



Federation of European  
Screen Directors

Fédération Européenne des  
Réalisateurs de l'Audiovisuel

# TRANSCRIPTION GA Online Series

Session 2 – October 13, 2020

## Doomsday or Rebirth? A Rebellious Take on European Film's Future

### **Klemen Dvornik:**

Dear all, welcome back to the second session of FERA's general assembly. My name is Klemen Dvornik, I am a film and television director from Slovenia and the chairperson of FERA's board. Our federation of European screen directors is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, and during this time we have grown into a network of 48 organizations as members of 35 countries.

This year's general assembly is taking place in a virtual environment through three sessions – today, our session is titled "Doomsday or rebirth? A rebellious take on European film's future", and it will open with an address of from our former Honorary President and acclaimed Hungarian film director István Szabó.

### **István Szabó:**

Thank you for the honor of being allowed to greet you on the occasion of FERA 40th anniversary.

During the time I served FERA and we had gratifying results, I felt for sure that there was a good reason for the existence of our organization. We can help our colleagues and represent them. That was why my contribution caused me great pleasure.

I hope that the same is valid today but I know that the situation of European film is considerably more difficult today than it used to be in my time. Moreover it seems to be increasingly harder.

When after graduation I entered the film industry and started to work as a director's assistant, on my first day on the job I was overwhelmed with the happiness of stepping into such a wonderful world. I could move in the circle of famous directors of high renown and great actors. I could watch the work from up close – what is more, I could be at their assistance.

It was in the 1960s at a time when the world cinemas were full from America to Asia, if the audience could see the face of Marcello Mastroianni or Sofia Loren, Lola-Brigida, Alain Delon, Jean-Paul Belmondo, Liv Ullmann. European faces conveyed love, jealousy, suffering, injustice, social troubles. The world admired Bicycle Thieves, La Strada, Breathless, La Notte, The Seven Seers, The Loneliness of the Long

Distance Runner, La Dolce Vita, Wild Strawberries and everybody knew the name of Fellini, Antonioni, Bunuel, Bergmann, Godard, Andrzej Wajda, Jancsó then later Tarkovsky and Jiří Menzel.

Those were blessed years, the years of sound film reaching his adulthood, these years of captivating a large audience with real artistic values. And all of this happened to us, here in Europe, the above-mentioned names are all European names. The faces living on cinema screens were European faces.

Today, we probably could not pick one single European face or name which would draw audiences in the world to the cinema. And if by chance there should be a name, we can see it on the poster of an American film.

What happened to our face that nobody is interested in it ? Or what happened to the world that our stories or the way we tell them do not raise interest ? We might not want to change because we are proud of our culture inherited for our ancestors, but why has our face become less interesting when it expresses love like Mastroianni's face did in his time, or jealousy like Liv Ullmann's or Monica Vitti ?

When I started working in a film studio, a significant proportion of the audience wanted art films. Today, film is only a tiny part of the entertainment industry, and the selective audience can only see films matching their taste in ironically or professionally called arthouse movies nowadays in arthouse cinemas with 60 or 70 seats.

There are new opportunities, new spaces for telling our stories. Besides television there is the internet and the ever-changing technologies. Tolstoy's ingenious novel War and Peace was first published as a series in a newspaper in the late 19th century, like a television series today.

But on 28 december 1895, the Lumiere brothers screened their first film shots and ever since the living human face carrying changing emotions and thoughts can be recorded. The way we show it can be of documentary nature. Its expressive force can be of artistic value and this will stay with us forever, just like a piece of fine art music or literature, motion picture exists as a new form of human expression. Nobody can take it away from us.

Whatever new opportunities are provided by technology to record the event of our life, we can still tell our stories about love, jealousy, truth, injustice, life and death. With the help of a radiating, charismatic and living human face, these changing emotions on the screen of motion picture. Do not forget it. This is your enormous power – you can influence people, you can reach miracles.

### **Klemen Dvornik:**

Today's panel will be hosted by Domenico La Porta, who is editor at Cineuropa. Cineuropa is also FERA's partner on these online events. Domenico – the floor is yours.

### **Domenico La Porta:**

Thank you for having me, it's a real pleasure to moderate this event. Cineuropa is indeed partnering with this series of online events, and sadly this is the only way right now to have this kind of discussion, the as sanitary situation is getting difficult again in Europe. Some festivals are holding events and others have to find hybrid or alternative ways to continue to show films and to have this kind of discussions between professionals.

Today we are lucky, we have great speakers – let me introduce them to you.

First we have Agnieszka Holland, Polish director and FERA honorary president, welcome. And then we have Mr Werner Herzog, German director, screenwriter, actor and opera director. We have Hrvoje Hribar, Croatia director and FERA board member. Mr Roberto Olla, Eurimages executive director is with us as well. And last but not least, Marion Döring, European Film Academy director. Welcome to everyone.

We will be starting with each one of you – you have the opportunity to say something and I will ask you to tell us something about the present, today. We have this title for this event that is a little bit like a blockbuster title – Doomsday or Rebirth. It sparkles a lot of imagination but sadly it's not fiction, it's a reality. And this reality is today.

Agnieszka Holland, as FERA Honorary President, you have the honor to start this discussion – the floor is yours.

**Agnieszka Holland:**

Hello everybody. I would be happy to start this discussion in much happier time. We all feel now that the pandemic we are living through is somehow the end of the world we know. We could have the illusion after the first wave that it was an episode in our history and that and it would go away, and that it would not leave too deep changes in our minds and in our economy. But I think now with the second wave or whatever you call it, and anyway with a more violent presence of the virus in our countries, we have to admit that this is a reality we which we have to to accept, and to find the way to live with this reality or to even take some possible advantages of it.

We of course don't know the possible social, political and economical consequences in general. We can be afraid that they will be quite disastrous – but we can also hope that maybe it will be some kind of waking call for humanity to start really take seriously the challenges, dangers and problems we have seen quite clearly in the last years – such as climate change, the rise of the populist and non-democratic governments, and the general confusion of people who are unable to deal with the problems of modernity.

We know one thing – this pandemic is probably the first global experience for the generation which didn't experience great political changes. And that is the chance also for this generation to find some kind of unity. When I'm thinking about the new, the young generations, I'm thinking about the internet and communications revolution, and how the distribution of content and stories is different for them. This generation grew up with and is more and more used to communicate with the world through virtual means, rather staying home and communicating through tablets, computers, smartphones or whatever than going out and choosing some social gathering including going to cinema theaters.

Which means that this change we are all afraid of started before the pandemic. It started with this change of attitude/behavior and new ways to communicate of younger people, and this change can be accelerated in unpredictable ways by the pandemic situation.

So after the internet revolution, after the generational changes in the way to communicate with the world, we are facing a pandemic which is a blow to cinema distribution as we know it. And when theatrical distribution as we know it is endangered, movie financing and is in danger as well.

I'm afraid that we are slightly behind, we independent filmmakers who are attached to the theaters as the best place to present our movies and communicate with our audience. We the creators, and we, the people of our industry. We are a bit behind, like Kodak was behind when they didn't realize that the technological changes were making film obsolete, and it was too late to catch up when they realized it.

I think this is the last chance for us to think about these issues more globally. What can save our cinema ? What can make us attractive for the audience ? What can make us attractive from a financing perspective, and how we can unite our forces and our ideas and our imagination to be prepared and to anticipate problems ?

These several issues – some are very specific, some are more general, more ideological.

What is clear to me, and I think it has to be clear to everybody, is that united we can win. That organizations like FERA, like the European Film Academy, like local academies and different kind organizations which are supporting or imagining cinema at European level, have to really unite their

forces and to fight for a renaissance, for a new chapter of cinema in Europe – and of course in the world, but let's focus on our courtyard for now.

