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Creative  
Europe  
MEDIA

## Mapping of Collaboration Models among Film Festivals

A qualitative analysis to identify and assess collaboration models  
in the context of the multiple functions and objectives of film festivals



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## 1. Introduction

*“We live in the **age of the image**.*

*Today, no other realm of culture displays so much power than that of the image.*

*Words, music, literature,  
books, newspapers, Rock 'n' Roll, theatre...  
nothing comes even close  
to the authority of moving images, in cinema and television.”*

Wim Wenders, *Giving Europe a Soul*

Speech at the conference, *A Soul For Europe*, in Berlin, 18 November 2006

More than 10 years later this statement hasn't lost its relevance, but rather gained significance. Only one constraint can be observed: while the authority of culturally valuable cinema and television is increasingly influenced by *Netflix, Amazon & Co*, it is, in many places, the film festivals that are assuming the task of presenting the realm of culture.

With digitisation, the international film festival landscape has undergone exorbitant and sustained growth. According to research, it is assumed that, apart from small, locally restricted film festivals, there is currently a circuit of approximately 10,000 networked players worldwide, with about 4,000 in Europe alone. In the wake of disruptive change, film festivals have established their own ecosystem and for years have functioned as a “key force and power grid in the film business” (Elsaesser: 2005: 83). Apart from their impact on the development, financing, distribution and exhibition of films, they contribute significantly to the circulation of European film works, as well as to the promotion of international careers of their filmmakers\*.

In doing so they ensure a plurality in the cinema landscape which largely reflects the cultural and linguistic diversity of Europe. While European cinema, even commercially successful art-house productions, is still unable to assert itself against US market power, and new players from Asia are entering the arena (cf. Kanzler: 2018), it is the film festivals that substantially help European filmworks to achieve “prominence, visibility, cross-border access and audience reach” (European Commission: 2018a: 2). Therefore, they make an important contribution as far as the priorities of the European Union are concerned, including their influence on supporting international sales, and their role as an

*\*For reasons of legibility the male form was chosen in the text, the information refers nevertheless to members of all genders.*

alternative form of exploitation in generating revenues through screening fees.

Beyond this economic effect, it is particularly those festivals which succeed in tapping into the value of audio-visually told stories to build bridges among cultures and societies for the European population by specifically addressing a willing audience with a carefully-curated programme, as well as numerous sidebars with an educational component.

A skill which, against the background of political and societal challenges, cannot be taken lightly due to rising levels of discrimination, divisive nationalism, rising populism and xenophobia, as well as parts of Europe's population feeling left behind.

Thus, film festivals today, and even more so in the future, represent a major instrument for fostering mutual understanding, elevating dialogue (cf. Recalde: 2018), and maintaining an open, inclusive and creative societies and, as a way to approach people and make our European identity more tangible (cf. Gabriel: 2018).

As island events, film festivals – such as the *IFFR*, the *IDFA*, and the *Sarajevo Film Festival* which, over time have turned into year-long activities – have to master a multitude of challenges inherent in their structure. Collaborations, formal or informal, offer key options for tackling these difficulties. The EU encourages film festivals to collaborate and network, in order to achieve greater synergies that could maximize the impact of European support. This study provides an overview of the diversity and multitude of collaboration models among European film festivals. By means of a differentiated analysis, it presents empirical findings on the strengths and weaknesses of these models and those that have proven themselves on a broad basis over the long term. These results are supplemented by recommendations for action for the European Commission in addressing the most urgent problems currently hindering film festivals from promoting the further exploitation of valuable potential for European filmmaking.

## **2. The Study**

### **2.1. Objectives and Methodology**

This study was conducted from April to November 2018 and was led by Tanja C. Krainhöfer of the Film Festival Studies/Filmfestival-Studien Initiative. Its overall objective is to map and evaluate collaboration models among film festivals on behalf of the European Commission.

To this effect, an empirical, qualitative analysis against the theoretical background of the resource-based view (RBV) was conducted, in order to:

- provide an overview of the collaboration models based on various levels and contexts: i.e. logistical, structural, or content-related
- evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of such collaborations between the selected film festivals
- identify existing collaborations between the selected film festivals that have already proven their worth (best practice examples)

Fulfilling these objectives required preparing a literature review; developing an interview guideline, and conducting semi-structured expert interviews with 24 representatives from 21 European film festivals (pre-test on 27 April 2018, final interview on 29 August 2018). The study also involved three interviews with experts from national, international and US-American film festival circuits, as well as the analysis of statements within the framework of three specialist events on the topic of cooperation between film festivals (see Annex).

Selection for the random sample of film festivals for the expert interviews was based on research-efficient and scheduling conditions, with the proviso that European Union and EU candidate countries should be represented to the greatest possible extent. The study also considered festivals with different profiles, missions and budgets.

In accordance with these requirements, the sample includes two film festivals from Northern Europe, five from Western Europe, three from Southern Europe, one from Eastern Europe and ten Central European film festivals. Representatives of three other festivals from the sample (two from Eastern Europe and one from Central Europe) were unable to participate. The selection includes film festivals with pure audience orientation, as well as hybrid (audience and industry agenda) film festivals. Festivals

with different film genres (fiction, documentary, animation, experimental), diverse geographical profiles (national, European and international), or a focus on different film types in terms of duration (short, medium, long) and size as to budgets (from €40,000 to approx. €9 million).

The selection includes three FIAPF-accredited film festivals. This, however, was as little a selection criterion as the number of festivals currently supported by the *CREATIVE EUROPE/MEDIA* programme.

With regard to the qualitative-explorative study design, all interviews were conducted by the author. This made it possible to further intensify targeted questions during the research process and compare diverging positions.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face wherever possible (17 cases), via Skype (seven cases) and in written form (two cases). The interviews took place exclusively with representatives in leading positions, either artistic directors/head curators, administrators/managing directors/general managers, or heads of industry. In most cases, the expert interviews took place as one-on-one conversations. In a few cases, with two festival representatives simultaneously.

The festival representatives selected for the study were very willing and interested in taking part in the study, which is also reflected by the fact that 21 film festivals out of the 24 invited took part.

Apart from the results of interviews with film festival representatives, the analysis also includes findings from discussions with three experts from the film festival circuit. These include Lela Meadow-Conner (Chairman of the *Film Festival Association*, USA), Claas Danielsen (Managing Director of *Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung* and former Director of *DOK Leipzig*, Germany) and Dennis Ruh (Festival Relations Officer at *German Films*, Germany).

Further results were garnered from a panel discussion on the topic *Collaboration among Film Festivals - New Key to Success*, hosted as part of the *International Short Film Festival Oberhausen* and moderated by the author on 4 May 2018 in Oberhausen; a bar camp on the subject *Short Film Festivals - Let's work together (but on what?)*, as part of the *Hamburg International Short Film Festival* and chaired by Sven Schwarz (Administrative Director) on 9 June 2018; as well as a podium discussion dealing with *Formal/Informal Networks between Film Festivals - Strategies in Disruptive Media Markets*, organised as part of the annual conference of the *Gesellschaft für Medienwissenschaften* (Society for Media Sciences) and moderated by the author on 28 September 2018 in Siegen.

## 2.2. Definitions

### 2.2.1. Definition of the Term Film Festival

To date, an ultimately binding definition of the term “film festival” is absent in scientific and research circles, as well as in practice. “In fact, film festivals come in many sizes and flavours. Next to the major and well-known film festivals stand a multitude of medium-sized, small, and tiny festival events.” (de Valck: 2016: 1) In addition to the differing aspects of size in terms of programme, number of visitors and budgets, it is the numerous profiles, and the varying spheres of action and diversifications, such as the highly divergent missions corresponding to a localisation in varying contexts, that make it difficult to clearly define film festivals per se. Yet, in order to be able to specifically support the achievement of such goals as “fostering circulation and cross-border access of EU audio-visual content”, “reaching out to new and more audiences”, and “fostering talent and creative audio-visual content” (EC: 2018b: 10ff) with analyses against the background of “the intricate interconnections of the festival world with its hierarchical tiers and parallel/sub-circuits” (Loist: 2016: 60), it is necessary to specify and narrow the research subject.

### Regulatory Restrictions of the European Commission

Parallel to the programmatic guidelines on the eligibility of film festivals for funding, which depend on the country of origin of the programmed audio-visual works, the guidelines of the European Commission within the framework of the *CREATIVE EUROPE/MEDIA sub-programme SUPPORT FOR FESTIVALS* maintain as follows:

“Audio-visual festival is understood as an event programming eligible films (fiction, documentary, or animation), that are being screened to wide audiences, including the general public, as well as accredited, international, audio-visual professionals and the press:

- taking place over a specific period of time, in a previously defined location
- having a clear regulation/selection procedure.” (EC: 2017: 7)

And furthermore, as an event “which operates on the basis of European entities (private companies, non-profit organisations, associations, charities, foundations, municipalities/Town Councils, etc.), established in one of the countries participating in the *MEDIA sub-programme* and owned directly, or by majority participation, by nationals from such countries.” (Ibid.: 5)

Within the framework of the sub-programme *SUPPORT FOR FESTIVALS*, excluded are:

- “Festivals dedicated to works that are not considered as eligible, such as commercials, live broadcast events, TV series, music videos, videogames, amateur films, mobile phone films, trailers and non-narrative artistic works
- Thematic festivals, such as cultural events or art/technology/science-related events, as well as highly specialised festivals dealing with specific topics (e.g. tourism, sport, ecology, nature, environment, gastronomy, fashion, health, etc.)“ (Ibid.: 7f)

### **Specification by National Funding Institutions**

In the context of the national funding guidelines for film festivals (e.g. on the part of Austria), and more precisely, the City of Vienna in cooperation with *Forum Österreichischer Filmfestivals* (Stadt Wien: n.d.), festivals are specified as "locally bound events with several film screenings" ("satellite events" are possible and desirable), which take place:

- on at least three consecutive days
- with at least fifteen films (or about forty-five short films) or film screenings
- at one or more venues; and which
- offer professional and film-cultural exchange
- have preferably already been held at least three times

Further quality criteria are:

- traceable programmatic line and clear profile
- regional and/or national and/or international relevance
- conducted periodically
- competent management, due and proper business conduct
- professional projection/suitable for cinemas and accompanied screening situation
- predominantly original versions
- film guests and industry professionals

### **Determination by the FIAPF**

The *FIAPF* (*Fédération Internationale des Associations des Producteurs de Films*) sees its function as the international representation of the interests of film producers. “As a regulator of international film festivals, the *FIAPF* is to facilitate the job of the producers, sales agents and distributors in the

management of their relationships with the festivals.” (FIAPF: n.d.) The characteristics required for the accreditation of a film festival are not publicly accessible, nor can they be determined by a detailed observation of the group of such festivals already accredited.

However, the *FIAPF* seems less committed to the role of regulating film festivals in their formal configuration, than supporting them by means of defined quality standards in the professional performance of their tasks, especially against the background of location specific disadvantages (cf. FIAPF: n.d.), and thus, "constitute a trust contract between those festivals and the film industry at large" (FIAPF: n.d.).

### **Restrictions on the part of Film Festival Associations**

Likewise, film festival associations see their task primarily as establishing codes of conduct in order to create a general basis for fair and professional dealing with filmmakers and rights holders, and a high-quality cinema experience for the audience (cf. Short Film Conference: 2015). Furthermore, the guidelines should contribute towards "strengthening the film festival industry, and advocates for a sustainable and inclusive environment for film festivals and the people who run them." (FFA: n.d.)

The Code of Ethics, developed in 1995 by the former *European Coordination of Film*, on the other hand, identifies two specific characteristics for determining film festivals. Accordingly, only those "where films are presented preferably over a period of five to twelve days with several screenings daily" and "organised and managed by an independent body" (ECFF: 1995), were accepted as film festivals.

The increasing eventisation of cinema programmes and the associated inflationary use of the term "film festival" are currently prompting ever more associations to differentiate the film festival format, by definition, from other forms of event. For example, in its charter, the *Association of Bavarian Film Festivals* defines film festivals as formats that are spatially and temporally limited, take place periodically (at least every two years), for a minimum of three days, with several daily film screenings (cf. Verband Bayerischer Filmfestivals: n.d.).

### **Definition by the Author**

In order to define the object of the study "film festival", the author developed a definition (cf. Krainhöfer: 2014) in the context of the systematic collection of data on the German film festival landscape, which also forms the basis of this study. Accordingly, a film festival is defined by the following criteria:

- **duration:** event lasting several days ( $\geq$  two days)
- **frequency:** annual or biennial
- **venue:** one, or in exceptional cases, several constant, real (no virtual) venues
- **programme:** various and predominantly current, professional film productions
- **film genre:** predominantly classic feature, documentary, experimental and animated film productions
- **film format:** theatrical and TV films (including series and serial formats) of different lengths or running times
- **access:** public screening and advertising (website)
- **self-image:** the term "Filmfest" or "Film festival" as part of the name, additional title or description of the event.

Consequently, events which only take place on one day or several times a year (e.g. festival tours), or at irregular intervals (sporadic), do not correspond to this definition. Also disregarded are film presentations that are exclusively offered online, those which serve the presentation of films from the amateur sector or contain a programme concentrating on PR, images or advertising films. Likewise, those which are organised by commercial enterprises, or in the context of trade fairs (e.g. *AutoVision Film Festival* of the *International Automobile Show*) are disregarded. Also excluded are purely competitive events (e.g. the *First Step Award*) and national film festivals which are organised abroad as showcases (e.g. the *German Film Festival* in Sydney organised by *German Films*).

This definition also largely coincides with the limitation of the phenomenon of the film festival developed by Harry van Vliet (2018) as part of the analysis of the film festival landscape in the Netherlands.

