

Report

EUROPA CINEMAS INNOVATION DAY LAB

***“How to make the most of our own resources:
Improving skills and renewing practices for audience development”***

(Thessaloniki, 2nd - 3rd November 2019)

Cinema Museum | Takis Kanellopoulos Theatre | Thessaloniki Port

For the second year in a row Europa Cinemas partnered with the Thessaloniki International Film Festival to organise a *Day Lab*. Directed by **Iris Praefke** (Exhibitor, Movimiento cinema, Germany) and **Hrvoje Laurenta** (Executive Director, Zagreb Film Festival, Croatia), the aim of this *Day Lab* was to help exhibitors to find new ways to develop audiences, create sustainable programming strategies and use innovative marketing tools (including social media) to engage with the younger generation of cinemagoers.

DAY 1

Saturday 2nd November 2019

The Innovation Day Lab was opened by **Elise Jalladeau** (General Director, Thessaloniki International Film Festival), she welcomed the participants of the Lab and shared with the exhibitors the good news about the possible reduction of the VAT for the cinema admissions, a subject that was discussed in the previous lab as one of the main problems for exhibitors in Greece.

Then, the president of the exhibitors association Mr. Takis Tszakalakis, spoke in the name of all the exhibitors and thank the festival and Europa Cinemas for helping the sector find new ways of collaboration and innovative ideas to face the problems exhibitors must face in a ever changing market.



The discussion began with an ice breaker exercise and the presentation of the workshop leaders **Iris Praefke** and **Hrvoje Laurenta** as well as each of the 30 participants. During the exchange, they also shared their main expectations and the subjects they wanted to discuss during the Lab. Among the raised topics they mentioned their need to explore and deepen in: Promotion of the programming, young audience development, sustainability for independent cinemas, communication and digital marketing.



During the introductory session **Iris Praefke** spoke about promoting venues and programming choices through digital marketing. She used the case of Kino Movimiento, the oldest cinema in Germany, to illustrate how cinemas should communicate and promote for diverse audiences and programming. She advised the participants to think in the easiest way to reach each niche of audience the cinemas want to target. For her, one should have an audience approach for a good marketing strategy, which means always think first in the audience they want to reach. At Kino Movimiento for example, the leaflets, posters and the Media (newspaper, radio) are very important for certain kind of audiences but Facebook and social Media promotion is addressed for a more connected and younger audiences.

Another important point mentioned during the session, was the collaboration spirit one needs to have to be able to use the word of mouth and reach or interest audiences to a certain topic, because the different local groups interested in the topic of the films (Human Rights, LGBT+ subjects, Environmental, etc.) will do part of the promotion for and with you.



In the next session **Hrvoje Laurenta** spoke about alternative approaches to audience development. He shared his division of audiences in 5 different groups: Regular (few times a month), Often (once or twice a month), Sometimes (couple of times a year), Rare (once a year, two years...), and Never (never). Then, he showed participants how he used this division to image the best strategies to bring each of the groups to the cinema.

One of the most interesting projects he shared, was the programme “Subtitled Tuesdays” created at Kino Europa for the 4th and 5th category, which he identified with the 14.000 foreigners living in Zagreb. It consists

in one screening every Tuesday of Croatian and European films from their regular program subtitled in English. This allowed them to bring the tourists and foreigners to the cinema and create an image of the cinema of a multicultural venue. The results have been very positive with 40-60 tickets sold to foreigners per screening.

Another initiative the participants really appreciated for the category “Never” was what he called “First Time at the Cinema”, he explained that when they thought about who had never been to the cinema the age group between 0 to 4 years old came to their minds. The initiative consists in a line-up of short films intended for preschool children, with the objective of introducing them to moving images on the big screen for the first time with dialogues from the films live read by actors.

In the frame of this initiative, the youngsters have a chance to make little film diplomas, which are the souvenir of their first cinema experience.

The first day ended with a discussion about the strengths and challenges of the participant’s venues, many subjects were discussed, among them, the constant changes in the economy and the VOD platforms irruption in the production and distribution of films, as a consequence of all this, the changes in the release windows and the economic threat they face with this situation; the sustainability of the digitalization which in Greece haven’t finished yet and the percentage of the VAT for the cinema ticket price which is up to 24% in Greece.



After the discussion, the Lab Leaders brought up three conclusions:

- Small things make always the difference with audiences. It begins with the building and it ends with the human relationship between the cinema staff and the audience. The building of the cinema must be clean, cozy and user friendly and at the same time we must think that we want to create a love affair between the audience and the cinema. This should be the motto for the audience development strategy.

