



Policy Brief

January 2024

Engagement and Inclusion of Young People in the European Film Industry

Katharine Sarikakis (UNIVIE), Angeliki Chatziefrimidou (UNIVIE),
Gentiana Ramadani (UNIVIE), and Janina Juengst (UNIVIE)



REBOOT (www.thereboot-project.eu) has received funding from European Union's Horizon Europe Research and Innovation programme under Grant Agreement No. 101094769.



Who is this aimed at

Relevant to the European Film Industry:

- EU and national Policymakers
- Government and local Authorities
- Industry Stakeholders
- Educational institutions
- Youth organisations

Key messages

- Young people are the future of creativity and innovation in the European Creative Industries; their perspectives and talents have the potential to rejuvenate and reshape the European film industry (EFI). The involvement of youth in the EFI is not only beneficial, but also crucial for ensuring relevance and dynamism of the EFI in storytelling.
- Spaces, systems and measures in developing the competitiveness of EFI should include provisions for young filmmakers to experiment independently, so that youth's diverse living experience and perspectives find authentic expression and validation.
- Pre-industry initiatives aim to educate emerging media creators in collaborative creativity across diverse backgrounds to challenge established norms within the industry. These initiatives play a pivotal role in nurturing emerging talent, providing young creators with spaces to experiment, develop skills, demonstrate creativity, and develop networks. These programmes must be strengthened to encourage creative collaboration among young people from diverse and non socioeconomic dominant backgrounds who can challenge and redefine industry norms.
- Systematically engaging young people in decision-making processes governing the EFI, ensures that content remains relevant, youth participate in political and civic education, and the EFI creates spaces that resonate with young people's multifaceted interests and values. This can ensure a more robust and future-oriented development of the sector.

Introduction

The European audiovisual industries, including EFI, need reinforcement to enhance young people's competitiveness in the global market (Mitric & Sarikakis, 2016). As we navigate the evolving landscape of media and entertainment, there is a growing recognition of the untapped potential and perspectives



REBOOT (www.thereboot-project.eu) has received funding from European Union's Horizon Europe Research and Innovation programme under Grant Agreement No. 101094769.



that youth brings to the table. Engaging young people in the film industry is not merely about diversifying the talent pool, but also about rejuvenating storytelling, fostering innovation, and challenging the conventional norms that have shaped the industry for decades (Sarikakis, Ramadani & Juengst, forthcoming). The EFI is faced with the challenge of directly including young talent in relevant policies. Youth represent an important part of the audience (British Film Institute “BFI”, 2018) and its future consumer base and it is necessary to consider and respond to their interests and needs. Promoting a proactive approach that encourages young people’s participation, including in decision-making, is essential.

Additionally, encouraging education and interest for the film industry from an early age is crucial to sustaining and growing the industry not only as an audience, but also as young, aspiring professionals in the field. Therefore, pre-industry initiatives have a distinct advantage in training emerging media creators to collaborate creatively across diverse backgrounds, challenging the existing norms of the industry. A pre-industry programme is understood as an advanced stage of development in higher education initiatives aimed at professionally instructing students in media production. Characterised by a collaborative relationship between educational institutions and various media industries, such programmes typically encompass film, radio, and television. The focus is on preparing students for future roles in the media sector by providing comprehensive training and practical experiences that bridge the gap between academic learning and industry demands (Banks, 2019).

This policy brief explores the ways in which empowering youth as catalysts in the EFI, emphasising pre-industry programmes and strategies to lower entry barriers, can support and ensure a commercially vibrant and socially inclusive future of the film industry.

Statement of the problem

In the 2000s, European Union (EU) institutions undertook a series of initiatives to enhance audiovisual policies (EC, 2012; EC, 2013), specifically focussing on the film and media industry in Europe (EP and CoE. 2014). With a particular focus on the film sector, evaluation criteria for state aid for the production of films and other audiovisual works were developed in 2001, emphasising economic considerations, primarily (EC, 2013). The European Commission's policies predominantly reflect the classic model of economic development, often overlooking cultural and creative growth. Historically, there is a noticeable omission regarding the inclusion of young people as creators and leaders in the film sector. To understand the role of young people in the broader policies of European institutions concerning the film sector, it is essential first to examine the weight European Commission assigns to policies for this



community and the ways in which influential stakeholders in the EFI perceive, interpret, and address the challenges associated with market transformation, particularly regarding young individuals as upcoming collaborators in the industry.

