

10th European Film Festival announces lineup

The European Film Festival in South Africa celebrates its 10th edition from 12-22 October 2023 with an inspired lineup of 16 new award-winning films screening in Johannesburg and Cape Town, with a special programme in Durban. Featured countries are Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom and Ukraine, while the festival also features an African-European co-production film, set in Sudan.



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Filmmaker engagements, community centre and schools' programmes will deepen the festival's reach, while the countrywide online programme of free screenings will run concurrently during the festival. The festival will also present events at the Alliance Française in Eswatini (20-22 October) and Lesotho (20–29 October).

The European Union's Ambassador to South Africa, Sandra Kramer, said that "not only does the 2023 European Film Festival showcase some of the most acclaimed productions to have emerged from the film industries in the European Union and Europe, but the films provide thought-provoking perspectives on issues that are just as meaningful to South Africans as they are to people everywhere.

We hope this festival will strengthen connections between Europe and South Africa, and its immediate neighbours, Eswatini and Lesotho. May this festival stimulate discussion and new ideas around our shared experiences, hopes and dreams, as together we face our ever-changing world."

The festival theme this year is Transition, as the films offer a cinematic reflection of the transition people go through during our turbulent and fast-moving times.

As festival co-director and curator Peter Rorvik explains, “There can be numerous transitional moments in a lifetime; awakenings, re-awakenings, renewal of purpose, our self-understanding, of who we are, and our direction in life. Transition is, in essence, a response to change, a process of managing change, or making a change.

All these elements of transition feature prominently in the line-up of films on offer this year. The illuminating power of cinema transports us deeply into these experiences, milestones, growth points and turning points, which offer resonance with our own life journeys, and the shared life journeys of those around us”.

The films

The festival includes two films which were jointly awarded the Grand Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 2022:

From Italy

Set in the breath-taking Italian Alps, *The Eight Mountains* is a compelling character-driven drama directed by Charlotte Vandermeersch and Felix van Groeningen. Gorgeously shot, this film offers a deeply textured glimpse into the bonds of friendship, the journeys of self-discovery, and the relationship between humans and nature.

From Poland

The Oscar-nominated film *EO*, directed by the legendary Jerzy Skolimowski, is an innovatively-conceived road movie with a difference; it is seen almost entirely from a donkey’s perspective. This beguiling and often-harrowing tale of a donkey is both thrilling and empathetic, compelling us to see the world differently.

There are three films fresh from the most recent Cannes festival in May 2023:

From France

Anatomy of a Fall, astonishingly well-written and directed by Justine Triet, won the top prize at Cannes, the Palm d’Or. This part thorny family story, part whodunit, part courtroom drama puts marital power dynamics under the microscope. As *Time Out* magazine says, ‘This is a thriller of real psychological, intellectual and emotional depth.’

From the United Kingdom

In *The Old Oak*, veteran filmmaker Ken Loach has made an incisive social drama about an English village where there is anger, resentment and a lack of hope since the closing of the local mine. What more could go wrong for the world-weary townsfolk? That’s when the Syrian refugees move in....this will be a time of transition for everybody!

African-European collaboration in Sudan

Goodbye Julia is a six-country coproduction film (Sudan, Egypt, Germany, France, Sweden and Saudi-Arabia) and winner of the Cannes Film Festival’s prestigious Freedom Award. Directed by Mohamed Kordofani, *Goodbye Julia* tells of the friendship between two women who represent the complicated relationship and differences between northern and southern Sudanese communities at a time of intense upheaval and transition. South African cinematographer for the film, Pierre de Villiers, will present workshops at the festival.

Discovering and affirming one’s identity is not a straight-forward process for all, especially in relation to gender norms. As

evidenced by the following two films, this is all the more challenging for the very young who face enormous pressures as they attempt to find their place in the world, and within themselves:

From Spain

20,000 Species of Bees by Estibaliz Urresola Solaguren focuses on an 8-year-old child who asks “How come everyone knows who they are and I don’t?” Beautifully delivered, this richly textured chronicle of an 8-year-old’s gradual transitioning, and the effect it has on a family, is ultimately about tolerance and acceptance.

From Belgium

The Oscar nominated *Close* by Lukas Dhont has been winning major awards for its sensitive portrayal of how the pressures of masculinity shatter the innocent friendship of two 13-year old boys. *Close* is an emotionally transformative portrait of the intersection of friendship and love, identity and independence, heartbreak and healing, and of necessary transition.

