

NEXTDOOR NETWORKING

Film Professional Development Program of IN THE PALACE

Context

As part of FILMER FORGE – the Short Film Industry Program of the IN THE PALACE International Short Film Festival – an intensive **training course** for **young directors, writers/scriptwriters, producers, and film critics** from the **Balkans and the Black Sea region** will take place during the 22nd festival edition in Pernik, Bulgaria, in **2025**.

The program aims to support the youngest generation of filmmakers in these regions, helping them grow as **competitive professionals** in the **short film industry** immediately **after graduating** from film academies.

Program fosters **professional communication** and creates an environment that facilitates **better cooperation** and **exchange** in film production between the **local short film industries of the Balkans and Black Sea region**.

Who Can Participate

Participants must be **final-year university students** in **Film Directing, Scriptwriting, Film Production, or Film Criticism** from the following countries: **Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Turkey, and Ukraine**.

The group of young professionals will include representatives from each focus area — **director, scriptwriter, producer, and film critic/film historian** — from the **participating countries**. Each national team or individual participant are provided the opportunity to engage with a **film project**, which must be **potential to develop as an international co-production** with any of the **other countries** presented in the program.

Accommodation and subsistence for participants are covered by the project.

Short Presentation

The program aims **to add partical value** and thus enhance the participants' academic training and skills, while running alongside the environment of **Oscar® Qualifying IN THE PALACE Festival**.

The festival invites **established professionals** actively working in the short film industry to lead working and training processes and teams in **Film Directing, Scriptwriting, Film Production, and Film Criticism labs**.

Alongside trainings, participants, guided by their tutors, will be able to further **develop** their **film projects as international co-production**. The program concludes with a **pitching session** where projects are presented to a **professional audience, accredited participants, and decision-makers** at the **22nd IN THE PALACE** in 2025.

Three of the most promising film projects will receive:

- € 1,000 for production expenses;
- a **premiere screening** of the completed work at the next edition of **Oscar® Qualifying IN THE PALACE**;
- **presentation and promotion** at the **Short Film Market** (Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival).

All participating film projects will receive:

- exposition in **IN THE PALACE's video library** for **professional access and viewing** by accredited professionals;
- **full accreditation** for the **23rd IN THE PALACE** in 2026, including **free access** and **invitations** to all **professional events** for all project team members.

Benefits for Film Critics participants

Film critics participating in the workshops will actively engage with the dynamics of a renowned international event. Alongside the workshops and facilitated by tutors, young film critics are provided with the opportunities to:

- **present and report** on films from the festival's **Official Selection**; **NEXT DOOR NETWORKING's student film projects** and the program itself;
- **moderate Q&A sessions** and discussions with **filmmakers**;
- **publish news, reviews, and critical essays** in **English** and their **native languages** in **local and international online media**;
- contribute to **IN THE PALACE's paper journal**, and thus **gaining exposure** at the **Clermont-Ferrand** and **Cannes** film markets;
- receive **full accreditation** for the **23rd IN THE PALACE** in **2026**, with **free access** to all **professional events**;
- **coordinate, create, and publish content** on **IN THE PALACE's blog** as a **paid** professional engagement for **one year** (for the most outstanding participants).

Motivation and Needs

The program provides **youngest generation of filmmakers from the Balkans and Black Sea region** with **access** to the vibrant **short film industry**. This **NEXTDOOR NETWORK** aims to support their **better** and more oriented **presence** in **professional environment** and **integration into professional networks**, **enhancing their competitiveness** in the industry.

The **geographic focus** of the training program reflects not only the cultural and aesthetic characteristics of these regions, but also the critical **need** for a **cohesive** and **well-functioning creative industries sector**, which is currently underdeveloped.

To address this need, **IN THE PALACE** strives to **establish, manage, and expand** a **complex communication network** that promotes the **exchange** of **good practices, financing policies, production, film projects distribution, and professional cooperation opportunities** with national and international bodies, companies, institutions, organizations, etc.

Furthermore, by involving participants and tutors in this program, **IN THE PALACE** integrates them into the **professional audience** of the Oscar® Qualifying festival, creating a **pool** of talented **young professionals** whose development the festival is committed to **invest in long-term**.