Our members, FERA members, and all filmmakers are now at risk with unemployment and poverty. A lot of productions have stopped, theaters are getting bankrupted and distributors as well. Because the sources of financing for our movies are mostly a mix of public money and taxes from different operators exploiting of our works, we are also at risk regarding money for production which will be shrinking a lot.

Who is the winner of this situation, once production will come to normal, after the virus will have been defeated in some way? The winners of course will be streaming platforms and VOD – and they are mostly American. We've been talking for several year in the European Film Academy about the urgent need to create a powerful paneuropean streaming platform. Of course, our talents are working for Netflix and Amazon, but I don't see that the interest of those platforms will be to really support the production of independent european movies. They can put some money in the production here and there, they can commission content, but it will not be their main goal. Their main goal will be series which are somehow global, even if shot in a particular European or Asian language. The aim of those series will always be the global market and the generic qualities which make them accessible for everybody, without a very strong identity, with young adults audience as their main target.

If we fail to create powerful means to finance such a platform, with support that I imagine could be provided by governments and maybe by the European Union, I am afraid that we are at risk to somehow dilute in this global wave, and what is the best in our cinema may not survive.

The second thing, which is more urgent in terms of creators' survival today, it's to really push to adjust the legal framework regarding royalties payments. FERA did here fantastic work together with the European Commission in this regard and it's essential for legislation to catch up with the current situation. We have to get money from the exploitation of our content, that is absolutely necessary.

And the third thing, which may be the most important, is that we have to rethink our production. We have to rethink the way we are financing films, the way we are producing them, the way we are shooting and writing our movies. We have to be really very original and very courageous in order to attract the audience in this new situation/context. I think that we have to leave our comfort zone, we have to forget a certain laziness of mediocrity, we have to raise the criteria/bar. I think that talent is not enough, we need courage and real flame to attract the audience.

This is what I have to say for now, thank you.

#### **Domenico La Porta:**

Thank you, Agnieszka. Before we move to Werner Herzog, let me remind all participants and people attending this talk that they have the opportunity to use the chat to ask questions, I will try to include them in our discussion with the speakers. Mr Werner Herzog, over to you.

#### **Werner Herzog:**

Thank you. I salute all of you from Los Angeles. I'm living and working here, but not in Hollywood – I want to make the distinction, I'm in the United States and Los Angeles only because I'm happily married here, that's the reason and not Hollywood in my filmmaking.

When we have to make predictions, and we should be very careful about Europe and European cinema, one thing doesn't need/mean any profits and that's the United Kingdom leaving the European Union, which in a way affects me because many of my last films, in particular some of my documentaries, were co-produced with British co-producers and partners. Where are they gonna go ? What is the legislation,

can we still collaborate with them as if Brexit didn't exist? We do not know but we know the United Kingdom is going to leave.

What is going to happen to British film? I do not know but I'm worried a little bit that there might be an even more intense hollywoodization of British cinema, whereas I would love to see more regional cinema and that does not only mean British cinema, I would like to see films from marginal areas like a film in Gaelic, a film in Bavarian dialect. Last night on purpose I re-watched Ermanno Olmi's *The Tree of Wooden Clogs* which in 1978 won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes film festival. It is a film which is absolutely wonderful, in the dialect of Bergamo – even for Italian audiences, it has to be subtitled in Italian.

It's very hard to understand for anyone else, but there's something regional – and regional doesn't mean regional in substance – the film is so beautiful because it is so truthful and it is something universal. When you look at Bengali films from 1955, Satyajit Ray's *Apu Trilogy*, all of a sudden tiny village near Calcutta becomes a universe of cinema, and it has worked. So I would like to see films from Scotland, I want to see friends from Bergamo, from Sicily, I want to see films that have something very specific, regional not pan-European. I think that that could be one of the strengths, if we go and discover our intimate identity through the intimacy of the identity all of a sudden we become much more universal.

I would like to speak about the shift into the digital world. Of course all of us know it and Agnieszka Holland has spoken clearly about it but I hope we will have some sort of a new culture of viewing theaters or cinema by home theaters, very large screens on our own world, good sound systems, inviting friends for having dinner and then we'll watch a film. That it may bring a new culture – not everything is a completely gloomy and doomsday scenario as we have seen in the title of this encounter.

However we have to bear certain things in mind. Here is what I experienced – I asked the 14-year old daughter of one of my actresses recently – which of the films of your mother have you seen? She said hardly any one, I shouldn't see my own mother on a screen. And I said screen? What do you mean by screen? Have you been in the theater? No, no, no we do not go to the theaters. And then I said what does it mean, we? Well me and my friends, my girlfriends. Why don't you go to the theaters anymore? And she says, and I think it's significant, she said – because it is dark and because we do not know anyone around us. That's a very significant point that struck me very deeply, and I have to think about this.

Of course we know and we have to face the fact that many of the 14-15 year-old kids are watching films on their cellphones, somehow their brain – and my brain has started to get some training, I can translate this small screen into a large sort of image. How that functions, I do not know, but it can be learned – but it should not be our goal. What is alarming for example is that now some of these 15 year-olds watch a film on their cellphone and they accelerate it to one and a half times the speed – many of them are doing it.

We have to face it what's coming at us of course and what can we do? We should not of course have accelerated storytelling in our own movies. We go with the rhythm of our own heartbeat and of our cultural traditions, that's what we have to do. And of course we will not have exclamation marks of a car explosion every 15 seconds instead of every 30 seconds.

We also have to anticipate something which shouldn't be discussed excessively here in this forum, as everybody speaks about financing of productions – financing has become very easy nowadays, you can make your feature film for no money at all. In my last feature film which I shot in Japan, an expensive country, most of it in Tokyo – *Family Romance*, a narrative feature film for literally no money. I was my own cinematographer, I had a team of three, and the film was shown at the Cannes film festival, it's good for big screens. So production – you can shoot a film nowadays, a credible feature film on your own cellphone. I do not advise it but this is possible.

The problem, the real problem is distribution. And what Agnieszka has hinted at could maybe be some sort of a European streaming platform, a little bit like for example the Sundance channel which is

promoting and widening the scope of a film festival. It could be for a whole – not only countries, but a whole region like Europe.

I can give you an example, Filmverlag der Autoren – a platform for film distribution of the authors themselves in Germany, in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s and then it dwindled away. It was a platform of the filmmakers as a distributor. The problem of this was that, as it came from ourselves and was created by the filmmakers, everyone had equal access to it and here came the disenfranchising ourselves with our audience – because every single piece of garbage had to be accepted. So if let's say a streaming platform is being created for European based cinema, the real caveat, the real problem is going to be how can we be selective so that we weed out the garbage? And that's a deep, deep, deep problem. And still I'm thinking about something like a European streaming platform, something that your organization should contemplate to start.

I can only advise from outside, because I'm not member of your organization, and I don't even know whether I'm a European filmmaker – my traditions are European but they are much more Bavarian. I represent Bavarian cinema the same way Fassbinder was Bavarian or Achternbusch is Bavarian, so I maintain this kind of cultural identity and it has carried me through all the rough waters and through all the cliffs in the ocean.

I have no answer, I can only hope that European cinema is going to find its voice and it actually does – it does regionally because there's a basic solidarity in Europe. Everybody's always bemoaning the politics in the European Union and the divisions and the Brexit and all this. But we have to face it, the European Union is the biggest practiced peace project that has ever been in world history – nothing of this magnitude has ever been practiced, so we should never lose it out of sight. And I think basic solidarity has made it possible that small countries, too small for their culture and language, all of a sudden have their voice. Romanian cinema, Danish cinema, Austrian cinema. So that's one of the big tasks and I want to see the voice of wonderful Romanian filmmakers and we can see them, they have shown their films at the big festivals. But of course again, it is more a regional trend, and we should not lose the regions out over a pan-European sort of culture. Okay, I'll be around for the discussion.

**Domenico La Porta:**

Thank you very much. There are already themes that are popping up out of this talk and curation is one of them, curation and visibility of work. Marion Döring, I introduced you last but you now have the possibility to speak before the two males that are coming after you –because unfortunately we don't have parity on this panel.

