

Online regional seminar
of film education in
South Eastern Europe

Next Steps in Film Education

26-27
January
2021

On Tuesday and Wednesday, 26 and 27 January, the online regional seminar of film education in South Eastern Europe **Next Steps in Film Education** was attended by more than a hundred representatives of the key institutions for film education development from the entire region and the broader area – cinemas, distributors, film and cultural associations, national agencies and ministries, educational institutions and independent film education practitioners.

At the seminar, they focused on the search for the conditions and models that ensure the **quality, sustainability and wide accessibility** of film education. Case studies were presented by organisations that, with their innovative approaches, have managed to continue their programmes during the shutdown or limited operation of cinemas and other cultural and educational institutions.

The two-day online seminar took part in the framework of *Film Education: From Framework to Impact*, an EU project co-ordinated by the British Film Institute with partners: Danish Film Institute, Vision Kino and Cinémathèque Française. The project is co-funded by the Creative Europe MEDIA Programme of the European Union. The seminar was organised by the Slovenian Film Centre and Kinodvor

The seminar's main emphasis

The analysis of individual practices and the broader environment showed that the region has a number of **film education programmes of exceptional quality**, good expert knowledge and partnerships between different sectors. Due to the **lack of national strategies and stable funding sources**, these potentials have difficulty developing into long-lasting models with a national or even broader regional reach.

The seminar raised the question about what **the field gains by using various online platforms**, where numerous organisations moved their content during the pandemic. The seminar participants agreed that online platforms cannot replace the comprehensive film experience in a cinema, which, in the future, will have to be adapted to the changed needs of the audience and shaped as an attractive social event. On the other hand, online platforms do bring new possibilities of content provision and importantly contribute to a broader reach and a greater inclusion of children and young people. Free content for children and young people plays an important role here, but it is economically viable only with the support of public and/or private funds.

A great challenge is also **the accessibility of quality film titles**, since the pandemic has impacted not only film production, but also film distribution. What is crucial for the future development of film education is therefore to design sustainable business models that will ensure a stable operation of all the key actors and a coordinated strategic cooperation between all members of the film chain.

A quality film education depends on people, which is why we have to **ensure constant education and training** of both film educators in the field of cinema and pedagogical professionals in the education sector. By connecting both sectors – the cultural and the educational – we can reach the largest share of children

FILM EDUCATION
FROM FRAMEWORK TO IMPACT



IFELA
INSTITUT ZA FILM
I KULTURO

VISION KINO

CINÉMATHEQUE

FILM
Estonian
Film
Institute

GREEK
FILM
CENTRE

NFI
NATIONAL
FILM INSTITUTE
FINLAND



MENO
AVILYS

MIMEA

SLOVENSKI
FILMSKI
CENTRE
SLOVENIA
FILM INSTITUTE
CENTRE

Kinodvor.
Mestni kino.

Sofinancira program
Evropske unije
Ustvarjalna Evropa

and young people. A special emphasis was put on the need to conduct studies and research on the changing trends and viewing habits.

Partnerships that enable the exchange of knowledge, content and tools significantly contribute to the development of the field towards greater quality and sustainability. **Weaving a regional network** can thus provide a strong support for individual actors in their work at the local and national levels and strengthen the strategic power that the region has in the field of film education at the international level.

The future of film education in the region will thus be marked especially by **searching for innovative approaches** that will employ the synergy of the physical and the digital space in order to strengthen the connections between films, cinemas and young audiences and ensure a **stable development** of the field within individual countries and the broader region.

Summaries of the presentations and discussions

Regional meet-up – an exchange of knowledge, experience and challenges

Summaries of the presentations

Darko Bašeski, Director of the Giffoni Macedonia Youth Film Festival, presented the experience of moving the festival online during the pandemic. The basic principle of the Giffoni Festival Macedonia is that the decisions are made by young people that participate in workshops and thus actively contribute to the festival's programming and the creation of a lively film community. That is why their main goal on the web was to provide the »liveliest« festival environment possible. They thus established their own web platform, where they moved not only the film programme, but also the accompanying activities. They even kept the festival's hospitality. In the end, the online edition offered more programme than the previous ones, but the attendance by young people was almost halved. As Bašeski emphasised in his conclusion, due to the shift of schooling and most activities online, young people are also fed up with it.

