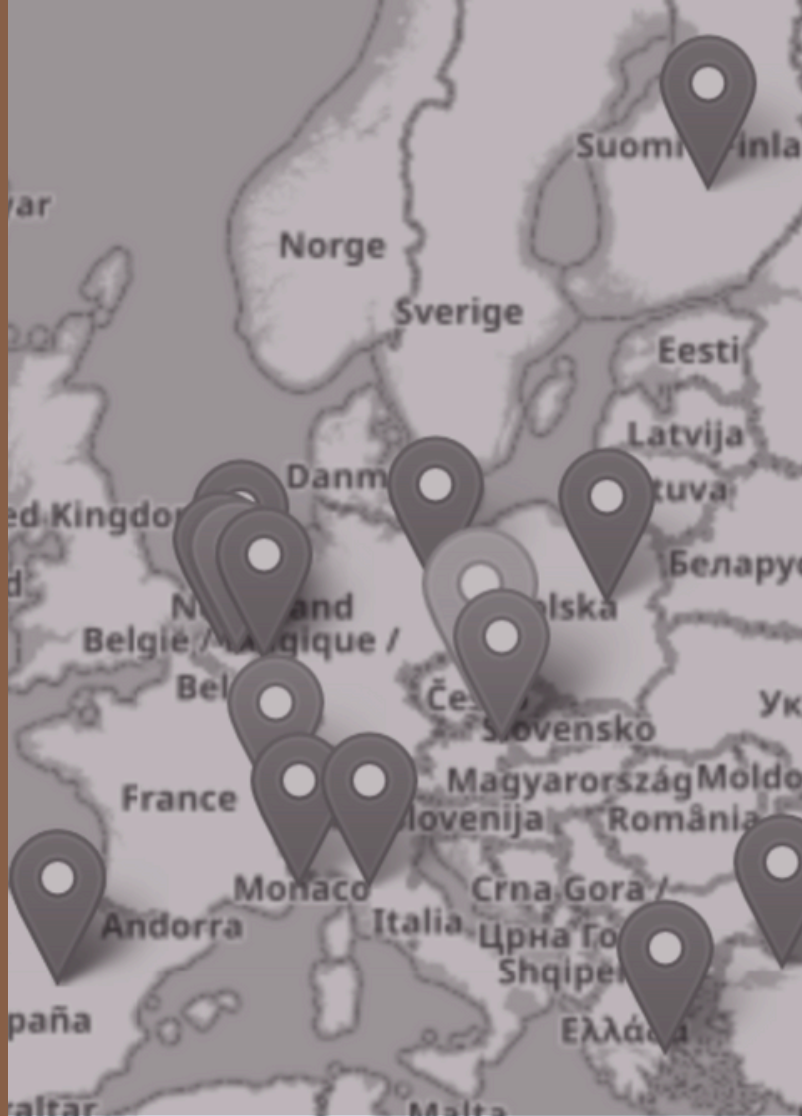




Reviving, Boosting, Optimising
and Transforming European Film
Competitiveness



Newsletter #4

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01 A system built to fail its filmmakers?

By Gentiana Ramadani

The REBOOT project hosted its closing conference entitled “Screening the Scene: Rethinking European film competitiveness” in October 2025, bringing together more than 70 scholars from 19 nationalities and featuring 37 research presentations. Over two days, the event showcased the results of three years of collaborative work, during which researchers collected and analysed extensive data on the European film industry. The discussions that unfolded offered valuable insights and pointed to the profound tensions shaping the sector today.

From the outset, the conversation gravitated toward the growing disconnect between ambition and reality in European filmmaking. Speakers described contemporary pitching forums and film markets as “temples of illusions,” spaces built around the logic of capitalist exchange despite the diminishing availability of actual capital. This observation set the tone for a broader reflection on how creative aspirations are often welcomed into institutional spaces where financial foundations have quietly eroded.



Professor Katharine Sarikakis' welcome address at the Screening the Scene Conference. Photo: Simon Zhu

The conference brought together academics, filmmakers, policymakers, and industry professionals for a critical exchange on the future of European cinema. With streaming platforms reshaping distribution, artificial intelligence transforming production workflows, and calls for diversity and inclusion becoming increasingly urgent, participants examined what competitiveness means for Europe's cultural industries today.

The programme featured keynotes, policy discussions, and thematic panels exploring the intersections of people, technology, and institutions. Central themes included the position of European film in global markets, youth audiences and their evolving preferences, the challenges faced by those working at the fringes of the industry, the impact of streaming and AI and the legal and policy frameworks shaping Europe's cultural sovereignty. Distinguished speakers and guests included Roland Teichmann, Director of the Austrian Film Institute (Austria) Juliette Prissard, General Delegate of Eurocinema (Belgium) Katharina Schenk, Head of Fiction, ORF Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (Austria) Rodrigo Gomez, Professor, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Cuajimalpa (Mexico).

Under the leadership and moderation of Professor Katharine Sarikakis, Director of the Media Governance Lab and REBOOT Coordinator, the conference became a space for meaningful dialogue and collective reflection. It offered an opportunity for scholars and industry stakeholders to rethink how a more resilient and equitable future for European cinema might be imagined and built.

Throughout the sessions, one issue repeatedly surfaced; the sector offers almost no incentives for long-term thinking or audience development. Participants argued that this absence of strategic

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vision is not a minor administrative gap but a structural obstacle that restricts the industry's capacity to adapt to social and technological change. In a system with limited encouragement for experimentation, sustainability, or community-building, European cinema risks reinforcing its own limitations.



The conference hosted a policy roundtable, bringing together academics and industry leaders to discuss the gaps in European film policy. Photo: Simon Zhu

This tension between aspiration and constraint was especially apparent in discussions on talent development. Drawing on examples from national mentorship programmes, participants noted that even well-designed initiatives can inadvertently discourage creative risk-taking. Young filmmakers often enter such programmes with bold ideas but quickly adjust their work to align with institutional expectations that reward safety and familiarity.

Questions of power and privilege featured prominently as well. Speakers underscored that access to funding continues to depend heavily on pre-existing networks, informal norms, and Eurocentric standards that determine who enters and who remains outside the industry. Film education was criticised for perpetuating closed circles, connecting primarily those already linked to the sector and thus limiting the diversity of voices represented on screen.

