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July - August, 2025



Hellenic Film &
Audiovisual Center
Creative Greece



CIFEJ COSMOS

PERIODICAL PUBLICATION

OF THE INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF FILMS FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE.



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01

CIFEJ

FIRST WORD

I. President's Foreword

II. Greetings



President's Foreword

Jitendra Mishra

President of CIFEJ



Jitendra Mishra, President of CIFEJ

Jitendra Mishra is an acclaimed Indian film producer and director, Festival Director of Smile International Film Festival for Children & Youth (SIFFCY). He is a promoter of children's and youth cinema globally, and has also served as former Goodwill Ambassador of CIFEJ.

**Dear Friends and Changemakers,
Warm greetings !**

Today, we witness a world that is increasingly fragile for children—shaped by digital overload, misinformation, isolation, and mental health challenges. War and displacement have stolen the innocence of millions. These realities demand more than sympathy—they call for empathy, action, and empowering platforms that heal and uplift.

In this landscape, film could be a force of resilience. It fosters empathy, preserves culture, and gives young people the tools to understand their world. Through stories, we can heal, empower, and inspire. CIFEJ stands as a global platform committed to this cause. Our mission is to use film and media to amplify unheard voices, promote media literacy, and build bridges across cultures.

As we move forward, our vision is bold and clear:

- **Reach the Unreached** – Extending our reach to ensure that every child, no matter their circumstance, can access empowering media literacy.
- **Innovate Boldly** – Design meaningful, research-driven programs for the digital age.
- **Forge Global Alliances** – Partner with global changemakers to scale our impact.
- **Empower Youth** – Support young people to lead, create, and inspire.

CIFEJ is more than just an organization—it is a movement for change. With your continued support, we can create lasting impact and a future shaped by empathy, inclusion, and hope.

A Special Note to My CIFEJ Family: As I begin this new chapter as President of CIFEJ, I'm deeply honored and grateful. Being elected unopposed reflects the trust and unity we share. Over the past decade, through several initiatives like SIFFCY and CINEMA4GOOD, we've amplified youth voices. Purposeful media is a mirror, a bridge, and a catalyst for change. Your faith inspires my continued commitment to lead with integrity and compassion.

As we move forward, I do so with immense hope—knowing that together, we will continue to inspire, to innovate, and to build a world where every child's voice is heard and valued.

Message from Athina Rikaki

CIFEJ Honorary President



Athina Rikaki, CIFEJ Honorary President

Athina Rikaki is a retired educator and children's media producer from Drama, Greece. She has been a leading figure in the field of youth media globally. She has served as president of the European Children's Television Centre and of CIFEJ, where she still holds the title of honorary president.

With great joy and renewed commitment, we welcome this first edition of the upgraded CIFEJ publication, following the relocation of our headquarters to Athens, Greece.

This transition marks a new chapter in the life of our organization, after 14 productive years in Tehran. Athens—a crossroads of cultures, education, and creativity—offers a fertile ground for CIFEJ to deepen its mission and form new paths in promoting quality audiovisual and film content for children and young audiences worldwide.

This move also presents a timely opportunity to strengthen the foundational bond between CIFEJ and UNESCO. Let us not forget that CIFEJ was founded in 1955 under the auspices of UNESCO, and today, this historical relationship feels more pertinent than ever. With the registration of CIFEJ to UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Alliance, we see a significant convergence of goals: promoting critical thinking, cultural diversity, media inclusion and ethical responsibility, and above all, safeguarding children's rights in the media space.

CIFEJ is uniquely positioned to serve as a bridge between creators, educators, and policy-makers. From Athens, we will be working to expand our outreach, host training programs, and support filmmakers, with a vision grounded in empathy, ethics, and artistic excellence. As we face the evolving challenges of media in a digital era, our orientation remains clear: children deserve narratives that empower, educate, and inspire.

In this effort, I invite our members, partners, and like-minded organizations like UNESCO, to walk alongside us. Together we can shape a global media culture that respects every child's voice and story.

01

Greetings from Leonidas Christopoulos

CEO of EKKOMED



Leonidas Christopoulos, CEO of EKKOMED

Leonidas Christopoulos has served as Secretary General for Digital Governance and Simplification of Procedures at Greece's Ministry of Digital Governance from 2019 to 2023. In this role, he oversaw significant reforms, including enhancements to the audiovisual cash rebate scheme.

As we move further into 2025, I am proud to see CIFEJ entering a new and exciting phase—one grounded in tradition, but boldly reaching into the future. Our shared vision is clear: to establish CIFEJ as a global driver of youth-centered film innovation, education, and industry development—anchored now in Greece, a country with a deep-rooted cultural narrative and a rapidly evolving audiovisual landscape.

The relocation of CIFEJ's headquarters to Greece marks more than a symbolic shift. It reflects a shared commitment to rebranding and repositioning children's media as a strategic pillar of the global creative industries, while also enhancing Greece's standing as a cultural and audiovisual hub. We are here to co-design policies that elevate children and youth film production—a genre still strikingly underrepresented across Europe. In Southeast Europe alone, only 17 out of more than 1,000 films produced over five years targeted younger audiences. Greece is ready to reverse this trend.