Eroll Bilibani, head of the educational programmes and the curator of film projects at DokuFest's DokuLab, presented the ways in which they have managed to become even more connected with their audience and filmmakers despite the pandemic. They took the new situation as an opportunity and created online film classrooms and even more actively promoted the use of films in the education system. In the virtual environment, they also carried out their film school. Despite modernisation and the success of their programmes, the future development of film education necessarily requires partnerships at the regional and the European level. Only thus, will film education be accessible to everyone.

Ivana Alpeza, head of the film education programme Seventh Continent, presented the main characteristics of their programme of teaching pre-school children media literacy through film. The key element of their successful programme implementation is the »circle of trust«, consisting of the city

municipality with its infrastructure, educators, parents and future pedagogical workers, with whom they also connect through pedagogy departments of Croatian universities. In addition to trust, the important elements in transforming their programme into a virtual form during the pandemic were the continuity of the programme and the film educators' personal approach to the audience. One of the positive consequences of going online that Alpeza pointed out was a wider accessibility of the programme at the state level, especially in socially and culturally more vulnerable areas. The negative aspect she emphasised was the loss of the social and magical experience of watching a film in a cinema. She sees the main challenge for a future in the new normal in finding a balance between the cinema experience and the online film experience.

In her contribution, **Barbara Kelbl**, Head of Kinodvor's School Programme, focused on the operation of cinemas and their role in film education during the pandemic. Based on Kinodvor's school programme, she pointed out the challenges and the solutions that they came up with after the cinema had been shut down and they moved their content online. Online film viewing cannot be the same as the experience in a cinema which is why an additional value of the online experience has to be found. Kelbl emphasised the importance of moving the accompanying activities from the internet back to the physical world. In addition to the needs and wishes of the audience (children, teachers, parents), we need to take into account the needs of other actors such as the distributors, filmmakers, film educators etc. that, in this situation, lost their job or were forced to change the way they work. Kelbl concluded that, for the operation of cinemas in the field of film education, the new real opens new paths, but also requires a lot of reflection on where and how to proceed.

In the discussion, the speakers first addressed the topic of sustainable development. Among the key conditions for an undisturbed implementation of the programmes, they pointed out: regular funding or support of the local authorities, trust and loyalty of the audience and the role of strategic partners (especially teachers) and other support networks that ensure the exchange of knowledge, tools and film content. What is crucial in moving content online is knowing the audiences, their wishes and needs. That is precisely why, in this time of the pandemic, evaluations and adaptations of individual activities are essential. The discussion ended with a reflection on the future of cinemas and film education. The speakers remain optimistic despite numerous challenges. In their opinion, the cinema experience is irreplaceable, but it will have to be adapted to the new desires and needs of the audience and designed as an attractive and safe social event. In a similar way, film education programmes will also have to adapt to the new online reality. The speakers see the future of film education in persistent work that has to continue regardless of the existence of national strategies or the support of state institutions and insist on the connection between the fields of education and culture.

Film education in the region

Summary of group work

The participants of the afternoon part of the seminar were divided into five thematic groups. Each group discussed one of the current key challenges of film education: quality of the programme, understanding

audiences, new technologies and cinemas, strong partnership networks and new business models and financing. Through group discussions, the participants thought about the possible ways of dealing with the current situation and further development, while sharing their knowledge, experiences and practices.

The first group thought about the **quality of the programme** and how to maintain it in the future. They posed several questions, among them how to maintain the quality of the accompanying content in the shift from the physical to the digital environment and how to ensure that all users have access to appropriate equipment. In view of the flood of freely accessible content, they wondered how to inform the audience about the value and significance of a carefully selected online programme that brings not only film content, but also additional materials. The group concluded that in order to ensure the quality of the programme in a new and quite unknown environment, a lot of work and regular evaluation is needed. That said, we should not forget the fundamental values of our programmes and projects.

The second group discussed the topic of **understanding audiences**. In the debate, they emphasised that the new real necessitates a good knowledge of the audience and their changed viewing habits. It is important that we follow and actively co-create the viewing habits. That should also include a reflection on the suitable way of appealing to every individual group. The new modes of film experience in the online environment should be as user-friendly as possible.