A particularly charged debate centred on regulation, financing, and creative freedom. Contrary to the perception that regulation restricts artistic expression, several participants emphasised that well-crafted frameworks can protect and empower

creators, particularly those without financial safety nets. Pre-financing emerged as the most crucial mechanism where without it, creative risk becomes a privilege accessible only to those who can afford failure. Economic insecurity pushes young filmmakers toward self-censorship, encouraging them to produce content they believe will be “liked” rather than to explore innovative or challenging ideas.

In this light, regulation is not merely administrative, it becomes a tool for safeguarding artistic risk. Fair funding structures, equitable labour conditions, and transparent decision-making processes can shift the burden of uncertainty from individual creators to institutions better positioned to manage it.

As discussions came to a close, one central question resonated across the room; who will pre-finance the films of tomorrow, the films that might first emerge on digital platforms, outside traditional markets, so that creators have the freedom to take risks? This question amounted to a call for financial innovation and a rethinking of institutional responsibility within the European film ecosystem. Without new mechanisms to support risk at the earliest stages, the future of Europe's cultural diversity and its global competitiveness remains uncertain.

In the end, REBOOT's conference made one thing clear: The European film industry and its future will depend on whether institutions, funders, and policymakers are ready to rebuild systems that not only recognise the challenges of risk, inequality, and technological disruption, but actively work to overcome them.

02 My First International Conference: Enthusiasm, Exchange and New Perspectives

A student's personal account

By Sarah Baumgartner, University of Vienna

From October 9 to 10, 2025, I had the opportunity to attend my very first international conference - "Screening the Scene: Rethinking European Film Competitiveness." As a Master's student in Communication Science and Theatre, Film and Media Studies at the University of Vienna, I recently joined Professor Katharine Sarikakis' team as a Teaching Assistant and Research Assistant in the REBOOT Project. For me, this conference was a chance to experience the academic working world I have just entered from a new perspective.

Outside academia, I am an enthusiastic cinemagoer with a "Nonstop Abo" - a subscription that grants unlimited access to Vienna's arthouse cinemas. I am especially drawn to Austrian and European productions. Watching European cinema often feels like discovering pieces of a collective identity: a "we" that is built through storytelling, reflection and diversity. So my personal connection to European film was one of the main reasons I was so eager to attend the conference. It offered a chance to see how this shared cultural space is being discussed, challenged and reimaged from many perspectives.

A Venue Steeped in History

The moment I entered the "Alte Kapelle" (literally "Old Chapel") - the historic venue of the conference at the heart of the University of Vienna campus - I felt a special atmosphere. The campus, located in the 9th district Alsergrund, has a long history: it began in 1693 as a charitable hospital under Emperor Leopold I and became the General Hospital (AKH) in 1784, where prominent figures of

the Viennese medical school worked. After the New AKH was built, the city transferred the old site to the university in 1988, which transformed it into a campus opened in 1998. Amid this living history, the Alte Kapelle feels like a bridge to the past, a space where the centuries seem to linger in the light and shadows.

Yet in the midst of this historic setting, the room was alive with conversation. You could sense the energy of a network of scholars and practitioners that extended far beyond the event itself. People from 19 countries all over the world had come together to discuss the future of European cinema - and with it, questions of culture, technology and social responsibility.



The "Alte Kapelle", an old chapel, served as venue of REBOOT's conference. Photo: Simin Zhu

A Space Full of Passion and Critical Openness

What struck me immediately was the spirit of togetherness: open, curious and driven by genuine interest in exchange. Researchers, filmmakers, students and creatives from around the world engaged in dialogue - as equals. Critical thinking

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was not only welcome but encouraged. Different viewpoints met, yet a shared passion united everyone: enthusiasm for film, for research and for cultural dialogue.

Diversity as a Strength

The panels and keynotes revealed just how multifaceted the topic of “European film competitiveness” truly is. Discussions about streaming platforms, diversity, legal frameworks and new technological developments showed that cinema today is not merely a cultural asset but also a political and social arena. Particularly inspiring were the international perspectives: valuable insights from Latin America, Turkey, South Korea and South Africa reminded us that European film culture must also be understood within a global context.

Scholarship that Connects

Between presentations, coffee breaks and spontaneous conversations, a unique dynamic emerged. It was fascinating to see ideas evolving across borders. What began as academic talks grew into lively debates; encounters turned into new collaborations - and I witnessed many joyful reunions among colleagues and friends. This experience showed me that research is not an isolated process, but comes alive where people engage in dialogue.

inspiration for the Future

For me, the conference was far more than an academic event - it was an experience that opened new horizons. I gained insights into current research and cultural debates and, more importantly, felt what it means to be part of an international community committed to innovation. I left the conference with fresh perspectives, valuable new (LinkedIn) connections and a deep conviction that exchange and collaboration are the keys to a sustainable, inclusive and creative future for European cinema.



The “Alte Kapelle”, an old chapel, served as venue of REBOOT’s conference. Photo: Simin Zhu

03 Democracy, ecology, culture

Three interdependent battles for a competitive Europe

A reflection by Juliette Prissard, General Delegate of Eurocinema and REBOOT Advisory Board Member

The 2024 European elections and Ursula von der Leyen's reappointment as head of the Commission marked a key moment to rethink the links between

culture, democracy, and ecology. These three areas, often addressed separately, are nevertheless closely linked and crucial to the future of the continent and its competitiveness. For it is culture that shapes society and supports democracy in a context of ecological and technological upheaval.

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During her first term, Ursula von der Leyen focused her policy on digital technology and ecological transition. However, while the audiovisual industry was encouraged to reduce its emissions, the Commission remained hardly silent on the colossal energy footprint of digital technology, particularly artificial intelligence. I would add that the cultural dimension of ecology—the role of stories, images, and works of art in raising awareness—has been (and remains) largely ignored. Yet culture, which is omnipresent in our societies, contributes powerfully to the formation of the collective imagination and the transformation of behaviors.

“Art” produces works, and “culture” refers to our relationship to these works and how we interpret them. Culture is therefore alive, evolving, and reflects changes in society. It is not frozen in tradition: it thrives on debate, disagreement, and the confrontation of different points of view. In this sense, culture is the “factory of dissent,” which is essential to a pluralistic democracy. Without free and diverse culture, there can be no authentic democracy, because it is through artistic creation that the multiplicity of voices and criticism of power are expressed.