We also believe that film education is central to building a screenwise, media-literate generation. Our recent animation-based education program engaged over 50,000 children and 1,000 educators—proof of the impact structured, inclusive media literacy can have. With CIFEJ's expertise, we aim to scale this model internationally. In an era of rapid digital transformation, our focus is not fear but embracing innovation. From storytelling and character design to immersive educational experiences, we view AI and emerging technologies as powerful creative allies—when employed ethically and inclusively.

Let this newsletter serve not only as an update—but as a call to action. We invite all members of the CIFEJ family to collaborate, share, and shape together a more connected, creative, and youth-centered future for children's media.

01

Address from Vassilis C. Karamitsanis

CIFEJ Secretary General



**Vassilis C. Karamitsanis,
CIFEJ Secretary General**

Vassilis C. Karamitsanis is a Greek attorney-at-law, President of ANIMASYROS International Animation Festival. A prominent voice in Greek and international animation, he has also served as President of ASIFA HELLAS (Hellenic Animation Association) and former President of CIFEJ.

Dear friends,

It is with a deep sense of responsibility that we initiated the CIFEJ Headquarters transfer to Athens. The decision to relocate to Athens is no coincidence. This city, with its rich cultural heritage and timeless role as a bridge between civilizations, offers an ideal meeting point for creators, educators, and institutions worldwide who are devoted to advancing and enriching audiovisual content for children and young audiences. Situated at the heart of the Mediterranean and within the core of the European Union, Greece is now the place where the CIFEJ family's global vision will take root and flourish.

The future ahead is full of challenges but also extraordinary opportunities. Our aim is to foster the production of high-quality works that inspire, educate, and entertain younger generations, ensuring that children across the globe have access to content that respects their rights, nurtures their imagination, and reflects the diversity of the world they inhabit.

From Athens, we look forward to building new bridges of collaboration, amplifying voices, and empowering professionals dedicated to shaping a better audiovisual landscape for children and young people everywhere.

Together, let us reimagine the possibilities for a brighter, more inclusive future in children's media.

02

CIFEJ

Voices of Vision:

Women in CIFEJ Leadership (2025-2027)



Women in CIFEJ Leadership (2025-2027)

The continued strength and relevance of CIFEJ in the global landscape of children's media is due in no small part to the exceptional dedication and leadership of the women who currently serve within the organization. Whether in executive roles, editorial work, educational initiatives, or international collaboration, these women embody the values of CIFEJ with professionalism, vision, and a deep commitment to children's development through meaningful media. This tribute is a recognition of their inspiring presence, and the impact they make every day in advancing CIFEJ's mission worldwide.

Honoring the women of CIFEJ

**— leading with vision, heart, and dedication
to children's media worldwide.**

Vice President of CIFEJ (2025-2027)



Head of DEI
(Diversity – Equality – Inclusion)

Emma Pendiuc is a Romanian media professional, sociologist, film producer, and certified mindset mentor, known for her significant work in children's media and education. With over 20 years of experience in television and film, she has dedicated much of her career to empowering young audiences through storytelling, creative education, and personal development.

Emma is the co-founder of the LITTLE STARS Children's Film and Television School, launched in 2010 with her sister Ariana. Together, they have produced over 50 educational short films starring children—many of which have been selected at prestigious international festivals, including Cannes. The school equips children with on-camera skills, media literacy, and self-confidence, while promoting values like teamwork and creativity.

She currently serves as Vice President of CIFEJ — a position she has held twice before—where she contributes to global initiatives that use film as a tool for youth education and cultural development.

Passionate about personal development, Emma is also a certified Proctor Gallagher Institute consultant and the creator of transformative programs like “Camera Loves You”, which helps professionals become confident speakers, and “Thinking Into Results”, a mindset coaching program designed for long-term success. She is also the founder of “The Road to Success” conferences—a free national initiative focused on mental and nutritional well-being for teachers, parents, and students.

A Word from Emma

“It has been 13 years since I have been here, in this loving family of CIFEJ, and I have made it both my duty and personal mission to serve you – and by ‘you’ I mean not only the children, but also the professionals in this field. In the next two years, I am dedicated to bringing balance, harmony and professionalism to the CIFEJ Board and our entire CIFEJ community.”

02

Irene Andriopoulou

Executive Director of CIFEJ (2025–2027)



CIFEJ Executive Director

Irene Andriopoulou has been appointed Executive Director of CIFEJ for 2025–2027. With over 20 years of experience as a media and film literacy expert, she brings deep commitment to the promotion of high-quality content for children and the advancement of film education worldwide.

She is currently the Director of Creative Hub GR, the newly established innovation, education, and technology hub of the Hellenic Film and Audiovisual Center—EKKOMED, the Greek host organization. Through her longstanding work as a policy analyst, researcher, and educator in media and culture, Irene has consistently repositioned film literacy as the aesthetic core of media literacy—an engaging form of edutainment that nurtures “screenwise spectators” from early childhood through lifelong learning.