The European Film Academy has also this wonderful tool which is the European Film Awards, it's a great way to select films, to show films, to pinpoint/highlight some of the cream of the cream like we say in French. Can you tell us a little bit what is the European Film Academy's take on everything that is happening right now?

**Marion Döring:**

First of all, I would like to congratulate the FERA members on behalf of the European Film Academy on the 40th anniversary. We all wish the circumstances to celebrate such important event could have been better, and whatever drink we may have chosen to toast on FERA in these days, COVID-19 has poured a bitter taste into every glass. Not only are we – and are you – not allowed coming together to celebrate, to make ambitious plans and to dream for impossible things to come to life – no, whatever we do, whatever we think is suddenly overruled by big question marks.

The only comforting experience in this situation is that we are all in the same boat. Today for example we, the European Film Academy had to announce that the European Film Awards will have to be

presented online and only online, without a live audience. From Berlin instead of Reykjavík, which we have all so much been looking for. However sometimes in bad news there are also good news, and the good news are that Iceland will host the European Film Awards in 2022.

I think that all we can do in this pandemic is not to let ourselves being pulled down by our worries. And the worries are big, because it is too early to find the appropriate answers to the challenges that we will be facing. We cannot estimate at this moment how long the pandemic will last, nor do we know how complex and sustainable the damages will be.

What we do know however is that a lot is at stake, we heard that already, and that we will have to be flexible, inventive and yes, as you are mentioning it in the title of this discussion, we have to be rebellious if we want to find a new formula for the future, for our future.

There's only one answer to your question, whether this is doomsday or rebirth – and that is we have to join forces, to make sure it will be rebirth and nothing else. And it's all a lot is on us. We are facing a great, maybe a historic upheaval and we will only be able to master it if we are looking beyond our own personal needs, and beyond the needs of the individual needs of our professional departments, and last but not least beyond our pure national interests – which we can all observe now in the debate around COVID-19 in this time.

Building the future after the pandemic will require new thinking, it may even mean having to leave the familiar patterns of echo and funding systems that we could rely on for several decades. EFA, which is representing a wide scope of european cinema is ready to take a responsibility in that, in taking this task. The diversity of its members, both by professions and by countries, already defines the potential role that EFA can take in the process and that is the role of a mediator.

But let me come back to the anniversary of FERA which is why we are here. We all know reaching 40 is anyhow the moment when one has to decide if she or he wishes to live a life without surprises, or whether she or he is ready to leave the comfort zone and to set off for new shores. I'm sure FERA belongs to the latter group, so once again happy birthday and good luck.

#### **Domenico La Porta:**

Thank you very much. Indeed it's talent but it's also luck and as you said, what's happening right now is very unlucky, but out of unlucky situations sometimes – most of the times, luck can rise and create something unexpected when you go out of your comfort zone.

I really want to end the first round of discussion with a filmmaker, as we started it with a filmmaker – so Hrvoje, you will speak after Mr Roberto Olla, representing Eurimages. It's also very interesting to have you here in this discussion, because we spoke about curation –you were saying before we started that Eurimages is having a round of selection of films right now, it's all about finding the right talents, finding the right projects and create them. I guess Eurimages is also impacted by the current crisis, so I will let you tell us a little bit about that.

#### **Roberto Olla:**

Thank you for inviting me first of all, and happy birthday to FERA. This is a wonderful occasion to speak about the future, make an assessment of what has happened until now, and what we hope will happen in the future.

Every time something difficult happens to me in Eurimages, and let me tell you it happens every day, I try to tell myself – if you cannot avoid it, try to embrace it and to turn it into something if not always useful but that at least works for Eurimages.

I agree 100% with Agnieszka saying the trend that we are seeing now amplified because of COVID-19 started earlier. The problems that we are seeing right now, for example cinemas being empty – today because people are scared of COVID-19, but we had a problem with filling cinemas before COVID-19 as well, for different reasons. And the reasons – I can't list them all, I probably don't even know them all – but one of the reasons is that the opportunities to watch films today are multiplied.

I'm 53 years old. When I was at the university in Sardinia, I remember I could watch arthouse films in one and only cinema in town, and there was only that opportunity for me to see the films of directors that were not in the commercial network of cinemas. Today, the equivalent of Roberto in the 1980s can have access to films in different ways, not only in cinema. You may say films are made for cinema, that's where they should be celebrated and watched – I agree 100% but today, one thing does not exclude the other and there are opportunities to see films in other ways. Films that before physically could not reach the audience can be found by an audience that is interested in that kind of cinema.

What I'm trying to say is that I always try to see the glass half full, even though I understand that now the industry is in deep crisis financially, because the market is not investing anymore, Agnieszka mentioned it – there is only public money available, and the private money is not taking risks. That's evident. I don't have a recipe to solve this, I think the governments should stop looking at cinema as the cherry on the cake of the culture, cinema is also an industry and like an industry, it should be supported in all its aspects. So subsidies are necessary, but they don't resolve the problem of COVID-19 today.

Domenico, you were mentioning that we are in the middle of a selection process, and we're receiving still many applications for projects mostly financed by public funds and by public broadcasters. There is not much more money around, and this has to be dealt with, we cannot hide from it.

Again, I believe that COVID-19 has amplified, as Agnieszka was saying before, a crisis that was already present. What do we do with this? Do we weep on ourselves and think this is the end of cinema? Are we taking the opportunity maybe to change our future? We do not want to become like Kodak, Agnieszka said it, but there are a lot of examples like this – think of Nokia for mobile phones and so on. I think that in any sector, if you do not balance between innovation and exploitation, you become old and people are not interested in you anymore.

Leaving the comfort zone, you said that Agnieszka and Marion, we have a duty to do that – I don't even think we have the choice. There was this dichotomy before between very arthouse films and the point of view of the author on the one hand, and then very commercial films with a larger audience on the other. Then TV series appeared, and they showed that you can have quality, an unique point of view and an audience at the same time.

I think there's a lot of work to be done towards that direction – don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that all authors should sell themselves to a commercial way of making films. But the way cinema was seen in the past cannot survive today, and we have to deal with this in a way in another, including by sheltering arthouse filmmakers and voices because they need to survive and to exist and to be seen, both in cinema and in other forms of exploitation of audiovisual works.

Werner Herzog mentioned it before, I don't know how but we are missing a big video-on-demand platforms in Europe, we're just missing it. Of course, as Agnieszka was saying, Netflix or Amazon are commissioning projects in every single European country, but that does not make the European industry self-sufficient, and we are not the owner of our own content anymore.

So I think there is a lot to be done, I think this COVID-19 crisis has accelerated a crisis that was already present and we have no choice but to react now. Otherwise we'll end up like Kodak.

**Domenico La Porta:**

Thank you. Hrvoje, your intervention is interesting because you're a FERA board member, you're a filmmaker but you also worked on an institutional level in Croatia, in the Croatian film center. You have a perspective from multiple angles, so what can you tell us about the situation today? How does it affect you ?

**Hrvoje Hribar:**

Well, this situation right now at 17:47 is making me very excited because if it is a doomsday, it's a doomsday in such a fantastic company that I'm really thrilled and I really thank everybody for agreeing to congregate in this Zoom cloud today.

We are very happy to have Agnieszka Holland to lead us, and to have Werner Herzog persuaded to assist us in our mind exercise, and I'm also very glad to be able to see this recording of István Szabó who looks so green, so vertical and so healthy in telling us these words of commands. In the beginning of this rebellious debate, as it was announced, did you notice that István was not really very rebellious? István was substantially sad. He gave us an image of an extremely sad, matured man and he came up with some arguments which really proved his sadness. He came up with some ideas that we had in our thoughts about why European film is not so sexy anymore etc etc, and in all of what he said, he didn't mention one thing – he didn't mention the virus, he didn't mention the COVID-19. He didn't mention the doomsday we are talking about – the Tuesday doomsday.