### 2.2.2. Defining Collaboration

A cooperation is understood as a non-organisational collaboration, based on either explicitly contractual (formal) or implicitly oral (informal) agreements between the parties (cf. Blohm: 1980). It "usually takes place between two or more economically and legally independent organisations to achieve one or more common goals" (Schubert: 2008: 34).

## Typification of Cooperation

Cooperation can offer unlimited creative scope and thus enable tailor-made solutions or virtually any initial situation and requirement of the partners involved. Their specific form is largely based on their individual characteristics:

- **organisational function**, and thereby its orientation towards a single, or occasionally several, field of activities, such as acquisition, production, marketing, technology and research, as well as knowledge and innovation at a superior level.
- **contractual design** in the sense of a slightly formalised (unofficial), temporary, project-specific, or rather strategically motivated, fixed collaboration.
- **geographical expanse** and accordingly a local, regional, national, pan-European, up to a global reference.
- **temporary stability** and consequently short-term, permanent, case-by-case, or recurring connection.
- **position of the partners** in the value chain and thus, either the partnership at a horizontal level (cooperation between film festivals at the same value creation stage), at a vertical level (cooperation between film festivals at upstream or downstream stages of the value chain), or in a lateral connection (cooperation between film festival and stakeholders outside the festival sector, but from relevant and associated environments, e.g. educational institutions).
- **complexity**, which is measured by the number of film festivals involved, their diversity on the basis of their respective missions and objectives, or the various sectors of the partners involved.

Numerous challenges in response to globalisation and digital transformation, such as the need for constant development and expansion of the (supporting) programme range and increasing diversification, the on-going pressure to professionalise with sustained increase in costs, or even declining subsidies, call for European film festivals to develop effective strategies to secure their long-term viability. Cooperation in a wide variety of forms, at all levels and in numerous fields of activity, is a key course of action among film festivals.

Likewise, with a view to donors and other stakeholders, a large number of festivals are also aligning their strategies to growth and innovation. Expanding the operating radius often necessitates cooperation with one or more partner festivals, or players from related submarkets. Moreover, there are numerous connections with the economy and civil society in alien submarkets, where film festivals often provide valuable stimulus.

## Frequent Intentions or Expectations of Cooperation on the part of Film Festivals

- **resource sharing**, e.g. shared use of offices or viewing rooms (*Indie Lisboa – Doclisboa/Queer Lisboa/Monstra - Lisbon Animated Film Festival; Diagonale – /slash Filmfestival/VIS – Vienna Independent Shorts/Viennale; or joint employment of specialists e.g. the members of the Conférence des Festivals.*
- **cost reduction**, e.g. splitting of travel costs for guests between overlapping film festivals, e.g. *Edinburgh International Film Festival - Filmfest Munich - Karlovy Vary International Film Festival; Exground – Kasseler Dokumentarfilm- und Videofest.*
- **combined development of complex problem solutions**, e.g. joint conception and implementation of film festival databases, e.g. *IDFA - IFFR – The Netherlands Film Festival.*
- **joint offer of products or services** to open up new market segments, e.g. *DAFilms.com*, a platform of *DOC Alliance* and increase of customer orientation, e.g. offer of a joint festival pass for four German, autumn film festivals.
- **increase in market power**, e.g. through merging of seven major European documentary film festivals: *CPH: DOX, Doclisboa, Docs Against Gravity, DOK Leipzig, FID Marseille, Ji.hlava IDFF* and *Visions du Réel Nyon*, in order to form a strategic alliance.

Depending on the scope and content of a cooperation, a wide range of forms and structures are available:

- formless, sporadic, mutual **support** - a widespread culture in the film festival landscape.
- targeted **project communities** on the basis of simple (oral) agreements, or detailed rights and obligations contracts.
- **joint ventures** that serve to establish cooperative enterprises with rarely more than four parties.
- **franchising**, whereby one film festival makes a business concept available to another in return for payment or monetary services.
- **strategic alliances** that generally connect partner festivals for a limited period of time for one specific project.
- **networks** that establish an unlimited cooperation of legally and economically independent parties, a larger number of partners, without explicit limitation to a single project.

Apart from the great importance of cooperation in the context of the general organisation of film festivals, it is external factors in particular that prompt film festivals to explore possibilities of cooperation

within the framework of their strategic decisions. It is, thereby, not least due to the rapid growth of the international film festival circuit that film festivals not only enter into a targeted cooperation in order to foster their development and growth, but also, and above all, in order to counter the growing competitive situation.

### 2.3. The Data

Despite the growing importance of film festivals in the cultural, economic and social context, to date no systematic data or official statistics on the sector have been recorded for, or in countries of the European Union.

This is unfathomable in view of the pioneering work of Nils Clever Aas, former Executive Director of the *European Audiovisual Observatory*, who was already involved in this desideratum "to find 'hard' and analytical data and information on film festivals" in 1995, with the quantitative study *Flickering Shadow. Quantifying the European Film Festival Phenomenon*, and thus, verified his observation that

*"(o)ver the past decade, the number of events going under the label "film festival" has literally exploded across all European countries. From being confined to a fairly limited number of professional events with a specific function for introducing films and new talents to the commercial distribution sector, festivals have virtually developed into a distribution circuit of their own. Festivals may indeed be taking over the fundamental role of introducing audiences to foreign cinematography and to the European film heritage, previously performed by the art-house cinemas." (Aas: 1997)*

Since the early 2000s, public authorities have only been conducting impact assessments in the context of the allocation of funding for individual events, e.g. Dresden (cf. KÜchler: 2014) or for groups of spatially linked festivals (cf. Coldewey: 2003), while comprehensive analyses of (socio-)economic impact have been initiated by the film festivals themselves, e.g. ECFF (1999), *Short Film Festival Oberhausen* (cf. Vorbeck: 2011), *Berlin International Film Festival* (cf. Mertens: 2010), *Sarajevo Film Festival* (cf. Petkovic: 2018). In recent years, individual studies on programme and visitor structures, as well as on economic effects, have also been performed on behalf of national festival associations, such as the *Conférence des Festivals* (2014) and the *Forum of Austrian Film Festivals* (2016).

Reliable data on the annually growing European film festival landscape with its currently estimated 4,000 festivals, and the global circuit with about 10,000 players (cf. Wiedemann/Krainhöfer: 2018: 178) is limited to Germany and the Netherlands. While Christel Taillibert (2009) already identified 605 film festivals in France in 2006, Harry van Vliet in the Netherlands and the author in Germany have, for several years, been continuously collecting master data on film festivals, together with information on a selected catalogue of characteristics. These data pools serve as a basis for regular descriptive and comparative analyses, especially of territorial and calendar distribution, as well as the programmatic specifics of the 123 film festivals identified for 2017 in the Netherlands (cf. van Vliet: 2018: 5) and the 399 players in the German film festival landscape (cf. Krainhöfer et al.: 2018).

All in all, there is no doubt that a detailed overview of the European film festival landscape is needed, not only for scientific purposes but to an even greater extent, in order to promote cooperation among film festivals across national borders.

### **3. Film Festivals within the Framework of the European Union**

The fact that film festivals today are regarded as a valuable instrument in such numerous political contexts as economic, cultural and social policy, and even in cultivating foreign policy relations, is demonstrated not least by the broad range of their initiators, but also by their steadily growing number. "Film festivals, in other words, play a role in multiple areas. They accommodate culture and commerce, experimentation and entertainment, geopolitical interests and global funding. In order to analyse the network of film festivals, it is necessary to investigate all these different areas on which the festival events operate." (de Valck: 2006: 18)

Originally a European phenomenon, film festivals date back to one event "on New Year's Day 1898 in Monaco. Other festivals followed in Torino, Milan, and Palermo (Italy), Hamburg (Germany) and Prague (Czechoslovakia)...La Mostra Internazionale d'Arte Cinematographico was the first film festival to be organised on a regular basis" (de Valck: 2007: 47).

Their success story, which continues to this day, ultimately spread throughout Europe after the Second World War, with festivals in Venice, Moscow, Cannes, Karlovy Vary, Locarno and Berlin. Yet, the big names among the film festivals overshadow the "more humble practices that are just as vital to film

economics on different scales, contributing to the growth and sustainability of ... this impressive proliferation of film festivals and their networks globally and locally” (Robbins/Saglier: 2015: 1).

The international film festival landscape has long since evolved into a successful global ecosystem with numerous parallel, yet often overlapping, networks (cf. Iordanova: 2009: 29f). In many cases, these offer the last bastion for European cinema and thereby access (cf. Janik: 2007: 93) to film works far-removed from mainstream US productions. Today, the international film festival circuit not only offers an essential presentation platform for European cinema, but also provides independent structures from financing up to the distribution of art-house films.

### **3.1. Players on the International Film Market**

The European film industry has always had to struggle with a number of difficulties compared to that of the US. These mainly consist of “industry and market fragmentation, little cooperation among member states, lacking distribution for European films outside national markets and too large box office share of Hollywood films” (Richeri: 2016: 312). In the course of globalisation and digitisation, this baseline has further intensified for the European film industry “and has sparked both turmoil and transformation, forcing industry leaders to reconsider established maxims about how screen media are created, circulated, and consumed“ (Curtin: 2014: 1).

During an expert interview, Diana Iljine, director of *Filmfest Munich*, described the situation as follows.

*“There is a huge shift in the medial area and we don't know how it will look in five or ten years. We also fear it, because we love cinema. But I don't know whether these large, dark spaces will remain in this form, or whether there will be entirely different forms of exploitation and financing. And whether the classic film festival will still exist in 20 years' time, or perhaps only formats like film festivals, but no more conventional cinema.”* (Iljine: 2018)

Added to the disruptive changes in the media and film industry, the digital shift is also accompanied by a democratisation of the production process. Easier production conditions not only lead to increased output in countries that are lagging behind in terms of film production infrastructure, but in fact to a production boom that can be observed worldwide, and thus, also in Europe.

Even though in 2017, a production output of “1,676 theatrical films ... an estimated 1,072 fiction films (64 percent) and 604 feature documentaries (36 percent)” (Kanzler: 2018: 14), initially indicated a slight decline in production in the European member states. The comparative figures “between 2007 and 2016, with overall production in Europe rising from 1,422 feature films in 2007 to 2,123 in 2016” (Ibid.: 17), shows an increase in European production volume of almost 50 percent in only 10 years. Yet, at the same time, this development does not alter the fact that in 2017, the US market share in the European Union accounted for 66.2 per cent compared to 27.5 per cent for European films (cf. Ibid.: 14). As before, only few European productions managed to successfully assert themselves in the domestic cinema market.

*“(T)o promote non-commercial exhibition throughout the year, that’s also one of our concerns. Commercial exhibition in Portugal has been in a crisis. It’s a permanent crisis. It’s difficult for independent distributors and exhibitors to exist.” (Sena: 2018)*

The persistently fierce competition for rare theatrical programme slots is prompting filmmakers to pursue alternative forms of exploitation, especially in the art-house sector. Strategic film festival exploitation often proves successful in creating visibility and awareness, even among those younger target groups, where cinema is finding it increasingly difficult to reach.

The number of productions that attract significantly more viewers through festival invitations than by means of regular cinema exploitation are no longer isolated cases, according to Dennis Ruh (2018), Festival Relations Officer at *German Film*. Consequently, more and more filmmakers abstain from cost-intensive cinema releases altogether, instead counting on screening fees – often by means of a year-long exploitation via the international festival circuit – and hoping, on top, for highly-endowed awards. While programming at international A-list film festivals used to be of prime importance for the presentation, promotion and PR of films and creative minds, the much smaller – third and fourth tier festivals – as well as numerous special interest festivals, are now offering lucrative, long tail effects in the form of a pool of "Re-run Festivals".

Such trends as the “rise of industry niches dedicated to art cinema” (de Valck: 2014: 41), and the corresponding audience fragmentation, are fuelling the worldwide growth of the film festival market, just as the regular audience records at festivals.

*“Yes, it’s a changing landscape where, when we started in 2004 there were two or three other film festivals in Lisbon, but now we are one out of 25 or 30.” (Sena: 2018)*

In parallel, numerous film festivals have continually extended their activities far beyond their original function of being a presentation platform for (new) films and talent. “(D)istributors like Wild Bunch or Fortissimo, in their organisation, have meant that film festivals have established institutions that in some way parallel the production, distribution and exhibition processes for mainstream cinema.” (Wong: 2011: 145)

Meanwhile some of them have built structures similar to those of highly diversified media companies. By becoming increasingly involved in the nurturing and training of (new) talent, on the one hand, and the development, financing, packaging, exploitation and distribution of film projects, on the other (cf. Krainhöfer: 2018), the film festival has turned, step by step, “into a key player in the film industry” (Iordanova: 2015: 7), and has formed a highly ramified, extremely flexible and competitive global network.

*“(To support the circulation of European film works), that’s why our streaming platform IFFR Unleashed, I think, is important. So, these VOD platforms are offering festivals ...to do things throughout the year and... you get out of this ten-day-bubble. ... Or, for example, now with NINA, a Polish film which was in our programme and won the Big Screen Award. But still the distributors find it difficult to pick it up. So, we are now releasing the film ourselves.” (van den Elshout: 2018)*

Despite this development, the particular value of European film festivals for the European film industry lies in their ability to attract a broad and diverse audience beyond regular cinema-goers and to cultivate an interest in cinema in general. In this context, they not only succeed in addressing their local or even national audiences by targeting them precisely, but also contribute significantly to the circulation of European film works through intensive exchange between festivals in Europe and worldwide and, in some cases, also promote non-national cinema releases.

