

**:DOKU  
FEST**

ANNUAL REPORT

2023

# FESTIVAL REPORT

EDITION XXII

4-12 august 2023

Prizren, Kosova



16,756 attendees

102 staff members

120 volunteers



268 Films

66 Countries

11 Music events

7 DokuTalks

7 Workshops

3 Masterclasses

2 Exhibitions

Economic Impact 4.2 mill. €\*

\*According to GAP Institute research conducted during festival.





## SUMMARY

The 22nd edition of DokuFest – International Documentary and Short Film Festival, was held between 4 and 12 of August 2023 in Prizren. The festival returned to its full in-person format, by bringing a rich program of 268 film screenings, 7 debates and panel discussions, 3 masterclasses, 2 exhibitions and 11 music performances.

This year was truly exceptional, with an astounding 3,481 film submissions that we accepted from November 1st, 2022, till 28th of February 2023 from 111 countries, a remarkable 22% increase from the previous year's submissions. The festival selected 268 films and curated the program from eight competitions and sixteen special programs. DokuFest continued its tradition of providing a global stage for both emerging and established filmmakers to showcase their work and stories.

Through our ticket counting system, we were able to assess that the number of audiences rounded up to a 16.756 people across all our activities. The festival's fundraising was provided through a combination of financial support from state and local institutions, international foundations, commercial sponsors and foreign embassies in Kosovo. The festival was organized through the tireless work of the core team, enforced with more than 80 dedicated full and part-time teams, and with the enormous help of equally dedicated 120 volunteers.

DokuFest has made Prizren an attractive destination for tourists from all over the world. The festival has attracted thousands of visitors to the city, who spent money on accommodation, food and other tourist activities. This has encouraged the development of the tourism industry and created new jobs in the service sector, making the festival once again a cultural event with one of the highest economic impacts in the country. Based on the preliminary results from the research done by the GAP institute in collaboration with UBO consulting, the amount spent during the festival is estimated to be 4.2 million euros, of which 2.9 million euros is the impact on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Whereas the economic impact calculated on consumption expenditures is around 4.0 million euros.

**The relation between human and Artificial Intelligence was at the center of this year's theme of DokuFest. Human consciousness, an intangible heritage of the known universe and evolution, may be nearing extinction not because artificial intelligences will claim agency and take over the world but, more likely because of the climate crisis created together by human intelligences.**

"I AM AI AM I", a slogan used to promote the theme of the festival, was a prompt for the inquiry into the fundamental nature of both artificial intelligence and human existence.

Can an AI entity truly claim the statement "I AM AI" and evolve as an intelligence of its kind? If AI is a container and interpreter of human stories, can it enlighten us about the characteristics and qualities that constitute our own human identity?

Through number of films dealing in one way or another with artificial intelligence, including the opening and closing films of the festival, through a full day of program dedicated to AI, and through the visual identity of the campaign partly created with the help of AI and ChatGPT, the festival aimed to initiate debate and spark interest in yet another far reaching issue concerning us humans and our ever-growing relation with technology.

THEME  
OF THE 22<sup>ND</sup> EDITION

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# HUMAN STORIES

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# FILM PROGRAM WINNERS



**At the award ceremony, held at Lumbardhi Open Air Cinema in Prizren, in the presence of numerous dignitaries, guests, jurors, sponsors and partners of the festival, the winners of the 22nd edition of DokuFest were announced. DokuFest this year awarded the filmmakers in total of 12 different awards.**

BALKAN DOX  
WINNER

**Drifting**  
by Somnur Vardar

Jurors:  
Marlene Edoyan, Srđan Kovačević and Zeynep Güzel

INT'L FEATURE DOX  
WINNER

**Hypermoon**  
by Mia Engberg

Special Mention: **Q** by Jude Chehab

Jurors:  
Valérie Massadian, Dario Oliveira and Maryam Tafakory

INT'L SHORT DOX  
WINNER

**Pacific Club**  
by Valentin Noujaïm

Jurors:  
Sanne Jehoul, Ruggero Calich and Randa Maroufi

INT'L SHORT FILM  
WINNER

**Neighbour Abdi**  
by Douwe Dijkstra

Special Mention: **The Goose's Excuse**  
by Abdo Zin Eldin and Mahdy Abo Bahat

Jurors:  
Dorian Jespers, Nina Rodríguez and Simon Ellis

HUMAN RIGHTS DOX  
WINNER

**A Golden Life**  
by Boubacar Sangaré

Special Mention: **My Name is Happy**  
by Ayşe Toprak and Nick Read

Jurors:  
Shoshi Korman, Rron Gjinovci and Dina Pokrajac

GREEN DOX  
WINNER

**Last Things**  
by Deborah Stratman

Jurors:  
Cecilia Barrionuevo, Artan Sadiku and Viera Čákanyová

TRUTH DOX  
WINNER

**Total Trust**  
by Jialing Zhang  
Special Mention: **Seven Winters in Tehran**  
by Steffi Niedertzoll

Jurors:  
Tomáš Hudák, Emilia Mazik and Gugi Gumilang

NATIONAL FILM  
WINNER

**Prishtinë, 2002**  
by Trëndelina Halili

Jurors:  
Maike Mia Höhne, Sabahat Meta and Thelyia Petraki

AUDIENCE AWARD  
WINNER

**Snajka: Diary of Expectations**  
by Tea Vidović Dalipi

EFA SHORT FILM  
CANDIDATE 2023

***Daydreaming so vividly  
about our Spanish holidays***  
by Christian Avilés

Jurors:  
Dorian Jespers, Nina Rodríguez and Simon Ellis

TALENT  
DOC AWARD

***The Future is Better, Comrade***  
by Blerta Haziraj

Jurors:  
Maike Mia Höhne, Sabahat Meta and Thelyia Petraki

LE FRESNOY  
AWARD

***The Future is Better, Comrade***  
by Blerta Haziraj

A newly established award, a collaboration between DokuFest and Le Fresnoy, the renowned National Studio of Contemporary Art from France