Two films about responding to the unforeseen circumstances that sometimes surprise and challenge us:

From the Netherlands

In Martijn de Jong’s *Narcosis*, an adventurous, eccentric and fun father fails to resurface during a cave-dive, and we see how his family responds in unique but very relatable ways as they transition to new lives. This deeply touching story about love, loss and acceptance won four Golden Calf awards at the Netherlands Film Festival and was the Dutch submission to the Academy Awards.

From Germany

The smallest of decisions has seismic repercussions in *The Teachers' Lounge*. When a young teacher decides to investigate theft at her school things escalate dramatically, not how she intends. İlker Çatak’s film is about a lot of things — conformity, rebellion, racism, optics, and intergenerational mistrust. The film swept up the top prizes at this year’s German Film Awards, and has just been selected as Germany’s submission for next year’s Oscars.

Coming-of-age processes are integral to making transitions in life:

From Denmark

Will a dream dictate life or death? *As in Heaven*, by director Tea Lindeburg, takes place in turn-of-the-century rural Denmark, where a mother goes into a complicated labour, thereby accelerating the growing-up process for 14-year-old Lise, a process that can be bewildering as well as joyful. *As in Heaven* highlights woman-centred experiences that remain just as relevant today.

From Switzerland

Barbara Kulcsar’s feel-good comedy *Golden Years* shows that coming-of-age can come at any time. As a newly retired husband and wife discover, it’s never too late to find the courage to make a change in life. And growing old is certainly not for sissies! *Golden Years* was a breakout hit at the Swiss box office, ranking as the most successful Swiss feature film since the beginning of the pandemic.

New participants Bulgaria and Romania have films in the festival for the first time this year:

From Romania

Mikado, directed by Emanuel Pârvu, is a fast-paced drama about power dynamics in a Romanian family. Teenager Magda

offers her expensive necklace to a sick child, thereby creating conflict with her controlling father. A complicated situation develops where every action has consequences...

From Bulgaria

Inspired by a true and transformative story, Zornitsa Sophia's *Mother* starts out with a theatre director in Bulgaria struggling to come to terms with her inability to have a child, and progresses to her discovering a new and culturally challenging kind of motherhood in Kenya. The director Zornitsa Sophia will attend the festival accompanied by the remarkable artist and cultural activist Elena Panayotova, on whom the story is based.

Adding an exciting new dimension to the festival are two extraordinary animations:

From Ukraine

Carving a path to peace and a future beyond war, *Mavka - The Forest Song*, by directors Oleh Malamuzh and Oleksandra Ruban, is the highest-grossing Ukrainian film ever. Poignant and uplifting, this animated story touches on themes of love, trust, and the coexistence of two worlds: people and forest creatures, and the transformative power of music!

From Portugal

José Miguel Ribeiro's film *Nayola* brings us much closer to home. A painful secret, a reckless search, a combat rap-song, a suspended love, an initiatory journey - *Nayola* is about three generations of women plagued by the long civil war in Angola. Based on a play by José Eduardo Agualusa and Mia Couto, *Nayola* is bold and thrilling storytelling alive with eye-candy animation!

From the Czech Republic

Petr Václav's *Il Boemo (The Bohemian)* is a special treat for music lovers. Prolific 18th century composer Josef Mysliveček was admired by Mozart, but forgotten by history. This biopic includes Mysliveček's romantic dalliances, revealing backstage intrigue, and the colourful lifestyles of the era. Centrally of course, there is glorious music featuring some of the world's leading operatic soloists performing with the renowned Baroque Orchestra Collegium 1704.

The screenings

Screenings take place at Ster-Kinekor's The Zone in Johannesburg, and The Labia in Cape Town. Each film will screen once. Ster-Kinekor Gateway in Durban will present a limited programme of films not available in the online streaming.

The European Film Festival 2023 is a partnership project of the European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC), the Delegation of the European Union to South Africa and the participating European embassies of Belgium, Bulgaria, The Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Switzerland and Ukraine; as well as the cultural agencies of British Council, Camoes Institute of Portugal, Diplomatic Representation of Flanders, French Institute in South Africa, Goethe-Institut and Italian Cultural Institute.

The festival is organised in cooperation with Cineuropa, supported by Ster Kinekor, The Labia and coordinated by Creative WorkZone.

The special programmes in Eswatini and Lesotho are organised in partnership with the Delegations of the European Union to the Kingdoms of Eswatini and Lesotho respectively, and the Alliance française in Maseru and Mbabane.

For more, go to www.eurofilmfest.co.za.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>