*“I think there are very strong platforms for the development of projects, like Torino Film Lab. There is cinema art, something that is important in how we are creating films in the future. ... The second way is how the distribution of art-house films could*

*be more present, not only during the festivals but during the whole year. One of the great examples is Rotterdam Film Festival Live. Something that is already giving results is, six films with simultaneous premieres parallel to the screening in Rotterdam premieres and live Q&A's in 45 cinemas throughout Europe. ...This is beneficial for the audience and this is how we build our collaboration in Europe.”*  
(Purivatra: 2018)

Opening new perspectives and visions, demonstrating innovative narrative forms, as well as new film technologies on national and international levels, represent further essential qualities of film festivals. In addition, many of them are engaged in media education (especially film literacy for children and adolescents), as well as constantly exploring the trend of event-cinema. Thereby, not only opening laboratories for the entire film industry, but also serving as testing grounds for the struggling art-house cinema, in particular introducing European audio-visual works.

### **3.2. A Driving Force in the Growth Markets of the Cultural and Creative Industries**

*“The cultural and creative sectors occupy a significant part in the digital economy and the EU economy at large (up to 4.5 per cent of EU GDP) and are providers of quality jobs (eight million jobs), especially for young people.”* (EC: 2018b: 4)

Film festivals are proving to be an extremely valuable contribution to the growth market of the cultural and creative industries in many respects. Not only do they generate significant added value, including flow back levies and taxes for their locations (cf. Mertens: 2010: 8), but due to their indirect returns, they also generate significantly greater economic effects than they receive in the form of public funding.

Apart from their significance in generating commercial benefits, stimulating regional trade and service providers, and fostering employment in general – a major aspect for economically weak film festival locations (from Clermont-Ferrand to Thessaloniki, from Leeds to Oberhausen) – numerous film festivals serve to decisively boost the image of their cities or regions. This even applies to such capitals as Amsterdam through the *IDFA*, or Berlin through the *Berlinale*, as well as “Copenhagen and Rome and their international film festivals” (Strandgaard Pedersen/Mazza: 2011: 139), yet the same applies – and often to an even greater degree – to smaller, culturally and economically minor locations, such as Annecy, Hof, Jihlava, or Lecce. This leads to considerable long-term effects, be it directly, for example,

in the tourist industry, or indirectly, through a heightened appeal in attracting companies and coveted human resources.

Film festivals visibly play a major role as employers and especially as educational and training centres. Only a few cultural institutions offer such a variety of different fields of activity, while enabling interns, young professionals, and career changers to acquire extensive specialist knowledge, particularly in a working environment characterised by a young team.

Apart from such cultural and social influences, these multiple economic effects are also shown in an independent study on the *Film Fest Sarajevo*, published in August 2018 by Olsberg SPI. Accordingly, the festival not only “generated €26.6 million income for the local economy and jobs for 1,385 workers” (Petkovic: 2018), but also contributed significantly to a positive perception of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the international community. At the same time, the festival has “a strong influence on local residents, inspiring a sense of belonging and pride” (Ibid.: 2018). The *Sarajevo Film Festival* makes a significant contribution to Sarajevo's branding and global image and, at the same time, enhances the unique identity of its capital.

### **3.3. Forums of Cultural Diversity for a Diverse Audience**

Protection of the cultural independence of the EU member states, guaranteed by Article 167 of the European Unification Treaty signed on 13 December 2007 in Lisbon (cf. EU: 2009), established great cultural diversity as a part of Europe's vibrancy. However, this diversity includes so much more than a bouquet of different mentalities and traditions, coupled with “24 official languages and approximately 60 officially-recognised, regional and minority languages” (EC: 2018b: 5). Rather, it sees itself as a guarantee for a rich and diverse world, as well as a stimulus for social development and, on the basis of tolerance and justice, promotes a common identity in Europe.

Depicting the diversity of cultural forms of expression is what essentially characterises film festivals. Not only does the majority of film festivals present extensive programmatic diversity but, above all, offer unlimited plurality. This is primarily a result of the abundance of different profiles according to their individual orientation towards an aesthetic, geopolitical, identity-based, thematic, or industry agenda. In addition, film festivals vary greatly in terms of geographical focus (from national, or continental, or rather

EU, to international), film genres presented (e.g. fiction or documentary), types of works determined by length (short, mid-length and feature), as well as other conceptual or curatorial focuses.

In view of the increasing fragmentation of audience interests, this diversity forms the foundation for the vitality, longevity and growth of the film festival. At the same time, it is film, "as affective medium that inspires, captivates and emotionally charges people of all nations, age groups and social affiliations" (Wasilewski: 2009: 51), which has an appeal and use in width and breadth like no other cultural asset (cf. Landeskulturbericht NRW 2017: 167).

On the one hand, this quality contributes greatly to the remarkable and often consistent visitor records. This success also results from numerous initiatives by the film festivals themselves to reach specific target groups outside the core film festival audience via a variety of channels (especially social media), to generate interest through differentiated audience development programmes and, above all, enabling the greatest possible inclusion by means of barrier-free participation. Accessibility is not only considered for wheelchair users, the deaf, the hearing-impaired and the blind, but also for those with lower incomes, or other disadvantaged, marginalised groups (sometimes even for an autistic audience), as well as in the form of dementia-friendly events (cf. *Glasgow Film Festival*), or for prisoners (cf. *DOK Leipzig* and *Filmfest Oldenburg*).

In addition, it has virtually become the rule that film festivals provide cultural education (e.g. film literacy) especially for a younger audience like *DOK.education Munich* (cf. Kohout: 2018), and *IFFR Educatie* (cf. van den Elshout: 2018). Cultural education is also a priority for educationally disadvantaged groups, with teaching and vocational schools at the *Diagonale* (cf. Höglinger: 2018) as a prime example. Plus, Q&A's and further events to enhance the film experience and enable the audience to enjoy cinema as a community experience.

This endeavour is also supported at the programmatic level. Firstly, in times of total oversupply, today's audience values curated programmes more than ever (cf. Ruh: 2018), while for another, while many other festivals use their programmes to focus on audiences of different ages, ethnic or social backgrounds. This is particularly evident in their commitment to "play a vital role in the local representation of diasporic cultures" (Booth: 2016: 100). Thus, they not only provide access to films which audiences would not be able to see otherwise (cf. BFS of the Swiss Confederation: 2013), but also facilitate cultural participation in the sense of the "culture for all" demanded by Hilmar Hoffmann (1979).

Apart from creating cultural highlights in otherwise culturally weak regions, or locations where a cinematic infrastructure is (already) lacking, film festivals create necessary platforms for meaningful discussions within the context of a film screening, and likewise for public discourse, in large cities. With their retrospectives and homages, they are among the few institutions providing wide public access to cultural film heritage and thus to European history and the collective memory.

As all-year activities, but also as temporary island events, they significantly enliven their locations in the short term, but also give impetus to the local cultural scene by stimulating exchange across different artistic disciplines.

Above all, however, their initiatives succeed in supporting the local cinema structure throughout the year and thus resisting a further dilution of the (rural) cinema landscape.

*“We have the Golden Crossing Movie Card. This is a gold card that includes the festival pass and is valid all year round in our partner art-house cinema. That means, you pay once a year and then you can go to the movies the whole year for only a few Euros.” (Dollhofer: 2018)*

Through the specific involvement of the local population, in the form of volunteer work or friends, film festivals contribute towards creating permanent communities and keeping the excitement for cinematic experiences beyond the mainstream alive.

### **3.4. Stimulus for Social Change**

In 2015, the Agenda 2030 was the first global agreement on the future ever to be concluded. It proportionately addresses the three dimensions of sustainable development - ecological, social and economic - and emphasises gender equality, as well as a peaceful and inclusive society (cf. United Nations: n.d.).

With a view to its ability to impact social processes, culture plays a key role in supporting “stability, peace and human development, the socio-cultural conditions of development processes, intercultural communication, democratic values and human rights, social cohesion, conflict prevention and reconciliation, development of civil society” (Weber: 2016: 16), in the form of a horizontal task.

From the very beginning, and not merely in the context of a multicultural European immigration society, film festivals have seen themselves as bridge-builders between cultures and consciously assume this responsibility on a local, national and global basis.

It is especially at the local level that they mix and broaden horizons, thus contributing to the personal development of each individual, but also to personal education in the sense of lifelong learning. Transcending individual cultures, promoting understanding and tolerance, and creating platforms for social and political debate revolving around race, religion, class, sexuality, and gender. Thus, fostering a sense of belonging, promoting European values and contributing to the process of building a collective European identity, while facilitating enjoyable entertainment.

Today, more than ever, audio-visual works are shaping our society's view of the world. This is why cultural equal opportunity is of the greatest relevance, not only to the public, but above all to film-makers when it comes to the diversity of perspectives.

Film festivals have always offered an arena, even for irritating or uncomfortable positions. They often prove to be supporters of disadvantaged groups and their perspectives - for example, the introduction of the gay-lesbian film prize over 30 years ago at the *Berlinale* section *Panorama*, honouring productions dealing thematically with sexual orientation and gender identity.

Currently, film festivals are positioning themselves as a driving force in the debate surrounding equal opportunity for women in film. While the European film landscape – apart from the Gender Equality Plan launched in Sweden as early as 2012 (cf. Swedish Film Institute: 2017: 24) – is only taking tentative steps to combat the structural discrimination of women, with film festivals such as *Crossing Europe*, the *International Shortfilm Festival Oberhausen* and *DOK Fest Munich*, setting the tone for some years now by programming the competition, or even the overall programme, on the basis of gender parity. With the signing of the *5050x2020 Charter*, numerous renowned international film festivals such as *Cannes*, *Annecy*, *Locarno*, *Toronto*, *Sarajevo*, *San Sebastian* and the *IDFA*, have now joined the movement (cf. *Women and Hollywood*: n.d.) to take action against gender imbalance in the film industry.

Some film festivals, however, do not take this position far enough. Thus, the *IDFA*'s declared goal lies in "breaking down entry barriers and fostering the cultural participation of all." (*IDFA*: 2018)

The fact that, simultaneously, with the aid of European film works and the exchange among filmmakers and respective local citizens, the dialogue is having an extremely positive effect, not only within the

European Union but worldwide. This has already been shown by the *Feasibility Study for the Creation and the Management of a Cost-Efficient Mechanism of Support for the Organisation of European Film Festivals in Third Countries* by the KEA European Affairs of 2002.

*“Cinema is a very popular art form, which has the potential of attracting large audiences. EC delegations are keen to organise European film festivals despite limited resources because of the success of such events from a PR point of view. Today the organisation of European Film festivals is a reality. Every year, approximately 30 of them take place thanks to the initiative of EC delegations.”*  
(KEA: 2002: 4)

Today, people are well aware of the valuable diplomatic role that film festivals can play in the EU and other nations. In connection with the EU strategy for international cultural relations, a network of European film festivals currently spans the world. As for the future, the potential of film festivals and “the creation of a repository of films and the organisation of side-events will create spaces for intercultural dialogue ...in third countries” (N.N.: 2018).

#### **4. Collaboration Models**

*“I guess networks are the tool that most of the work is done and most of the knowledge is exchanged. And I guess most of our work as festivals is collaboration. Really all of it. Programming ideas come through collaboration. Rethinking our models is through collaboration. Our events exist through collaboration. We are constantly thinking from the most local level up about new partners we can cooperate with and new ways we can influence and be influenced by.”* (Taylor: 2018)

Despite the numerous challenges facing film festivals as island events in the course of globalisation and the current digital shift, film festivals are struggling per se with a resource scarcity inherent in their structure itself. This not only applies to smaller film festivals, whose programmes are largely limited to a specific time frame each year. It is often even more difficult for larger film festivals to meet their standards in terms of the multitude of public and industry activities they pursue throughout the year. A

severely limited workforce, and inadequate access to operating resources and external services, makes many of them repeatedly come up against obvious barriers.

*“One of the biggest challenges in our organisation right now is that we are under-financed. We are trying to do more than we can. ... I have the assessment that we need to grow a little bit in order to reach a plateau of resources. In the sense that, right now, the four people we have all year round seem too few to actually be visible in the landscape all year... So we keep losing people, because if we only offer people four or six months of work, then there is a good chance that they’ll be gone next time you need them.” (Poulsen: 2018)*

Another key aspect posing particular difficulties for film festivals is their nature as both specialists and generalists. On the one hand, they represent (highly)-specialised providers of qualitative cultural programmes. On the other, they are required to meet the demands of a broad range of stakeholders with the most varied film and programmatic priorities.

It is such influential variables, in addition to the disruptive change – combined with the growing tasks of the film festival circuit to build up structures and assume the functions of an alternative film market – that drive them to cooperatively seek innovative and efficient solutions.

*“Since the industry is changing, everybody sees that we can’t keep this sort of competition thing going. And in a way, we are all trying to do the same thing. So, we have to collaborate, keeping each of our own strengths, but adding two is maybe more than creating your own big thing.” (van den Elshout: 2018)*

Thus, it is not surprising that cooperation in general represents a basic option. This is also supported by the fact that collaboration is largely accessible due to the work culture enjoyed among film festivals and underpinned by the openness and readiness of the various players to cooperate in seeking tailor-made solutions. In addition, film festivals are mostly distinguished by great flexibility and a willingness to innovate.

*“I’ve now been working for the festival for 25 years. There is a network of people who work for festivals, we meet each other all the time and we don’t have a structure for that. But the thing is that we talk about possible ways of cooperating all the time. ... And the idea is that what goes around, comes around. If you do someone a*

*favour, they will do one in return and this is networking. And this is cooperation. It's not structured but it exists.*" (Laakso: 2018)

Looking at the multitude of cooperative models applicable to film festivals, it is clear that, apart from geographical and temporal range, as well as the number of partners involved, formalisation is a primary distinction when analysing various associative structures, as well as cooperative forms in terms of the individual fields of operation.