THE DOC ALLIANCE  
AWARD (SHORT)

***The Cervix Pass***  
by Marie Bottois

Jurors:  
Anna Berthollet, Arnaud Hée, Jonathan Ali

THE DOC ALLIANCE  
AWARD (FEATURE)

***Death of a City***  
by João Rosas  
Special Mention: ***Disturbed Earth***  
by Kumjana Novakova and Guillermo Carreras Candi

Jurors:  
Anna Berthollet, Arnaud Hée, Jonathan Ali

DISTRIBUTION  
AWARD

***Hana e Re***  
by Jehona Berisha

Distribution Award, given by Radiator IP Film Sales from Belgium to a film from National Competition

***As part of agreement between DokuFest and Ikonë Studio, the leading film production company in Kosova, a prize in the amount of 7.000 EUR in the form of equipment lease and to be used in the next film project was awarded to the winner of National Competition Trëndelina Halili.***

***New Wave Grant, in the amount of 7.000 EUR + film equipment lease and 6-month mentorship by renowned film experts, was awarded to two projects this year.***

***Financial grants going towards the production of short films are given by DokuFest and are supported by SIDA and Swedish Embassy in Kosovo. The winners were Aurela Berila and Flaka Kokolli.***







## COMPETITION

From a total number of 3481 films from 111 countries from all over the world that were submitted for consideration, a whopping 22% increase from the previous year, the Festival showcased 104 films in its eight competition sections, with number of films seeing their World, International and European premieres, making DokuFest an important launching pad in this part of the world for both, documentary and narrative short films.

Our competition strands this year presented an impressive selection of filmmaking talent. The films in our seminal **Balkan Dox Competition** offered an expansive look at the documentary production in the region, including a foray into different stylistic waters with many brave artistic choices.

Our **International Feature Dox Competition** section continued to be a place of discovery, both for us and for our audiences. Several films from this strand played with codes freely, mixing genres and modes of storytelling by placing spectators in unusual environments, such as inside video games or embedded in a series of WhatsApp messages, continuing to invigorate a more experimental, non-linear narrative practice in documentary filmmaking.

We continued to highlight vital topics on human rights and pressing environmental issues in the **Human Rights** and **Green Dox competition** sections. Needless to say, many of them are so urgent and timely, it is hard to find the words to convey how important they are to be seen and absorbed.

Personal, as well as global stories, dealing with the notion of truth, are to be found in our recently established **Truth Dox Competition**. And we continued to explore the short documentary form, its constant evolution and rich offerings, in our International Short Dox Competition.

The **Short Films Competition** featured some of the best of the short form on the silver screens scattered around the city of Prizren, including prize winners from the Berlinale and Locarno.

We showcased an equally impressive roster of films in our **National Competition**, from up-and-coming filmmakers to more seasoned talents, all of which left us with a sense of awe in regard to possible futures of moving image work being produced here. It makes us so proud.



# SPECIAL PROGRAMS

## **VIEW FROM THE WORLD**

The View from the World program stood out with a selection of ten outstanding nonfiction films. These films included award-winning works from prestigious festivals like Berlinale, Sundance, and IDFA. Festivalgoers had the privilege of experiencing the creations of acclaimed filmmakers like Maïte Alberdi, Lucien Castaing-Taylor, and Véréna Paravel, offering a glimpse into the cutting edge of contemporary documentary filmmaking.

The program's eclectic mix of styles and subjects showcased the boundless possibilities of nonfiction storytelling. From immersive sensory experiences to deep explorations of the human psyche, the View from the World program expanded our understanding of what documentary cinema can achieve. It reinforced DokuFest's commitment to bringing the best of global cinema to its audience, promoting cross-cultural exchange, and pushing the boundaries of the documentary form.

## **WITH NO BEFORE AND AFTER: FILMS ON FILM**

The "With No Before and After: Films on Film" program was a tribute to the cinematic art form itself. This selection of films explored the history, philosophy, and craft of filmmaking. It delved into the minds of filmmakers, dissected the art of storytelling, and offered an in-depth look at the evolution of cinema.

The program celebrated the power of film to capture moments in time, preserve memories, and shape our understanding of the world. It invited audiences to journey behind the scenes and witness the magic of cinema from a new perspective. "With No Before and

After" paid homage to the rich tradition of cinematic storytelling and highlighted the enduring relevance of film as a medium for artistic expression and cultural reflection.

## **FOCUS CANADA: SPOTLIGHT QUÉBEC**

The "Focus Canada: Spotlight Québec" program shone a spotlight on the vibrant and diverse cinema of Québec. This selection of films showcased the unique storytelling voices emerging from this Canadian province, highlighting the creativity and innovation of Québécois filmmakers.

Audiences were treated to a diverse range of narratives, from intimate character studies to sweeping epics, all grounded in the rich cultural fabric of Québec. The program offered a window into the cultural and social dynamics of the province, celebrating its unique identity and contributions to the world of cinema. "Spotlight Québec" reaffirmed DokuFest's commitment to fostering international partnerships and promoting the global exchange of cinematic art.