Recent research points to the untapped potential within Europe concerning the engagement of young individuals with the EFI. In 2021, a study encompassing 937 young people across eight European nations, found a predominant trend among youth, as they overwhelmingly opt for consuming movies at home through personal devices and a discernible preference for U.S. American film productions over their European counterparts (Soto-Sanfiel et al., 2021). These findings point to the need for heightened efforts in promoting film literacy and educating young people about European heritage in the film industry. This includes the need to address and help reshape the attitudes of young individuals towards European films, particularly regarding their role as an important audience demographic (BFI, 2018), emphasising the necessity to cultivate a greater appreciation and interaction with local cinematic creations (Soto-Sanfiel et al., 2021). Moreover, these indications point to the need to inspire, include and enthuse young people about the possibilities and potential of European filmmaking. A persisting challenge, which needs to be addressed, is the lack of educational opportunities, as current education systems do not prioritise learning and understanding film for young people. This deficiency remains, despite differences between countries and educational institutions, highlighting the need for a Europe-wide, transnational approach to film education (BFI, 2012). Furthermore, there is an urgent need for greater awareness of the preferences of the younger demographic. While factors, such as sound and image quality, ticket prices, and sanitary conditions influence cinema attendance (Tintel & Raats, 2022), a more in-depth understanding of young communities is essential. Research into young people's cinema habits across eight different European countries has raised concerns and shown that youth's interest in cinema is decreasing compared to previous years (Soto-Sanfiel et al., 2021), with going to the cinema being a sporadic and not a preferred activity (Veenstra, 2017). Cinema going is a financial burden for young people and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has made young people reluctant to return to traditional cinema experiences (Tintel & Raats, 2022).

Moreover, addressing young people as aspiring professionals within the film industry, reveals several challenges that hinder their participation in this field. A notable issue is the lack of stimulation of interest, where the absence of structured programmes in the European curriculum leaves emerging professionals without the necessary experience of producer roles in relevant projects (McSheaffrey, 2020). This deficiency not only affects the development of youth's technical skills, but also the promotion of their creativity, resulting in a lack of active involvement of young people in film production (McSheaffrey, 2020).

Additionally, another significant obstacle is the lack of opportunities for young people to enter the industry. While European policies provide for workplace safety for youth, there is a gap in enabling entry into the industry, forcing young professionals to both obscurity and precarity. Limited



opportunities to establish themselves professionally in the film industry further exacerbate the problem, as young people encounter obstacles in receiving adequate work assignments and compensation for their roles as directors, screenwriter and audiovisual authors (Willekens et al., 2019).

The film industry has the potential to foster a transformative space, especially for young filmmakers to engage in socio-political discourses by using their cinematic creations as an opportunity for advocacy and change. These developments, which include various advanced film tools, serve not only as instruments for artistic creation, but also as powerful mediums for social activism and personal expression (Sarikakis, Ramadani & Juengst, forthcoming), facilitated by new ways of distributions, enabling direct audience interaction by triggering discussions about politically relevant themes. Enabling young people to create films about their own views and experiences is essential for future development (Cybart-Persenaire & Literat, 2018). This includes not only the development of skills such as collaboration, but also the promotion of self-expression and exploration, especially for diverse, marginalised and multilingual young people. In addition, this can help foster young people's political and civic development by using their own voice and recognising the power of that voice in civic spaces. By combining their personal and creative interests with public activism, young people can link political participation with filmmaking as a tool for expression.

As the narratives portrayed on our screens should represent the diverse fabric of our society, these narratives deeply influence self-perception, lifestyles, and perceptions of others. For many, the depictions offered by these industries serve as their primary or even sole representation, whether these portrayals are authentic or misleading.