A passionate global advocate, Irene served as Secretary General of the International Steering Committee for UNESCO Media & Information Literacy Alliance (2019–2022) and continues to serve as an EU expert on media literacy and digital skills, championing critical media identity within the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs).

A devoted film lover since her student years, Irene has a special place in her heart for European alternative cinema—though she never says no to a classic Hollywood film. Favorite films: 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968), Hitchcock’s filmography, and The Lobster (2017), for the uniquely unsettling touch of fellow Greek, Yorgos Lanthimos.

A Word from Irene

“At the helm of CIFEJ, I embrace its timeless mission with renewed passion: to champion meaningful media for children, foster screen education, and elevate professional training in youth cinema—through innovation, creativity, and global connection.”

Board member of CIFEJ (2025-2027)**CIFEJ Head of Internal Communication**

Elham Shirvani is an Iranian educator and media advocate with a deep-rooted commitment to children and language education. With an academic background in Educational Management, she has spent over two decades shaping educational practices for children and young adults in Iran.

From 2003 to 2014, Elham served in various roles at the Iran Language Institute, beginning as an English teacher and advancing to Manager of the first children's branch, Educational Supervisor, and later Regional Supervisor for 10 provinces. Her work significantly contributed to improving teaching strategies and the quality of language education for children and adults.

Elham held the position of Executive Director of CIFEJ from 2013 to 2024, and also served as the Managing Editor of CIFEJ Info Magazine during the same period. Based on her extensive experience with the organization, she is now responsible for the department of 'Internal communication', a role including the supervision of CIFEJ publications.

She has also participated as a jury member in numerous international children's film festivals in Japan, India, Spain, Ukraine, Germany, and Iran.

In addition to her editorial and managerial work, Elham has conducted research in early childhood development and translated multiple educational books between English and Persian, further advancing access to knowledge and cross-cultural learning.

A Word from Elham

"The reason I participated in the election of the current Board of CIFEJ was because of having always worked with children and adolescents, in various ways, and with a deep passion in my heart towards them, both during my studies and during my work. Now I would like to combine the experience I have gained with this love and use it to help strengthen our CIFEJ community."

Board member of CIFEJ (2025-2027)**CIFEJ Head of Media & Digital Strategy**

Paméla Bisson is a media arts artist, producer, filmmaker based in Quebec city in Canada. She creates content for the Web in the name of Pammy Poppins and is now in charge of Social media content for CIFEJ.

In 2015, she founded Le Machin Club, a non profit organization which produces media quality content with and for youth with the goal of empowering youth, locally and globally, through the power of creativity to become active citizens in their community. Since 2018, she has been hosting a weekly cultural radio show with children. She believes in children's right of expression so she seizes every opportunity to make space for them.

Her latest projects involve the production of: a series of videos relating to education to climate change, a short live action film adapted from a comic book series and an intergenerational short documentary film about the purpose of celebrating Quebec culture.

A Word from Paméla

"I deeply believe in the CIFEJ mission and I feel proud to be elected on its board. Children's good cinema is an outstanding tool to federate empathy towards difference and diversity. I wish for our organization to keep on sharing its values across the globe to build bridges and peace."

03

CIFEJ

Make Sure to Read it:

I. CIFEJ May Symposium Report

--Irene Andriopoulou , CIFEJ Executive Director &
Director Creative Hub GR, EKKOMED
--Katerina Virvidaki , CIFEJ Athens HQ Coordinator



03

1st International CIFEJ Symposium

Athens, 2025

I. The 1st International CIFEJ Symposium successfully held in Athens: A new era for children's and youth cinema begins

The **1st International Symposium of the International Centre of Films for Children and Young People (CIFEJ)** was successfully held on **Monday, May 5, 2025**, in a large auditorium at the European Parliament Office in Athens. The event was co-organized by **CIFEJ** and the **Hellenic Film and Audiovisual Center - EKKOMED**.

Under the title **“Storytelling through Kids & Media: Audience development across regional, national and cultural borders for future generations”**, the event marked the official launch of CIFEJ's new headquarters in Athens, after 14 years of presence in Tehran, and initiated **a new chapter of international cooperation in the field of children's and youth audiovisual content**.

The event hosted globally recognized guests from Europe, the USA, Canada, India, Iran, South Africa, and other countries. Representatives of UNESCO, the European Children's Film Association (ECFA), as well as members of the CIFEJ Board of Directors, were also present. The purpose of the event has been to bring together key stakeholders and lead practitioners promoting children's and youth film on the global stage, by showcasing their extensive and critical work in the field.





11:00-12:30



Monday,
05 May, 2025



Liaison Office of the
European Parliament in Greece

ROUND TABLE 1

“Why Greece? Why Now?
The International
Role of CIFEJ and
Best Practices for
Audience Development”

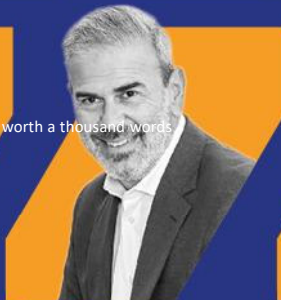
moderator



Irene
ANDRIOPOULOU



Firdoze
BULBULIA



Dimitris
FRAGAKIS



Alton
GRIZZLE



Athena
KARTALOU



Nitendra
MISHRA



Jerzy
MOSZKOWICZ



Pantelis
PANTEOLOGLOU



Elham
SHIRVANI

The Symposium was structured around two Round Table discussions.