#### **4.1. Collaborations as Associative Structures**

In face of the continuously growing number of film festivals, both public authorities and film festivals themselves are striving to achieve synergies through shared infrastructures and structured collaboration.

##### **4.1.1. At the Local Level**

At the local level, three distinct forms of cooperation on the basis of organisations have mainly evolved over the years.

One of the oldest is the formation of an organisational unit, i.e. amalgamation of several film festivals under one roof. These include, for example, the *Internationale Münchner Filmwochen GmbH*, whose organisation, in addition to the *Munich Film Festival*, also combines the *Kinderfilmfest München* (Munich Children's Film Festival) and what is perceived as the entirely independent *Filmschoolfest Munich*. A comparable structure is that of the National Film Museum in Torino, which is not only affiliated with the *Torino Film Festival*, but also with "the Gay and Lesbian Film Festival... and the CinemAmbiente, an environment film festival" (Martini: 2018), two other film festivals with totally different profiles.

So-called network organisations can also be found at the national and international level. Not only in the sense of an optimal use of capacities and infrastructural resources, they are moreover involved in strategic expansion. For example, *IndieLisboa's* parent organisation coordinates a children's film festival in Northern Portugal.

*“Besides IndieLisboa, we organise an International Children and Youth Festival in the city of Porto. So, we are still expanding our activities and sources of funding. We decided to create a new festival in Porto because there was no space in Lisboa. There were already too many festivals. We moved to Porto where they are still under-serviced.” (Sena: 2018)*

Apart from such well-known examples like *Sundance Film Festival: London*, more organisations are to be found among European film festivals, such as the *International Film Festival Rotterdam*, which has established a subsidiary festival in Curaçao.

*“We have our own festival in Curaçao. There is a foundation in Curaçao which wanted to give an impulse to the regional Dutch Caribbean Islands, the regional Caribbean film industry. So, they asked us to organise the festival ... together with them. So, our technicians are there, projectionists and colleagues for the production and the programme.” (van den Elshout: 2018)*

At the same time, over recent years, European capitals in particular have recognised the value of film festivals for sustainable urban development and exploiting various forms of support. Thus, the autonomous association *Filmstadt Muenchen e.V.* has gathered a series of Munich film festivals under its umbrella which, with the aid of full-time management, not only maintains contact with the city, but also administers funding for the individual festivals. Another concept can be found in Lisbon.

*“...the Mayor decided to create a hub for film festivals, so we are door-to-door with Doclisboa, Queer Lisboa and the Lisboa Animation Film Festival. And we share the same space. We don't use the same office, of course, but we are neighbours. And we do share some cooperation on a very specific basis – like a condominium for cinema.” (Sena: 2018)*

These examples of a formal alliance prove extremely effective in many respects. The proximity of content and space contributes greatly to the cultivation of exchange and cooperation. Information and contacts are quickly shared, professionals find employment at several festivals, promotional activities are more widely disseminated and perceived, and new audiences are approached (e.g. through guest programmes at the festival venues).

Collaboration at the local level, on the other hand, is of little use when there are too many partners of different sizes and too much variation in content.

*“But it’s also a matter of who are the participants, what can we do together and that is the biggest problem in these types of collaborations. We are all in a very hectic environment and you really need time to make it work. I am also in a collaboration in Amsterdam. In Amsterdam, there are 150 festivals throughout the year. Every two days there is a festival. All festivals, not just film. And for six months I haven’t gone to the meetings, because they are so diverse, and the goals of the festivals are so very different and it’s a hectic environment. When there is clear organisation and clear goals, and the goals are important enough and I can make time for it, then it’s very good to have a cooperation. I have worked for the festival for nearly 30 years and we know all these cooperations. For me now, it’s better to work with two festivals.” (van’t Hullenaar: 2018)*

#### **4.1.2. At the National Level**

While the Dutch film festivals generally favour selected partnerships over film festival associations, so as to take advantage of knowledge transfer and cost savings when realising such communal projects as developing a joint database (cf. van Nieuwenhuijzen: 2018), new associations are being progressively founded in other European member states at both the regional and national levels.

Thereby, all associations are pursuing the primary goal of “lobbying, in the positive sense. Visibility. Creating structures” (Sponzel: 2018). But although many of them initially achieve astonishing results – such as developing political communication, provisional funding guarantees, intensifying and expanding relations with member festivals, and even occasionally conducting impact and market analyses – it is often very difficult to initiate and pursue cultural policy initiatives, or even joint projects, in the long term “because the players simply do not have the time to deal with them on the side” (Gass: 2018). Yet at the same time, there are also widely divergent understandings and thus inconsistent needs and objectives, as well as different levels of professionalisation, which represent obstacles for a successful cooperation.

*“To sit at a table with 29 Austrian festivals – and this number is constantly growing – and define what a festival actually is, there were already many points of contention... Nevertheless, I think it makes sense to exchange ideas. ...what is planned in terms of programming, where do things overlap, but also in order to coordinate dates and ultimately, articulate ourselves more strongly, in union, politically. But I would say we didn’t succeed in finding a collective voice. More or less we failed.” (Höglinger: 2018)*

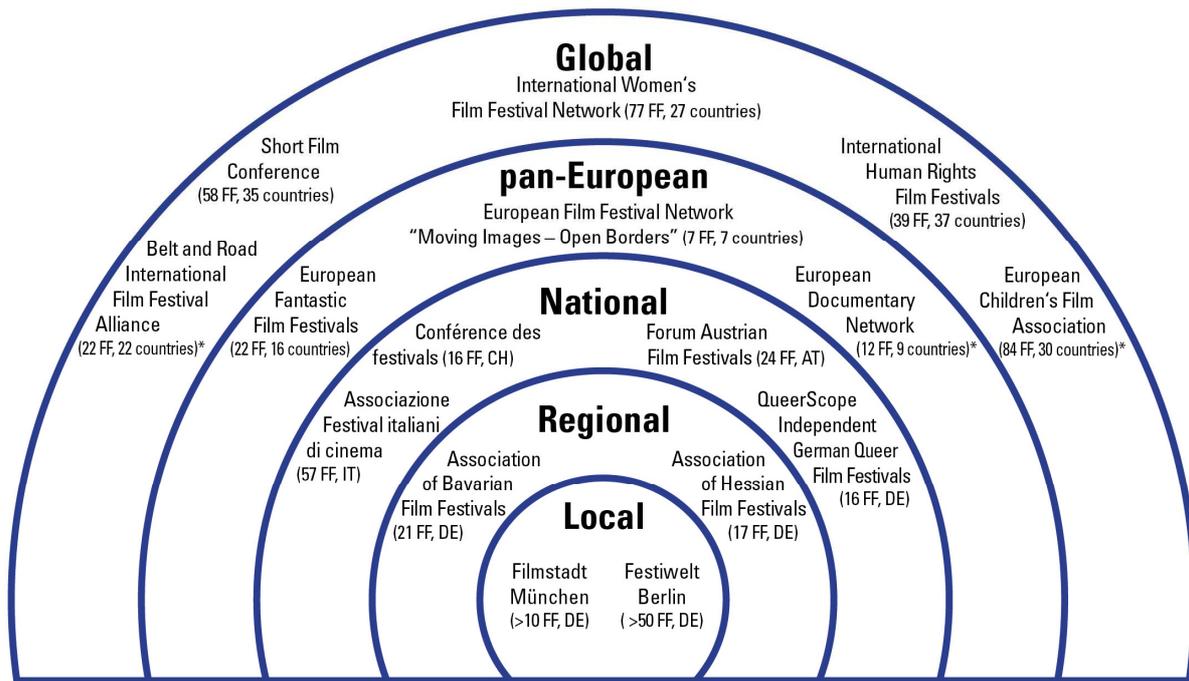


Fig. 1 Examples of associative structures with different geographical reach \* next to further member institutions and other countries

Moreover, in some countries or regions, “institutional fragmentation is simply too large to install a functioning association beyond informal communication between festivals” (Kufahl: 2018). Apart from that, it is evident that the growing rivalry for premieres makes cooperation more difficult even at the regional level (cf. Wink: 2018), which is one reason why the *Confédération des Festivals*, the association of Swiss film festivals, basically excludes cooperation in the artistic area (cf. Clivaz: 2018). On the basis of strict membership rules and the generally converging interests for public representation, and Through mutual support in the operative field, as well as in technical issues, the association has succeeded in mastering a viable basis for the joint handling of current tasks.

*“In Switzerland, there are 30 film festivals and 16 of them are now members of the Conference. It’s difficult to have a collaboration in the artistic part. But we collaborate on the organisational level. We share a ticketing system, a database application and we maintain staff exchanges. Staff exchange is one of the most important issues, since none of us can employ all the professionals throughout the year. So, we have some team members in Nyon for three months and afterwards, they work for Geneva for three months. So, we don’t lose those professionals and the professionalism, which is important.” (Clivaz: 2018)*

The respectable results of this formalised collaboration on both an organisational and a political level thus indicate two essential criteria for the success of a film festival collaboration: Firstly, the corresponding expectations and objectives of its members. Secondly, a clear demarcation and formulation of cooperation goals.

#### **4.1.3. Networks and Alliances on a Pan-European and Global Level**

As opposed to the national film festival associations, which were formed during the course of the huge expansion of the international film festival landscape, especially since the 2000s, some can be found among the pan-European and worldwide festival associations whose foundation dates back well into the last century. One of the oldest networks is probably the *Short Film Conference*, which already numbered 16 organisations from 11 countries among its members when it was founded in 1970.

For its current 58 member film festivals from 35 countries, it offers, above all, an active and valuable forum, as well as numerous networking opportunities and, in particular, an annual conference with presentations, panel talks, and table discussions revolving around recent issues and questions on the promotion and dissemination of short films. As the only organisation worldwide, it also officially represents the interests of the international short film community vis-à-vis the public, the industry and politics (cf. Schwarz: 2018).

Founded in 1996, the *European Documentary Network (EDN)* with approx. 800 members – among them twelve film festivals – also provides a global interest group for professionals in the documentary film sector. It is “an organisation that tries to lobby for documentaries. They have a conference called *Media and Society* and they travel to different festivals” (van Nieuwenhuijzen: 2018), where they also organise training programmes or offer consulting and advice (cf. EDN: n.d.). Aware of the growing significance of documentary films, especially in the festival market, the *EDN* provides its members with a detailed, international film festival calendar and thus contributes decisively to the distribution and refinancing of independent productions.

The European film festival network *Moving Images - Open Borders* is the latest example of a formal, transnational amalgamation. The aim of the 2017 network of seven founding film festivals from seven European member states is the promotion and circulation of European filmmaking with a focus on fostering new talent. Whereby, it is a matter of developing best practice models with tried and tested means in the sense of multiplicity. (cf. Dollhofer: 2018)

## CROSSING EUROPE

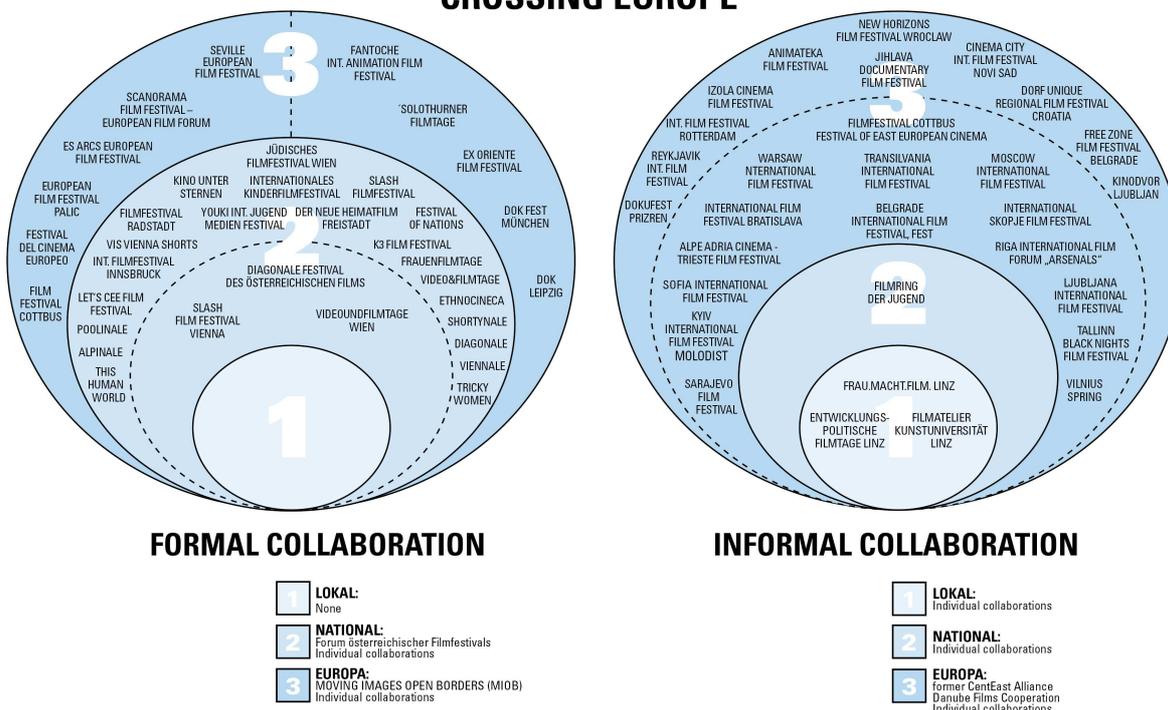


Fig. 2: Crossing Europe - Formal and informal collaborations

As with this new European network, the far-reaching activities of other European and global alliances prove that, regardless of a formal or informal basis, a common mission and vision are essential in determining whether a collaboration is sustainable and promising.

