

October 14, 2026

To the Members of the European Council

Open Letter: Short Film Coalition Opposes the Proposed Cuts to AgoraEU

The Short Film Coalition strongly opposes the proposed cuts to AgoraEU set out in the Irish Presidency's negotiating box for the EU's 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), published on 10 October 2026.

Under the proposal, funding for AgoraEU, the future EU programme for culture, media and democracy, would fall from the European Commission's proposed €8.6 billion to €6 billion in current prices – a 30% cut, almost four times greater than the overall proposed budget reduction of 8%.

AgoraEU supports organisations and spaces that bring people together across territories, enabling them to make their voices heard and participate in society with equal opportunities and without discrimination. **AgoraEU has the power to help fulfil the EU's democratic promise through artistic and media freedom, culture and the active participation of people living in the EU.**

Culture and the audiovisual sector, including the short film industry, play a vital role in strengthening democracy, fostering critical thinking and promoting European values. Beyond their contribution to broader political and societal objectives, culture and artistic expression are fundamental public goods, reflecting Europe's cultural diversity, democratic identity and creative freedom. **Access to culture, engagement with audiovisual media and opportunities for young people from different backgrounds and European countries to exchange ideas are fundamental to an open, inclusive and pluralistic European society.**

Through talent development, film education, support for emerging filmmakers, international collaboration, film festivals and audience development, particularly among children and young people, our sector creates opportunities for diverse voices to be heard and different perspectives to be shared. **The proposed cuts to AgoraEU would seriously threaten the sustainability of these initiatives, particularly those run by smaller and independent organisations, and reduce opportunities for emerging talent, cultural participation and access to diverse European stories.** They would also risk reinforcing existing geographical inequalities in access to professional development, production opportunities and international markets, while weakening the interconnected networks and infrastructures through which new European talent and stories emerge. **The consequences would extend far beyond the cultural and audiovisual industries, weakening the civil society organisations, cross-border networks and democratic spaces that help build an informed, engaged and resilient European society.**

AgoraEU strengthens democratic resilience, information integrity, social cohesion and local empowerment by supporting culture, media, rights and civic participation – all essential to Europe's sovereignty, competitiveness and innovation. Yet a strong European cultural and audiovisual sector also depends on the ability of people from different backgrounds and regions not only to access culture, but to create it, shape it and participate in the structures through which it is developed, produced and shared. Sustained investment in independent organisations, emerging talent and interconnected infrastructures is essential to ensuring that Europe's cultural and audiovisual future reflects the full diversity of its people and regions. These are not secondary priorities, but fundamental investments in Europe's future.

We therefore call on EU Member States to reject the proposed disproportionate cuts and maintain at least the European Commission's proposed budget of €8.6 billion, recognising AgoraEU as critical infrastructure for Europe's collective future. The programme must be established as a stable, coherent and sufficiently ambitious framework, with adequate and accessible funding to support cultural and audiovisual organisations, independent media and civil society across all European regions. In particular, its cultural and audiovisual strands must safeguard the independent organisations, talent development initiatives, festivals and cross-border networks that enable new generations of European filmmakers and audiences to participate in and contribute to Europe's cultural future. **Investing in culture, creativity and democratic participation means investing in Europe's resilience, security and shared values throughout 2028-2034 and beyond.**

Yours sincerely,

Short Film Coalition:

European Short Film Industry Summit
European Network for Film Discourse (END)
European Short Film Network (ESFN)
Short Film Conference
AG Kurzfilm - German Short Film Association
CineSud
Clermont-Ferrand Int' Short Film Festival & Market
European Short Pitch (ESP)
Baltic Pitching Forum & Lithuanian Shorts
Friss Hús Budapest ISFF & Fresh Meet Market
Italian Short Film Center & ShorTO Film Market
Riga International Film Festival
FILMFEST DRESDEN - International Short Film Festival

Signatory organisations (16.10.2026):

AG Animationsfilm
Animation Production Days
Animest Bucharest International Animation Film Festival
Brussels Short Film Festival
CEE Animation
connecting cottbus
CPH:DOX - Copenhagen International Documentary Film Festival
DocsBarcelona International Documentary Film Festival
DOK Leipzig
exground filmfest
F.A.M.E. Film and Audiovisual Markets in Europe
FeKK - Ljubljana Short Film Festival
Filmboard Karlsruhe e. V.
Filmfestival Max Ophüls Preis
Filmfestival Münster
Go Short - International Short Film Festival Nijmegen
IDFA
ifs Internationale Filmschule Köln
Institute of Documentary Film
INTERFILM International Short Film Festival Berlin
International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival
International Short Film Festival Oberhausen
JEF - youth network for film and games
KUKI Young Short Film Festival Berlin
Kurzfilm Agentur Hamburg
Kurzfilm Festival Hamburg
Literaturbrücke Berlin e.V./ Haus für Poesie
MakeDox- International Documentary Film Festival
Porto/Post/Doc: Film & Media Festival
Regensburg International Short Film Week
Sarajevo Film Festival
The Norwegian International Film Festival / New Nordic Films
Thessaloniki International Film Festival
Uppsala Short Film Festival
VIENNA SHORTS International Short Film Festival
When East Meets West
Young Horizons Industry