The expansive scope and potential for growth within the film and media industries means that there appears to be a degree of exclusion of young people from the overarching narrative. However, European initiatives and practices funded by European resources offer a contrasting picture. Institutions are increasingly dedicated to promoting the film and media sector, with a specific emphasis on involving young individuals. Robust programmes, such as MEDIA 2007-14 and 2014-2020, operating within a broader framework supporting media industries, particularly film and television, are instrumental in this effort. Meanwhile, youth participates in a range of activities, including training programmes, collaborative ventures, festivals, and what is referred to as the pre-industry sector, providing young professionals with opportunities to develop skills and become proficient collaborators. Providing hope and an example towards the right direction, a recent illustration of the inclusion of young individuals in such programmes is the establishment of "The Future of European Film, co-created by Young People" within the European Film Awards Academy in November 2023. Throughout the year, the European Film Academy contributes in various activities that encompass film policy, economic factors, artistic endeavours, and training aspects. These activities involve conferences, seminars, and workshops, all aimed at bridging the gap between creativity and the industry.



Policy recommendations to empower youth as catalysts in the EFI

1. Make Youth-Centric Policy to address shortfalls in Europe's film sphere

The problems faced by young people in the EFI are multifaceted, encompassing structural limitations, financial constraints, and institutional barriers. To address these issues, it is crucial for the EU to proactively advocate for diversity, inclusion, and accurate representation within the industry. To reshape the landscape of the entertainment and film sector, the EU should champion diversity and inclusion by actively involving a varied group of storytellers, actors, directors, and producers. This approach creates a more equitable cultural environment and aligns with the EU's goal of maximising its cultural resources. By prioritising inclusive practices, the EU can foster innovation, creativity, and sustainable employment, particularly among the younger generation in the film industry. Given that the future development and sustainability of the industry hinge on the contributions of young individuals, *policies should be crafted to tap into youth's dedication, fostering creativity and nurturing a lasting interest in the European film industry.* It is imperative to initiate the establishment of a comprehensive policy framework dedicated to promoting enthusiasm for and appreciation of European films.

2. Enable involvement of young people in political decision-making

The *integration of young people into political discourse and decision-making* is of essential and future-orientated importance. It can offer innovative perspectives and approaches that are characterised by a deep familiarity with technological progress and social understanding of peers. Young people represent a multifaceted and globally connected and cosmopolitan worldview, which can ensure that political measures reflect a broad social spectrum and are geared towards long-term sustainability. Young people's engagement strengthens democratic structures and promotes social change, especially socio-cultural and political challenges. Engaging young individuals in the political process in the European film industry is therefore an investment in the development of future leaders and an adaptation of policy to the demands of a rapidly changing world governmental dynamics.

3. Create spaces for young filmmakers to experiment

Institutionalising youth development involves *creating and maintaining free spaces for experimental works primarily managed by youth themselves.* Funding, educational access, distribution, and other institutional decisions remain predominantly by adults and with their supervision. This future independence in artistic expression is crucial to ensure the authenticity and genuineness of young people's perspectives. This not only enables the work of young filmmakers to be seen more widely, but also promotes the engagement of young artists in cultural and social discourse. By providing young



people with this freedom and opportunities, the development of a diverse and dynamic film culture that integrates different voices and perspectives is supported.

4. Develop a Europe-wide approach to film education

Starting from the early stages of education, children should have the opportunity to learn and participate in meaningful discussions about movies in film clubs, delve into the processes of film production, and undertake different roles in making films in dedicated filmmaking projects. This involvement should be facilitated with the support and guidance of specialised educators. As children are growing, there is a need for options within secondary and tertiary *education that not only inspire interest but also qualify and teach young people to emerge as young professionals in all European countries.*

References

Banks, M. J. (2019) Film schools as pre-industry: Fostering creative collaboration and equity in media production programs. *Media Industries Journal*, 6(1), 73-93.

British Film Institute. (2012) *Screening literacy: Country Profiles*. Available in: https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/culture/library/studies/literacy-country-profiles_en.pdf

British Film Institute. (2018) *BFI Statistical Yearbook 2018* [Yearbook]. Available at: <https://www2.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/bfi-statistical-yearbook-2018.pdf>

Cybart-Persenaire, A., & Literat, I. (2018) Writing stories, rewriting identities: using journalism education and mobile technologies to empower marginalized high school students. *Learning, Media, and Technology*, 43(2), 181-196. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2018.1458736>

European Commission. (2012) *Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. First Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the application of Directive 2010/13/EU "Audiovisual Media Service Directive"*. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0203:FIN:EN:PDF>