In this context, the *International Human Rights Film Festival Network (HRFN)*, founded in 2004, is also proving to be an outstanding example. As an informal partnership programme, it currently links 44 members from 42 countries and pursues numerous extraordinary initiatives in addition to its commitment to the circulation of human rights films at film festivals and other distribution channels. These include, in particular, practical support for emerging film festivals, such as with the free *HRFN* manual *Setting up a Human Rights Film Festival* and a fund to enable financially weak partner festivals to visit major festivals. (cf. Kuhn: 2018)

Both aforementioned networks illustrate that despite similar objectives, different prerequisites, approaches and collaborative structures require different formal conditions, while, at the same time, the potential of both forms of association significantly depends upon their members' identification with the association's guidelines and a corresponding sense of unity.

#### 4.1.4. European Coordination of Film Festivals (ECFF)

Looking back at the *European Coordination of Film Festivals (ECFF)*, the network established in 1994 on the initiative of several European film festivals, with its comprehensive programme and diverse catalogue of measures, the initiative's clear strengths are obvious, yet so are its weaknesses.

With the aim of promoting European cinema, up to its insolvency in the early-2000s, about 200 film festivals of different sizes and great programmatic diversity joined the *ECFF*. It is unclear to date whether it owed its great popularity more to the initiative and its activities, or to the fact that the prevailing assumption in the festival landscape was that membership was a prerequisite for possible funding through the *MEDIA Programme*.

From today's perspective, however, the *ECFF*'s greatest merits lay in the broad debate on the form, function, task and value context of a film festival and the agreement of a corresponding Code of Ethics, which still forms the basis for the self-conception of countless film festivals and associations.

Not only against the background of the limited communication possibilities available at the time, a mainstay of the coordination was to offer encounter and exchange between European film festivals.

*“After I began at DOK Leipzig, I was also at a meeting. I found it very exciting, because there you could easily get to know colleagues from other festivals, whom you would otherwise only have met briefly on the fringes of the big festivals like the Berlinale, or if you arranged to visit their festival.”* (Danielsen: 2018)

Encounters, exchange and the deepening of knowledge and skills were not only limited to various events, but also perpetuated at organised meetings and workshops held at member festivals. Projects such as a *Staff Exchange Scheme*, offered and administered by the *ECFF*, served as a specific measure to further networking and professionalisation of the festival landscape as a whole, and are still considered as very valuable and successful on several levels by many former members (cf. Dollhofer: 2018, cf. Laakso: 2018, cf. Wink: 2018).

The coordination further distinguished itself by its commitment, especially in the area of conferences and research, such as *The Cultural and Socio-economic Impact of Film Festivals* (1999).

Even back then, however, the diversity of the parties, their agendas and, consequently, diverging objectives, proved problematic in what was still a comparatively clear and differentiated festival landscape.

*“About 20 to 25 film festivals came from Germany... The Filmfest Munich, the Filmfest Cottbus, DOK Leipzig, as well as such short film festivals as Hamburg, Oberhausen... It was very mixed.” (Wink: 2018)*

This was one reason that made it very difficult for the coordination to contribute towards furthering exchange between festivals, especially when it came to content. The great reservations about a system at the programme level being superordinate to the artistic concept, are still relevant today.

*“Frankly, programme packages make a festival programme too small-scale, and too many extra bells and whistles tear it apart. And Crossing Europe is a brand, has a profile and an image, and that also stands for something programmatically and if it is too diluted, it no longer functions. Maybe it makes sense for short film festivals. But even there, I always find this levelling a problem.” (Dollhofer: 2018)*

Due to technical developments and the associated communication and networking possibilities, “decentralisation has occurred in many areas, which is why structures such as the ECFF are no longer absolutely necessary” (Schwarz: 2018). Besides, the diversity of the requirements placed on the majority of film festivals and the attendant complexity in coping with them requires, now more than ever, individual and tailor-made concepts based on cooperation between selected partners.

*“We have always kept out of all of those things. We preferred to stay independent in the way we organise things and also to maintain a certain flexibility to adapt to change and innovation.” (van den Elshout: 2018)*

The great diversity of the film festival landscape also confronted the ECFF with the difficulty of being unable to equally represent all members of the network at the political level. The rival interests among them likewise led to a dissolution of the national divides that had formed in the context of the network's activities.

*“Most festivals suffer from a shortage of time, money and personnel and then to motivate themselves and to participate in such a network, there must already be appropriate incentives. ... That's why I don't believe that festival networks work when*

*they are installed from above, so to speak. Rather they only work if the parties agree that a common problem needs to be solved.” (Kufahl: 2018)*

As it turned out, the respective priorities did not coincide sufficiently to propel communal efforts and provide the necessary time and funding, primarily due to the scarcity of resources.

## **4.2. Collaboration in the Operational Field**

The aforementioned observations on collaborations as associative structures underline that over the past few years, the associations, alliances and networks that have prevailed, are those linking festivals together on the basis of their respective content profiles and missions. Whereas associations, which might have been expected to produce major synergies based on a regional, national or even pan-European network of film festivals with different orientations, often fail to fulfil their anticipated results.

*“The first thing that we share is the same idea. We have collaborators, most of them are from the same short film scene. And with this passion for short film and expertise you can exchange ideas.” (Zoldener: 2018)*

Today, the majority of film festival collaborations are aimed at overcoming explicit problems or enabling film festivals to fulfil their operational tasks more efficiently and at a higher quality level. This, however, requires the targeted selection of one or several (mostly a few) partners who, on the one hand, have the necessary skills and resources and, on the other, are willing or able to use them to the extent and context required.

*“(B)ecause we are a specific documentary film festival and documentary has become much more important in the last decade ..., everyone now wants to work together with IDFA, because documentaries are important and IDFA is one of the most important documentary festivals in the world. I think for us, it’s not that we don’t want to cooperate with everyone, but it’s not possible to do so.” (van’t Hullenaar: 2018)*

Many film festivals have cultivated close partnerships over the years and systematically expanded this circle against the background of the increased functions and expanded interests of their stakeholders –

not forgetting that, “MEDIA funding played its part” (Danielsen: 2018). An approach that not only fuelled its own development, but also required a huge investment in time and effort.

*“I think we can see advantages and disadvantages in this process. We used to have several strong relationships in the last 24 years. But at one point, we found we would like to keep a relationship with around three festivals, because it was becoming logistically too complicated. If you collaborate with 10 festivals, two or three people are needed to communicate, to visit the festivals, to watch the films. We are asking ourselves, what is the benefit for our festival? What is the benefit for our visitors or our film makers? What can we learn from our experience of working with a festival? That is why there are now just a few festivals with whom we are directly communicating and collaborating.” (Purivatra: 2018)*

Today, apart from friendly relations and well-rehearsed cooperation among film festivals, often only strategic partnerships are cultivated in close coordination with a specific objective (cf. Mooney: 2018). The initiators of the *DOC Alliance* also profess that their association and the introduction of the cooperative VOD platform *DAFilms.com* was the result of a strategic decision. Accordingly, their merger was based on the endeavour to intensify exchange and collaboration between the festivals and, at the same time, served to counterbalance the market power of the *IDFA* (Clivaz: 2018, Danielsen: 2018, Rehm: 2018).

As opposed to the extensive rivalry between feature film festivals, the short film sector sees itself less in competition, not least due to a more “laid back” premiere policy (cf. Laakso: 2018). Still, festivals such as the *International Short Film Festival Oberhausen* find that “cooperation is an expression of a problem that is to be solved, nothing else” (Gass: 2018).

Today, formal and informal collaboration among film festivals can be found in all areas of their organisational activity: from acquisition and production, marketing, technological development, the introduction and testing of innovative practices, to joint research projects. On a superordinate level, they facilitate the transfer of knowledge and improvement of skills among film festivals in a context ranging from informal exchange to specifically commissioned consulting services. Thus, not only do they contribute to a further dynamic development of the film festival circuit and achieve great effects in the professionalisation of the film festival landscape as a whole, but much more, they set positive stimuli in the cinema market. The various forms of collaboration promise to be successful, above all, if they

“emerge from the working situation” (Dollhofer: 2018) and, at the same time “exist naturally and evolve in an organic way” (Sena: 2018).

#### **4.2.1. At the Acquisition Level**

Apart from financing, characterised by a complex structure of subsidies, box office, sponsoring, and advertising, and the difficulty involved in securing personnel, acquiring the programme and thus the access to talent and film works, represents the prime task for film festivals.

In connection with the individual activities involved in programme acquisition, research, selection, "purchasing" and the specifics which determine programming in its entirety (incl. genre, country of origin, premiere status, target group, additional services), terms (conditions, access), acquisition channels (e.g. submission, scouting) and communication (e.g. advertising, PR, establishing and maintaining contacts), there are numerous opportunities for cooperation, some of which involve major synergies.

Based on the film festivals' individual possibilities and missions, cooperative forms can be found ranging from the joint programming of several film festivals and cooperation on individual sections or special programmes (see 4.2.2.), up to and including specific communal measures in connection with individual marketing activities (see 4.2.3.). Beyond these broad conceptual approaches to programmatic cooperation, are a variety of mainly informal collaborative forms that support festivals in scouting, curating and programming.

*“There are countless examples of cooperation and there are more every year... We are networking with one and a half to two dozen festival makers. And, of course, we are networking worldwide. ... And that gives us access to film works in two dozen states and regions, and, above all, to the respective expertise.” (Sponsel: 2018)*

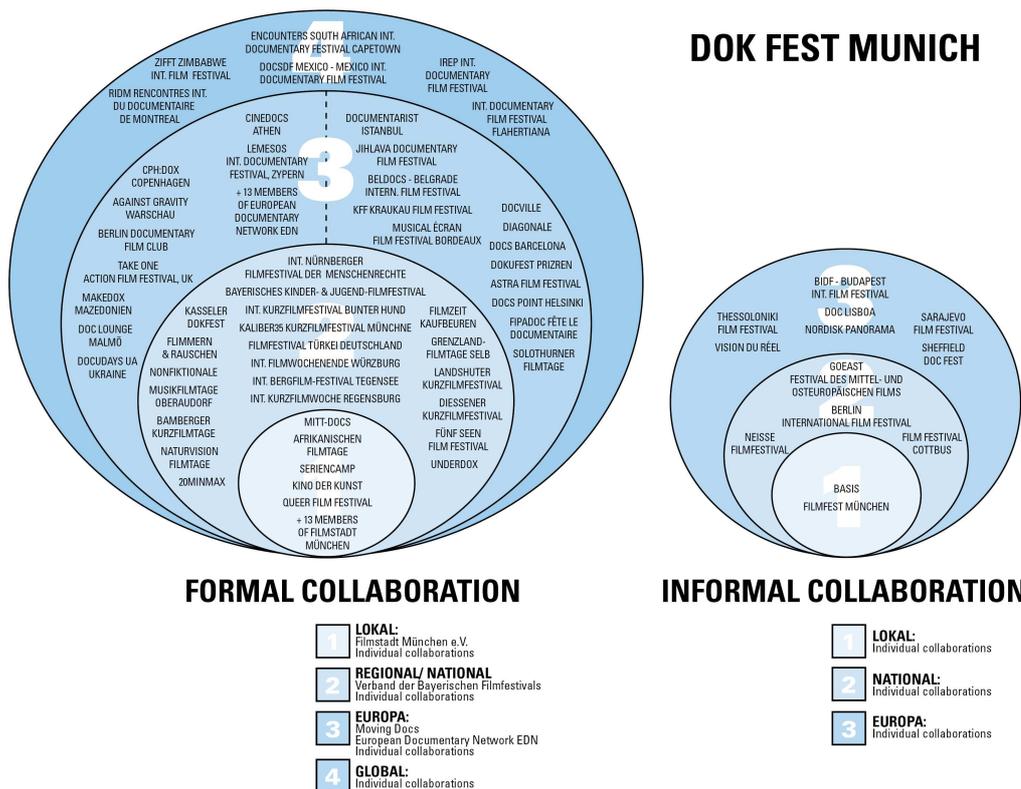


Fig. 3: DOK Fest Munich - Formal and informal collaborations

*“But programmatic cooperation is never easy.... it always involves a lot of communication, including potential misunderstandings and individual requirements for each festival, different event dates, the right to premiere - you come up against so many obstacles. And there's so much that's unclear, which of course makes it more expensive and elaborate and may look productive on the outside, but it's pretty complicated on the inside.” (Sponse: 2018).*

Mutual recommendations on film works and their makers are part of the living culture and thus part of everyday business among film festivals. In particular, information is compiled on national insiders' tips, indie films and upcoming filmmakers, contacts are initiated, and recommendations made for highly esteemed film festivals. (cf. Clivaz: 2018, cf. Dollhofer: 2018, cf. Ilijine: 2018, cf. Kohout: 2018) This way of working essentially determines the process of programme acquisition and represents a monetary advantage. It also has the major effect of attracting attention to cinematographic works beyond the big director-names, making the leap beyond national borders and paving the way for cinema exploitation in foreign territories (cf. Gröner: 2018; cf. Mooney: 2018), as well as providing public access to the diversity of European cinema.

The extent of this informal market of information and its possible impact is shown by the fact that films become part of the film festival circuit long before they are even completed.

