

MANIFESTO

# WE LOVE THE BIG SCREEN



UNION INTERNATIONALE DES CINÉMAS  
INTERNATIONAL UNION OF CINEMAS

# The International Union of Cinemas

The International Union of Cinemas (UNIC) is the European trade body representing national cinema associations and key operators across 39 territories, covering over 43,000 screens.

UNIC promotes the cultural, social and economic benefits of a vibrant cinema-going culture in Europe and provides a strong voice for European cinema operators on issues of shared interest.

Cinema theatres are an essential component of Europe's cultural and creative fabric. They are local hubs of creativity, sharing and community and have incredibly positive effects on our local

economies, providing hundreds of thousands of jobs, in particular for young people.

The Big Screen is the gold standard for film viewing. The positive results for cinema admissions in the second half of 2021, following two years of crisis for the sector, amply illustrate the industry's resilience and the eagerness of European audiences to return to the cinema.

Like millions of cinema-goers across Europe, we love the Big Screen and very much look forward to a bright future for our industry.

## OUR KEY PRINCIPLES

### RELEASE WINDOWS

A 'window' of exclusivity for cinema operators is vital for the health of the film and cinema industry and a proven business model that ultimately benefits the entire film value chain, from financing, to marketing, to distribution throughout each film's life-cycle. It provides an opportunity for the widest possible audience to discover and enjoy as broad a range of film content as possible, offering unique cultural and social experiences and creating unparalleled excitement around releases.

Box office revenues in turn drive performance and audience awareness across all other platforms and markets, contributing significantly to the financing and diversity of European works and supporting European distributors and producers.

### TERRITORIALITY

It is crucial to preserve territoriality, to ensure that films are enabled to best reach their audiences in cinemas throughout Europe. Partners in distribution typically acquire rights for films on a territory-by-territory basis, taking into account an array of market specifics and regional differences. This practice represents a key component of film financing through creating value for the wider film sector and ensuring that films perform as well as they can. It also forms the basis of a robust copyright framework – to the benefit of both the industry and audiences alike.

### FILM THEFT

Film theft remains the biggest threat to the well-being of the film and cinema sector. Illegal film viewing deprives cinema operators, film distributors, producers and creators of important revenues and reduces the possibility of further investment and growth. It endangers the diversity as well as the competitiveness of European cinema, putting much-needed jobs for millions of Europeans working in the creative industries at risk. For all of these reasons, it is now more necessary than ever to ensure the enforcement of intellectual property rights and that copyright infringements are prevented. All intermediaries must contribute equally to this endeavour and take action in the fight against illegal online content.

€ 8.8  
billion  
box office  
in 2019

Best results  
in 30 years

590  
million  
admissions  
in 2021

-56%  
from 2019

+38%  
from 2020

39.7%  
European  
films'  
market share  
in the EU  
in 2020

## THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE EUROPEAN CINEMA INDUSTRY AND THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

No one could have predicted the duration and the severity of the unprecedented social and economic challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. For two years, cinemas were required to remain closed for prolonged periods and, even when open, were often mandated to operate under safety measures that significantly restricted audience numbers.

While reports mostly focused on box office losses, they did not provide a full picture of the impact of COVID-19 on the sector. Cinema operators had to cover not just revenue losses but also significant fixed costs, including rent, energy bills and temporary leave compensation. The social impact of the pandemic on the industry was equally severe, threatening the livelihoods of the hundreds of thousands of dedicated staff members.

During this time, we witnessed the resilience of the film sector, its capacity to adapt to challenging circumstances and to kick-start its recovery process thanks to national re-opening campaigns and the support of local and European productions.

The broad range of support mechanisms that have been made available at EU and national level have also helped secure the future of the industry and as many jobs as possible within it.

Following a very challenging 2020, European cinema admissions in 2021 increased by an estimated 38 per cent, with over 590 million visits across the region. Box office reached an estimated €3.7 billion, an increase of 42 per cent on the previous year. This strong performance sent a clear signal that audiences were eager to return – especially if new films were available on the Big Screen.

The relevance and success of local European releases has never been clearer than during this period. In 2020 and 2021, national films' market shares were higher than normal across the region. Indeed, it is only with the support of local and international distributors that cinema operators will be able to confidently recover from this incomparable period of challenge. A strong and diverse film slate will be key to attracting audiences back to the Big Screen.

But the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the European cinema industry remains significant. Now is not the time for industry stakeholders and policy makers alike to ease those efforts aimed at ensuring the survival of local cinemas, whatever their size and location.

2022 will be a pivotal year. Leading industry analysts Gower Street Analytics forecast 55 per cent growth in global box office. UNIC members are confident that the cinema industry will come back stronger from this crisis, and that as before we will continue to enjoy films together, on the Big Screen.

For additional details on the impact of the pandemic on the European cinema industry, please consult the regularly updated UNIC research on the topic, available on the UNIC website [unic-cinemas.org](https://unic-cinemas.org)

Cinema is ...  
**CULTURE**  
**COMMUNITY**  
**INNOVATION**

# SUPPORT CINEMAS

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Cinemas must remain at the heart of policymakers' decision-making when it comes to the future of the European film industry. This includes clear recognition of the key principles on which cinemas rely – such as territoriality and theatrical exclusivity – and also the continuation of vital support schemes. It is only by bearing these in mind that the sector – along with the wider film value-chain it so fundamentally supports – can count on a bright future once we emerge fully from the pandemic. The way to achieve this is to focus on ensuring both sustainability for all stakeholders in the value chain, as well as the availability of films to the benefit of all audiences.

Let's meet again soon, in a cinema, and enjoy together the unique beauty of the Big Screen

## KEY AREAS OF INTEREST

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**Media and Audiovisual  
Action Plan**

**Territoriality of copyright**

**Rewarding investment**

**Audiovisual Media Services  
Directive (AVMSD)**

**Creative Europe Programme /  
MEDIA Programme**

**Recovery and Resilience Facility**

**Sustainability**

**Accessibility and inclusion**

**Music rights**

# GET IN TOUCH

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**COMING SOON**

**My Favourite Cinema**

A celebration of the Big Screen

STARRING EU POLICY MAKERS



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