He was all focused on a pre-existing doomsday, and we are now faced an additional one connected to this pestilence. What's obvious is that we have learnt a lot of from this situation, because we've been warned, humanity has been warned by science fiction authors and scientists – we knew it was going to be either a comet or a volcano or a virus, and finally it was a virus. And the virus is actually very timid – it's a low-key virus, it's not the nine monkeys, it took him six months to kill a million people – and yet we are completely lost, because we are very vulnerable. Our societies are vulnerable and our profession, our industry is vulnerable too and we are hit very much. If I had to explain it to kid, I would say – we are hit because we are traveling artists, because we travel, we travel to our sets, we travel to build the basis of each of our productions, we travel to get funding.

From the perspective a small country, if you've been listening to Teona last Tuesday, she was very clear about this – you need to travel to fundraise, you need workshops and you need funds. Coming from small country, you're actually collecting, gleaning the money that's left from the bigger funds or the bigger parts of the industry, and if you can't travel, you're in trouble.

And then the festivals – we need festivals to get this confirmation of what we are doing. We need festivals to travel there to wrap up the cycle of life of this European art film that we know so well. We all live in this zoo or in this Serengeti of European art film.

So this is not the doomsday of our world, it's the doomsday of our rituals, of our routines, of our comfort zones, of our ways you know that we've been accustomed to and obviously we have to try to use this situation to get out of the box.

One of the good sides of the whole thing is that in the beginning of the crisis, we started to talk and think and meet more often, we became digital and so we became closer than before – at least in exchanging ideas. And there was a hope six, seven months ago that maybe there would be some happy end, that we would be forced to take a step back and then we would find a better way to discover something new.

The fairy tale really didn't happen but six months have passed and we can observe certain things, and these things are interesting. I'm still thrilled also by the crisis itself, because as István proves with his initial sadness, something had to come to make us move and to see what we can do you.

The whole humanity is sharing one virus, but our societies are not the same, our industries are not the same. The way the American industry is affected is not the same as how the European industry is

affected, and I think that we have an opportunity within our routines, within our institutions – it's not by chance that we are having represented today these two amazing crossroads of European films: here is Mr Olla and this amazing Eurimages, and the European Film Academy with Marion. By using these crossroads, we can really contribute to do something, to lift up the level of our co-productions and to move on.

The permanent influx of American industrial film is now halted, so there is some space for European cinema, for European films in European cinemas. And some countries took advantage of it, as we shall probably talk about later in the debate. So there are also some good news. There is an immense amount of rebate money usually available for American crews is left there unused, which is an opportunity for European projects, for European TV series etc. But we must move, we must push, we must go ahead. Six, seven months have passed and I think we should stir our brains a little bit and we could get somewhere.

### **Domenico La Porta:**

Well, let me take your last words – you say we must move, you also said it took this virus to make us move. You are projecting yourself in the future already, but the situation today is that we are all paralyzed. We are all in different places talking online, shootings are not happening because insurance companies cannot provide sufficient guarantee for the artists to work, so platforms like Netflix that have private funding able to fund and guarantee those shootings are taking advantage of that situation. We want to move but are we really moving right now? And as you said it's been six to eight months, this is a huge paralysis.

So the discussion will be about that of course, and something else that I want to pick up out of your intervention and that other people have said as well – you mentioned the fact that the virus is not hitting the world the same way. It's not hitting Belgium like it's hitting Italy or the us for example, but it's still a global a global thing that happened, and if you take world war ii for example it did not affect the world the same way. It affected the world, yet everybody was touched differently.

I think three of you mentioned the comfort zone – we fought for that comfort zone after world war ii, we wanted cultural diversity, we wanted exceptional notions such as the cultural exception in France and in other places in Europe. This contributed to overproduction, everybody, as it was said, is able to make a film today and it's a chance in one way, but it's also a curse because there are not enough screens for all of those films. So again, we need curators, we need people able to put those films in front of the right audience, in front of the right eyeballs.

As a conclusion of this first round of interventions, let's say that the threat is global, last time we had a global threat was actually the second world war I would say, and yet we are in a paralysis that is lasting quite long now. So my first question to you all, and I encourage the person that is the most inspired by this to answer first, is – what can we do now? What can we learn from the past but do today, right now, after six or eight months of paralysis? Roberto, are you are you changing something at Eurimages, are you keeping the same kind of editorial line when you are selecting project, or is COVID-19 in your mind somewhere and are you changing your perspective on the project that you are receiving?

### **Roberto Olla:**

What we have done is change radically the way we work. Eurimages, like the EFA, is a collective body so we have 41 countries sitting around the table and taking decisions on which film should be supported. We used to do it physically until COVID-19 hit the world and if we had waited until travels could happen again and borders re-opened, we would not have had any new support decision taken.

Instead we have changed our regulations, now we can meet online and take decisions so that the producer can keep on making films. It is not correct that there are no shootings today by the way, there

are. The additional cost is between 10 and 20% in average because the COVID-19 health and safety protocols cost money. They make everything slower but are necessary to make sure that everybody is secure and it makes things extra complicated.

Some countries have found national level solutions to have the production insured. And everybody tried to have a European magic formula for helping also those countries that did not or could not take such initiatives because they did not have the strength to have the insurance companies covering pandemics as well in the future.

What I would like to say is that the problem today of Europe is the lack of Europe, meaning that if the European Union does not have a competence to act in certain sectors or areas, they cannot invent the competence from day one to day two. It is something that should be coming from national governments that transfer such competences at European level. That is the basic functioning formula which seems not to be working today – the pandemic is an example. You have seen that the borders were open and closed individually. Why? Because there is no such a thing as European competence on that, there is no such a thing as health-related measures at a European level.

So what we are learning today is that in order to be stronger, we need to be a little bit more European than we were before COVID-19 happened. That, Domenico, does not answer the question as to what can we do now, today.

Today we realize that we have huge weaknesses and then we have to deal with them as quickly as possible, because the future probably holds similar situation like this one. The only few measures that we took, that are probably not sufficient but what we could take, is the following: when the theaters were closed in all over Europe because of the lockdowns, films could not be screened. The last installment of Eurimages financial support given for the making of the film is tied to theatrical release, and we considered during that period a VOD release as equivalent of the theatrical release. It may sound like an easy measure to take but let me tell you it was not easy, because we did not want to give the idea that cinema exploitation is equivalent to VOD exploitation – because it's not. But we did not want for producers that had taken risk in making a film they could not release because of a condition that went to beyond their control, to be pushed into bankruptcy somehow.

The decisions of financial support we take that are normally valid for 12 months are now valid for 20 months, because we know that some shootings cannot happen immediately as programmed for the reason that you just mentioned, Domenico.

The validity of the decision is longer also in terms of repayment – Eurimages gives out loans that are paid back through the revenues generated by the films that we support. If producers cannot repay in one installment because of liquidity problems, we decided to allow several installments in longer periods so that it could help them surviving in this difficult period.

But Domenico I didn't answer your question – are we changing the content that we are supporting? In terms of process, Eurimages is a collective body taking decisions collectively. I am in line one hundred percent with what Agnieszka was saying – that we need to adapt and this COVID-19 crisis has accelerated something that already existed, but not everybody agrees with that. So I'm not sure what will happen in the near future, the only thing I can tell you is that if we do not change, and Werner Herzog pointed it out earlier, the distribution of films will be a serious problem, even though we produce those films, meaning that through public money we end up making them possible. But how can people see them? It's like a book in a library – if you don't even know it exists, it's like it was never written because you don't have access to it. So we have to collectively think how to react. I don't have the magic solution but I agree with the fact that we need to react.

**Domenico La Porta:**

Agnieszka, you have a comment on what Roberto just said?