*“Sure, for the international programme we use these informal networks in order to get access to films as soon as they are made. We have a number of partners at other film festivals that share with us some of their references and suggestions. We do this on a regular basis. We suggest Portuguese films to them and they suggest films from their own countries – and not just their own countries. We have this idea of adding good influence to films and projects we believe in. So, we make a lot of recommendations and we take a lot of recommendations from festivals that share the same programming orientation.”* (Sena: 2018)

The degree of the programmers' knowledge of current film production and its developments is illustrated by claims that some of them view around 4,000 films per year (cf. Dollhofer: 2018; cf. Martini: 2018), and that it is not uncommon to attend an average of two film festivals per month (cf. Rehm: 2018).

On top of this, artistic directors visiting festivals as programmers, scouts and viewers, have the chance of getting an overview of productions before their completion through a multitude of presentations and pitching platforms up to rough-cut boutiques.

Nevertheless, the obviously collegial exchange between film festivals should not obscure the fact that the competition among them imposes its limits.

*“There has already been a very trusting and open relationship between Edinburgh, Munich and Karlovy Vary for years, but you still don't put all your cards on the table. Although one intuitively understands that it's all the same to the audience what happens in Munich, if it happens in Karlovy Vary first, in today's digitalised film industry, we also live from references made in the first review of a film, i.e. where a film is 'born'. The world premiere and the international premiere are major currencies in the festival business.”* (Gröner: 2018)

One encounters similar attitudes when asking about the value of cooperation in the areas of talent scouting and film research. “Everyone wants to discover talents and films for themselves.” (Gass: 2018) This statement is often made and demonstrates that the informal exchange of programmatic information is necessary and elementary, but that it by no means constitutes a convincing model when it comes to programming.

In comparison, the activity of freelance programmers has significantly more impact. As a result of their great expertise in a specialised field, they frequently work for several film festivals and are able to place film works specifically with regard to individual brand, special regulations of an A-list festival, as well as calendar dependencies.

Moreover, the extensive online film festival catalogues that enable international programme research are not only aimed at the smaller festivals with local or regional reach. The majors, too, take advantage of the information. For most festivals, the “first points of contact are likewise the national film commissions” (Kufahl: 2018). According to their respective content, visits to film festivals, on the other hand, not only provide a detailed overview of current film productions but, as a rule, also enable direct contact with the filmmakers and rights-holders, as well as the collection of supplementary information and tips from a wider circle of programmers. This makes them the key instrument for programme research and acquisition.

Especially in the view of increased importance film festivals currently enjoy as an alternative form of film exploitation, the number of festival representatives in attendance is therefore of great relevance to the programmed film and likewise to the corresponding festival.

*“There is always a group of invitations sent to programmers, of course. I would say we have up to 20 to 30 international programmers at IndieLisboa every year. ... We feel that’s important. ...They watch a lot of films and we have a video library service where our guests can access every film submitted to IndieLisboa. So, it’s a good chance for them to check every film that was sent to the festival.” (Sena: 2018)*

Programmers describe this practice as the “best way to promote Portuguese film” (Taylor: 2018) and it is just as appreciated by other festival directors.

*“There are always films that stay under the radar and have nowhere to go, that don’t find a distributor. And then someone like Jean-Pierre Rehm sees one of these films, invites it to the competition and suddenly there’s a domino effect: distribution, festival participation, prizes, and more.” (Höglinger: 2018)*

The outstanding significance and enormous effects of visits to film festivals for both visitors and hosts, for even the large film festivals, are described by Cees van't Hullenaar, “we have scouts in different parts of the world, even China and Africa. There are five or six scouts throughout the world, so together with the viewers, we visit around 395 festivals in the world. Everybody visits a lot of festivals.” (van't

Hullenaar: 2018) Andriek van Nieuwenhuijzen (2018) completes the picture with, “we like to bring people from all over the world. We truly believe in a global network. It’s also a way to scout for talent and build relationships.”

And Carla Mooney (2018) emphasizes, that “there is no doubt that attending other festivals not only offers the opportunity for film festivals to discover film works and talent, as well as establish and maintain contact with colleagues. To get a highly coveted film, it makes a great difference if you are meeting the filmmakers in person.”

There is no doubt that attending other festivals not only offers the opportunity for film festivals to discover film works and talent, as well as establish and maintain contact with colleagues. It practically offers the sole and unique opportunity to recruit employees, gain insight into the structures, systems and practices of other festival organisations (cf. Christanell: 2018) and, in a best practices sense, contributes to one's own festival work.

*“One of our main tasks is to bring as many festivals directors as we can to our festival, so that the films shown at Sarajevo can be seen by them and be invited to travel around. Every year we are hosting between 25 and 35 directors from festivals. We are always trying to make a tailor-made list to target the festivals where we would most like the films to be seen. ... Another of our regular activities is to invite all festivals from Bosnia and Herzegovina every year. There are ten of them and we invite them for the first three days also to be part of the workshops, or for an open door, which means they have an open door free of charge to any of our activities. And later in the year they can ask us whatever they want about the festival and how we can support them.”* (Purivatra: 2018)

There is an informal network, a reciprocal hospitality, between festivals, (cf. Taylor: 2018) which represents one of the supporting pillars for exchange between them and, above all, for the cross-border circulation of European film works. In view of the premiere policies of the international film festivals, it is those at the third and fourth tier which, in a pool, particularly ensure a wide presentation of European filmmaking. It is therefore of great importance that international film festivals don’t keep to themselves but open this circle to local and regional film festivals.

*“The dissemination of films throughout the film festival circuit is not only limited to two notable festivals. The films’ life span is especially long afterwards. Within the*

*framework of our collaborations we are explicitly asked for German language films, e.g. by Budapest or Perm. This year we had the world premiere of "Tackling Life" at the DOK.fest. Afterwards we took it to Africa and now – via our networks – it will be shown in Russia as well."* (Kohout: 2018)

The *Nordic Network Fund* (financed by the *Nordic Cultural Point*), which supports the networking of Nordic film festivals, is thus proving to be very far-sighted. It enables even financially weaker film festivals to communicate about film production in the neighbouring country by means of reciprocal visits and, in addition, to establish contacts with filmmakers as well as with partner festivals.

#### **4.2.2. At the Programming and Management Level**

For many years, the great appeal of film festivals in the most varied contexts, as well as the substantial simplification of their organisation due to the digital shift, has led to the creation of a colourful European film festival landscape.

Even though many of the players – due to their special-interest profiles, or rural locations - have only limited reach, numerous festivals succeed in creating major synergies by means of a diverse portfolio of different cooperative forms, thus managing to secure their long-term existence.

Accordingly, *Queerscope*, a community of about 15 independent Queer/LGBTQ film festivals in Germany, founded in the late-1990s, is proof of a successful film festival cooperation. True to its goal of minimising costs through joint programming, producing subtitles, invitation of guests and production of promotional material, it still offers its community a high-quality programme at many venues.

The concept of the *Vienna International Shorts (VIS)* is based less on cost efficiency than on the endeavour to present different European perspectives. Every year, the *VIS* invites two festivals to curate a programme on a specific theme, which are then presented en bloc, together with its own programme, at all venues of the three partner festivals.

The *Riga International Film Festival 2ANNAS* regularly invites other, highly-esteemed short film festivals, giving them carte blanche to curate a programme as part of its *Focus* format. Here, too, the emphasis is on a change of perspective.

*“Some programmes we curate ourselves, but, for example, this year I had a meeting in Oberhausen with Jukka-Pekka Laakso from Tampere (Film Festival) and he agreed to curate the Focus programme for us. And in the last years, we collaborated with DokuFest Kosovo and Winterhur Short Film Festival. We always try to have one or two programmes curated by other festivals. But we prefer, not just the best from Tampere, but a selection corresponding to our theme. So, it goes two ways: To provoke a dialogue. ... And, in the opposite direction, we have shown festival programmes and specially-curated Latvian and Baltic programmes at Cellu l'art, Germany; at the International Short Film Festival CPM, Belarus; at the International Film Festival Kino Otok, Slovenia; at Flimmerzimmer Berlin, Germany; at Cinedays, Macedonia, and so on.” (Zoldener: 2018)*

Although not as a fixed part of the programme, some feature film festival representatives are also interested in the occasional involvement of a partner festival from a host country. Volker Kufahl (2018), for example, talks of the valuable collaboration with the *Batumi International Art House Film Festival (BIAFF)*, combined with the guest curation of a short film programme. Nevertheless, in his opinion, such cooperation is usually the exception, as even his efforts to form a small music film festival network with the *Festival Gent* and the *Silent Film Festival Pordenone* a few years ago fizzled out after a unique selective collaboration.

On the other hand, there are more and more festivals which, with regard to the strong differentiation of audio-visual works, specifically involve outside expertise to expand their core profiles. In line with the motto, *“we don't need to reinvent the wheel”* (Iljine: 2018), Filmfest Munich works closely with *Seriencamp*, the festival for series and TV culture, and *Film Fest Bozen* cooperates with the *Landshuter Kurzfilmfestival* with respect to a short film programme.

*“It was my desire to also show short films in the programme, but here we lack the necessary know-how. That's why, last year, I asked the Short Film Festival in Landshut, if they would present their European programme here, as well.” (Christanell: 2018)*

That an exchange of programmes not only represents a vital form of cooperation within the framework of regional festivals is shown by collaborations such as *“Cannes in Milano and Milano in Cannes”* (Martini: 2018), the short film exchange programmes between the *Sarajevo Film Festival* and the *Zagreb Film Festival* (cf. Purivatra: 2018), or the presentation of special programmes by the *Viennale* as

the *Berlinale Forum* at *IndieLisboa* (cf. Sena: 2018). But even if these examples demonstrate the interest of a number of film festivals in the exchange of film works, one must not overlook the fact that this is not meant as a base for a “systematic connection, but an informal link” (Poulsen: 2018). Rather, the majority of guest programmes represent very individual compilations conceived specifically for the partner festival and, therefore, do not offer programmes suitable for wider dissemination.

One festival director expressed some concern about the cooperation encouraged by the EU, especially at the content level.

*“It is certainly legitimate to want to produce targeted effects with funding formats. However, it is to be feared that a further narrowing and intensification of funding formats by the EU could stimulate a streamlining of festival programming (vulgo: all showing the same thing), as well as festival franchising (vulgo: all looking alike). The great proportion of European films required by the EU already represents a conflict of objectives for international festivals. In other words, the better and bigger a festival, the more difficult it will be to represent a very high proportion of European works and a very high degree of networking.”* (Gass: 2018)

The situation is different when it comes to what are known as “best-of-fest” programmes, which offer platforms at numerous local and regional festivals for the (PR-strong) winning films from European A-festivals and, at the same time, serve as showcases for current European cinema. A trend that is also spreading to the short film sector, as Jukka-Pekka Laakso (2018) describes, “*some pick up films from our competition and use our name to brand*”. In the broadest sense, the *best short films* from the *European Film Academy* adopt this concept. However, in contrast to its successful circulation in over “35 or 40 festivals around the world” (Ibid.: 2018), festivals not closely linked to the European film festival circuit do not appear to be informed about this programme.

Advocates of the concept of packaged programmes are found in the short film scene with regard to cost-intensive special programmes, as well as in the feature film sector when it comes to “complex retrospectives or historically challenging programmes that go hand in hand with an elaborate clarification of rights” (Dollhofer: 2018). Two comparable examples of cooperation between the *International Film Festival Rotterdam* and *Crossing Europe* prove that such projects can be successful.

*“We took over the Young Turkish Cinema and the Red Western as complete programs from Rotterdam, shared the costs and produced our own brochure.*

*Nevertheless, it was very complicated in both cases, because the rights with Russia had to be separately negotiated and were expensive.” (Dollhofer: 2018)*

Some programmers see profitable options for programmatic cooperation at festivals that overlap in time or are very similarly structured.

*“Festivals that are not called Cannes, Venice or Berlinale become very interesting on a boutique level, for a few selected projects, if, for example, one can offer a film the opportunity to premiere at three different European locations within three days. I believe, however, that this kind of thinking will become more widely accepted, where on the other side, the licensors are globally operating companies. This of course means Netflix, Amazon and Google.” (Gröner: 2018)*

Apart from such strategic considerations, there are a number of others that focus mainly on the increasingly tough competitive conditions in the international film festival market.

Other forms of close cooperation can often be found at the level of jury appointments, expert invitations, or the “sharing” of personnel. By contrast, in recent years a large proportion of collaborations have established themselves in the area of industry programmes. Examples of cooperation include the Sarajevo Film Festival and the FID Marseille (*Marseille International Film Festival*) with the Talents Programme of the Berlinale, the Riga International Film Festival 2ANNAS and the PÖFF Shorts Festival at the Baltic Pitching Forum, Visions du Réel and Nordisk Panorama within the context of the Doc Incubator Programme, the connection between the CineMart at the International Film Festival Rotterdam, IDFA's Docs for Sale market, and the European Film Market at the Berlinale. All examples are just the tip of the cooperation iceberg.

Yet in this area, too, there is a long-term need for collaboration. Not so much to open up new possibilities but as to better structure the vast range of existing services and coordinate them more effectively among one another.

*“Talents are hopping from one workshop to another. ...The same goes for the project market, the forum. I do not want to select projects that have been presented elsewhere. ...At the same time, it's nonsense to think that if someone pitched in Sheffield in June they will have raised the money by the time of November, so they still need our market to be there, to speak to people and follow up. Even that can be organised. I could ask Sheffield what are the five most promising projects? Then I*

*would give them automatic access to the forum. Not to pitch officially, but to be there. Sheffield can help them grow their projects, while being at IDFA.”* (van Nieuwenhuijzen: 2018)

#### **4.2.3. At the Marketing Level**

Looking at the collaboration between film festivals from the marketing perspective, it is clear that, apart from some isolated cases, the target market of the audience is rarely a cooperative focus. This has to do with the fact that film festivals as island events can only collaboratively serve the end consumer to a limited degree. And that’s why film festivals concentrate primarily on a wide variety of cooperation activities at their specific location, cultivating collaboration with cinemas, cultural and educational institutions, as well as socially relevant organisations and companies.