- If we want to evolve we have to learn new things and allow the cinema staff the same by taking part in trainings and workshops to be up to date.

- We need to collaborate, first with our peers, the other cinema venues are our competitors but, at the same time, they are also colleagues to whom we share common interests. If cinemas work as a professional sector together towards shared objectives, they will find better solutions to their problems. Second, collaborate with the local businesses that surround us. This will allow cinemas to become active social links creators in their local communities.

DAY 2
Sunday 3rd November 2019

The second day of the Lab began with a presentation by **Iris Praefke** of some practical ways to reach out to communities through programming. She shared with the participants how Kino Movimiento succeed in promoting films like the documentary “*Me Llamo Violeta*” through special screenings with the help of many organisations hosting debates and involved in the communication.

Two case studies followed in the programme with the intervention of **Georgios Papageorgiou** (Pantheon, Cyprus), who shared with his peers a success story about the documentary “*Eric Clapton: Life in 12 Bars*”.



He organised screenings of the film followed by a musical tribute to the great musician by a local band. Many people from the local community in arts and Media collaborate in the organisation and communication of the event and all the screenings were full. The second case study was exposed by **Nina Veligradi** (Greek Film Archive, Greece). She explained the “guerrilla distribution” strategy, a programme for young audiences with films from new directors without distribution in the country. The Greek Film Archive

does the subtitling of the film and pays the rights holder per screening. This allows the cinema freedom in the programming and exclusivity in the content offered.

At the end of the session, **Christos Ringas** (Panathinea, Greece) shared with the group the dogs’ friendly screenings, in which the audience can come to the cinema with their pets. This season they also created an album in their Facebook page with all the pictures of the public with their pets at the screenings. This initiative is allowing Panathinea to create bonds with the people from the neighbourhood who are happy to be able to come with their best friends to the cinema and to interact in social networks even after the screenings.

Hrvoje Laurenta introduced the session 3 on branding and marketing strategies sharing with the auditorium Kino Europa’s case. Through the motto and the vision of the cinema, he explained how they built an attractive brand for the cinema with an image of a cultural institution. Digital marketing was also in the programme



and **Hrvoje** shared the main benefits of it. Cost-effectiveness, laser-targeting, customization, performance tractability, information in real time, dynamism and direct relationship and interaction with the target groups, were some of the positive points highlighted. **Hrvoje** concluded his presentation advising the participants to communicate online without forgetting the printing material. His message was clear, if he had to choose between online and offline he would choose both.



During the session **Eleni Chrysopoulou** (CineDoc) presented a survey she did in the municipal cinema in Volos, the survey intended to know better the audiences of the cinema and to learn how to bring the people from the city (120,000 inhabitants) to watch documentaries. In the study, they learned that 74% of the public came to see their documentaries programme because the subject of the film appealed to them. Another interesting point was that the regular audience was demanding incentives. After the survey, they implemented a fidelity card because they became aware that incentives

create a sense of privilege and community. The beneficiaries of these incentives also multiply the fame and value of the venue.

After the session **Iris Praefke** moderated a group task in which participants worked in three groups to build the marketing campaigns for the release of three Europa Cinemas Label films. This session was full of ideas and feedback from the workshop leaders.

During the afternoon, two case studies from **Marta Ban** (Art-kino) and **Michael Zeis** (Trianon) illustrated the subject: Targeting new audiences. **Marta** explained the *Youth Cinema Club* project that allows youngsters to be part of the everyday life of the cinema. With monthly group meetings, discussions after the screenings, workshops and lectures the cinema pretend to become a place in which the youngsters spend their free time learning new skills and developing interest in independent films. Art-Kino even created the Youth Cinema Club in social media (Facebook and Instagram). The club is responsible for the management of these platforms.



Michael shared with the group the Trianon initiative of an International day of persons with disabilities celebrated with disabled artist in the frame of school screenings. **Michael** explained that the success of this initiative was mainly due to the relationship the exhibitor has with the teachers. He insisted in the importance of going directly to the schools and keeping an ongoing communication and collaboration during the year to strengthen the bonds between the schools and the cinemas.

The Lab ended with a participatory discussion in which all the exhibitors shared what they learned and the main ideas they wanted to implement back home. The most popular ideas that came out during the discussion were: Focusing on niche audiences as kids and foreigners for audience targeting, working on giving to audiences a unique experience with, for example, a diploma to the children as a souvenir to celebrate their first time at the cinema, and, the importance of analytics in digital marketing to get to know better the audiences when cinemas do not have a sophisticated CRM software.

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