The third group tackled the question of **new technologies and cinemas**. Through their discussion, they came to the conclusion that, by using online platforms, they have mostly enlarged their audience. The group also talked about distribution and the role of cinemas in the new real. They thought about how to overcome the lack of physical contact and pointed out the problem of the accessibility of new technology – due to the lack of both equipment and user knowledge, which differs according to age groups. They concluded that film education in the new environment should be understood in the post-modern narrative, which determines its practice interactively and in connection with other content and technologies.

The fourth group presented the significance of **strong partnership networks**. In the absence of national strategies, partnerships are very important, especially in view of the exchange of knowledge, content and technologies, which enables the growth of all involved parties – both individuals and their organisations. In view of their experiences, they concluded that it does not make sense to wait for partnership initiatives to come from the outside, but that the community should take the initiative itself.

The fifth group discussed new **business models and financing**. They pointed out that everybody in the region faces similar problems, especially the lack or non-existence of long-term or constant sources of financing earmarked specifically for film education. Due to the pandemic, most did not carry out in full the programmes that received funding through calls for applications, so they are worried about having to return the funds. At a time when the sector cannot carry out its activities in full, calls for applications are the only source of income. The participants expressed fear about a decrease in the funding of their activities in the near future. Public funding (at the state and local levels) is thus crucial for their financial survival.

The first day of the seminar was summed up by **Mark Reid** (BFI), who compared the idea and situation of film education to a telescope. On one side, there are film educators that are also film and cinema workers and, on the other, there are pre-school and school teachers. The first day of the seminar considered film education primarily from the perspective of the first, but, in thinking about film education development, we have to take into account the perspective of both and also the needs of the latter. At the same time, Reid rejected the fear that, in the new real, film education would lose its value and significance and become marginalised in basic education. Based on the experience of the BFI, which, during the pandemic, to a large extent, moved film education online, the speaker ensured that it is now even more accessible as evidenced by the larger attendance at their online events. In his conclusion, Reid pointed out the needs of children, drawing on Kelbl's presentation, which foregrounded their five key needs: art, play, dialogue and interaction, cooperation, thinking and equal possibilities. According to Reid, we have to think about film and film education of the future in terms of the five needs and explore how film can meet them in its unique way.

Building sustainable film education strategies and facing challenges

Summary of the presentations

Ian Wall, Education Director at the Film Space, a partner organisation in the project *Film Education: From Framework to Impact*, presented the development of the *Mass Open Online Course – Film Education – A User's Guide* and its results. The course was created based on an analysis of the state of film education. Two important points in conceiving it were the accessibility of the course and it reaching the broadest audience possible. As expected, a lot of teachers responded, but also cinema and film workers. The participants were most interested in pre-school film education and practical instructions for teaching filmmaking. They are preparing a multi-lingual webpage that will provide content suitable for use in class. In addition to its linguistic accessibility, the webpage will also emphasise interactivity, since that has proven to be one of the key modes of learning.

Sanja Jovanović, a professor in the field of audiovisual production and a collaborator of the Film Centre of Montenegro, presented the current state of film education in her country. She focused on the key steps leading to the design of a sustainable national model of film education. She pointed out the importance of creating a document that emphasises the significance of film education at the state level, both in and outside schools, promotes film practice among young people and strengthens the awareness of the audience in relation to cinemas. In designing the strategy, they drew on the experiences of their European and regional partners, but they also performed their own research and studied the current viewing habits and the attitude to film education in the country among teachers, children and young people. The survey results significantly contributed to the conception of the strategy, which they will present to the decision makers at the Ministry of Education with the aim of including film education in the school system. They also included in the strategy other areas that are crucial for the further development of a sustainable film education model: from setting up a wide film base with an emphasis on national cinema to dubbing for young children and the translation of key film literature.

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Živa Jurančič, the current Head of Kinodvor's Young Audiences Programme, took Kinodvor as an example to trace five fundamental elements necessary for the development of a sustainable film education model: a stable source of funding (city municipality in the case of Kinodvor), management and staff committed to programme development, strategic partners, the audience and the school system. She then projected the five elements to the national level and pointed out the heretofore achievements, but also certain problematic points. At the national level, there is already a network of cinemas that, together with their strategic partners, provide a quality programme. At the national level, we can also detect a rise in the attendance at cinemas that are part of the Slovenian Art Cinema Association. A few years ago, the Slovenian national strategy for the development of film education was adopted, introducing film education as a special elective subject into the school system. The key problem remains the lack of long-term financing that would ensure a stable development and a wide reach of quality film education content. In this context, the speaker also pointed out the problem of the distribution of quality film titles for young audiences, which still depends on market logic. Jurančič concluded that we have to be aware of the significance of film education, especially in these times, since it not only strengthens film culture, but also essentially shapes the development of each individual and encourages critical thinking.