*“At Graz festival, it is far more important to maintain cooperation in the city: with the cinemas, the independent scene, the galleries, and the theatres... That was something we initiated intensively, and we can now see the success. The Diagonale has always had the problem of being perceived as an alien who, once a year, virtually descends onto Graz before rushing back to Vienna.”* (Höglinger: 2018)

This strategy, whereby a festival takes extensive measures in the context of audience development, also demonstrably produces valuable incentives for the cinema, as well as for other cultural landscapes beyond the festival’s actual duration.

A notable exception, however, is the former attempt at marketing a joint festival pass for the four Cologne film festivals and all their events taking place in late-November: *Exposed – Festival für erste Filme*, *Soundtrack Cologne – Congress & Festival on Film Music and Music Film*, *Cinepänz – Kinderfilmfestival*, and *Unlimited – European Short Film Festival*. Although it is difficult to determine for how long the initiative was pursued, it can be assumed that the demand was limited, if only due to the very different festival target groups.

More effective in target group marketing are such PR and advertising measures as the annual *Long Night of Film Festivals*, organised under the umbrella association *FESTIWELT* in about 50

amalgamated Berlin film festivals. Other examples aimed at developing new target groups can also be found at the same location by organising various guest events in the programme of a partner festival.

It thereby follows that cooperation on a larger scale concentrates extensively on additional distribution efforts which, with the aid of VOD services, make it possible to uncouple festival date and location. Outstanding in this respect is the international online distribution platform for documentary and experimental films *DAFilms.com*. Operated since 2008 by seven key European documentary film festivals, it is “a platform created to give documentary films a new lease of life and offer audiences a curated selection of documentary films with the quality seal of the festivals” (Danielsen: 2018).

Pursuing a similar objective, the *Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival*, the *Tampere Film Festival* and the *Interfilm International Short Film Festival Berlin* have entered into a formal alliance with the submission platform *Reelport*. Its focus is on short films, made accessible to a wider audience with an application via public libraries (cf. Laakso: 2018; cf. Schwarz: 2018).

These marketing activities focused on the industry are accompanied by a far more extensive catalogue. A multitude of festival activities based on formal and informal collaboration shapes the picture and pursues the needs of the film market, especially the target group of filmmakers and rights holders, buyers and film festivals.

Cooperative advertising measures can be found on a wide scale. These generally include the exchange of advertisements in online and print publications, the dissemination of calls for entry or accreditation, as well as festival dates and other news via various channels such as newsletters, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. This form of distributing information, as well as exchanging ads, is also intended to display one’s closer contacts to the outside world (cf. Schwarz: 2018). Thus, they offer *carte blanche*, i.e. to organise a guest programme, not only for the primary purpose, but to simultaneously raise awareness and enhance the image of both partner festivals.

Other effective publicity measures include presenting a partner festival’s competition-winning films. A long-standing cooperation exists between the *Filmfestival Max Ophüls Prize* and the *Perspektive Deutsches Kino* section at the *Berlinale*. At the same time, however, such partnerships are also exercised by purely audience-oriented film festivals such as the *Filmfest Lünen* and *Film Fest Bozen*.

The awarding of prizes within the circle of partner festivals, such as the *DOC Alliance Prize*, represents a further instrument for providing a larger public stage to outstanding film works.

*“The main action of the DOC Alliance is each year’s prize, the DOC Alliance Selection Award. Each of our seven documentary film festivals proposes one film. The nominees are then submitted to an independent film jury. One film is selected as the winner, which, apart from the prize itself, is coupled with a financial award of €5,000. Yet a further distinction consists in the fact that each festival picks two of the nominees for their own programme. In that sense, it’s modest but meaningful, because it’s a promise for a film to travel. It’s visibility and a chance to win a further prize.”* (Rehm: 2018)

To increase the visibility of film works and thus stimulate their national and (more importantly) cross-border circulation, is one of the major concerns of festivals. This involves the use of the most varied forms of cooperation, such as a distinct invitation policy. Therefore, on the one hand, free accreditation is systematically granted and, on the other, targeted invitations to relevant festivals are extended. Such activities are further supported on site with specific matchmaking events.

*“Under the title ‘Meet the Festivals’, the Visions du Réel hosts an industry event as part of the market. Here, filmmakers and rights holders are introduced to festival representatives at an international level in order to initiate the invitation of films”.* (Clivaz: 2018)

The *FID Marseille* also offers a comparable event. The concept here is for the festivals to introduce themselves with a profile summary, so that filmmakers can arrange individual appointments. *“Face-to-face encounters between film festivals are very precious! The International Short Film Festival Oberhausen organises a dinner for film festival representatives, a great opportunity to get in touch with each other.”* (Wink: 2018)

The organisation of festival receptions on the fringes of a partner festival is another match-making format that has enjoyed increasing popularity in recent years. These events offer the advantage of promoting the image of the current festival with attractive supporting events and giving the host festivals the opportunity to cultivate contacts and, above all, draw attention to themselves during the year. Emanuela Martini describes her longstanding experience with such match-making events.

*“I remember that, maybe 20 or 25 years ago, we tried to do it in Italy too. There was a group of festivals, Torino, Bergamo – I was the director of Bergamo at this time – Rimini, and I don’t remember the fourth. We used to rent a place in Cannes and organised a reception together. We also thought we could exchange films, but that doesn’t work in Italy.” (Martini: 2018)*

With the goal of stimulating the circulation of domestic filmmaking, the Austrian film festivals *Crossing Europe* and *Diagonale* have formed a close partnership. By providing a library of its festival entries to *Crossing Europe*, the *Diagonale* at the same time informs industry representatives about current Austrian cinema.

For certain, the greatest communication service, likewise in regard to policy, has been achieved by cooperative studies. Particularly noteworthy is the survey on film festival visitors as part of the first study on the situation of Austrian film festivals (FÖFF: 2016), and the systematic analysis of the programmatic diversity of film festivals as compared to cinema, TV, DVD and VOD (BFS: 2013), as requested by the *Conférence des Festivals*.

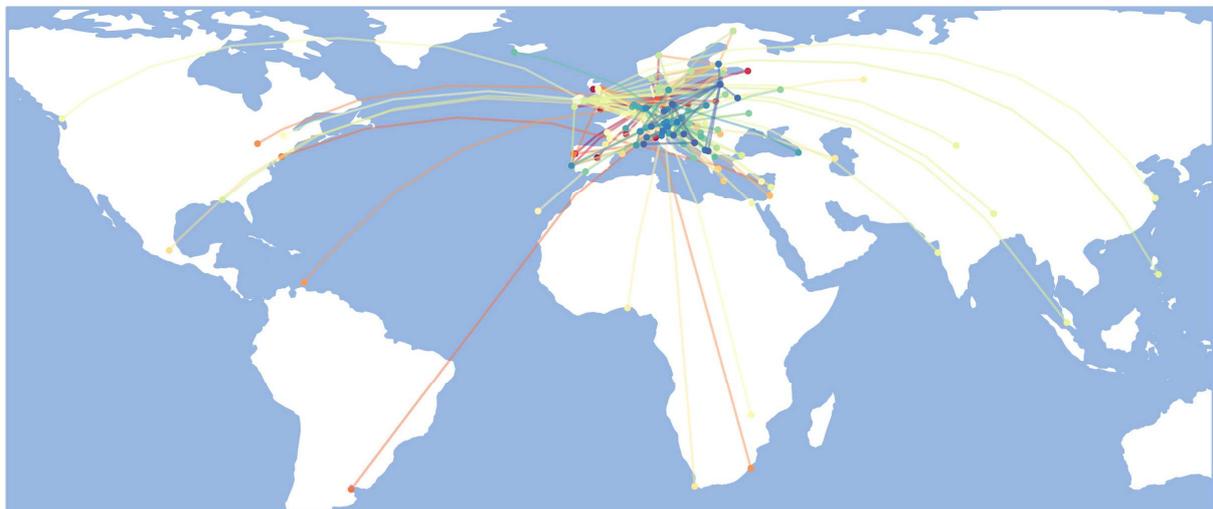


Fig 4. Illustration of formal and informal Collaborations among European Film Festivals

This illustration with 228 connections comprises only a small proportion of the collaborations maintained by the 21 film festivals participating in the study and is solely confined to those specifically thematized in the study context.

#### 4.2.4. At Innovation and Knowledge Level

Those familiar with the structure, activities and processes of film festivals are aware that their organisation is extremely flexible, innovative and adaptive. It can be assumed that due to their form as island events, they are forced to master challenges which require resilience and the ability to change. Innovations are not understood solely on the basis of the development of a new format or introduction of new measures, but rather as the essence of every process, which explains why networking and partnerships are generally considered to be feasible options.

*“We share a lot of ideas with other festivals, because we like to be inspired by our colleagues. For instance, five years ago, I was attending a festival in the Czech Republic and I was very impressed by their festival app. We didn’t have one at the time, so we contacted their provider, who was a Czech app developer. The festival agreed that we could use the same structure and do it in Portugal for a small fee. We adapted the app to IndieLisboa and we have been doing it ever since.”* (Sena: 2018)

The above example of cooperation in connection with a technical solution is hardly an isolated case. There was talk of databases (van’t Hullenaar: 2018, Wink: 2018), a film upload application (van den Elshout: 2018), film festival software (Gass: 2018), VOD platforms (Rehm: 2018; van den Elshout: 2018), submission tools (Gass: 2018), and festival programme apps (Sena: 2018), up to and including systems for counting the audience (Clivaz: 2018).

Yet when film festivals join forces, it is not only to find technical solutions. Together, they develop visions, or initiate think tanks, so as to peer into the future of the audio-visual market. With the *Propellor Project*, a collaboration between the *IFFR*, the *EFM*, *CPH: DOX* and *Cinemathon*, was established five years ago when four partners created a forum to explore new models for production, distribution and experience of films. This was implemented through round tables and debates together with the film industry, as well as mentors from neighbouring disciplines. With this initiative, the *IFFR* also seeks to reaffirm and expand its image as a film festival, not only during the core period of the festival itself, but far beyond, into the film industry (cf. van den Elshout).

The extent to which film festivals are assuming responsibility for the (European) cinema landscape is apparent, and not only in the context of such large events. More and more festivals are teaming up to discuss pressing film industry concerns, be it in closed working groups (cf. Gröner: 2018, cf. Höhne:

2018), or in public panel discussions (cf. Wink: 2018), or even in specially organised conferences, such as the *Congress on Perspectives of German Film and Cinema*, organised in April 2018 by the *Lichter - Frankfurt International Film Festival* (Frankfurt Positions on the Future of German Cinema: 2018).

That festivals go beyond words and ideas is demonstrated, above all, by the growing horizontal and vertical differentiation of their activities. As active participants, their considerable contribution to the cinema landscape goes far beyond the overwhelming number of training, consulting and market activities. They have also successively established and expanded their own business areas for the distribution of film works in the wake of absent or declining structures and, in particular, in response to recent and rapid market changes. These include the formation of classic distribution structures (cf. Ruh: 2018), the launch of their own VOD services (cf. Purivatra: 2018; cf. van den Elshout: 2018), the organisation of extensive cinema tours (cf. van 't Hullenaar: 2018), and the development of innovative cinema formats, such as *IFFR LIVE* (which screens films simultaneously in over 45 European cities with live Q&A's), all of which can be used as testing options for the cinema of tomorrow, as well as approaching new target groups.

*“We even had a VOD platform, but we had to close it, because it was too costly. I think it’s because there isn’t a real developed market here in Bosnia or in the region. That was our aim, to cover as much as we could. But it’s getting a better market and I’m hoping some of the other elements will be covered by other companies and then we will go back to our core business, which is a film festival, industry platform, and a training platform for talents. That’s our core business.”* (Purivatra: 2018)

In addition, modern film festivals also reference audience development and inclusion among their key tasks. For example, many of them design programmes to address disadvantaged and culturally alienated groups (Höglinger: 2018; Sponsel: 2018) and thus bring about broader participation. Whereby the varied educational programmes, especially for children, adolescents, and teaching staff, also play a major role (cf. Clivaz: 2018; cf. Kohout: 2018; cf. van Nieuwenhuijzen: 2018).

*“In the context of Moving Image – Open Borders, we seek to approach the young audience, i.e. with regard to Best Practices in Young Programmers, Path of Selection, organising Q&A's, Living Book sessions, Youth Jury, Film Talents Present – thus, in the area of Young Audience or Creating New Audiences.”* (Dollhofer: 2018)

This representation shows the broad range of functions, tasks and activities of a growing group of film festivals in Europe. They are developing and designing new programmatic forms, a new range of services, new technological solutions, new internal and external organisational network structures and thus demonstrating a future orientation that is often lacking outside the mainstream cinema. The growing and varied number of their visitors proves that they are on the right track.

On the other hand, a number of festivals deplore the fact that the expertise in many areas painstakingly built up by festivals over the years can rarely, and not even systematically, be passed on. Extremely thin staffing levels make an exchange of knowledge, even within an organisation itself, virtually impossible outside the individual areas of responsibility (van Nieuwenhuijzen: 2018).

For many years, film festivals have been supporting each other, even on a large scale, with training and consulting activities, as shown by the cooperation between the *IDFA* and *Hot Docs* (cf. van 't Hullenaar: 2018), or the *IFFR* and the *Sarajevo Film Fest* (cf. van den Elshout: 2018; Purivatra: 2018). However, even at the formal level of collaboration, no sustainable structure could be established for any further measures when it comes to the exchange of knowledge and experience among a larger circle of film festivals.

