

Subject Press release

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**So Far, So Good!
First School of Film Agents (SOFA) successfully completed**

After ten days of tweaking the concepts and budgets of their dream projects the participants of the first School of Film Agents (SOFA) presented their work results to industry figures and the audience in Poland's largest Art-house-Cinema Nowe Horyzonty on August 29, 2013. The new workshop initiative for committed film agents from Middle and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Germany found its ceremonial ending. Experts and participants were delighted by the group dynamics and the development of the innovative ideas: "In the last few days I learned more than I did in years in the film industry", said participant Leana Jalukse from Estonia.

Courses and feedback from top-class lecturers like Claudia Dillmann (German Film Institute), Marion Döring (European Film Academy), Karel Och (Karlovy Vary International Film Festival) and Katriel Schory (Israel Film Fund) were as part of the schedule as single and group work with tutors Oliver Baumgarten (Filmplus) and Ewa Puszczyńska (Opus Film). The programme was completed with international and Polish panels on the state of European and Polish cinema and a Networking panel, which presented, among other things, the European training and support programmes MEDIA and EAVE. After the agreement of Council and Parliament principles of the new Creative Europe/MEDIA programme were presented for the first time. The programme will replace the existing initiatives MEDIA, MEDIA Mundus and Culture in 2014.

The professional and intercultural exchange with lecturers and between the participants was already fruitful: Concepts became clearer and significantly closer to realization. Also first partners for the implementation could be found: "We are particularly pleased that in these two weeks transnational cooperations have emerged, contributing to the strength of the projects and underlining their importance for the international cinema culture," said initiator Nikolaj Nikitin.

In lively discussions about the respective socio-cultural situation, it became clear that in many countries the underdeveloped cinema market presents the biggest challenge. Although art-house films from Middle and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus established themselves successfully at major international festivals, it's hard for them to take root in the respective domestic cinemas. This is due the lack of structures that could strengthen sustainable perception of film as an art form and relevant socio-cultural factor. On the other hand film agents and festival organizers, distributors and cinema operators

find little support for their work. This is the starting point for the projects which matured at SOFA: The main concern of many projects is the alternative distribution of European art-house films on the big screen and audience development for these very films, particularly with regard to younger audiences – the audiences of tomorrow.

As part of the activities of Wrocław being the European Capital of Culture 2016 SOFA will be held again in the Lower Silesian capital next year. Projects for the second edition can be submitted from now on.

The School of Film Agents (SOFA) is a unique workshop initiative for young film agents from Middle and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and Germany, whose centre of attention is the realization of innovative projects in cinema. As an international platform SOFA provides interdisciplinary and intercultural knowledge exchange at eye level. The first edition took place from August 19 – 30, 2013 in Wrocław, Poland.

The School of Film Agents (SOFA) is a project of Filmplus UG, in cooperation with the City of Wrocław, the Polish Film Institute and the New Horizons Association, funded by the Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture, the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation, the International Visegrad Fund, the Foreign Office, the Film- und Medienstiftung NRW, MEDIA Desk Poland and Goethe-Institute Krakow, and supported by the Adam-Mickiewicz-Institute, the Goethe-Institute Georgia, the Goethe-Institute Hungary, the Goethe-Institute Romania, the Cinema Development Foundation, the Film Commission Poland, the Wrocław Film Commission and the German Consul General in Wrocław.

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