## **LOGICAL REVOLTS: THE WORKS OF LOUIS HENDERSON**

The "Logical Revolts: The Works of Louis Henderson" program was a deep dive into the thought-provoking and experimental films of Louis Henderson, a groundbreaking filmmaker known for challenging traditional documentary conventions. His films blend elements of fiction and reality, offering a unique perspective on pressing global issues.

This program allowed audiences to explore the avant-garde works of Henderson, which pushed the boundaries of documentary storytelling. His films prompted viewers to question established narratives and engage with complex topics like colonialism, technology, and identity. "Logical Revolts" showcased DokuFest's commitment to presenting innovative and challenging cinema that sparks critical thinking and discussion.

## DOC ALLIANCE AWARD

The Doc Alliance Award program featured the winner of the prestigious Doc Alliance Award, a pan-European documentary film competition. This award-winning film was selected from a pool of remarkable European documentaries, representing the pinnacle of nonfiction storytelling.

The program celebrated the excellence and diversity of European documentary cinema, highlighting the power of this art form to explore pressing societal issues and challenge conventional perspectives. The award-winning film stood as a testament to the vitality and relevance of European documentary filmmaking, and its inclusion in DokuFest emphasized the festival's dedication to promoting outstanding works from around the continent.

## EYES WIDE OPEN: A SAMPLE OF LE FRESNOY'S FILMS

The "Eyes Wide Open: A Sample of Le Fresnoy's Films" program presented a curated selection of films from Le Fresnoy - Studio National des Arts Contemporains in France. These films showcased the unique creative visions of emerging artists and filmmakers from this renowned institution, offering a glimpse into the cutting-edge world of contemporary cinema.

Audiences were treated to a visual feast of experimental and artistic films that challenged traditional storytelling conventions. The program celebrated Le Fresnoy's role as a breeding ground for avant-garde cinema and artistic innovation. "Eyes Wide Open" highlighted DokuFest's commitment to international collaboration and its dedication to pushing the boundaries of cinematic art.

## BLAST FROM THE PAST: FROM THE ARCHIVE OF LUMBARDHI

The "Blast from the Past: From the Archive of Lumbardhi" program delved into the rich history of cinema by showcasing a selection of classic films from the Lumbardhi Cinema Archive. These cinematic

treasures, carefully restored and presented on the big screen, allowed audiences to travel back in time and experience the magic of vintage cinema.

This program celebrated the enduring appeal of classic films and the importance of preserving cinematic heritage. It was a nostalgic journey through the history of cinema, offering a glimpse into the past and a reminder of the timeless power of storytelling.



## FUTURE IS HERE

The "Future is Here" program introduced festivalgoers to the next generation of documentary filmmakers. This selection of films showcased the fresh and innovative voices of emerging talents, highlighting their unique perspectives on contemporary issues and storytelling.

The program celebrated the potential of young filmmakers to shape the future of documentary cinema. It provided a platform for these emerging voices to share their visions with the world, encouraging dialogue and reflection on the pressing issues of our time.





### **JÜRGEN BÖTTCHER: THE HIDDEN MASTER**

The “Jürgen Böttcher: The Hidden Master” program paid tribute to the remarkable career of Jürgen Böttcher, an iconic filmmaker from Germany. Böttcher’s works, often characterized by poetic and introspective storytelling, left an indelible mark on the world of cinema.

The program allowed audiences to explore the depth and complexity of Böttcher’s filmography, highlighting his contributions to the art of visual storytelling. It celebrated his status as a hidden master of cinema, whose works continue to inspire and captivate audiences around the world. “The Hidden Master” program showcased DokuFest’s commitment to recognizing and honoring influential figures in the world of documentary filmmaking.

### **LEFT ON OUR OWN DEVICES - DEREK JARMAN: THE MUSIC VIDEOS**

The “Left on Our Own Devices - Derek Jarman: The Music Videos” program was a celebration of the visionary work of Derek Jarman, a pioneering filmmaker known for his groundbreaking music videos. Jarman’s innovative approach to visual storytelling left an indelible mark on the world of music and film.

This program allowed audiences to immerse themselves in Jarman’s unique visual language, exploring the intersection of music and cinema. It celebrated his role in shaping the music video genre and highlighted the enduring influence of his work. “Left on Our Own Devices” was a testament to DokuFest’s dedication to showcasing the diverse forms of documentary storytelling and the impact of visual art in popular culture.



## **KASSEL DOKFEST SHORTFILMS AT DOKUFEST**

In partnership with The Kassel Documentary Film and Video Festival, DokuFest presented a curated program titled “Kassel DOKFEST Shortfilms at DokuFest.” This program featured experimental short documentary films that boldly pushed the boundaries of traditional storytelling. These avant-garde works challenged conventional documentary narratives, offering viewers a unique and immersive cinematic experience.

The collaboration with The Kassel Documentary Film and Video Festival underscored DokuFest’s dedication to fostering international partnerships and showcasing innovative filmmaking from around the world. It celebrated the spirit of experimentation and artistic exploration that drives the documentary genre forward.

## **RIPPLES AND THREADS - POETIC SHORTS FROM CANADA**

The “Ripples and Threads - Poetic Shorts from Canada” program showcased a collection of short films from Canada that explored the poetic and contemplative side of documentary storytelling. These films offered viewers a meditative and introspective journey into the human experience, presenting narratives that touched the soul and provoked reflection.