The first Round Table, coordinated by Irene Andriopoulou, touched on the topic of **Why Greece? Why now?** exploring the momentum of bringing CIFEJ to Greece and Europe, after 14 years of operation in Tehran, Iran.

This marked a new era, where commitment to boosting and expanding quality media production, promoting and developing film education and professional training in **Children's and Youth Cinema**, are renewed under an innovative and extrovert prism. Greece is now the host country of CIFEJ with its new HQ in Athens coordinated by the Hellenic Film and Audiovisual Center - EKKOMED, signaling a big step into children and youth film production for the first time the Mediterranean region and back to Europe, after its launch by UNESCO in 1955 in Edinburgh. It is indeed noteworthy to revisit the first aims and scopes of CIFEJ being the promotion and empowerment of youth through “screen education”, in response to heavy film propaganda in the post-war society, back in the day.

The decision for moving CIFEJ to Greece was the outcome of long - term negotiations of the between the **Hellenic Ministry of Culture** and the Minister herself, **Dr. Lina Mendoni**, the persistence of our founding member of **CIFEJ**, **grandma Athina Rikaki**, the vision of **Leonidas Christopoulos**, **CEO of the Hellenic Film and Audiovisual Center** as host organization, and **CIFEJ's previous Board** and **KANOON organization** in Iran.



11:00-12:30



Monday,
05 May, 2025



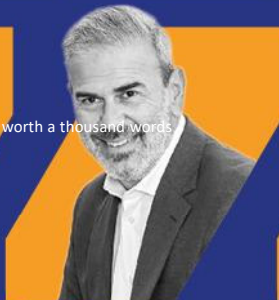
Liaison Office of the
European Parliament in Greece

ROUND TABLE 1

“Why Greece? Why Now?
The International
Role of CIFEJ and
Best Practices for
Audience Development”



Firdoze
BULBULIA



Dimitris
FRAGAKIS



Alton
GRIZZLE



Athena
KARTALOU



moderator
Irene
ANDRIOPOULOU



Nitendra
MISHRA



Jerzy
MOSZKOWICZ



Pantelis
PANTEOLOGLOU



Elham
SHIRVANI

There could not have been a better timing for this since a new era for Greece's engagement in the CCIs is launched, due to the new Law 5153/2024, that established H.F.A.C. - EKKOMED, as the new uber actor in the CCIs for Greece and global stakeholder. In this context, Greece stands in the crossroads between Europe and the rest of the world in promoting a coherent national policy for the fields of audiovisual, film and culture, as well as in the CCIs to highlight a modern cultural identity, notably through the use of new technologies and innovative media.

The panel elaborated on the perspectives, challenges and potentials from the new Athens HQ that coincided with the re-branding of CIFEJ as global key actor in the field, staying close to the original premise that was the definition of a clearing house with focus on the cultural and educational needs of young people, on the one hand, and on the requirements of professional groups and the CCIs industry, on the other.

Find the relevant Press Release

[here.](#)

ROUND TABLE 2

“Future Challenges
and Prospects for
Quality Content and
Children and Media”



Paméla
BISSON



Calliope
CHARALAMBOUS



Sherri Hope
CULVER



Doros
DEMETRIOU



Katerina
VIRVIDAKI

moderator



Hideo
DEBRIES



Matthaios
FRANTZESKAKIS



Anis
LASSOUED



Ema
PENDIUČ



Gabriella
TRIANAFYLLIS

The **second Round Table**, coordinated by **Katerina Virvidaki**, focused on **Future Challenges and Prospects for Quality Content in Children's Media**, where participants explored the need to rethink the ways through which, educational practices as well as the film and media industries at large, engage young audiences with meaningful, imaginative, and socially relevant storytelling.

A recurring theme referred to the need to combine creativity and criticality—an approach that not only inspires children through captivating, fun narratives, but also encourages them to reflect on the world around them.

Best practices for engaging children and youth with quality film content could also prioritize the value of authenticity, ensuring that stories genuinely reflect the lived experiences of young viewers. Importantly, when it comes to empowering children to create their own films, the emphasis should be placed on the process itself (rather than focusing solely on the final product), thus allowing children to cultivate a deeper and more personal connection to media, as a form of communication and cultural participation.

A discussion around the values which come into play when considering the ethical and cultural responsibilities of Festival programming and curation, finally underscored the conversation.