## **Agnieszka Holland:**

It's very difficult to think about the present because it is changing so quickly. I think that we all need some kind of distance to judge the situation and to come up not with panicky, quick solutions, but with a deeper understanding of the situation and revolutionary ideas.

Now the pandemic is, I agree with you, a global experience which is very exciting actually, because it can create unity. At the same time, when you are analyzing the past, it is very strange how the last global pandemic which was the Spanish flu, after the World War I, was forgotten in such a big way. A few years ago, I was researching about it before doing Mr Jones on the internet and there actually were very few mentions of it on Google. A huge amount of material existed about World War I, a lot of it was about the deep economic crisis, the great recession, about fascism, World War II, the Holocaust and so on – yet the Spanish flu, which took more lives probably than the first and second wars together, vanished from the global conscience. At the same time, I'm pretty sure it somehow entered the psychological and social tissue of humanity and had some repercussions which we never really worked on.

That is really interesting, and I think it will be really interesting to observe now with this new pandemic, as it is not – so far at least – as dangerous and as deadly as other past pandemics from the past, to try to understand how we can take advantage of it.

That represents a huge scientific and intellectual work, but also work of the imagination, and artists and filmmakers have proved many times in the past that the biggest capital they have, that we have, and which can be one of the biggest capitals of humanity, is imagination. So let's, let your imagination to work.

Regarding distribution, which is key – because Werner was right, we can make our movies very cheaply. I'm receiving scripts now which have a "COVID friendly" stamp on their front page – it means that there will be a new category of films, mostly low budget films in one or two or three interiors, one exterior, three, four characters at most, no crowds, not big production value etc. We had some films like that in the past, for example Locke or The Guilty two years ago, which were wonderful films, very entertaining and very well made, very interesting and exactly on this wave. I cannot imagine that we can make only movies like that, but why not? Why not now really fight for the quality of the imagination and the quality of the writing?

The fact that we neglected to develop a European platform and the relationship between the institutions of European cinema and platforms like Netflix and Amazon is our great sin. And I think that we are guilty in front of our colleagues and younger generations, frankly, that we've been so lazy in fighting that battle. For example, remember Cannes a few years ago, when two or three movies produced by Netflix were in competition, and this huge wave of opposition – never, no streaming platforms movies in our Cannes competition, fuck them. They are exactly like the dinosaurs, they are exactly like Kodak – because at that moment Netflix needed festivals. At that moment, Netflix needed us, and to have the opportunity to showcase another kind of products. Now they don't need us anymore, now we can beg, asking please, please finance my very original and very unique film. And they this will say ah maybe, come back later. It means we didn't understand where we were.

We cannot afford it anymore, we have to be ahead of the time – not behind the time. And we have to understand one thing – Europe is in very poor state. In many countries, we have authoritarian – if not worse, populist – if not worse – governments and I'm speaking unfortunately about my native Poland and about Hungary, for example. Let's see about the United States and pray that Donald Trump will lose the elections, if not we will have crooks like that in many more countries. Charlatans like that, if I can use the name of my last film. The European Union, even with the best people, is tied by the treaties, it means solutions for the most important issues are tied by this kind of liberum veto/unanimity voting rule, and those jerks can block any interesting and innovative regulation very easily. And they they want to do it.

So I think that we have to unite as different professions, different branches in the European way, but not with the governments or the European Union institutions – we have to create a web and make pressure. Of course, we are not the miners in 1970s, we are only filmmakers but we can be acoustic, we have a voice and we have to create a web and create pressure. I think this is what we have to do.

**Domenico La Porta:**

Thank you. We will go first with Mr Werner Herzog and then Hrvoje, I will give you the floor afterwards.

**Werner Herzog:**

Agnieszka, I think you're completely right – we cannot expect anything from politics. Of course Europe, the European Union is full of contradictions and full of schisms and trends and things that should not affect our work. We have to become self-reliant, we have to become more rogue, more guerrilla film style, and I think the guerrillas should somehow unite, the European guerrilla filmmakers.

And it's a situation a little bit like with global warming, our planet being destroyed. You do not wait for politics to solve it – it's a hopeless thing because whatever happens, all of a sudden the United States leave the Paris accord. These things cannot be expected from politics. It has to start with everyone ourselves, and that means we can do a lot in the United States, in Western countries. 40 or 45 percent of our food is being thrown away – just imagine the amount of growing things and raising cattle and cool houses and transportation and plastic created. And so you just don't wait for politics – manage your own fridge and do not waste things. The problem is that we are too many people on this planet, one and a half times too many already in my opinion, and of course all of them are in a consumerist attitude. Reduced consumerism – for example I drive my car only 10% of what I used to do years ago. I have one pair of shoes, I do not need a second one. So it's very easy and the same thing with cinema.

We have to reduce our ways of how we are doing it. COVID friendly – we should not do a film with only four persons in one room, that would be silly. But of course we have to reduce our teams, our crews. A film like Aguirre, the Wrath of God which has hundreds of extras, costumes and Spanish conquistadores in search of El dorado in the Amazon jungle. It's a film that had eight crew members, eight people and the grand total of the budget was three hundred sixty thousand dollars. A film like Fitzcarraldo, which had in one sequence 5.000 extras but I didn't even have an assistant director and the entire crew of Fitzcarraldo which is a huge production, moving a ship over a mountain, building two identical ships, having camps for 1.100 extras, the entire grand total crew was 16.

We have to become more intelligent in how we apply our resources, how we are maneuvering and of course films like Fitzcarraldo couldn't have been made without a solid amount of criminal energy. For example creating fraudulent shooting permits, doing things outside some of the strictures of legality – of course legality in the context of a military government at that time, of Aguirre.

So you roll up your sleeves and reduce your crews. Don't reduce the amount of actors that you have, you can – I think we can function and we shouldn't complain about it and we should not work for the particular COVID friendly movies. Just be more intelligent and outsmart the situation without becoming irresponsible.

**Domenico La Porta:**

Hrvoje, you wanted to say something and Marion I saw you as well.

**Hrvoje Hribar:**

Even more now after this wonderful intervention. Domenico, I just wanted to start on our database, maybe we're not on the same page with the fact-finding. Like in some card game, I have a need to line up the positive points – it's not only the basic Christian hope or Sunday school hope that something good will come out of the misery, but some good things are happening. If there is a proof that the kind of film we believe in is resisting and surviving, you have it here in picture. You saw this courageous man who was talking before me, and you see Agnieszka Holland – they're amazing survivors of all changes, of the all terms, of technology, of fashion, of taste, of politics, they're still on. They work and they're at the helm at least of their dreams, of their careers.

And talking about this situation right now, in the atmosphere of this poor Europe that you depicted so well as being politically shabby and united etc etc – but still, we have our public systems. I wouldn't really argue about public funding – well I know that Roberto didn't argue for it either, he's longing for private investments. The fact that we have it actually made us operational, and if you compare what's happening in the American industry and what's happening on this continent, on this side of Atlantic it's much easier because yes, we do shoot films the films are being produced because European films are cheap. We can take risks. We have the security net of public funding. We are a little bit barbarian in COVID protocols, so it's not really an addition 20%, it's more like four percent for shooting. Who will survive, who will die we don't know, but we are producing films.

Then also there was this emptiness in cinemas, and organized countries like France and Denmark I think, it also happened in Scandinavia – some films really scored extraordinary attendance. There is one Danish film that will probably get to one million attendees – this is the bizarre momentum of this whole situation.

We have such a wonderful thing like a general health insurance, they don't have it in America and it creates a great problem between unions and employers, producers etc. So there is a little hold there, that's also affecting production for the platforms.

I think that we should really not look to the future but try to act now – I'm able to give you a recipe on how to do it, but I'm thinking of some offensive on the promotion of European film in cinemas, in television. Okay, we don't like politicians but we need them. We have dictators in East Europe again – the last time we had dictators, they were investing in cinema – now it's different and it's difficult, but I think that we can try to make our promotional instruments like the European Film Academy stronger, louder and create some common idea about this white whale, about this holy grail.

