

A New and Critical Look at European Cinema: Six Short Film Festivals Start Network for Film Discourse FeKK - Ljubljana Short Film Festival is part of a young and EU-funded alliance to promote film criticism and audience participation – Close link with successful online magazine Talking Shorts

With the aim of promoting critical debate and intensive engagement with European cinema, six short film festivals from Germany, Austria, Italy, Belgium, Slovenia and Lithuania have joined forces to form the European Network for Film Discourse (The END). Being official as of March 2023, the new alliance, which is closely linked to the successful online magazine Talking Shorts, will receive EU funding for the next two years via the "Creative Europe – MEDIA" programme.

The network consists of Filmfest Dresden (DE), Vienna Shorts (AT), Lago Film Fest (IT), Kortfilmfestival Leuven (BE), FeKK Ljubljana Short Film Festival (SI) and Vilnius International Short Film Festival (LT). Its main purpose is to promote critical film discourse by and for a younger generation and to familiarise new audiences with a flourishing European film landscape, including cooperative workshops, mentoring programmes and various community activities.

The fact that the network has given itself the tongue-in-cheek acronym "The END" is also for good reason. "Both European cinema and film criticism like to be declared dead," says network coordinator Anne Gaschütz from Dresden with a smile, adding that the new platform aims to actively counter this. "When 'The End' appears in classic cinema, it also usually marks the beginning of the discussion about the film. We thought that was a nice analogy."

The first offerings for aspiring film critics begin as early as April and June with the first of a total of three so-called "tandem workshops" per year, a series of workshops organised jointly by two festivals each. Under the guidance of established journalists and film scholars, the participants will learn the basics of film criticism by means of short films and film programmes. The first tandem in Dresden and Vienna is already fully booked, dates for Lago/Ljubljana (summer) and Leuven/Vilnius (winter) will follow soon.

A selection of the resulting workshop texts will be published on the platform Talking Shorts, which shares a close connection to the network. The online magazine was initiated in 2019 by Filmfest Dresden and Vienna Shorts and gained Europe-wide recognition during the pandemic, not least with the short film series "My Darling Quarantine." The magazine is dedicated to the short cinematic form as well as to the networking of film festivals and film critics. **The END also endows a new film prize worth 1,000 Euros in collaboration with Talking Shorts.**

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