The program celebrated the art of poetic storytelling in documentary cinema, highlighting the ability of these films to evoke emotions and spark deep introspection. It was a testament to the diversity of voices in Canadian cinema and the power of storytelling to transcend cultural boundaries. “Ripples and Threads” offered a glimpse into the contemplative and artistic side of documentary filmmaking.

## **GRAND VOYAGE**

The “Grand Voyage” program took festivalgoers on a cinematic journey across continents and cultures, presenting a selection of documentaries that explored the themes of migration, identity, and cultural exchange. These films offered a deep and nuanced look at the lives of individuals and communities affected by the



global movement of people. The program celebrated the power of documentary storytelling to illuminate the human stories behind migration and displacement. It encouraged audiences to empathize with the experiences of those who embark on life-altering journeys in search of a better future.

### **WRITING URBAN PLACES**

The “Writing Urban Places” program explored the complex relationship between cities and the people who inhabit them. This selection of films delved into the urban experience, presenting narratives that examined the challenges, triumphs, and transformations of urban landscapes and communities.

The program celebrated the ability of documentary filmmaking to capture the essence of cities and the stories of those who call them home. It highlighted the role of cities as dynamic and ever-evolving spaces that shape the lives of their residents.

### **NEW WAVE KOSOVO**

The “New Wave Kosovo” program showcased the fresh and innovative voices of Kosovo’s emerging filmmakers. This selection of films celebrated the creativity and talent of a new generation of Kosovar filmmakers, offering a glimpse into the diverse narratives and perspectives emerging from the region.

Audiences were treated to a rich tapestry of stories that reflected Kosovo’s cultural identity, history, and contemporary life. “New Wave Kosovo” highlighted the vibrant cinematic scene in Kosovo and its potential to contribute to global conversation in the world of film. It provided a platform for local filmmakers to connect with international audiences and share their unique stories and visions.



# — DOKUNIGHTS —

**Our DokuNights program returned as a full music line up during 9 nights of the festival and took part in two stages, Andrra and Lumbardhi Outdoor.**

**25 performances took place in this year's program, being home to great performers from the region, Europe and Canada that were engaged with the local and international audience.**





# DOKUKIDS

**This year DokuKids, a program co-curated by Zana Arapi Xheladini, Rita Bekqeli and Idriz Morina with full of love for our dearest audience, was made up of 54 films and 7 workshops, with unique and educational themes for children aged 6 - 12.**

**The films and the workshops addressed topics such as children's rights, climate change and other various social issues, set to develop the visual perception in children, and overall creativity and social consciousness.**





# DOKUTALKS

As a vibrant platform for film professionals, activists, and scholars DokuTalks, a space to share experiences, knowledge, and insights, consisted of 7 panel discussions, 3 masterclasses and 2 exhibitions.

The panel discussions, co-curated by Eroll Bilibani and Dea Gjinovci and moderated by Gjinovci, continued the exploration of cinema's narrative potential as catalyst for political change, specifically addressing the issue of missing persons.

The discussions also delved into the powerful role of women in shaping film narratives and societal perceptions and continued with the transformative impact of technology on storytelling. It also examined how digital self-representation has revolutionized the way we tell stories about ourselves, and the ethical considerations involved in this process.





# —MASTERCLASSES—

During DokuFest, a series of masterclasses offered rich insights into various aspects of filmmaking and cinema, enhancing the festival's educational and cultural impact.

The “Navigating the Short Film Circuit” masterclass, led by Mathieu Janssen and Emilia Mazik, explored the intricacies of film screenings, distribution, sales, and submission strategies. It also delved into film festival mechanics, discussing selection criteria and etiquette. This interactive session, tailored for emerging filmmakers and students, included a Q&A segment, allowing for deeper engagement with the topics.

“Female Animals: A Conversation with Valérie Massadian,” featured the French-Armenian photographer and filmmaker, Valérie Massadian, in her first DokuFest appearance. The session, moderated by Pamela Cohn, offered a dive into Massadian's artistic journey, highlighting her achievements and experiences.

Steven Lake led the “Dialogue in Documentary Producing: From Financing to Finishing” masterclass. Lake shared his insights on navigating the challenges of producing independent documentaries in a commercially driven industry, imparting valuable lessons from his career.



Lastly, “The Expanded Cinematic Practice & Collective Authorship” session, a conversation with Louis Henderson, spotlighted his unique approach to filmmaking. Henderson, known for exploring post-colonialism, politics, and anthropology, discussed his collaborative methods and showcased clips that complemented the festival's film programs. This session, also moderated by Pamela Cohn, included a post-conversation Q&A, allowing attendees to engage directly with Henderson's ideas and works.

These masterclasses provided a platform for learning and discussion, reflecting DokuFest's commitment to fostering a vibrant, educated, and engaged cinematic community.



# EXHIBITIONS

DokuFest's 2023 exhibitions provided a profound and thought-provoking exploration of Kosovo's social and cultural landscape, highlighting the power of art in fostering understanding and reflecting on the past.