03

1st International CIFEJ Symposium

Athens, 2025

Ultimately, the successful hosting of the **1st International CIFEJ Symposium in Athens** signaled a crucial moment for the future of children's and youth cinema on a global scale. With its new base in Greece, **CIFEJ enters a dynamic phase of creative renewal, policy alignment, and international collaboration.** The thought-provoking discussions and diverse global participation reaffirmed the importance of fostering media literacy, cultural authenticity, and storytelling that genuinely resonates with young audiences. As the organization moves forward, it strives to become a central force in shaping inclusive, educational, and imaginative content for new generations.

The **Minister of Culture of Greece, Dr. Lina Mendoni**, in her remote greeting, described the symposium as "a landmark and highly promising beginning," emphasizing the significance of CIFEJ's relocation to Greece. The Minister referred to cinema as a powerful tool for shaping social consciousness, especially among younger generations, and acknowledged Greece's contribution to the global cultural scene. She expressed warm thanks to all involved, and to **Athina Rikaki**, honorary president of CIFEJ, for her decisive role in making this vision a reality.

The **CEO of EKKOMED, Leonidas Christopoulos**, emphasized the importance of this new, hopeful chapter for CIFEJ in Athens, especially in today's turbulent international context. He noted that the relocation was the result of collective effort and reaffirmed EKKOMED's commitment to acting as a reliable partner in advancing innovative policies and content in the field of children's and youth cinema.

Mr. Vassilis C. Karamitsanis, Secretary General of CIFEJ and President of ANIMASYROS, described the event as a historic moment for children's and youth cinema in Greece. He further highlighted that the efforts of **Minister Lina Mendoni** and **Athina Rikaki** to promote the strategic positioning of children's audiovisual content are now becoming a tangible reality, thanks to the united forces of CIFEJ and EKKOMED – Creative Greece.

As the national host organization, **EKKOMED** and **CIFEJ**, through the trust it has placed in the Greek film community, are jointly opening a new channel of dialogue, exchange, and collaboration.

The event was held with the support of the **Ministry of Culture** and the **European Parliament Office** in Greece.

03

CIFEJ

Make Sure to Read it:

II. Presentation of EKKOMED as the new hosting organization of CIFEJ

-- Efi Palli, Communications & International Relations, Creative Hub GR, EKKOMED

II. Shaping the Future of Culture, Innovation and Audiovisual Policy

The Hellenic Film & Audiovisual Center–EKKOMED is the national institution, supervised by the Ministry of Culture, responsible for shaping and supporting Greece's film, audiovisual, and broader Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs). With a comprehensive and future-focused mandate, EKKOMED serves as a strategic hub for policy design, international promotion, and sustainable development across the cultural and creative sectors.

Its mission is to strengthen and protect the Greek audiovisual and creative ecosystem, while actively promoting its presence on the global stage. EKKOMED supports both domestic growth and international investment in the film and media industries, fostering a competitive and outward-looking environment for creators, professionals, and institutions alike.

Innovation is at the core of its strategic orientation. The organization encourages the integration of new digital technologies across all stages of audiovisual production and distribution and advances the use of modern digital tools for the promotion of Greek cultural content. EKKOMED also supports research and development across these fields, ensuring that Greece remains at the forefront of creative innovation.

To this end, the organization is committed to education and professional development, designing training programs that respond to technological advances and promote audiovisual and media literacy for the next generation of creators and audiences. One of the key priorities of EKKOMED is fostering cultural exchange and professional dialogue at both European and international levels. In this spirit, the organization recently hosted the 1st International CIFEJ Symposium in Athens, marking a milestone in the global conversation on film for children and youth. Held under the umbrella of EKKOMED, the host organization of new CIFEJ HQs in Athens, the symposium brought together leading professionals, educators, and institutions to shape a new, inclusive vision for young audiences in the cultural and creative industries.

II. Shaping the Future of Culture, Innovation and Audiovisual Policy

Reflecting on the significance of this initiative, the **CEO of EKKOMED, Leonidas Christopoulos**, stated:

“The relocation of CIFEJ’s HQs to Athens from Tehran after 14 years is a great success for Greece and part of the broader strategy by the Ministry of Culture and EKKOMED to establish Greece a significant international key player in the film and audiovisual sector. Our organization is committed to supporting initiatives that empower young voices, foster creative literacy, and build sustainable cultural bridges between generations and across borders. We see this opportunity as the beginning of a long-term strategy: building policies with real social and educational impact and connecting our local creative community with international networks that share the same vision for a more inclusive and thoughtful audiovisual world.”



Official website [here](#)



As an advisory partner to the Greek government, EKKOMED contributes to the design, implementation, and international promotion of national policy for the audiovisual and creative sectors, with the goal of positioning Greece as a dynamic force in the global cultural landscape.



04

CIFEJ

CIFEJ Global Footprints:

**Report on Cannes, Kristiansand and GIFFONI Film
Festivals**

– Jitendra Mishra, CIFEJ President

Report on Cannes, Kristiansand and GIFFONI Film Festivals



Jitendra Mishra, President of the International Centre of Films for Children and Young People – CIFEJ, had a strong and impactful presence at three major international film events in 2025 so far: the 78th Annual Cannes Film Festival and Marché du Film (May 13–24), the Kristiansand International Children's Film Festival in Norway (May 7–10), as well as the 55th GIFFONI Film Festival in Italy (July 17-23).