Charlotte Giese, special advisor and founder of the Children and Youth/Film Education Department at the Danish Film Institute (DFI), described the development of a long-term strategy and a sustainable model of film education in Denmark. She pointed out the important role of government support for the production and distribution of Danish films for children and youth and the awareness of the decision makers encapsulated in the guideline: *»If we lose one generation, we lose them all.«* The vision that *»every child should experience, understand and make films«* is today manifested in their five main film education programmes: school film programme in cinemas, a web platform that brings films to schools, pre-school programme in cinemas, a web platform for the use of films in pre-school education and a film studio in which children and young people can make short films. They constantly develop new programmes, trying to keep up with the quick development of new technologies. Their national network of partners, also financially supported by the DFI, is crucial for their successful sustainable model of film education. In the end, the speaker emphasised that online film viewing complements the viewing of films in cinemas and that we can learn from the current situation and use the gained knowledge in the future.

In the discussion, the speakers touched on the importance of strategies and clear visions. They pointed out that strategy is important because it provides support at every step and determines the entire development. It also provides coordination in directing all the involved stakeholders towards the set goals. They also talked about the relation between online film bases and cinemas as places of film education. Giese emphasised that those are two parallel modes: in the framework of the DFI, they too began as a film festival and only later moved films into the classroom, thus making them truly widely accessible, even where there are no cinemas. Film viewing in a classroom or on a web platform can thus be understood as raising the awareness of children and young people, an invitation to the cinema or an additional activity with tasks and even the possibility of repeated viewing, which deepens the child's thinking and film sensibility. Jovanović concurred and emphasised how important it is that schools and cinemas cooperate. The

speakers concluded that accessibility is crucial and can be provided in several ways, among them by ensuring lower ticket prices with the support of the local authorities. Jurančič concluded the discussion on the long-term strategies for the development of sustainable film education models by summing up Giese's claim that even if we do not have a strategy, we need to start somewhere and patiently proceed step by step, turning something small into something big. As one of the participants noted during the discussion on the first day, we cannot wait for the strategy, but have to take the initiative ourselves.

How to design a strategy of film education development?

Summary of a short lecture

In the second part of the day, **Edita Bilaver Galinec**, a business consultant and a co-founder of the non-profit organisation Kids Meet Art, first delivered a short lecture on designing a strategy for the development of film education and pointed out the key elements for its establishment. She, too, emphasised the significance of a strategy in achieving long-term goals and establishing sustainable film education models. According to her, the three key questions here are: *Who* are we and why do we need a strategy? *How* will we achieve our goals? *Who* will we need or include in it? The speaker compared the strategy with the map of a route leading to a destination – in this case, the destination is the success, trust and acknowledgement of the organisation or the programme among the stakeholders, the audience and the broader public. When developing a strategy, for which a mission statement and a clear vision are crucial at the beginning, we necessarily have to include all the involved parties, from the management and the employees to the stakeholders and the audience, which we have to (get to) know well. According to Bilaver Galinec, a necessary element, which is often absent, is a regular evaluation of the adopted strategy and a will to change it when and if necessary. In her conclusion, she again emphasised the significance of collective work and the power that all the involved parties would gain if a regional network were established. All the stakeholders would thus have more negotiating power, they would share knowledge, experience and tools, which would also reduce costs. That could be a new sustainable model for the development of film education programmes.

How to design a strategy of film education development?

Summary of group work

The work again took place in five thematically different workshops on conceiving a common vision and mission and defining the elements of a SWOT analysis: the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for a possible strategy of film education development in the region.

Vision and mission

The group formulated a clear vision encapsulated in the motto »Region connected through film«, which it explained with the mission: »to establish, through the existing partnerships of film education providers, a

regional hub that will provide a broader understanding of the artistic value of cinema, strengthen its significance and ensure accessibility to the broadest audience».