Because we all feel like that we had a European cinema that we lost. That's what István started with, and I can end my contribution with this: it's the fact that every truck driver at the time had a Brigitte Bardot pin up poster in his truck, and everybody was nicknamed – policemen were nicknaming each other Delon or Belmondo. Everybody knew who they were – we had this fantastic talk from Liv last Tuesday: everybody knows who Liv Ullmann is, yet she never was a Catwoman, she was never a Lara Croft – she's a dramatic actress from Oslo and everybody on Earth knew her.

I know the world change, the audience change, it's not only about cinema – if the kid now say it's dark in a cinema and I don't know anybody so I won't go there, we are in trouble because that's why we went to the cinema – because it's dark and we don't know anybody. This is a very difficult contrast, but I think that we should try to step on it, and to give some energy to what we are doing, to believe in it.

Maybe I'm a bad character or maybe I'm too much in advertising, but I really think that – I don't say that we can create a need, but we can really make people understand what they need because people are not stupid – our audience is not stupid. You can see it in festivals, you can see it around the corner: people can get educated, let's have them go back to the classics, let's teach, let's ask them what they think, why they think it was so popular then. They didn't see these films – let's push European film on them a little bit, and I think we could we could end up with something.

**Domenico La Porta:**

Thank you. Yes, it's all about context of course, and when Agnieszka was saying that she receives scripts COVID friendly, there's another type of films that are COVID friendly in the opposite way. You mentioned a Danish film that is making one million entry in Denmark, I guess you are talking about Another Round from Thomas Vinterberg. I met with Thomas last week in Cologne for a masterclass, and he told me in private that actually his film is super COVID friendly because it's a film about celebration, about going out, about drinking, about celebrating with friends – all the things that we are craving for right now, that are restricted. It's like making a film about freedom in the context of a war. So even this film that was made in a context that had nothing to do with COVID happened at the right time.

Marion, you wanted to say something.

**Marion Döring:**

I think we have all become victims of a mentality according which everything has to grow. I mean all the time, whenever we apply also for public funds, we have to prove we have more followers, more likes, you have to invent something new, you have to be innovative. You will not get any public funds if you don't prove that the project is growing and growing and growing. And I think we are eating ourselves up like that.

We should take the chance, the big chance which this COVID-19 pandemic is offering – we can take a breath and we should rethink our values. We should get slower also, and I completely trust the fantasy and the creativity of the filmmakers, but we also need to create a proper framework for what they do.

And I agree also with the fact that we need a platform. The younger generation unfortunately is not going to the theaters anymore, as much as we would like to see them in the cinema, so we need it for them but also for many people who live in regions where there are no theaters anymore. We have to show them our films, a platform is overdue.

And we all know that creating such a platform takes time – we can't wait until the end of pandemic which may take another one or two years before we start the whole process which would involve a lot of clearing of rights issues, etc etc. We know very well what it means to create such a platform, so we have to start now.

What Hrvoje said is also important, we have to invest in the next generation of our audience. Which we do for example with the EFA young audience award where we can see that there is a hunger for European film, kids love to watch these films and they love to see films which are not so accessible also. They want to see interesting stories which are not the typical popcorn films that they are mostly used to see in cinema.

I think we have to use the moment that we are in now, to take a breath, having so many question marks but starting at least with a couple of things like a platform, now, because we can't wait it will be too late. It will take eight years in the end – two years of crisis, at least six years until all the rights cleared, and then how will the look in the world look in eight years? We don't know so we have to start now, really.

**Werner Herzog:**

I believe it could be started by a single country. I don't think we need to wait for the entire European Union to bring it to a vote and to establish it if a single country starts it. The problem of the platform is not so much creating it in the legal form and in the technical aspects – representation of each individual country, balancing the amount of population from each country or whatever. That's going to be an endless debate which will not take us anywhere. It should be started spontaneously and attract more and more other European countries and we do have very very good examples. And that is the Filmverlag der Autoren in Germany, where the curation of it was a problem.

And how do you do that, how do you create something that has a certain vehemence? That's all that makes us survive for a long time – Agnieszka for example with her films, and in my case too. It's a question of vehemence of vision and it doesn't matter whether we are in the late 1960s in the student rebellion and the imminent socialism coming to the world, in whatever we have seen this in that and the other trends. It doesn't matter, we still make our films because the vision is clear and the vehemence of what we have to say is obvious and that always will find its outlet. But I'm speaking of something we have all in common, I should not speak about myself alone.

We do have a European household – some sort of a European culture. The culture of the Occident/the West and of course, that is what is the pulse, that's a heartbeat of what we have to do. But creating a platform through ballots and common political consensus is going to be endless. I think a country like Latvia should start it, whatever and invite others. I want to see Estonian films, I want to see films from Bulgaria and the funny thing is all of a sudden in my case, all the emails I get today come from 15-16 year-olds from Missoula, Montana who haven't seen a film of mine in the cinema theater for three decades but through availability and streaming platforms and on the internet, all of a sudden it's young people who are attracted, and all of a sudden a young lady from Botswana in South Africa gets fascinated.

So we do have a reach through a streaming platform that could be worldwide, not just here for European cinema. It should be, we should aim out to the world and of course we shouldn't be nostalgic and bemoan the wonderful times of Mastroianni and Brigitte Bardot and Liv Ullmann. They are not coming back. What we'll see today or in the future is big Bollywood stars or some Chinese action kung fu stars or whatever. Those are the archetypes of the cinema of the future. It doesn't matter. We do not need to complain, just roll up the sleeves and somehow a streaming platform I think is more necessary than anything else.

**Domenico La Porta:**

That's very interesting because there's a report from the European Audiovisual Observatory that has just been released, saying that 40.000 of European films are available on 367 platforms – so we have VOD platforms, we have too many of them. Most of them were funded publicly without risk assessment, without the way Netflix was funded or the way Amazon was funded, so it's a different policy.

**Werner Herzog:**

Quality assessment – for example a friend of mine is submitting a film to the Sundance film festival. 24.000 submissions are there now, so who makes the quality assessment? And in the 40.000 European films, 39.800 of them are garbage. And even in the selection of Cannes, 90% is garbage. In the selection of Sundance, in the final creme de la creme of the 24.000 applications submissions, most of it will be garbage.

**Domenico La Porta:**

Yes, it's still about the curation. And Mr Herzog, it's also interesting to point out that in this report, you are in the top three of directors who have the most titles represented – you have 46 films on VOD platforms, and there's basically just Godard and an Italian director on top of you so you are very well represented on VOD, you have some kind of outreach but I guess when you are talking about platforms, when you are talking about a single platform, you are talking about a competitor to those big streaming platforms that are Americans. A place where we would put all of our effort to compete and to reach the audience that is our audience, of course. Agnieszka, I see you burning to speak.

**Agnieszka Holland:**

Well we have plenty of platforms such as library platforms etc. But the platform we need has to be curated because if not, you will not have information about the content and you will not recognize what has high quality and what doesn't.

I would not say that there so much garbage, Werner, but there are a lot of mediocre things and we've talked about this already – the quality is our main tool, courage and innovation are our main tools.

We need platforms which are curated, but we also need platforms which are able to produce content, to finance content – it's what Netflix, Amazon, Apple, Hulu, HBO of course, the best one, and others do as they are growing. They are producing content, they own this content and they can make the money with it.

And of course, Werner, this content is not only for European audiences, it has to be global if we want in, if we want to make our cinema, our production, our art alive – but it has to be generated from our point of view and from our experience as artists and citizens, with our own particular history.

Europe, which is the union of so many talents, so many values, so many experience on all levels, due to some kind of laziness in science, in distribution of art, in new technologies, stays behind China, South Korea or the United States. If we do not change, we will just disappear – slowly but surely.