At **Cannes 2025**, CIFEJ harnessed the potential of the festival's dynamic global platform to enhance its brand visibility and strengthen its international network. With Cannes constituting a strategic meeting point for film professionals, Mr. Mishra worked on advancing the organization's mission and values, by focusing on the promotion of thought leadership, as well as on the elaboration of new partnerships and global outreach to potential new members.



**Where dialogue sparks opportunity,
Every conversation opens a door...**

Report on Cannes, Kristiansand and GIFFONI Film Festivals

A significant milestone during the Cannes visit was Mishra's representation of CIFEJ at the **Roundtable for International Film Festivals & Markets**, held at the **Bharat Pavilion on May 14**. This high-level engagement provided a critical opportunity for dialogue and knowledge exchange among global film institutions. Over the ten days, CIFEJ held **30+ one-on-one meetings**, participated in **10+ forums** and conferences, and reached over **10,000 people** across social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, presenting substantial growth in online engagement and visibility. Mr. Mishra also participated in collaborative discussions with representatives at the Greek Pavilion, exploring joint initiatives and future projects, aimed at empowering young filmmakers and promoting children's cinema worldwide.

Apart from Cannes, Mishra also participated in the **Kristiansand International Children's Film Festival in Norway (May 7–10)** and the **55th GIFFONI Film Festival in Italy (July 17-23)** where he explored new avenues for cooperation, exchange, and creative development. Both events, known for their focus on young audiences, aligned with CIFEJ's mission and allowed Mr. Mishra to further cement the organization's commitment to building a diverse and rich ecosystem for children's media and storytelling.

Together, these international participations underscored CIFEJ's growing outreach, expanding the organization's footprint across the world and laying the groundwork for international partnerships for the future.



05

CIFEJ REPORT

CIFEJ

HQ Transfer, New Board & Our New Task Forces

-- Elham Shirvani, CIFEJ Board member
-- Katerina Virvidaki, CIFEJ Athens HQ Coordinator

The Transfer of CIFEJ HQ from Tehran to Athens, and the New Board of CIFEJ

Following the proposal presented by CIFEJ Honorary President, Athina Rikaki, to the Board of Directors in mid-2024, the members of the Board, after several meetings of careful consideration, and in accordance with the Statutes of the organization, decided to move the Headquarters of CIFEJ from Tehran, Iran to Athens, Greece.

The organization hosting the new HQ, would be the Hellenic Film & Audiovisual Center – EKKOMED.

In alignment with CIFEJ's global mission to foster intercultural dialogue and support inclusive storytelling for young audiences, the decision to transfer the HQ, reflects CIFEJ's ongoing commitment to cultural diversity and operational adaptability, positioning the organization within a historically rich and internationally connected city that underscores the organization's dedication to global partnerships in children's media.

The decision was communicated to the members of CIFEJ at the extraordinary meeting of the General Assembly held on September 13, 2024.

The elections of the new Board of Directors, postponed until the HQ transfer was complete, were finally held online, through the ElectionBuddy platform, on March 23, 2025.

After the new Board was convened, the latter appointed Mr. Vassilis Karamitsanis as CIFEJ Secretary General and Ms. Irene Andriopoulou as CIFEJ Executive Director.

Learn more [here](#).

05

CIFEJ REPORT

The Transfer of CIFEJ HQ from Tehran to Athens, and the New Board of CIFEJ

The elected President and Board members for the
current GA 2025-2027 are as below:

**CIFEJ
BOARD**

2025-27



PRESIDENT
JITENDRA
MISHRA



VICE-PRESIDENT
EMMA
PENDIUC



SECRETARY GENERAL
VASSILIS
KARAMITSANIS



TREASURER
DOROS
DEMETRIOU



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
IRENE
ANDRIOPOULOU



DIRECTOR
PAMÉLA
BISSON



DIRECTOR
HUANG
JUN



DIRECTOR
ANIS
LASSOUED



DIRECTOR
ELHAM
SHIRVANI



DIRECTOR
MITSUO
TAHIRA



International
Centre of Films
for Children and
Young people,
formed under the
auspices of
UNESCO in 1955

**President: Jitendra Mishra
(India)**

**Vice President: Emma Pendiuc
(Romania)**

**Secretary General: Vassilis C. Karamitsanis
(Greece)**

Executive Director: Irene Andriopoulou (Greece)

**Treasurer: Doros Demetriou
(Cyprus)**

Board of Directors:

**Pamela Bisson
(Canada)**

**Huang Jun
(China)**

**Anis Lassoued
(Tunisia)**

**Elham Shirvani
(Iran)**

**Mitsuo Tahira
(Japan)**

Following the decision of the online Board meeting held on 25 April 2025, Michael Harbauer was appointed CIFEJ Goodwill Ambassador.

Following the decision of the first online Board meeting held on 28 March 2025, Katerina Virvidaki was appointed CIFEJ Athens HQ Coordinator.

Learn more [here](#).