Strengths

The group presented the strengths of the networking between various stakeholders in the development of a film education strategy in the region. They recognised the main strength in the diversity of the actors that can address different audiences and thereby increase the accessibility of the content. Networkings also ensure an exchange of existing knowledge and experience; the cases of Slovenia and Montenegro can serve as examples of good practices with an already developed strategy. In the region, networking can be quite simple since the countries have a very similar organisation of the school and cultural systems. We also must not forget the common cultural history and film heritage that can be better maintained and promoted through regional networking. Great strengths are also certain high-quality examples of film education that are acknowledged abroad and place the region on the map of important European film education initiatives.

Weaknesses

The weaknesses the group pointed out are the stakeholders' poor promotion of the programmes and an irregular public funding earmarked specifically for film education development. As a result, the field faces a lack of professionals and precarity, which hinders the development of the organisations and their programmes. The moderator Bilaver Galinec added that the topic of human capital is exceptionally important. We have to train both film educators and school teachers, while, when employing the personnel, quality has to come before quantity. The moderator concluded that knowing the weaknesses in designing the strategy is necessary because it shows us what we have to invest in additionally.

Threats

The group first pointed out the very evident problem of the lack of consistency at the political level. Most of the stakeholders depend on public funding, which does not enable long-term planning and a sustainable development. Every change of power or infrastructure is a potential threat since funding can be cancelled overnight. In addition, only rare public funds are earmarked specifically for the support of film education implementation and development. Film education providers must thus apply their programmes to calls in other areas with different purposes and goals, which negatively affects their quality and decreases their actual potential. An additional threat is a lot of competition. Film education providers do not compete with other fields only in obtaining funding, but also in their inclusion in the school system and attracting the attention of school teachers. In the second part of the discussion, the group focused their attention on the challenges brought about by the pandemic, especially its impact on the financial stability of the organisations, particularly the cinemas that are closed or operate in a very restricted manner. The pandemic has also affected film distribution and programming. Currently, we are all faced with a smaller number of quality film titles, while the ones that are available are more expensive. Due to their own survival, numerous distributors were forced to change their business model and no longer agree to price adaptation – even in the case of educational or free screenings. Certain threats come from the increasingly greater presence on the internet, where competition and the struggle for audience attention are even greater. In

addition, the online space requires additional investments in training the education staff in digital culture and the use of new technologies.

Opportunities

Web platforms also bring opportunities. Among the main opportunities, the last group pointed out a greater reach, also of the theretofore marginalised audiences. Web platforms enable filmmakers a greater access to their audience and vice versa. By creating freely accessible materials, trainings, seminars and workshops, it is easier to reach teachers and other film educators. Web platforms also bring new possibilities for the development of additional content, as they offer a new space for learning and enable repeated viewing of the same film content. At the end, the group also recognised an opportunity in the current changes of the entire environment in which we work. Despite the absence of national strategies, individual strong programmes have already been established in some of the countries. Moreover, we can notice great drive and enthusiasm, which makes fertile ground for establishing a strategy for film education development at the regional level.

The two-day seminar concluded with **Ian Wall** summing up the most frequently mentioned ideas, thoughts and dilemmas and opening a space for reflection about where and how we go from here. He first pointed out that there will be no return to the »old normal«. We are in for a »new normal« in which the physical and the digital world will co-exist, which is why we have to take advantage of this moment and examine all the opportunities that their coexistence brings for our future development (for example, reaching new audiences). He characterised the joining of the digital and the physical world as catch 22, which raises the following questions: How do we preserve the magic of cinema? When will cinemas re-open? Which films will be available? Who will want to come to the cinema? What will happen with school screenings? In searching for the answers to these questions, we have to think about the added value of film education projects in the new environment. Audience research is also crucial. In relation to it, Wall suggested a closer cooperation with the academic world and the universities. Academically substantiated arguments carry more weight with the decision makers at the national levels. By continuously analysing and evaluating our programmes, we can improve our activities, with the criterion being not only quantity, but also quality. What is crucial for the development of the field at the regional level is partnership, which, through dialogue, enables us to exchange experience and knowledge and join forces on creating content, which can save time and money. We must not forget that teachers are one of our key strategic partners. It is precisely them we have to convince how very important film is. We have to choose quality films, take into account the heretofore film experiences of young people, introduce them to their national cinema and open their gaze for the different. The most important thing here is the trust we build with young audiences and teachers. It is only with trust that we can educate children and young people to become self-confident viewers that will not be afraid of exploring a new film world. That said, we should not forget that a film is first and foremost a pleasure!