Juliette Prissard was a speaker at REBOOT's Screening the Scene conference. Photo: Simin Zhu

Democracy and freedom of creation are therefore interdependent. The former provides the space necessary for artistic expression, while the latter nourishes democratic vitality by constantly questioning certainties and hierarchies. But these two pillars are now threatened by numerous authoritarian and illiberal abuses. Digital technology, which has become the new agora, amplifies these dangers. Social networks, dominated by a few large companies, shape public opinion through opaque algorithms [1]. The ideal of a free internet has been transformed into a space controlled by a transnational oligopoly, which data-capture logic jeopardizes both democracy and cultural diversity.

In this deregulated technological universe [2], creation is increasingly equated with technological innovation rather than artistic expression. This shift reduces the critical and political significance of culture. Yet at a time when humanity is facing an ecological crisis, resource scarcity, major geopolitical confrontations, and the effects of global warming, society will need all its critical and creative capacities to rethink its relationship with the world [3].

Culture, democracy, and ecology thus form an inseparable triptych for a free and competitive Europe. Without freedom of creation, there can be no true democratic debate, let alone economic debate; without critical culture, there can be no ecological awareness; without a vibrant democracy, culture and ecology become tools for the production of data! It is in art, storytelling, and critical thinking that we find the key to a Europe that is competitive, but also human and sustainable.

[1] See in particular the work of Shoshana Zuboff, who was one of the first to describe in detail the turning point represented by the mass commercialization of personal data by internet giants and the role played by algorithms in shaping opinions: "The Age of Surveillance Capitalism" 2020, as well as whistleblower Frances Haugen, a former Facebook employee who testified before the US Senate <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I4y159lhTO8> and the European Parliament <https://www.touteleurope.eu/institutions/facebook-files-follow-the-hearing-of-whistleblower-frances-haugen-by-the-european-parliament-live/>

[2] However, during the last legislative term, the EU sought to propose a series of texts regulating the internet: see in particular: GDPR 2016/679 of April 27, 2016 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016R0679> Digital Services Act 2022/2065 of October 19, 2022 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022R2065>, the Digital Market Act 2022/1925 of September 14, 2022 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022R1925> and the AI Act 2024/1689 of June 13, 2024 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202401689 However, these texts are under threat from the Trump administration, which is asking the Commission to relax them.

[3] See the climate-skeptical views of Elon Musk, owner of X, who, while acknowledging the effects of global warming, minimizes its significance: <https://reporterre.net/Climatoscepticisme-Elon-Musk-derape-encore-sur-Twitter>

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04 Guest lecture “The Future Reel: Young Europeans Shaping the Film Industry”

This text was originally published on the website of the University of Zagreb's Institute for Development and International Relations. Click to be forwarded to the original publication.

As part of the Culturelink Guest Lecture Series, on the 24th of September 2025, at the Library of the Institute for Development and International Relations, Prof. Katharine Sarikakis, lecturer and researcher in communication science at the University of Vienna, delivered a lecture entitled “The Future Reel: Young Europeans Shaping the Film Industry”.

The lecture provided an overview of research data on how young people are both the present and the future of cultural creative industries, and on the ways they are dynamically shaping creative sectors such as the film industry.

The lecture was based on the research data from the Horizon Europe REBOOT project, which focuses on understanding and emphasizing the European film industry's (EFI) international competitiveness. The key goal of REBOOT is to explore the institutional frameworks defining the competitiveness of the European film industry and to highlight how audiences, particularly young people and children, comprehend the notion of a competitive film industry today. The research addresses existing gaps in literature, noting a scarcity of recent studies on film literacy support programs and a lack of comprehensive understanding regarding youth perceptions, preferences, and engagement with film.

The research employed mixed methods approach, utilizing a large quantitative survey with 4,453 participants (Children aged 12-18 and Young Adults

aged 18-24) and qualitative insights gathered from 508 young people in focus group interviews. The research encompassed nine European countries: Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain, and Turkey.



Professor Sarikakis' guest lecture was moderated by Dr. Jaka Primorac from the Department of Culture and Communication, IRMO.

The findings reveal that streaming has redefined how young people consume films. A significant majority (75.6%) prefer watching films on Video on Demand (VoD) via TV or computers, noting that streaming platforms offer a wider range of options compared to previous traditional models. Film plays a central role in their lives, with 77.6% watching films weekly or a few times per week. While VoD is dominant, cinema remains a valued and irreplaceable experience, often linked to social occasions with friends, family, or romantic partners. Young people are selective and critically aware of the film range, generally expressing satisfaction with the variety offered by streaming services. However, some youth report disappointment with newer films, perceiving them as repetitive, formulaic, and driven merely by profit. For young

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people, emotional attachment, inspiration, and connection are the most important things in films, and they are drawn to engaging plots and characters from different backgrounds. Comedies are their most preferred genre (61.8%).

Regarding preferences, young people generally recognize differences between European and US films. US films have become the standard reference point for many young European audiences due to wide availability and popularity. While European films are sometimes criticized for having lower production values, slower pacing, and being less commercial or spectacular, youth also perceive them as artistic, biographical, and thoughtful. Many believe European cinema is of higher quality precisely because it is less commercial and less propagandistic, offering deeper storytelling that may require more analytical engagement from the viewer. The dominance of American content is reflected in the list of the top 15 youth's favourite films, which consists mostly of long-standing, modern mainstream American box-office hits and franchises, such as Harry Potter, Interstellar, and Star Wars. The research found that European films lack sufficient visibility and promotion outside their country of origin among young people.

Furthermore, Prof. Sarikakis highlighted the emergence of youth as creators. Almost a quarter of young people (23.1%) produce and share video content online. This signals a new filmmaking paradigm where young people are democratizing video and filmmaking education through autodidactic models and everyday equipment, primarily smartphones (79.2%). They share their content on social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, often producing material in English for greater accessibility. However, young people express interest in professional work while simultaneously reporting barriers to filmmaking, such as the lack of proper equipment, resources, and institutional connections.

In conclusion, Prof. Sarikakis underlined several policy recommendations for fostering

competitiveness of the European film industry, based on the REBOOT project research results. These include urging the European Commission to increase the visibility of European films on social media by collaborating with content creators and influencers. It is also suggested that the Commission fund streaming services that prioritize European content for youth, foster the annual production of films aimed specifically at young audiences in national industries, and incorporate comprehensive film education into compulsory schooling across European State Members. Finally, the European film industry must embrace and adopt the democratic filmmaking paradigm now employed by young creators.