Our New Task Forces



In a move to reinforce its operational effectiveness and global outreach, the newly elected Board of CIFEJ has adopted a structural initiative based on a suggestion outlined by the President, Jitendra Mishra: under this new framework, each Board member will lead a designated task force or department, coordinating the relevant activities under their specialized responsibility.

The task forces are established to streamline CIFEJ's strategic operations, by assigning focused leadership to key functional areas, ensuring more accountability, agile decision-making and targeted action across the organization. By empowering individual Board members with focused areas of responsibility, CIFEJ aims to enhance both its internal coordination and its impact on the international stage.

Areas of Focus

Internal Communication (includes Publications, Newsletter, HR initiatives, Members engagements)

Head: Elham Shirvani

Media & Digital Strategy (External Communication, including Website and Social Media)

Head: Pamela Bisson

Workshops and CIFEJ Days

Head: Anis Lassoued

Media Literacy & Education

Head: Mitsuo Tahira

Diversity – Equality – Inclusion (including training and capacity building)

Head: Emma Pendiuc

Events (including Annual meetings)

Head: Huang Jun

Finance & Budget Oversight

Head: Doros Demetriou

06

CIFEJ

What Gift is Better than This?

Report on CIFEJ Prize Winner Films, 2024

-- Elham Shirvani, CIFEJ Board member
-- Katerina Virvidaki, CIFEJ Athens HQ Coordinator

06

The CIFEJ Prize

Celebrating Excellence and Cultural Understanding in Children's and Youth Cinema

Since its establishment, the CIFEJ Prize has stood as a widely respected international recognition in the field of children's and youth media. The prize honors films that not only demonstrate artistic excellence, but also uphold the core values of CIFEJ: promoting cultural understanding, respect for children's rights, and the power of storytelling to inspire, educate, and empower young audiences.

Each year, juries of international experts carefully select winning films from distinguished children's film festivals around the world. The awarded works reflect a deep sensitivity to the emotional and intellectual worlds of children, while encouraging imagination, empathy, and critical thinking.

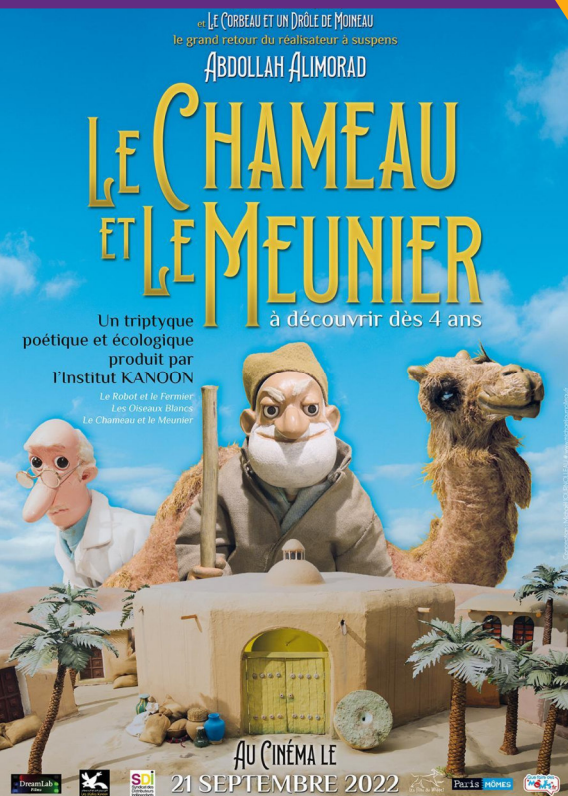
As we present the CIFEJ Prize-winning films of 2024, we celebrate the filmmakers whose work resonates with CIFEJ's mission and who contribute to a more thoughtful and compassionate world through the language of cinema.



06

The CIFEJ Prize

**Celebrating Excellence and Cultural Understanding
in Children's and Youth Cinema**



The Replacement

Original Title: Djaneshin

15m / Iran / 2021

Director: Abdollah Alimorad

Script: Abdollah Alimorad

Animators: Abdollah Alimorad,

Mohammad Rahim Bakhtiari

Producer: IIDCYA (Kanoon)

Awarded at:

13th Tehran International Animation Festival, 2024

Synopsis

The Replacement is a stop motion animated short depicting life in an old oil mill. When the mill's camel becomes ill and unable to turn the millstone, the miller installs a mechanical engine as its substitute. As the machine takes over the work, the sidelined camel reacts with jealousy—highlighting the tension between tradition and technology. Using rich stopmotion puppetry, the film evocatively examines how replacing natural, living labor with machinery affects relationships, emotions, and the soul of rural life.

About the Director

Abdollah Alimorad (b. November 22, 1947, Tehran) is a renowned Iranian animator, director, and screenwriter. A graduate of the Kanoon School of Animation, he has created numerous stop-motion films for children. His acclaimed works include *Bahador* (2001), which won the Grand Prix at Cannes Junior, and *The Replacement* (2022), which received the CIFEJ Prize at the Tehran International Animation Festival. Alimorad's films have garnered international recognition, with awards from festivals in Berlin, Cairo, and Russia.

