

# Travel with film education, Latvia and Lithuania

Interview with Ieva Sipola, Splendid Palace

by Pavel Sladky

**“Our mission is a new audience, educated in cinema.” Latvian-Lithuanian project Travel With Film Education is getting ready.**

Cinemas in three Baltic cities united to find new young audiences to offer them the possibility of an enjoyable education. The plan is to address social issues, national history, culture, language, and many other topics through a series of European films screenings. We sat down with Ieva Sipola, manager of the beautiful and traditional Splendid Cinema in Riga, to talk about this new activity.

**Which cinemas launched the project and what motivates you?**

In Travel With Film Education, there are three cinemas involved. My colleagues and I from Splendid Palace in Riga, Latvia, coordinate the project. Our partners in Lithuania are Romuva Cinema in the city of Kaunas, and Pasaka Cinema in the capital, Vilnius. Our cinemas are quite different in terms of programming, audience, number of screens, and capacity, but we do not consider it an obstacle, rather, a challenge. We have a shared mission in that we want to work with new audiences to educate them through film about a range of topics.

**What kind of audience do you want to work with and what is the plan?**

The Travel With Film Education project aims to bring young audiences between the ages of 15 and 25 to cinemas, for afternoon sessions with screenings. We also plan to create digital tools, through which young people, while playing and solving prepared tasks, could deepen their knowledge not only about European cinema, but also about other relevant topics including social issues. Tools that are currently being developed include tests, questionnaires, puzzles, crossword games, and other types of tasks with pictures, audio, and video material, all of which are accessible in a mobile app, because smartphones are the place where younger generations can be found.



**So, you aim to mix education and entertainment. What are your expectations and what could be the impact on a national level?**

We want to educate Generation Z while entertaining them. The diversity in cinema programming throughout the year is, unfortunately, limited. We want to bring Polish, Romanian, Belgian, and Greek cinema to our venues. We are reaching out to find intelligent young people, and we do not want to offer simple lectures that could feel the same as being in school. Screenings will be accompanied with workshops, and local influencers will participate in both promoting the events via their Instagram, Youtube, or TikTok channels and in the live workshops.

The heart of the project is a series of eight film programmes. Screenings of European films—classic and contemporary films of different genres—will be paired with lectures, discussions, practical workshops, and tailor-made activities appealing to the interests of young people, to attract them to traditional movie theatres. There is



Splendid Palace, Riga

essentially no film or audio-visual content taught in either Latvian or Lithuanian schools currently, and we believe that if there is no education on European film culture in the school system, someone else should do it. We consider that our mission.

**Could you be more specific about the programme?  
What kind of films do you want to screen?**

The Travel With Film Education project plans to kick off with *Amélie* (*Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain*), the famous French romantic comedy starring Audrey Tatou. The Latvian-Lithuanian project would like to use the film as an entry point to French culture. Our theme for the opening session will be the history of arts and culture in France. The accompanying digital app could inspire our participants to follow in the footsteps of the film in Paris, and we might even continue with creating intriguing tours in our cities.

Cristian Mungiu's *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* (*4 luni, 3 săptămâni și 2 zile*) is planned as our second iteration of the project. A much darker film, set in communist Romania in the final years of the Nicolae Ceaușescu era, it tells the story of two students trying to secure an illegal abortion. For this screening, we would like to team up with young influencers so we can address the topic of abortion, and also other social issues including the gender agenda,

LGBTQ+ issues, coming-out, and other current social topics related to body and mind.

**How far along are you with the project? Are you concerned about any Covid related complications?**

Some of the tools and programmes are still ideas under development at the moment. We are really curious about what films, topics, and activities will work. We plan to run focus groups with our target audience ahead of implementation, so they can tell us which ideas to keep and which to abandon. We are a little worried, that is true. But lockdown has been lifted on November 15<sup>th</sup> here, and cultural events in seated venues are possible again. We really hope to start in January as planned. We are ready to continue as a so-called "green events place" for audiences who are either vaccinated or have recovered from Covid-19 within 90 days. If pandemic restrictions are relaxed enough, Travel With Film Education will premiere on January 27<sup>th</sup> 2022.

**Partner cinemas:**

Splendid Palace (Riga)  
Kino "Pasaka" (Vilnius)  
Kaunas cinema centre "Romuva" (Kaunas)