The discussion after the lecture touched upon the gaps between audiovisual policies and practices at both national and European levels, the need to design new models of youth involvement in film production, and the issue of expanding film education programs and strengthening support for youth filmmaking. In addition to the issues of methodology and methods used, and the challenges of conducting such complex research at the European level, the need for a broader understanding of the concept of media governance (beyond the institutional approach) was also discussed, as was the need for greater communication of scientific research data not only to the industry, but also to other stakeholders.

The moderator of the event was Dr. Jaka Primorac from the Department of Culture and Communication, IRMO.

On the website of the The Culturelink Centre Repository, content related to Culturelink Guest Lecture Series by Prof. Sarikakis can be found: <https://kultura.irmo.hr/culturelink-en/repository/>

The lecture was organised in collaboration with the CresCine project, on which you can find out more at: <https://www.crescine.eu/>

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05 Culture in policymaking: a burden or a boost for the European Union?

[This text was originally published on the website of the Horizon Europe project Anima Mundi. Click to be forwarded to the original publication.](#)

Representatives of the Horizon Europe projects REBOOT, ANIMA MUNDI and StreamSCAPES took part in the seminar “Culture in policymaking: a burden or a boost for the European Union?”, which was held on 26 September 2025 at the European University Institute in Florence.

The seminar gathered academics, policymakers, and experts to reflect on the place of culture in European policymaking and its potential to address key challenges facing the EU in today’s complex geopolitical and technological context. Discussions focused on how the cultural and audiovisual sectors, including cultural diplomacy, can strengthen the Union’s competitiveness, international visibility, and contribution to global priorities such as sustainability.

The event featured presentations from four Horizon Europe projects at the heart of these debates: REBOOT and CresCine, which investigate the competitiveness and circulation of European cinema; ANIMA MUNDI, which explores how the animation industry can enhance the international promotion of European values and creativity; and StreamSCAPES, which analyses the role of VOD platforms and the cultural sector in driving the climate transition.

For REBOOT, ANIMA MUNDI and StreamSCAPES, the seminar was an opportunity to present ongoing work and to engage directly with EU policy experts on the broader implications of their research.

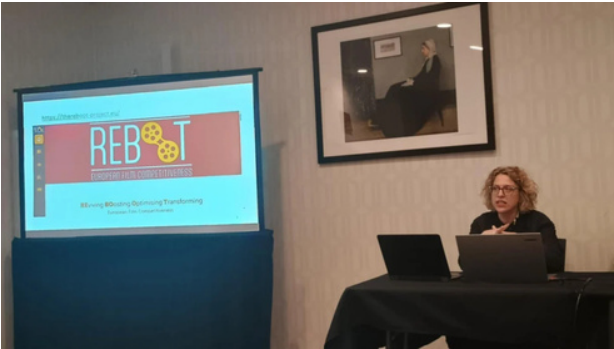
By connecting academic insights with policy perspectives, the seminar highlighted how culture and audiovisual industries are not a burden but a strategic asset for the European Union, both internally and as a global actor.



The workshop at the European University Institute united academics of several Horizon Europe project, policymakers and experts. Photo: Anima Mundi

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06 REBOOT research results in the international context

In the framework of REBOOT project, Evangelia Psychogiopoulou and Anna Kandyla participated in the 19th Biennial Conference of the European Union Studies Association (EUSA), held on May 8-10, 2025, in Pittsburgh (PA), U.S. They contributed to the panel titled 'The EU's Engagement in Trade, Investment, and Antitrust' with a presentation on 'EU External Trade Policy, Development and the Cultural Sector: An Impossible Nexus?'.


Evangelia Psychogiopoulou and Anna Kandyla represented REBOOT at the 19th EUSA.

The presentation examined the enduring tension between trade liberalization, development policy,

particularly on the audiovisual sector. It analyzed how, following the adoption of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, the EU began to develop new approaches to integrating culture into its external economic relations. A notable example was the 2008 Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the EU and the Cariforum countries, which featured a Protocol on Cultural Cooperation annexed to it. However, the presentation highlighted that despite its promising design, the Protocol did not manage to enhance audiovisual cooperation between the EU and the Cariforum countries. It also assessed whether EU instruments supporting cooperation through funding, particularly the NDICI–Global Europe instrument, might be more effective.

The presentation is based on research conducted by ELIAMEP under the REBOOT project, focusing on EU law and governance related to the European film industry in the international scene.

07 Cultural governance and EU external relations

Mapping the EU's audiovisual diplomacy

The Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP) participated in the "European Union in International Affairs (EUIA) 2025 Conference" (21-23 May 2025) with the panel "Cultural governance and EU external relations: The case of European film", chaired by Laia Comerma, Postdoctoral Fellow at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, and organised by Evangelia Psychogiopoulou, Asst. Professor at the University

of the Peloponnese and Senior Research Fellow at ELIAMEP.

Apostolos Samaras, Research Fellow at ELIAMEP, presented the joint paper by Apostolos Samaras, Evangelia Psychogiopoulou, and Anna Kandyla, titled: "Governing Culture through Enlargement: Audiovisual Cooperation in the EU Enlargement Agenda". He examined how the EU mobilises

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audiovisual cooperation as a regulatory, funding, and cultural governance tool in its external relations with enlargement countries, particularly in the Western Balkans and the “Association Trio”.

Mafalda Dâmaso, Researcher at Erasmus University, presented the joint paper by Antonios Vlassis, Mafalda Dâmaso, Kaisa Hiltunen, Pauline Bissot and Solenn Houard, titled: “International Promotion of the European Film Industry: National Institutional Practices in Denmark, Finland and France in an Evolving Technological Architecture”. She demonstrated that, despite the recent turn of the EU towards international cultural relations, EU Member States remain the main actors for the promotion of their respective film industries internationally through the establishment of funds and various support schemes.



REBOOT researchers Tuuli Lähdesmäki, Evangelia Psychogiopoulou, Mafalda Dâmaso and Apostolos Samaras.