06

The CIFEJ Prize

**Celebrating Excellence and Cultural Understanding
in Children's and Youth Cinema**



The Mountain

Original Title: Te Maunga

1h 29m / New Zealand / 2024

Director: Rachel House

Script: Tom Furniss, Rachel House

Producers: Desray Armstrong,

Morgan Waru, Carthew Neal, Taika

Waititi, Paul Wiegard, Kayleighsha

Wharton

Awarded at:

29th International Film Festival for Children and Young Audience SCHLINGEL, Germany, 2024

Synopsis

The Mountain is coming-of-age drama centered on Sam, a spirited young Māori girl living with cancer. Believing in the healing power of Taranaki Maunga—her ancestral mountain—Sam escapes the hospital to begin a journey of hope and reconnection. Along the way, she teams up with two misfit companions: Bronco, a bold boy steeped in Māori tradition, and Mallory, a quiet newcomer grieving his mother. Together, they navigate wild terrain and inner landscapes, forging bonds of friendship and courage. Set against the stunning backdrop of Aotearoa, the film beautifully explores themes of cultural identity, healing through nature, and the transformative power of connection.

About the Director

Rachel House (born October 20, 1971 in Auckland) is a celebrated New Zealand actress, director, screenwriter, and voice artist. A Toi Whakaari graduate, she made her feature-directing debut with *The Mountain* (2024), and is known for roles in *Whale Rider*, *Boy*, *Moana*, *Hunt for the Wilderpeople*, and *Heartbreak High*.

06

The CIFEJ Prize

**Celebrating Excellence and Cultural Understanding
in Children's and Youth Cinema**



My Wild Friend

Original Title: Moy Dikiy Drugd

1h 40m / Russia / 2024

Director: Anna Kurbatova

Script: Nadezhda Goncharova, Irina
Ilinskaya, Anna Kurbatova

Producers: Evgeniy Grigorev, Mikhail
Kolodyazhnyy, Mikhail Kurbatov

Awarded at:

36th International Film Festival for Children and Youth (ICFF), Isfahan, Iran, 2024

Synopsis

My Wild Friend tells the story of seventh-grader Sasha Menshikov, who is finishing the school year at a new school and lives with his aunt Nina in a small picturesque town. Sasha's mother, a famous scientist, brought him here from Moscow for the duration of her next expedition. Things didn't work out with Sasha's classmates; after school, he often walks alone in nature. One day in the forest, Sasha finds a little fox caught in a trap. Having learned that poachers are hunting for the fox cub, the boy hides him in a dugout deep in the forest and begins to nurse him. This begins a touching and adventurous story about friendship, responsibility and justice.

About the Director

Anna Kurbatova (b. January 6, 1983 in Moscow) is a Russian filmmaker—producer, director, screenwriter, and occasional actress. With credits on over 20 projects, she's best known for *My Wild Friend* (2024), *Additional Lesson* (2022), *Vne zony dostupa* (2021), and *Zhenu vyzyvali?* (2022).

06

The CIFEJ Prize

**Celebrating Excellence and Cultural Understanding
in Children's and Youth Cinema**



Icarus and the Minotaur

Original Title: Icare

1h 16m / Luxembourg, France, Belgium / 2022

Director: Carlo Vogele

Script: Carlo Vogele, Isabelle Andrivet

Producers: Nicolas Steil, JeanMichel Rey,

Fabrice Delville, Tanguy Dekeyser,

Laurent Derré, Katarzyna Ozga

Awarded at:

10th Smile Int'l Film Festival for Children & Youth (SIFFCY), India, 2024

Synopsis

Icarus and the Minotaur is an animated mythological adventure / drama film which tells the story of young Icarus who apprentices in his father Daedalus' sculpture workshop on Crete, and secretly befriends a gentle boy with a bull's head—Asterion, the Minotaur—hidden in King Minos's palace. Their bond is shattered when Minos imprisons Asterion deep in the labyrinth Daedalus built, and Icarus' trust in his father crumbles. When Prince Theseus arrives to slay the creature, Icarus makes a desperate attempt to save his friend. But a night of betrayal and tragedy forces him into a heartbreaking choice between light and darkness.

About the Director

Carlo Vogele is a Luxembourg-born animator and filmmaker trained at Gobelins and CalArts. He directed award-winning stop-motion shorts—For Sock's Sake, Una Furtiva Lagrima, Wurst—before his feature debut, Icare (Icarus and the Minotaur) in 2022. A former Pixar animator on Toy Story 3 and Brave, he now shapes poetic mythic tales.



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Credits

General Coordination

Vassilis C. Karamitsanis, CIFEJ Secretary General

Executive Director

Irene Andriopoulou, CIFEJ Executive Director, EKKOMED

Head of Publications

Elham Shirvani, CIFEJ Board member

Editor-in-Chief

Katerina Virvidaki, CIFEJ Athens HQ Coordinator, EKKOMED

Visual design and content editing

Eleni Kaskoura, Communications Manager, EKKOMED



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Photo by Alexander Dummer, courtesy of Pexels



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