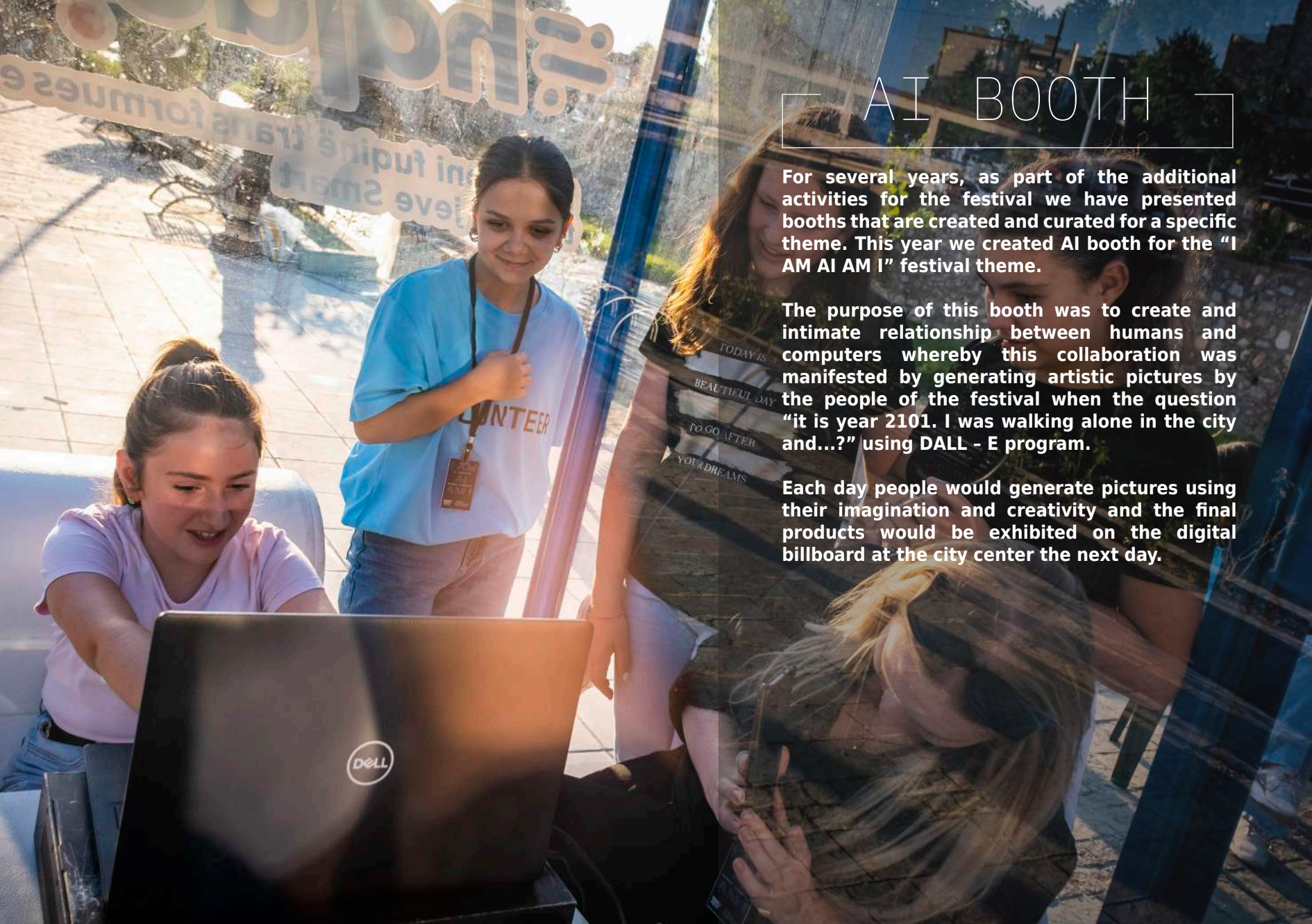
The "Digital Exhibition: How Do I See You - Kosovo?" was a significant highlight. This 20-minute digital showcase was the result of a collaborative effort between DokuFest and the OSCE Mission in Kosovo. It marked the culmination of a journey by 14 young individuals from diverse communities across Kosovo. The project aimed to challenge preconceptions and promote inter-ethnic tolerance, especially against the backdrop of divisive media narratives. Through visual art, these young participants explored and illuminated often-overlooked cultural differences. The exhibition featured video interviews and personal reflections from the Intercultural Camp, revealing the participants' evolving perceptions of each other and their shared experiences.

The second exhibition, "HOW DO I SEE YOU," presented by DokuFest, Fond B92, and Slobodna Zona and supported by the European Union, focused on inclusivity among Kosovo and Serbian youth, using documentaries as a medium for social change. This event encouraged discussions on inequality, human rights, and democratic values, aiming to foster transformative dialogues that transcend borders.

Lastly, "The Corner of Dealing with the Past," created by Humanitarian Law Centre Kosovo, offered a poignant reflection on Kosovo's tragic history. This space provided visitors with an intimate view of the past through exhibitions, personal stories, research, and reports. It served as a reminder of the region's history, encouraging a deeper understanding and contemplation of its impact on contemporary society.

These exhibitions demonstrated DokuFest's commitment to using art as a tool for social change, dialogue, and reflection, contributing to a more inclusive and empathetic understanding of Kosovo's diverse cultural fabric.





# AI BOOTH

For several years, as part of the additional activities for the festival we have presented booths that are created and curated for a specific theme. This year we created AI booth for the "I AM AI AM I" festival theme.

The purpose of this booth was to create and intimate relationship between humans and computers whereby this collaboration was manifested by generating artistic pictures by the people of the festival when the question "it is year 2101. I was walking alone in the city and...?" using DALL - E program.

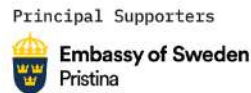
Each day people would generate pictures using their imagination and creativity and the final products would be exhibited on the digital billboard at the city center the next day.