Tuuli Lähdesmäki, Professor at the University of Jyväskylä, presented the joint paper by Tuuli Lähdesmäki, Mafalda Dâmaso, Kaisa Hiltunen, Melis Behlil, Elif Akçali, and Ruken Doğu Erdede, titled: “European Film Festivals – Balancing and Harnessing the Ambiguity of Competitiveness and Public Diplomacy”. She examined how the goals of increasing the competitiveness of European film and developing international relations between the EU and third countries are understood and addressed by European Film Festivals organisers. Evangelia Psychogiopoulou presented the joint paper by Evangelia Psychogiopoulou, Anna Kandyla, and Laia Comerma, titled: “The EU’s external audiovisual policy with developed countries: Trade and audiovisual cooperation strategies”. She examined the ways in which the EU addresses the audiovisual sector in economic and other types of agreements concluded with developed countries, pointing to the lack of follow-through and limited implementation and impact of the Union’s audiovisual cooperation provisions included in such agreements.

Caterina Carta, PhD Director of the Brussels School of Governance and Research Professor at the Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy of the BSoG, served as discussant and offered insightful comments. This was followed by questions from the audience and an interesting discussion between the speakers and the attendees.

08 Historicising the present

The “Frames of Change” conference looks back at three decades of transformations in the European film industry

On May 22 and 23, 2025, twenty researchers came together at Complutense University of Madrid to discuss the recent transformations of the European film industry. The conference Frames of Change had been organized by Fernando Ramos (UCM)

and Daniel Biltereyst (Ghent University), principal researchers of the REBOOT Project in Spain and Belgium, and provided a space to critically discuss the results of Lessons from the past. This report, released in February 2025, was based on the

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analysis of 68 in-depth expert interviews with key stakeholders in the European film industry and reflected how senior representatives from different sub-sectors and countries have experienced and reflected on key changes over the past three decades. The main aim of the event in Madrid was thus to present these findings to a broad audience of experts and academics, to engage in dialogue with fellow researchers, and to reflect on the current challenges faced by the European film industry.

After Fernando Ramos' introduction, where some of these issues were directly addressed, Mariana Liz (University of Lisbon) presented a brilliant keynote speech entitled "Half Full: Positive Conceptions of European Cinema". Her presentation focused on the current state of European cinema, as well as the emergence, development and growth of European cinema studies as an academic field. One of her main arguments was that "European cinema has always been in a state of crisis", arguing for a more positive outlook on the place of the European film industry in the global film landscape. Finally, Liz underscored the necessity to develop the branch of European Film Studies in academia: European cinema is, unlike 30 years ago, a clearly defined topic and the recent technological, policy and sociocultural changes only reinforce the necessity to study Europe's cinema in an holistic perspective.

For two days, the participants had the opportunity to listen to several experts in the history of European cinema. The thirteen presentations were

organized in four panels (Policies, Production, Identities, and Audiences and Reception).

In the first of those, Marina Rossato Fernandes (University of Liège) introduced an interesting debate on its competitiveness, based on a pan-European survey and 37 in-depth interviews with EU film experts. Its results, she explained, challenge dominant assumptions of the academic literature on film competitiveness, as the findings reveal a perception towards competitiveness which is significantly influenced by the potential alignment of economic, societal and cultural values among stakeholders. This seems also to be the case in the Turkish film industry, where, according to researchers Elif Akçali, Melis Behlil and Ruken Doğu Erdede (Kadir Has University), European funds are key for filmmakers who want to tell alternative stories or experiment with formal aesthetics. Almost all films from Turkey that do circulate globally in festivals have been European co-productions since the country's inclusion in the Eurimages fund. As Julie Amiot-Guillouet (École Normale Supérieure de Fontenay Saint-Cloud) argued in the closing presentation of the first panel, these models are also relevant on more modest economic scales even if their viability could be questioned. Amiot-Guillouet opened the discussion on the export of a European model of auteur cinema, through cooperation instruments that make it possible to spread beyond the continent a cultural and economic model that is alternative to that of the American majors.



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In the second panel, Christopher Meir (Carlos III University in Madrid) illustrated how European auteur film production has been in demand on platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, which have become active buyers and producers in this segment of the European film industry. These productions include a number of films which were later promoted as being “impossible” to have been made otherwise, with the platforms branding themselves as patrons of the cinema and European culture. Konrad Klejsa (University of Łódź) talked about the changes in film production and film exhibition after Poland’s accession to the EU in 2004. From a legal point of view, new business decisions had to be taken whereas new productions showed a clear disinterest in what was previously praised as the national cinema culture. In the same sense, Pavel Skopal (Masaryk University) showed how Czech companies operate in the European and global market and how this commercial and cultural configuration informs their strategies.

The third panel was dedicated to issues of representation and identities in European cinema, which were a priority subject for debate introduced by Emil Egenbauer (Freie Universität Berlin) who explored how the New Austrian Film’s aesthetic interventions reflect broader shifts in European cinema: the disruption of traditional production and exhibition models, the emergence of alternative programming strategies, and the confrontation of Europe’s changing social fabric. Jorge Marrero (Complutense University of Madrid) talked about how European cinema has tried to construct an identity, suggesting the existence of a broad concept of ‘European cinema’ understood as a type of diverse cinema that encompasses a variety of common themes and issues by elaborating on the case of Pedro Almodóvar. Lidia Merás (Autonomous University of Madrid) addressed the issue of transnational Romani cinema in Europe in two case studies inspired on Charlie Chaplin’s legacy. Merás came to the conclusion that the differences in terms of modes of production challenge notions of a cinema that aims to transcend national borders. Finally, Imme Klages

(Johannes Gutenberg University) explored how Doris Dörrie’s film work historicized a fleeting cultural moment -the 1990’s decade-within the broader European cinematic context.

The last panel, focused on audiences and reception, gave Philippe Meers (University of Antwerp) the opportunity to talk about European contemporary audiences, in particular ‘small cinema countries’ audiences, who are indeed liberated of their structural-economic-technological constraints after two decades of digitalization. Meers presented the results of two large scale audience research projects conducted in 2001 and again in 2015. Also Eirini Sifaki (University of Thessaly) elaborated on this topic, more precisely on how young audiences engage with European cinema and the extent to which U.S. based streamers influence their viewing choices. Lastly, Karina Aveyard (University of East Anglia) explained how contemporary European environmental film festivals work as spaces where new patterns of integration between the textual and socio-cultural aspects of film viewing are emerging.