**Domenico La Porta:**

Thank you. Roberto, I saw you raise your hand –

**Roberto Olla:**

I'll try to summarize what I wanted to say – I think what we are talking about, the need for an initiative to distribute or to make this content available European level beyond cinemas, is an old problem. In the 1990s, I don't know if you remember, there was this idea that Europe should have a distribution network similar to the US. It was the Polygram period, and everybody believed that a film should be theatrically released in every single country in Europe through the same distribution pipeline, so our fragmentation in Europe would be somehow sidestepped by the creation of a distribution network more or less like in the US.

It did not happen. They tried but there was not such a thing as a group that could invest so much, that would take so much risk in distributing films so that they would be seen and appreciated in a different way, in the different corners in Europe. However, looking back in history to see what has been tried in the past, and maybe learn from previous mistakes, in my opinion there is a fantastic example in the sector of television – a bit of a miracle in terms of quality and that is ARTE. As a broadcaster, it is probably not the most successful one, because it has to compete with commercial and also local public broadcasters that have a lot more means, and yet it co-produces many of the films that Eurimages supports in terms of quality arthouse filmmaking.

And I agree when we say we cannot wait for the all European Union or even all the Council of Europe members to get together and agree on something, it will never happen – probably all of us will not be here anymore physically if that one day will happen. But the initiative of few countries together can make the difference, and I agree with Agnieszka when she said such a VOD platform cannot only be a platform that is making content available, because as you said Domenico – there are so many already, and we never seem to know which platform is available in which country. You would need a database to tell you where to find the content, then find a subscription to the right VOD platform to see the film – that is too complicated, and millennials don't want complicated things, they just want to turn on the computer and find it.

I'm not saying that a video-on-demand platform like ARTE will solve all the problems of our lives, but I think it would be a start for something different. A platform where quality is the main criterion for

selection, that has strong communication and a strong editorial policy, that can make European content and also diversity in general, it doesn't have to be European in the old-fashioned way, palatable.

Hrvoje, I agree with you – you cannot do this if there is not a minimum education in schools on audiovisual content. When our generation went to school, they taught us how to read a book, how to criticize a book, how to analyze it and criticize it. The new generations keep on doing this, but they have no critical approach to audiovisual content and they swallow all the garbage that you find on internet with zero critical approach. They are uneducated like probably we are in terms of audiovisual content but we learn it ourselves. I think one VOD platform at European level will not resolve the problem if education does not help us fighting this fight in parallel.

**Domenico La Porta:**

You mentioned education and critical thinking as well, which is something that some are taught in school, some never have it, some are born with it. And when you say critical, there's criteria in that world. We were talking about curation, we've talked about all the garbage, to quote Werner Herzog.

Who are the new experts? Who are the people that are abilitated to make those decisions? We know that festivals are not anymore, at least not this year – they are losing so much ground, look what happened with the Cannes label. These films which had the label, where did they go afterwards? I don't think it was very useful for them, it was even worse as some festivals were not picking them up because of it. So, who are those people making the choices?

Obviously, the whole value chain is different now. You mentioned that some platforms should also produce content, but if you take the value chain, the producer and the distributor, two different segment of that value chain, are now often the same – are we just looping things? The whole chain has to be rethought, middlemen maybe have to reinvent themselves and are not willing to, because we are in an industry that is about creativity and innovation but we are also very conservative in the execution of those different jobs. Yes, Roberto.

**Roberto Olla:**

Very quickly, I agree 100%. I think there is a holy rule in the audiovisual sector – if you use content, you help making it possible. Televisions have been exploiting content and they were, like it or not, kindly invited through quotas and other means, to invest in content. That does not exist today in other forms of exploitation of the film, meaning that video-on-demand platforms, even though they use content, don't produce it necessarily.

I don't know how to resolve the problem, but it's clearly a regulation problem. Netflix has been using content, they produce content, and they produce a certain type of content for their potential audience. At European level, I don't see how a network that is exploiting content cannot be responsible for helping production, either doing it themselves or paying some sort of tax or other form of contribution for producing local content. That, I think, is the ABC, and I have the feeling that the reason why we're in a huge crisis right now is precisely because of that. Until recently those that were exploiting content were contributing in its production. Nowadays, because of globalization and the fact that you can be based in the US but we in Europe can see your content, our regulation does not affect overseas productions.

So the old model clearly is not working anymore and we have to rethink it. But if we do not find a way for those that are exploiting content to contribute in its production, then we're lost.

**Domenico La Porta:**

It seems logical, common sense that the organism that has access to the data about the audience, namely Netflix for example, the distributors or exhibitors as well, who have a certain amount of data about who is watching what and when, are also including that data into their thinking of what production they should invest in, what kind of films they want to produce, what kind of audience they want to touch. This is what the platforms are achieving today, and my question is for the filmmakers, Agnieszka, Werner, Hrvoje: what kind of data do you have about the films that you already made, or the TV series that you already shot? Do you have anything coming back to you? Who is watching it? How they appreciate it? I'm not talking about reviews, but about information coming from the audience. Yes, Werner.

### **Werner Herzog:**

The problem of for example Netflix is – I produced a film on volcanoes which was a big success: you never hear anything about it, they only tell you it is by far more successful than anything in the last three months.

But I want to know – what did the kids in South Korea say about it, because it's about a gigantic volcano in North Korea, so what are the Koreans saying? Does Brazil react to it at all? What are the Indians doing? How is Scandinavia? Nothing, there's like venetian blinds rattling down and you're completely and utterly shut off of of your own film. And that's really for me and it's a very bad thing – I want to know, did people understand the humor of it? Was anybody laughing? Does anybody comment on the ending of my film? Is there anybody out there who has observed a little detail that was important? There's no feedback, that's a problem. If Europe starts some sort of a platform, it should become transparent, with information back to the filmmakers. It has to be a two-way street. That would be very important.

And I do not believe that any platform can try and imitate Netflix, Netflix has nearly 200 million subscribers worldwide by now, I have worked with Apple which is the biggest company I think in existence on this planet at the moment, or something equivalent to that. So we cannot try to imitate it. It's the same mistake than European cinema distribution attempting to imitate Hollywood's distribution system, it's not going to work.

And I think there also is a certain danger if a platform like Netflix or Apple starts to produce content. That's a dangerous, dangerous road which may have unsurmountable obstacles, and it may be the demise of the idea. But if there is a platform well curated, with innovation, we do not need to look at the market out there – what does the internet say? What is TikTok doing? The content is seconds maximum. Look at the influencers – I saw some sort of a hint by somebody writing in the chat, about social media influencers. Look at the influencers – you wish you were never born if you listen to them, you just wish you were never born.

So we have to create our content with pride, and with real men's and with the cultural traditions that we have, with a clear vision and it will survive. We will survive like that. The dangers are out there but let's not try to imitate the internet. Nobody reads anymore, for example, nobody reads books anymore. I demand it from young filmmakers who are learning from me, you have to read, read, read, read, read, read, read, read, read, read books, no matter what. Because if you are not reading, you will be a mediocre filmmaker at best. You will never be a good filmmaker. And every single filmmaker here who is here today is sitting on tons of books. I see it in Zagreb, does Agnieszka have books behind her too?

And we cannot educate an audience through school, it's not going to function.

### **Domenico La Porta:**

Agnieszka, you wanted to comment –

### **Agnieszka Holland:**

I don't remember what I wanted to say, I was listening to Werner so deeply. We don't have to imitate for sure, but we have to learn from experience, and some of it is usable, some is not. We can do better on some areas and we'll never reach a certain level in certain things but when Netflix or HBO started, they were very small. You don't start immediately as a giant, you just need to have the right idea on how to do it. And courage and some money, of course.

On an optimistic note, I have to say COVID-19 so far was very nice to me in a way, with two of my movies opening under the COVID-19 in two countries Mr Jones in France and Charlatan in Czech Republic, to the best scores I ever had in these countries with any of my other movies. I don't think they are genius movies, but they are serious movies about substantial matters and it was for me very good news that the audience, in this very complex and complicated and dangerous situation, has a desire not only to escape from their restricted freedom situation, not only to be entertained, but also to try to communicate with some complex and difficult experiences of our world. So I feel reinforced, I don't feel defeated or depressed.