# DONORS

The growth of the festival, making it the biggest event in Kosovo and among the most important ones in the region, is done thanks to the continuous support of our long-term partners and supporters.

DokuFest is funded by international organizations, state and local institutions, foreign embassies in Kosovo and commercial sponsors. We are very grateful for their backing, for those who returned with us, and even increased their support as well as the new partners that joined us for the first time this year.

Their belief in our cause is very much appreciated and we continue working hard to make the festival even more magical and a bigger success each year more and more.



## Supporters & Sponsors









# DOKULAB

**DokuLab, the educational arm of DokuFest, plays a pivotal role in the organization's mission to integrate film and audiovisual tools into education, promoting social development and a deeper understanding of complex issues among youth. As DokuFest evolves, DokuLab stands as a key milestone in its transformative journey, extending the organization's impact far beyond the realms of traditional film festivals.**





At the heart of DokuLab's initiatives is the Film Production Centre for Youth, a dynamic space fostering the talents of high school students. With the generous support of the Swedish Embassy, this department managed to provide support in cash, equipment and mentorship for aspiring filmmakers, so these young creatives find a nurturing environment to explore and develop their skills in nonfiction storytelling. This center is not just an educational platform; it's a crucible for innovative narratives that contribute significantly to the region's burgeoning creative ecosystem.

Furthermore, integrating several projects into a programmatic approach, the department became instrumental in empowering educators. The program offers specialized training for high school teachers and university students, enhancing their abilities to integrate the art of film into their teaching methodologies. This innovative approach enriches traditional educational practices, making learning more engaging and effective for students.

In 2023, DokuLab continued its legacy of innovation and support for the cinematic arts. It not only sustained its existing projects but also launched new initiatives aligned with DokuFest's strategic direction. These projects are designed to fulfill the organization's vision and mission, ensuring a lasting impact on the educational and cultural landscape of the region.

The following sections will delve deeper into each of the projects, highlighting the contributions of donors and partners that make these initiatives possible. Through these collaborations, our educational department reinforces its commitment to nurturing the next generation of filmmakers and educators, ensuring the sustained growth and vibrancy of the cinematic culture in Kosovo and beyond.







# FURTHERING DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY THROUGH THE USE OF CULTURE AND ARTS

SUPPORTED BY THE SWEDISH EMBASSY / SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY  
YEAR: 2021-2024

In 2023, DokuFest's program made significant advancements in integrating arts and culture into fostering a democratic society. The project, central to DokuFest's mission, focused on enhancing the organizational capacities of DokuFest and addressing contemporary societal challenges through the medium of film and arts.

A major objective was the development of a comprehensive, long-term organizational strategy for DokuFest. This involved collaborative workshops leading to a draft strategy that underwent iterative refinement, emphasizing an inclusive and participatory approach. This process marked a significant step in aligning DokuFest's activities with its strategic vision for the future.

Addressing societal challenges, the program notably implemented thematic film programs at the festival and cinema, concentrating on democracy, human rights, gender equality, non-discrimination, climate change, and media literacy. These themes reflect DokuFest's commitment to using film as a catalyst for social dialogue and change.

The "Support to the New Wave of Kosovo Filmmakers" initiative was a key highlight. Offering grants and mentorship, it propelled local films, like 'Sisters' by Albana Nila and Flutura Balaj's 'Transmission'

(premiered internationally at Dokfest Kassel, Germany). During the 2023 festival, six new projects competed for two awards, including a 7,000 EUR grant, film equipment, and a six-month mentorship by film seasoned professionals Thomas Logoreci and Melissa Lindgren. Winners Aurela Berila and Flaka Kokolli, chosen by an independent international jury, exemplify the initiative's role in elevating Kosovo's film narratives globally.

Moreover, the educational component of the project made strides in integrating film into educational settings. This included preparing agreements with educational institutions to utilize film as an educational tool, enhancing the learning experience, and fostering critical discussions on important societal issues.

Overall, these efforts in 2023, underpinned by the Swedish Embassy's support, significantly contributed to DokuFest's vision of using culture and arts to further a democratic society. This comprehensive approach to organizational development, societal engagement, and educational innovation exemplifies DokuFest's role in shaping an inclusive, informed, and culturally rich society.



**Embassy of Sweden**  
Pristina



# SCHOOLS AND DOCUMENTARIES (KNOWLEDGE SHARING FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT)

SUPPORTED BY THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY  
YEAR: 2022 – 2024

Supported by the National Endowment for Democracy, the “Schools and Documentaries” project, a cornerstone of DokuFest’s DokuLab initiatives since 2008, has significantly advanced in its mission to integrate film education into schools for enhancing social development. The project provides a comprehensive Teacher’s Digital Library with films and tools, empowering educators to engage students in addressing societal issues such as democratic erosion and lack of inclusion.

In 2023, the project expanded its training activities to Albania, aligning with the national educational curriculum and enhancing teacher capacities. A group of 33 teachers from various cities and academic disciplines came together to integrate documentaries into their workplan. The workshop’s success was notably attributed to its unique ‘train the trainer’ approach, which enabled teachers to be both learners and educators, reducing reliance on external intervention. Key activities included workshops on the use of audio-visual tools in classrooms in both Kosovo and Albania. These workshops fostered innovative teaching methods and heightened social awareness among youth. Led by teachers proficient in documentary implementation, the workshops encouraged peers to adopt these practices in various educational settings.