The REBOOT report “Lessons from the past” analysed the most important changes in Europe’s film industry in the last 30 years.

The final roundtable was set up as a discussion between Valeria Camporesi from the Spanish National Film Archives (Filmoteca), David Deprez, former artistic director of the art-house cinema Lumière in Maastricht, Daniel Biltereyst and Fernando Ramos. This final panel raised questions about the abundance of films, audience strategies, and all kinds of obstacles and opportunities for European cinema to grow in the future.

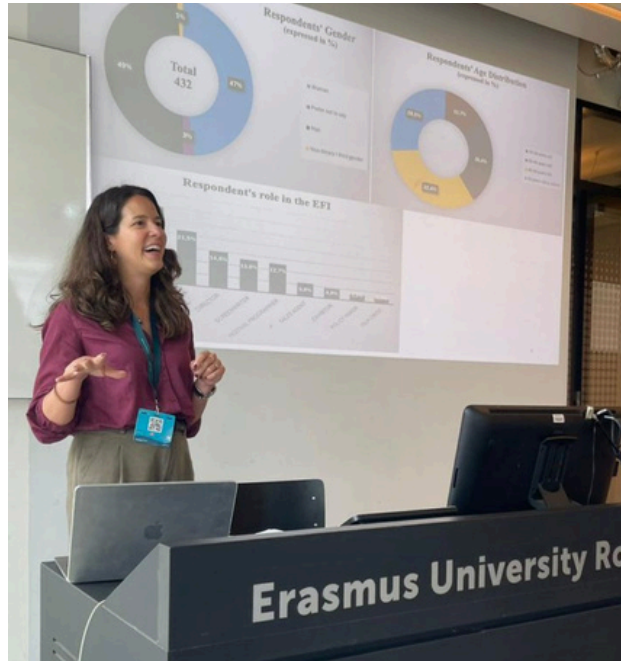
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09 REBOOT at the 23rd International Conference on Cultural Economics (ACEI)

The REBOOT project was represented at the 23rd International Conference on Cultural Economics (ACEI), held at Erasmus University Rotterdam, June 2025 where leading scholars and policymakers gathered to explore the intersections between culture, economics, and innovation.

Gentiana Ramadani from the University of Vienna presented her paper, “Public Value and Economic Impact in the European Film Industry: A Case Study of Austria and Greece.” Her presentation explored how public value, encompassing cultural enrichment, collective identity, and social cohesion, contributes to the competitiveness of the European film industry. Drawing on comparative insights from Austria and Greece, Ramadani highlighted the diverse strategies European countries employ to align economic performance with cultural policy goals, calling for more cohesive frameworks that balance market success with cultural and social contribution.

Complementing this perspective, Antonios Vlassis and Marina Rossato Fernandes from the University of Liège presented their paper, “Defining Competitiveness in the European Film Industry: Resurgent Debates in an Evolving Technological and Economic Context.”



Marina Rossato Fernandes from the University of Liège presented her paper with Antonios Vlassis.

Based on a pan-European survey and 37 in-depth interviews with film professionals, their research examined how “competitiveness” is understood from a bottom-up perspective within the sector. Their findings point to an urgent need to redefine competitiveness in European film beyond traditional economic measures, integrating dimensions of cultural diversity, creative innovation, and sustainable growth.

10 Once upon a storyboard...

REBOOTing Creativity as Young Voices Explore Cinema at KinderUni Wien 2025

By Yves Saint Clair Zogo

Every summer, KinderUni Wien transforms the University of Vienna into a ground of discovery,

where children from across Austria step into the world of university life for two weeks filled with lectures, workshops and hands-on seminars

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designed to spark curiosity and inspire learning. In its 23rd edition, 4,145 children participated in a rich programme offering 358 courses spanning science, arts and culture.

Amid this lively academic environment, the REBOOT project team led its second consecutive children's workshop on 8 July 2025. The session welcomed 22 children aged 7 to 12 for an interactive exploration of storytelling and scriptwriting, guiding them through the fundamentals of narrative creation and introducing playful, hands-on methods to bring their ideas to life. The workshop, titled "Insights into the World of Filmmaking: How Do You Write a Film Story?", invited participants to discover the foundations of scriptwriting through group activities, cinematic exploration and creative expression. It forms part of REBOOT's wider objective: to increase support for young people's engagement with European film, planting early seeds of curiosity, cultural connection and creative confidence.



In groups, the participants wrote their own movie scripts.

The session began with a light-hearted welcome activity: participants introduced themselves and shared their favourite films, establishing a relaxed and friendly environment. We then screened a series of short clips from different film genres (action, comedy, adventure, fantasy, science fiction, horror, drama and animation). The children enthusiastically discussed the features of each

genre, demonstrating sharp awareness of cinematic elements and storytelling tone. This discussion laid the groundwork for understanding narrative form and audience engagement.



The children were encouraged to think creatively.

To provide a professional framework for their creativity, a film industry professional introduced the three key stages of filmmaking: pre-production, production and post-production. This segment helped contextualise scriptwriting within the broader filmmaking process and prepared the children to build their own stories from the ground up. Next on the agenda was the heart of the workshop. An exciting group challenge: the children were divided into two genre-based teams : Comedy and Action, and asked to produce a short film script and corresponding storyboard. Each team worked in smaller subgroups using custom-designed REBOOT scriptbooks to build their stories step by step, including introduction, rising action and conclusion. After an energetic session of brainstorming, drawing, plotting and collaborating, the young teams proudly presented their original stories.

Story Highlights

The Action group created a thrilling story about a group of friends who, while running from the police, fall into a bin and discover a laser-shooting skateboard. This magical skateboard transports them first to the moon, then to the distant planet Xylus. There, their rocket explodes, leaving them stranded until the skateboard returns and teleports them safely home.

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The Comedy group spun a whimsical tale of Yann, a curious character who falls into a bin while searching for coins and finds the same enchanted skateboard. It shrinks her down and transports her to a mystical forest where she encounters a giant owl goddess. The story ends on a playful cliffhanger as the owl prepares to strike.