European Commission. (2013) *Communication from the Commission on State aid for films and other audiovisual works*. Available at: <https://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2013:332:0001:0011:EN:PDF>



European Commission. (2013) *Green Paper. Preparing for a Fully Converged Audiovisual World: Growth, Creation and Values*. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52013DC0231>

European Parliament and the Council. (2018) *Directive (EU) 2018/1808 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 amending Directive 2010/13/EU on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive) in view of changing market realities*. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018L1808>

McSheaffrey, R. (2020) Exploring the aspirations of young people to work in the British film industry through comparative focus groups in London secondary schools. *Film Education Journal*, 3 (2), 175–90. Online. <https://doi.org/10.14324/FEJ.03.2.05>

Mitric, P., and Sarikakis, K. (2016) 'European cinema: Spectator- or spect-actor-driven policies'. In *The routledge companion to cinema and politics* edited by Y. Tzioumakis & C. Molloy, 421–431, London/New York: Routledge.

Sarikakis, K., Ramadani, G., and Juengst, J. And... Action! the politics of youth collectives shaping documentary film-making in Europe. In L. Dean, Z. Zhu, V. Kishore, T. W. Whyke, and R. Frenneaux (Eds.), *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Global Documentary and Cinematic Storytelling*. London: Palgrave. (forthcoming)

Soto-Sanfiel, M. T., Villegas-Simón, I. and Angulo-Brunet, A. (2021) Uses and consumption of cinema by European adolescents: a cross-cultural study. *Studies in European Cinema*, 18(2), 119-140.

Tintel, S. and Raats, T. (2022) Young Flemish audiences' cinema-going intentions and VOD streamed viewing practices during COVID-19. *Journal of Audience and Reception Studies*, 19(1), 124-148.

Veenstra, A. (2017) *Watching film: An account of contemporary film consumption preferences and practices amongst youth in Flanders aged 16 to 18*. Working Papers Film & TV Studies, CIMS-Centre for Cinema and Media Studies, Department of Communication Sciences, Ghent University, Ghent – Belgium. Available at: https://federationscreenwriters.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/EU-Audiovisual-Authors-remuneration-study-2019_FINAL.pdf

Willekens, M., Siongers, J., Pissens, L., and Lievens, J. (2019) *Behind the screens: European survey on the remuneration of audiovisual authors* (Report). Available at: https://federationscreenwriters.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/EU-Audiovisual-Authors-remuneration-study-2019_FINAL.pdf



Disclaimer

This document is part of the outputs of the Reviving, Boosting, Optimising and Transforming European Film Competitiveness - REBOOT project, which received funding from the Horizon Europe programme of the European Union under the Grant Agreement No. 101094769.

This policy brief does not reflect the views of the European Union or any of its agencies or bodies. The information included herein is the outcome of the scientific research conducted by the authors and reflects the views of the authors only.

Citation

Please cite this policy brief as follows:

Sarikakis, Katharine; Chatziefrimidou, Angeliki; Ramadani, Gentiana; Juengst, Janina (2024): *Engagement and Inclusion of Young People in the European Film Industry*. Developed by the Horizon Europe project REBOOT (Reviving, Boosting, Optimising and Transforming European Film Competitiveness – REBOOT), funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe Research and Innovation programme under Grant Agreement No. 101094769.

Authors

Prof. Dr. Katharine Sarikakis is a Professor of communication studies at the University of Vienna, where she has been a Professor since 2011 and director of the Media Governance and Industries Research Lab and held several international chairs.

Gentiana Ramadani is a PhD candidate at the University of Vienna and analyses in her dissertation the role of citizen participation in public service media considering the case studies of Austria, Germany and Greece.

Janina Juengst is a PhD candidate at the University of Vienna and dedicates her studies to exploring the variety of content, strengths and weaknesses within the European film sectors, examining the effectiveness of policies aimed at supporting film production.



Angeliki Chatziefrimidou is a PhD candidate at the University of Vienna and concentrates on the topic of internet privacy for children in Vienna, emphasising aspects related to media consumption, children's rights, and their protection online.

© 2024, REBOOT Consortium. This work is openly licensed via [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



REBOOT (www.thereboot-project.eu) has received funding from European Union's Horizon Europe Research and Innovation programme under Grant Agreement No. 101094769.