In Kosovo, the project focused on local issues, broadening teachers’ networks, and providing resources that align with the Kosovo Curriculum Framework. This initiative aimed to combat hate speech and promote equality.

This training program that enabled the exchange between Kosovar and Albanian teachers was done in partnership with the ‘Korca Short Film Festival’. As a result our ‘Teacher’s Digital Library’ was enriched with new film guides, bringing it to total of 170 short documentaries and 120 guides available for teachers for free in both countries.

The Editing Camps ‘Future is Here’ – 11th Generation, held in April and June, aimed at equipping students with skills to complete their film projects for world premieres at DokuFest. These films tackled various social challenges, showcasing the students’ growing proficiency in cinematic storytelling.

Additionally, the project saw international recognition with film screenings in Geneva, Switzerland, presenting a selection of DokuFest-produced films over 12 years, addressing a range of social issues.

The premiere of the 11th Generation of ‘Future is Here’ films in August at Kino Lumi was a resounding success, highlighting the project’s impact on nurturing young filmmakers. The announcement of the next edition of the film school ‘Future is Here’ further emphasized the project’s commitment to fostering new talent in filmmaking.

Overall, the “Schools and Documentaries” project in 2023 demonstrated DokuFest’s dedication to empowering youth through film, promoting social development, and expanding educational horizons.



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# HOW DO I SEE YOU

**SUPPORTED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION  
YEAR: 2019 – 2023**

The “HOW DO I SEE YOU?” project, a collaboration between DokuFest, Slobodna Zona, and Fund B92, funded by the European Union, aimed to bridge the cultural and societal divide between the youth of Kosovo and Serbia. This initiative, spanning from 2019 to 2023, focused on youths aged 18-25 and involved six camps across both countries. It centered around intercultural exchange, media education, and nurturing common goals.

The project’s main objective was to foster a meaningful exchange between the youth of Kosovo and Serbia, going beyond mere dialogue. It aimed to create well-informed, active citizens in both countries, addressing the ethnocentric narratives that fuel hatred and hinder democracy. Through film and audio-visual content, the project-initiated dialogues on human rights, raised awareness, and increased media literacy, thus deconstructing social stereotypes and prejudices.

A key element of the project was the development of participants’ skills in critically analyzing media and audio-visual narratives, with a focus on tolerance, dealing with the past, and countering hate speech. This approach aimed to strengthen their awareness and resistance to ethnocentric media narratives.

The results of the project were impressive. It engaged 78 participants in exchange programs. The initiative produced over 140 visual portraits, displayed through six exhibitions. More than 60 students acquired skills in filmmaking, focusing on themes like identity, sexual identity, gender equality, and inter-ethnic relations. These efforts culminated in six 10-minute stories assembled in an Omnibus film.

The project also involved analyzing events through media narratives and hosting six exhibitions showcasing the outcomes. A significant milestone will be the launch of an online joint platform in January 2024, which will feature 100 two-minute stories, representing the culmination of the project’s efforts in fostering dialogue, understanding, and inclusivity among the youth of Kosovo and Serbia.



**Funded by  
the European Union**

# KOSOVO INNOVATION SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION PROJECT +

**SUPPORTED BY THE DUTCH EMBASSY  
YEAR: 2023-2024**

The “Kosovo Innovation Social Transformation Project Plus,” funded by the Dutch Embassy in Kosovo (MATRA Funds) and in partnership with the Kosovo Education Centre, embarked on a mission in 2023 to foster reconciliation, civic engagement, and prevent radicalization and violent extremism among youth. The project emphasizes digital literacy as a means to combat hate speech and promote inclusivity, underscoring the importance of dialogue on inequality, human rights, and democratic values.

The initiative’s primary goal is to create collaborative spaces and forums for teenagers from various ethnic backgrounds, where they can engage in discussions and exchanges to address fake news and disinformation. This involves elaborating on inclusive community strategies, enhancing digital literacy, and equipping educators and community leaders with the skills to guide youth in resisting extremist narratives.

In 2023, the project’s activities took place across 12 cities in Kosovo, including Prizren, Mitrovica, Gjilan, and others. A significant component was the DokuKids Summer School, where students and teachers from across Kosovo came together to discern truth from falsehood in the digital landscape. This year’s theme emphasized storytelling as a transformative tool, with students creating films and participating in workshops focused on fake news, digital literacy, and ethical online behavior.

Additionally, workshops on the use of audio-visual tools in teaching were conducted. These workshops, involving educators from 12 partner schools, focused on documentary film integration into the pre-university education curriculum. Educators like Feride Thaqi shared methodologies for using documentary films in classrooms, emphasizing the development of didactic materials and the benefits of incorporating films into teaching.

Participants were introduced to the Teacher’s Digital Library, a resource with over 150 educational films and accompanying worksheets. The library supports the development of democratic values and social understanding among students.

Overall, the Kosovo Innovation Social Transformation Project Plus in 2023 made significant strides in promoting digital literacy, fostering critical thinking, and equipping the youth with skills to engage constructively in society, thus contributing to the broader goal of social transformation and resilience in Kosovo.









# STORIES WE TELL

**SUPPORTED BY SMART BALKANS (NORWEGIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY)  
YEAR: 2023 – 2024**

In 2023, DokuFest launched the “STORIES WE TELL” project, supported by the Smart Balkans initiative of the Norwegian Foreign Ministry. This innovative program aims to promote intercultural understanding and creativity among Kosovo’s youth, focusing on the critical issues of misinformation, fake news, and stereotypes, particularly in the realms of inter-ethnic relations and gender equality.