Following the presentations, we spoke with the children to hear their reflections. When asked if they could imagine themselves working in film one day, responses varied. Some voiced clear enthusiasm for acting, directing, scripting or editing, while others imagined film as a future hobby. One participant remarked, “I want to be an athlete, but maybe I could do this as a second job.” Another shared a dream of becoming a set designer. When asked what they would need to pursue filmmaking, many children mentioned access to cameras and equipment, while others pointed to the importance of user-friendly software and online tutorials as entry points.

Each child received a personalised REBOOT scriptbook and an official attendance certificate of their creative experience and tools to encourage continued storytelling exploration. This workshop with children aligns closely with REBOOT’s commitment to creating listening spaces where young participants can actively express their creativity and contribute to knowledge production.



It reflects an approach to education and cultural engagement that recognises children as informed social actors, ensuring that their ideas are integrated directly into the research process rather than filtered exclusively through adults’ interpretations of their experiences, a long-standing limitation in mainstream practice (Montreuil et al., 2021).

Beyond a one-day event, the workshop was a meaningful introduction to the storytelling process, a boost to collaborative and artistic skills and a vivid example of how early engagement can foster lifelong interest in European film and media. This workshop was made possible thanks to the dedication and passion of its facilitators: Katharine Sarikakis, Angeliki Chatziefrimidou, Simon Haslauer, Gemtiana Ramadani and film industry professional Yves Saint Clair Zogo.

11 Discussing young film audiences at the Espoo Cine Film Festival

By Tuuli Lähdesmäki and Kaisa Hiltunen, University of Jyväskylä

Espoo Ciné (espoo.cine.fi/en/) is one of the largest film festivals in Finland. It focuses on new European films from renowned filmmakers and up-and-coming talent. The 36th edition of the festival

took place in August and featured special screenings and events. Through the Junior Ciné festival, the festival offered a special programme for children and young people, screening animations, children’s films, and youth films in theaters and online. The festival also organised workshops for school students.

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Junior Ciné opened with a guest screening of *Fleak*, an international co-production animation from Finland, France, Malaysia, and Poland. The film was introduced by its director, Antti Haikala. The screening was followed by a panel discussion entitled "Young people enjoy movies, but how?" Kaisa Kukkola, Executive Director of the Kokkola Film Festival, chaired the panel, which included Associate Professor Tuuli Lähdesmäki (University of Jyväskylä, REBOOT project), University Researcher Kaisa Hiltunen (University of Jyväskylä, REBOOT project), Deputy Director Marjo Kovanen (National Audiovisual Institute KAVI), and Elina Pohjola (Finnish Broadcasting Company Yle, Drama Productions). Additionally, Petri Peltonen, a Statistics and Research Specialist, and Ilmari Arnkil, an Exhibition and Distribution Specialist, both from the Finnish Film Foundation, participated in the panel as discussants. The audience consisted of professionals and students who work with young people and film. These professionals included representatives from the national film education association, Koulukino, and the national expert organisation for media education, Mediametka.

The panel discussion presented research results and experiences related to children's and youth films. It also discussed young people's film preferences, tastes, and viewing habits. Themes of discussion ranged from whether watching films is a social event for children and young people, to gendered film preferences and the notions of cinema developed during the teenage years. Other themes included young people's contradictory views on US films, which are both criticised and considered favorite films, and the production of children's and youth films in Finland and their impact on young people's positive views of Finnish films and film watching in general. Tuuli Lähdesmäki and Kaisa Hiltunen presented research results from the REBOOT survey, which was conducted among 12-24-year-olds studying at secondary school and university in nine countries: Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain, and Turkey. The survey included responses from 4,453 people. During the discussion, the views of the 571 Finnish respondents were compared to those from the other countries.

The panel emphasised the importance of film education in schools and the need for film educators and teachers to address various narrative and gender stereotypes and gender-based expectations regarding young people's preferences for genres and film characters. Additionally, the panel welcomed the shift in perception of young people as an important audience segment and of youth films as an ambitious genre, rather than a feminised, less important field for women. The panel also requested more diversity in children's and youth films and expressed concern about the increasing imitation of US productions, which decreases the diversity of films. They wished that young people could be introduced to a wider variety of films, including those from other European countries and beyond.



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12 Rethinking financing strategies for independent film in Europe

REBOOT at the Locarno Film Festival

At this year's Locarno Film Festival, REBOOT was part of a timely discussion during the round table "Public Meets Private: Rethinking Financing Strategies for Independent Film in Europe."

Marina Rossato Fernandes, representing the REBOOT project, joined a panel of industry professionals to share how REBOOT's research contributes to ongoing debates about the future of film financing in Europe. Drawing on project findings, Rossato explored the current challenges and strengths of the European Film Industry (EFI) and how these can inform more sustainable and inclusive financing models.

Her presentation highlighted one of REBOOT's key insights, the central role of public funding in supporting European cinema's cultural and creative vitality. As Rossato noted, any conversation about attracting private investment must build upon this foundation, ensuring that public mechanisms continue to safeguard cultural diversity and artistic independence.

For the occasion, Marina Rossato Fernandes also prepared an exclusive report for Locarno Pro participants, summarising REBOOT's key findings and offering evidence-based perspectives to guide future policy and industry collaboration.



Marina Rossato Fernandes presented findings from the REBOOT project at Locarno film festival.

13 Mapping young filmmakers' struggles in the European market

In August 2025, the University of Vienna Team represented REBOOT at the Mid-term conference of the European Sociological Association, that took place 28-30 August 2025 at the Faculty of Social

Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia under the theme „Communication and Capital(ism)“. As part of the „Labor and Precarity in the Digital Economy“ panel, Simon Haslauer and Angeliki

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Chatziefrimidou presented the paper “I feel like I slip through the cracks”: Young Filmmakers in the European Film Industry, co-authored with Katharine Sarikakis, Gentiana Ramadani and Mariia Yeroshkina. The paper addresses the problem of young filmmakers struggling to navigate the European film industry (EFI) due to its “make up” and the gap in academic research on the state of young people in the EFI, especially their transition to seeking employment in the sector.



Young filmmakers feel many constraints and barriers while entering the European film industry.

By interviewing young filmmakers living in the European Union and discussing their lived experiences in relation to existing EU policy, the researchers highlighted the extent to which current policies support or hinder young filmmakers’ professional development: They face multiple interconnected challenges that hinder their professional development and cultural contribution. Precarious working conditions create substantial barriers to entry and sustainability in the field. While EU and state funding exists, restrictive criteria and national boundaries create obstacles.

