.

What could be its impact at the local and national level?

We will strengthen the cooperation and exchange of experience between the three cinemas involved through development and implementation of our joint marketing strategy and campaign targeting young audiences. Training cinema staff and schoolteachers will ensure the sustainability of the project and strengthen local capacity, aiming to educate the people who will facilitate young audience engagement and increase the demand for European films for future activities. We aim to see, as the end result of our actions, more diversity across age groups attending screenings in our cinemas, increased demand for regular or special screenings of European films, as well as an enriched experience for every person attending screenings and events in the future.

Partner cinemas:

- Bioskop EuroCinema (Subotica)
- Cinema Fontana (Belgrade)
- Cultural Center of Novi Sad (Novi Sad)



Bioskop EuroCinema, Subotica