The project, targeting young people aged 18-25 from various communities across Kosovo, is centered around the transformative intercultural camp, “Stories We Tell.” This initiative offers a dynamic platform for young individuals to engage in dialogues that transcend mere conversation, using documentaries to explore issues like inequality, human rights, and democratic values.

“STORIES WE TELL” features a series of seven-day intercultural camps across different cities in Kosovo, including Prizren, Gjakovë, Pejë, and Prishtina. These camps are designed not just as learning experiences but as journeys, facilitating cultural exchanges and broadening participants’ horizons. During these camps, participants create video portraits and interviews, capturing their evolving perceptions and experiences. This creative process is aimed at fostering empathy and understanding among youth from diverse backgrounds.

The culmination of these efforts is showcased in curated exhibitions during DokuFest, where the participants’ works are displayed, amplifying their creative voices and perspectives. Additionally, the project includes the production of an Omnibus – a 30-minute compilation documenting the camps and exhibitions, offering a comprehensive view of the project’s impact.

“STORIES WE TELL” represents a significant step towards nurturing a generation of Kosovo’s youth who are not only culturally aware and empathetic but also skilled in using creative mediums to express themselves and challenge societal narratives. Through this project, DokuFest continues its mission of using film and audio-visual tools to build bridges of understanding and dialogue, contributing to a more inclusive and cohesive society.



# CONNECTING DOTS: EXPLORING SHARED FILM HERITAGE

SUPPORTED BY THE “CULTURE AND CREATIVITY FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS” (CC4WBS) PROJECT  
YEAR: 2023-2024



In this groundbreaking initiative for 2023-2024, DokuFest and BelDocs Film Festival, key players in the documentary film scene in the Western Balkans, have joined forces in the “Connecting Dots: Exploring Shared Film Heritage” project. Supported by the European Union through the British Council, this strategic partnership delves into the rich tapestry of cinema history in the Yugoslav countries from 1912 to 1999, a period marked by significant shifts in the film industry and cultural landscapes.

The project seeks to unearth and document the evolution of cinema during this era, paying particular attention to the film repertoire of “Bistrica” Cinema. By analyzing these films, the project aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the socio-cultural and political dynamics of the time. This exploration is not just a retrospective journey; it’s a mission to preserve a vital cultural heritage and enhance the understanding of cinema’s role in shaping societal narratives.

In its initial phase, the project commenced with a kick-off meeting and planning session, bringing together key stakeholders from Serbia, including representatives from the Yugoslav Film Archive. This meeting

was crucial in laying the groundwork for the project, particularly in establishing the Terms of Reference for the call for researchers. These researchers, once selected, will embark on a residency program in 2024 to delve into the shared film heritage, contributing significantly to the project’s goals.

The project also emphasizes effective communication and anticipates challenges, adapting its activities to the socio-political context. For instance, the decision to minimize physical activities in Serbia during December, considering the elections and holiday season, reflects a thoughtful approach to implementing the project.

“Connecting Dots” is more than a historical exploration; it’s a cultural odyssey that promises to enhance cultural understanding, preserve heritage, and empower communities through representation. By exploring the shared film history, the project seeks to foster a greater appreciation of the cinematic arts and their impact on society, making it a pivotal initiative in the cultural landscape of the Western Balkans.













# GENERAL SUPPORT

**SUPPORTED BY ROCKEFELLER BROTHERS FUND  
YEAR: 2020 – 2023**

From 2020 to 2023, the General Support from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF) played a crucial role in our operational framework.

This assistance was instrumental in covering our day-to-day operational expenses, thereby granting us the necessary flexibility to strategically allocate our resources in support of our core mission and organizational priorities.

The financial stability and flexibility afforded by the RBF support were important in addressing essential operating costs, ensuring the sustainability of our mission-driven endeavors. Importantly, this funding allowed our organization to concentrate on executing impactful programs, unimpeded by the usual constraints of funding limitations.



# FERTILE GROUND

**SUPPORTED BY PRINCE CLAUS FUND  
YEAR: 2023 – 2024**

DokuFest, has launched “Fertile Ground,” a project extended into 2024 with support from the Prince Claus Fund. This initiative uniquely integrates an artist residency with the ‘Future is Here’ film school and the ‘Connecting Dots’ project, creating a rich tapestry of artistic collaboration and educational enhancement.

This project aims to bring these emerging artists into close collaboration with local cultural practitioners and students. It focuses on themes pivotal to contemporary discourse, such as free expression, gender equality, and environmental issues.

Furthermore, depending on their expertise, the artists are invited to contribute to the artistic program of DokuFest’s nine-day festival.

“Fertile Ground” represents a commitment to fostering sustainable partnerships and intercultural exchange, contributing significantly to the development of nonfiction storytelling in the Western Balkans. It’s a project that stands testament to DokuFest’s role in nurturing the next generation of artists and storytellers.



Prince Claus Fund for  
Culture and Development

In the next five years, DokuFest aims to significantly enhance its influence in the film industry, among other areas. The five-year strategic plan, developed with inputs from staff, board members, volunteers, audiences, donors, and other key stakeholders, positions DokuFest as a cultural hub that promotes diversity and inclusivity in cinema.

The plan centers around two main programs: the Festival program and DokuLab. Focusing on the cinematic arts, both programs are dedicated to community engagement, talent development, sustainability, cultural dialogue, environmental responsibility, and digital innovation.



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