Young filmmakers perceive that success in the European film industry frequently depends rather on established networks than on talent or merit alone, reproducing patterns of exclusivity and systemic inequality, as socioeconomic background, gender, and limited access to resources continue to limit meritocracy.

14 REBOOT at the European Law Unbound Society Conference

Evangelia Psychogiopoulou, ELIAMEP Researcher and Assistant Professor on EU institutions and policies at the University of Peloponnese, gave a presentation titled “Governing Culture through Funding in the EU” at the Annual Conference of the European Law Unbound Society, held on 25-27 September 2025 in Prague. The presentation was part of the panel “Governing through Funding in the EU”.

Her presentation considered the role of EU funding in shaping EU cultural governance. She provided an overview of EU funding measures encouraging cultural cooperation between Member States and

their professionals and discussed their contribution to the shaping of EU cultural policy in terms of the objectives pursued, the actions eligible for funding and the European added value of EU support in this field. These points strike at the heart of REBOOT’s research agenda, considering the analysis carried out regarding the role of EU funding in supporting the competitiveness of EU audiovisual works in third countries as a key objective.

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15 Exploring film and television in the streaming era

REBOOT at ECREA 2025

How are streaming platforms transforming the way films and television are made, distributed, and watched? This question took centre stage at the ECREA Film Studies and Television Studies Sections Conference 2025, held on 8-9 September at the University of Bologna, where members of the REBOOT project joined leading scholars and industry professionals from across Europe.

The conference “Film and Television’s Transformations in the Streaming Era: Reconceiving Aesthetics, Narratives and Forms,” provided a vibrant space to debate how digital platforms are reshaping audiovisual storytelling and audience engagement.



Isabel Vargas Miranda presenting at ECREA 2025.

Isabela Vargas Miranda from Carlos III University of Madrid (UC3M), showcased research conducted within the REBOOT project. Her presentation, “SVoD Services in Latin America: Perspectives

from Key Markets, Lessons for Europe,” offered a comparative look at the fast-evolving streaming landscape in Latin America and what European policymakers and creators can learn from it.

With discussions ranging from cultural circulation to algorithmic visibility and creative economies, the event highlighted REBOOT’s ongoing contribution to understanding the shifting power structures of the global film and television ecosystem.

Meanwhile, Marina Rossato Fernandos from the University of Liège (ULiège) presented “Dependency or Development? European Film Professionals’ Perceptions of SVOD’s Impact,” which examined how European film professionals perceive the growing influence of US-based VOD platforms on the European Film Industry (EFI). Drawing on interviews and survey data, the presentation revealed that while initial expectations around global exposure and investment were optimistic, professionals have become increasingly critical. Concerns include intellectual property retention, creative autonomy, and the long-term sustainability of European production ecosystems.

Through these contributions, REBOOT reaffirmed its commitment to understanding the intersections of policy, technology, and creativity in Europe’s evolving media landscape. The project’s participation at ECREA highlighted how research can bridge cultural analysis and policy design—essential for navigating the challenges of the streaming era while safeguarding Europe’s cultural diversity and creative independence.

The conference “Film and Television’s Transformations in the Streaming Era: Reconceiving Aesthetics, Narratives and Forms,” provided a vibrant space to debate how digital platforms are reshaping audiovisual storytelling and audience engagement.

16 Film preferences of Finnish youth

REBOOT at the Finnish Society for Cinema Studies seminar

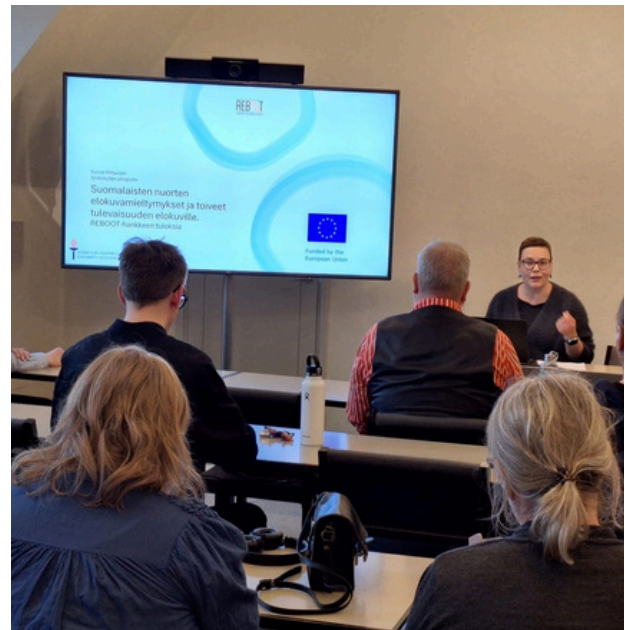
By Kaisa Hiltunen

Senior researcher Kaisa Hiltunen from the University of Jyväskylä represented the REBOOT-project in the seminar of the Finnish Society for Cinema Studies in Helsinki on 7 November 2025. The annual seminar brings together leading Finnish film scholars, doctoral students and others interested in film studies to discuss current research. The seminar is known for its encouraging and inspiring atmosphere, and it has been held since the early 2000s.

In her presentation Kaisa Hiltunen discussed the film preferences of the Finnish youth and their hopes for future cinema based on the survey and focus group interviews which were carried out in the REBOOT-project in 2024 and 2025. Her presentation focused on the Finnish data and more specifically on favourite films and genres as well as on the elements that young people consider important in films. She also discussed the hopes that young people have for the future of cinema and their thoughts on European cinema.

The presentation aroused a lot of interest. The findings were considered “a reality check” and “eye-opening”, and it was hoped that the results would be communicated to the Finnish public. Following the presentation, there was a lively discussion about topics such as the short attention spans of youth, the inability of some children to concentrate on watching full-length films and the declining cinema attendance of the Finnish youth.

There are no restrictions on the topics of the presentations at the seminar, but this year it just so happened that seven out of eight presentations were about Finnish cinema or Finnish film industry. Presentation topics included the possibilities for ecologically sustainable film production in a small country's production ecosystem, depictions of sex and sexual desire between women in Finnish cinema and the art theories of Ricciotto Canudo and Valentine de Saint-Point.



Kaisa Hiltunen presented results from research with young people.
Photo: Outi Hakola.

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