As with training and further education of festival staff and their placement, enormous potential lies dormant in expertise left unshared. In view of the expanding European film festival landscape, together with the greatly increased demands on the cinema market in general, it would seem imperative to develop an architecture to pass on knowledge, experience, and skills beyond individual organisations to the benefit of the film festival community and the film industry as a whole.

*“But if we only started by sharing expertise, that could be a huge benefit. There are some festivals that do a great job in that sense, but we do not even know who is doing a good job. And we put a lot of effort into it. I think sharing knowledge could be something very relevant.”* (van Nieuwenhuijzen: 2018).

## **5. Results and Recommendations**

As the analysis of formal and informal collaboration among film festivals shows, cooperation is the cornerstone of almost all forms of film festival activity. Collaboration is proactively initiated, maintained and expanded in associative structures, as well as in operational activities. With reference to these two basic collaborative forms, several major results of the study can be formulated.

Firstly, the majority of associative structures with different geographical range represents associations of film festivals with different profiles, size and reach. These associations usually fail in the long run, mostly due to their differing missions and correspondingly diverse objectives. This applies less to international associations with reference to a defined sub-festival circuit (e.g. Documentary, Human Rights, Women, Short Film). Nevertheless, the more manageable an association's number of members, the more capable, effective and promising it proves to be.

A second fundamental result concerns collaboration in the area of operational activities. Here it can be stated that for film festivals, due to their mostly limited capacities, only those collaboration models which take specific problems into account, prove practicable and meaningful, and promise to deliver targeted solutions.

Looking at the individual operational areas of acquisition, programming and management, marketing, and, primarily, innovation and know-how, the following results can be summarised and recommendations derived thereof.

### **At the Acquisition Level**

In many respects, it is clear that formal collaboration in particular does not lead to the desired synergies at the content level, as major international and renowned specialised film festivals see their role as explorers and discoverers of film works and talent. This situation, combined with growing competition, individual programming policy, scheduling, geography and other specific requirements, as well as restrictions in the context of further exploitation, seldomly offers the flexibility needed to meet additional demands in regard to a programmatic exchange.

Only in exceptional cases, e.g. when curating elaborate retrospectives, homages, or special programmes, does cooperation seem effective, due to the required expert knowledge, contacts and financial savings. On the other hand, great potential for programmatic collaboration can be observed at the basis of film festivals on the lower tiers of the international circuit and thus of major parts of the festival landscape. Due to their limited opportunities for gaining access to the diversity of European film production, extensive opportunities are also lost for the circulation of European film works.

Recommendations for improving access to European cinematographic works by European film festivals as a whole:

- online directory of EU films: expanding the information offered to include festival-relevant data, such as festival run, awards and prizes, existing language and subtitle versions, as well as inclusive versions, and additional programmes on film literacy, combined with information on the rights holders
- supporting mobility of programmers, including those from smaller, regional festivals, for targeted festival visits, in order to research into film works, contact filmmakers and rights holders and engage in positive exchange with festival representatives

### **At the Programming and Management Level**

The gradual shift in consumer habits in the audio-visual sector, especially among younger viewers, the continuing decline of art house movie theatres, and the emergence of new market players, make it essential to support the professionalisation of film festivals as one of the major platforms of sophisticated European cinema. This professionalisation does not necessarily mean the management sector or festival-specific expertise, which includes measures for systematic education and further training, but refers, above all, to instruments for supporting high-quality programming.

European filmmaking is characterised by great diversity. Illustrating and representing this plurality requires expertise and extensive resources. The same applies to supporting programmes and sidebars, especially those related to film education.

Recommendations for providing access to high-quality programming concepts for European Film Festivals as a whole:

- providing a platform for collaboration, secondary exploitation, or commissioning concepts for focus programmes in the areas of film heritage, national focus, special interest, and film education
- widespread availability and dissemination of European cinematographic works by festivals.
- programmes presenting premiered European film works, e.g. European short film reel organised by the European Film Academy
- programmes presenting selected European film works, e.g. compilation of competition winning films from European film festivals

### **At the Marketing Level**

Looking at the multitude of possibilities for European filmmaking enjoyed by the European film festival landscape, as well as (partner) festivals from non-European territories, two essential weaknesses become evident.

Firstly, there is a lack of in-depth knowledge of the European film festival landscape, its characteristics, distribution and circulation of European film works via the festival circuit. This prevents networking and cooperation among film festivals with similar profiles, especially across borders. At the same time, the lack of specific figures, even of such economic parameters as visitor numbers, revenues via screening fees, and knowledge of economic impact, leads to a disadvantaged starting point for initiating any further measures.

Secondly, there is a lack of comprehensive information on MEDIA-supported film festivals and their proven expertise in European film. This also prohibits access to those seeking information, be it filmmakers, rights dealers, or film festivals.

Recommendations for acquiring information on the European film festival landscape and matchmaking measures for MEDIA-funded film festivals:

- conducting a detailed market analysis of the European film festival landscape, including the provision of the collected master data to stimulate collaboration and networking among European Film Festivals
- presentation of all film festivals supported by the *MEDIA programme* via a comprehensive online information service

- presentation of all film festivals supported by the *MEDIA programme* at all festivals and markets where *MEDIA* is represented
- organising match-making events *for* film festivals *at* film festivals

### **At the Level of Innovation and Knowledge**

The observations described above have shown that film festivals not only prove themselves as drivers of innovation in the technical field, but also provide essential stimuli when it comes to the discourse on current film industry topics. It should also be noted that they take over ever more functions when the market fails. Based on their growing diversification, they currently represent an indispensable motor for the entire film production value chain, and in particular, for the presentation of European non-national works within Europe and abroad.

It is therefore unfathomable that, to date, no structure has evolved that allows this achievement, experience and knowledge to be transferred and shared. It therefore seems urgent to create an overarching platform, comparable to the *Europa Cinemas* organisation, which offers a basis for ensuring, and additionally promoting the development and progress of the European film festival landscape.

Recommendations for establishing a service organisation for exchange, networking, innovation and knowledge transfer of European Film Festivals in their entirety.

- establishing a permanent information and networking centre
- developing targeted education and training opportunities
- setting up a database for the placement of festival specialists
- implementing such measures as e.g. job shadowing programmes
- organising forums for best practices exchange
- organising a regular conference to ensure renewal of practices and innovation
- providing information tools to support exchange related to diversity and the circulation of European films

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## ABBREVIATIONS

**AFIC**, Associazione Festival Italiani di Cinema / Association of Italian Film Festivals

**BIAFF**, Batumi International Art House Film Festival

**BFMAF**, Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival

**Berlinale**, Berlin International Film Festival

**CineMart**, International co-production market of IFFR

**CPH:DOX**, Copenhagen International Documentary Festival

**CROSSING EUROPE**, Film Festival Linz

**DIAGONALE**, Festival of Austrian Film

**Doclisboa**, Doclisboa International Film Festivals

**Docs Against Gravity**, Millennium Docs Against Gravity Film Festival

**DOK Fest Munich**, Munich International Documentary Film Festival

**DOK Leipzig**, International Leipzig Festival for Documentary and Animated Film

**EC**, European Commission

**EU**, European Union

**ECFF**, European Coordination of Film Festivals

**EDN**, European Documentary Network

**EFM**, European Film Market

**EU**, European Union

**FIAPF**, Fédération Internationale des Associations de Producteurs de Films

**FFA**, Film Festival Association

**FIAPF**, Fédération Internationale des Associations des Producteurs de Films

**FID Marseille**, Marseille International Film Festival

**Filmkunstfest MV**, Filmkunstfest Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

**FÖFF**, Forum Österreichischer Filmfestivals / Forum Austrian Film Festivals

**German Films**, German Films Service + Marketing GmbH

**Hot Docs**, Canadian International Documentary Festival

**HRFN**, Human Rights Film Network

**IDFA**, International Documentary Filmfestival Amsterdam

**IFFR**, International Film Festival Rotterdam

**IFFR Unleashed**, Online streaming platform of IFFR

**IKFF**, Hamburg International Short Film Festival

**IndieLisboa**, Festival Internacional de Cinema Independente de Lisboa

**Ji.hlava IDFF**, Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival

**MDM**, Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung GmbH

**MPAA**, the Motion Picture Association of America

**NORDISK Panorama**, Nordic Short & Doc Film Festival

**OBS**, Europäische audiovisuelle Informationsstelle / Observatoire Européen de l'Audiovisuel

**PÖFF Shorts Festival**, Black Nights Film Festival, Tallinn

**Riga International Film Festival 2ANNAS**

**Sarajevo Film Festival**

**Short Film Festival Oberhausen**, International Short Film Festival Oberhausen

**SRIFF**, Silkroad International Film Festival

**TFF**, Torino Film Festival

**VIS**, Vienna Independent Shorts

**VISIONS DU RÉEL**, Festival international de cinéma Nyon

**VOD**, Video on Demand

## ANNEX

### Interviews conducted by the Author:

**Clivaz, Philippe**, General Secretary and President Conférence des Festivals, Visions du Réel, 4 May 2018

**Christanell, Helen**, Festival Director, Film Fest Bolzano, 13 July 2018

**Danielsen, Claas**, Managing Director of Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung and former Director of DOK Leipzig, 15 June 2018

**Dollhofer, Christiane**, Festival Director, Crossing Europe, 4 June 2018

**Gass, Lars Henrik**, Festival Director, International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, 13 June 2018

**Gröner, Christoph**, Programmer Neues Deutsches Kino/Strategic Development, Film Fest Munich, 27 April 2018

**Höglinger, Sebastian**, Festival Director, Diagonale Festival of Austrian Film, 5 May 2018

**Iljine, Diane**, Director, Film Fest Munich and Filmschoolfest Munich, 26 July 2018

**Kohout, Adele**, Deputy Managing Director, Munich International Documentary Film Festival, 14 June 2018

**Küchler, K.** (2014): former Festival Director Filmfest Dresden, 19 November 2014

**Kufahl, Volker**, Festival Director, Filmkunstfest MV, 1 July 2018

**Laakso, Jukka-Pekka**, Festival Director, Tampere Film Festival, 4 May 2018

**Martini, Emanuela**, Festival Director, Torino Film Festivals, 3 June 2018

**Meadow-Conner, Lela**, Festival Director, Tallgrass Film Festival and Executive Director, Film Festival Alliance U.S., 15 August 2018

**Mooney, Carla**, Festival Director, Silk Road Film Festival, 27 July 2018

**Poulsen, Søren Steen**, Managing Director, Nordisk Panorama, 5 May 2018

**Purivatra, Mirsad**, Festival Director Sarajevo Film Festival, 29 August 2018

**Rehm, Jean-Pierre**, Festival Director, FID Marseilles International Film Festival, 28 July 2018

**Ruh, Dennis**, Festival Relations, German Films, 5 July 2018

**Schwarz, Sven**, Administrative Director Hamburg International Short Film Festival, 19 July 2018

**Sena, Nuno**, Festival Director, IndieLisboa - International Independent Film Festival in Lisboa, 22 August 2018

**Sponsel, Daniel**, Festival Director, Munich International Documentary Film Festival, 14 June 2018

**Taylor, Peter**, Festival Director, Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival, 6 May 2018

**van den Elshout, Marit**, Head of Industry, International Film Festival Rotterdam IFFR, 29 June 2018

**van Nieuwenhuijzen, Andriek** Head of Industry, International Documentary Filmfestival Amsterdam IDFA, 28 June 2018

**van't Hullenaar, Cees**, Managing Director, International Documentary Filmfestival Amsterdam IDFA, 28 June 2018

**Zoldnere, Astra**, Programme Director, Riga International Short Film Festival 2ANNAS, 6 May 2018

**Wink, Andrea**, Festival Director, Exground Filmfest, 3 July 2018

### **Further Insights from three Panels:**

**Panel Oberhausen** (4 May 2018): *Collaboration among film festivals - new key to success*

Philippe Clivaz (Visions du Réel), Maike Mia Höhne (Berlinale), Søren Steen Poulsen (Nordisk Panorama),

Chair Tanja C. Krainhöfer

**Barcamp at the International Short Film Festival Hamburg** (9 June 2018): *Short Film Festivals - Let's work together (but on what?)*

Representatives of different European Short Film Festivals,

Chair Sven Schwarz

**Podium Siegen** (28 September 2018): *Formelle/informelle Netzwerke zwischen Filmfestivals / Formal/informal Networks between Filmfestivals*

Christina Essenberger (Int. Frauenfilmfestival Dortmund | Cologne), Heleen Gerritsen (goEast – Festival des mittel- und osteuropäischen Films, Wiesbaden), Andrea Kuhn (Int. Human Rights Film Festival, Nuremberg),

Chair Tanja C. Krainhöfer

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<https://www.lacid.org/fr/en>

### **Arbeitsgemeinschaft Kurzfilm - Bundesverband Deutscher Kurzfilm (AG Kurzfilm)**

<https://ag-kurzfilm.de/de/selbstdarstellung.html>

### **BELT AND ROAD INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL ALLIANCE**

<http://www.siff.com/a/2018-07-05/2901.html>

**European Coordination of Film Festivals (ECFF)**

[http://www.femmetotale.de/z\\_pages/ecff.html](http://www.femmetotale.de/z_pages/ecff.html)

**European Documentary Network**

<http://edn.network>

**European Film Forum**

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**Fédération Internationale des Associations de Producteurs de Films (FIAPF)**

<http://www.fiapf.org/intfilmfestivals.asp>

**Festivalnetzwerk Moving Images | Crossing Europe**

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