And don't be worried about István being sad, because István has always been sad for as long as I remember him. He's Hungarian after all, you can be chilly when you are Hungarian.

### **Domenico La Porta:**

Thank you. This word "influencers" that we used today was mentioned before – speaking only for myself, I can say my influencers were filmmakers, and you still are. When you are speaking here, you are you have people listening and taking notes, writing down the films or books that you are recommending – this is influence. We should never underestimate the influence that we have in this industry, but also as artists and you are here today exactly that in a way, it's not just about people on YouTube. Influencing is not new.

But now it's about influencing people that prefer to be influenced by someone unboxing a box of perfume on YouTube, a complete different behavior, and it's about getting known and using the medias that they are using. When we mention Netflix today, we are not actually mentioning a single platform/interface but several things – I have a Netflix app on my phone, a Netflix button on my TV remote. Soon – already, we will have Netflix on Playstation etc, so it's not one – and Netflix before was a rental company of DVDs. They used different platforms, they became a brand and I think we have several brands in Europe: Eurimages, Creative Europe, EFA, any awards given by EFA, and your name as directors are also brands. This is something that people can vouch for, can identify to – let's not forget that. This is not something that we lost with COVID-19, it's something that we have just the opportunity to strengthen. Hrvoje, you wanted to intervene.

### **Hrvoje Hribar:**

Yes, I wanted to thank Agnieszka for this couple of ironic remarks on the Hungarian voice I omitted, trying to be polite since I'm partly a host – but still some of István's arguments should be given some thought.

I will answer your question straightforwardly – no, from the platforms you cannot get any data. You can grasp what's happening on television and cable through collecting societies, but even the trans-frontier distribution in cinema you can't trace very well, so we are a little bit in the dark.

Since we are reaching the end of this session, I wanted to go back to this 40th anniversary – who wouldn't like to be 40, I would like to. I can remember that FERA used to be a very militant, very political, very angry organization in the past. We are different now, we don't believe in politics anymore, we don't even believe in the efficiency of positive politics, not to talk about the rest but still, I think there is a job to be done, that we could do more, all together and FERA, doing some advocacy, creating a case out of, well European film is maybe a dull word but, out of the European point of view on cinema.

This is fantastic – we coined this, it's very good – the European point of view on cinema. This is something that we should really advocate for, and make a case in front of the public, in front of politicians, in front of the industry – and especially televisions, with a special emphasis on public televisions. A battle.

And being a bit of a host, I'm really from the heart giving some compliments to Cineuropa which is doing such an amazing job that also should get to another level, and should be a reference to everybody because we don't have film critics anymore in press, on television. Everybody is just translating – thankfully the New York Times and The Guardian have very good film critics, because what you can read in European news is a bad translation of this reports.

**Werner Herzog:**

And of course if there is no discourse about cinema, we cannot artificially create it as it was in the 1960s, for example. It doesn't exist anymore. And all of the film reviewers in the United States have disappeared with the exception of two or three – all the rest the entire film critics has shifted into celebrity news. You see it with festivals – the headlines in the Canadian press last year was Brad Pitt gallantly weaseling around the car to open the door for his wife or ex-wife, also a big female star. And that was all – there was that nothing about films, it was about the gallant gesture of Brad Pitt.

We cannot create it again. When it comes to education I think it is the same, schools cannot do it, newspapers cannot do it, television cannot do it – in my case I have moved more and more into teaching, accepting young people who are filmmakers already, and doing workshops with them. From 28 different countries – I did something in Cuba and in Peru in the jungle. Not because I feel so noble to do workshops and to start a rogue film school on my own, but it was a response to an avalanche, an ever-growing avalanche of young people who want to learn from me. I think instead of asking for schools to have programs about film education, every single filmmaker should look about – where is my basis, where are the young people who might be interested? And invite them, invite them to pass on – it's not that I'm a good teacher but I have more experience than they have, and I can pass on a lot of tricks of the trade to them. So I think it's a very simple way to address a question of lack of education.

**Domenico La Porta:**

Thank you. Marion, I will give you one last word before we have wrap up and I will conclude the talk.

**Marion Döring:**

I just wanted to say since you were talking about the curators, the missing curators – they are still there, the festivals are on pause or take a break but they will come back.

The other thing is that we should also trust the audience and especially the young audience. For example, in the Young Audience Film Award that we present, there are five kids from five countries as jury deciding upon the nominations, and they are really well educated viewers, they take very wise decisions. Listening to them in their jury meeting is a great experience for us I have to say, having been in juries also. They are really, really very well educated. We should trust them more, trust the audience more and I think we can put together a very appealing, attractive program for a platform, a European platform for the European audience.

**Domenico La Porta:**

Yes, and of course the young audience of today are the filmmakers of tomorrow, so we have a responsibility to them as well.

I will have to conclude now, thank you very much – I will just say that we are in the dark with Netflix in terms of data, and someone mentioned that the young audience does not want to go in the dark – we shouldn't either want to remain in the dark anymore, at least in the metaphoric sense. If there is a transparency, if there's clarity, if there's a light that can light our way in Europe, maybe towards a new platform, it's that transparency of data and probably gathering information that would enlighten the work of those filmmakers, and not just stay at the production level. Not to only make profit from those numbers but maybe also learn from them and know, at last, who we are talking about [in terms of our audience].

Thank you very, very much to everyone attending, thank you FERA, happy anniversary again and I will leave the last word to Klemen.

**Klemen Dvornik:**

So thank you everybody for a very in-depth and personal discussion, thank you to all the panelists, you were great and I personally took a lot of insights from you. I think we talked about things that matter, things of the future and we were not so gloomy as our title. I invite all our FERA delegates for next week's statutory session which will take on Tuesday, October 20 or at 3 PM CET. Agnieszka, take us away with your last thought.

**Agnieszka Holland:**

Well, guys, I just read in The Guardian film section today, as subscribers regularly get several articles and thoughts about the cinema – it is a platform to talk about cinema which is intellectual, insightful and new – I will read you the sentence one viewer wrote: "Cinema brings hope in a way laptops cannot". So let's bring hope!

**Klemen Dvornik:**

Thank you everybody for a great session, see you next week! Bye.

## About Us

Founded in 1980, FERA represents the independent voice of European film and TV directors in Brussels. With 48 organizations as members from 33 countries, it speaks for more than 20,000 European film and TV directors, representing their cultural, creative and economic interests at national and EU level.

*Honorary President:* Agnieszka HOLLAND (Poland)

*Ambassadors:* Marco BELLOCCHIO (Italy), Isabel COIXET (Spain), Heddy HONIGMANN (Netherlands), Michaël R. ROSKAM (Belgium), Charles STURRIDGE (UK), István SZABÓ (Hungary)

*Executive Committee:* Klemen DVORNIK (Slovenia), Chair; Sverre PEDERSEN (Norway), Honorary Treasurer; Bill ANDERSON (United Kingdom), Elisabet GUSTAFSSON (Sweden), Hrvoje HRIBAR (Croatia), Lou JEUNET (France), Alberto SIMONE (Italy), Birgitte STÆRMOSE (Denmark), C. Cay WESNIGK (Germany), Martijn WINKLER (Netherlands)

EU Transparency Register Id No. 29280842236-21

[screendirectors.eu](https://screendirectors.eu)

[@Film\\_directors](#)

### **FERA AISBL**

Fédération Européenne des Réalisateur·euses de l'Audiovisuel /

Federation of European Screen Directors

Rue du Prince Royal 85-87 - 1050 Bruxelles, Belgique

+32 (0)2 551 08 94 - [office@filmdirectors.eu](mailto:office@filmdirectors.eu)