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Film Education, European Integration. An Encounter in the Heart of Europe – International Film Festival for Young Audiences Filem'on 2018

The role of film education in shaping the sensitivity of a conscious recipient of culture has been noticed long ago and has become an important element of innovative paths of schooling, also in Poland. However, it seems that the greatest value is brought by initiatives that treat mature reflection about a popular medium as a kind of way to the different goals. The creators and organizers of FILEM'ON – the International Film Festival for Young Audiences in Brussels – share a similar principle. Last year's edition was the twelfth part of the youth meeting in the heart of Europe. In 2018, the international jury composed of 13 and 14-year-olds from Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Belgium was joined by representatives from Poland – eight jurors from the Wrocław Elementary School Szalom Alejchem, run by the Foundation HA.

Although the festival and the jury's deliberations took place in late October and early November, in fact events and activities integrating guests from different parts of Europe began much earlier – all members of the international jury were invited to take part in the MEET & GREET action, based on recording short, few seconds greeting clips. Youth had occasion to introduce themselves to the others, say a few words about their hobbies and countries where they come from. FILEM'ON was inaugurated on the Internet – the organizers showed great sensitivity to the communication channels and social media used by the youth; the festival ran its YouTube channel, Instagram account and fanpage on Facebook.

The rich program of residence in Brussels on October 19–November 3 could be divided into two categories: the first of them would be activities closely related to “hard skills”, film criticism workshops, participation in jury deliberations, selection of productions participating in the main competition and participation in non-competitive film screenings. The second group of tasks set for the participants involved shaping the „soft” and social skills related to integration with youth from other European countries.

FILEM'ON focuses on diversity, which can be seen in the the selection of films. Teenagers had the opportunity to see long and short films belonging

to various genres, including documentaries and animations. Already at the beginning of the festival, members of the jury were equipped with tools that would help in the professional analysis of all film genres. During the critics' workshops, the students learned about what elements of form and content they should pay attention to, how to motivate their assessment of the film, and above all – that their opinion matters and has a real impact on the results of the competition. Four productions took part in the main competition: *I Kill Giants* (directed by Anders Walker, 2017, Belgium, China, USA, Great Britain), a moving story of otherness, growing up and a thin border between imagination and the real world, *Cross My Heart* (dir. Luc Picard, 2017, Canada) a story about accelerated adolescence and facing adult problems. Among the candidates for the main award were also productions from Central Europe – the Czech film *Winter Flies* (directed by Olmo Omerzu), a variation on the theme of the classic road cinema. The fourth proposal and, as it turned out, the triumphant one, was based on the facts – the German film *Silent Revolution* (directed by Lars Kraume), describing the “silent” protest of high school graduates from the GDR caused by events in Hungary in 1956. The selection of the laureate of the main prize was associated with many hours of deliberations, first among the national jury, then with members from other countries. Each decision had to be motivated by a thorough justification – the last stage of the meeting was connected with working out a common standpoint and creating a single, general commentary:

We choose a film that shows that, when you make a decision without knowing the consequences it can effect your whole life. The film shows how people suffered from communism. The class showed loyalty to each each other. The film helps commemorate those that rebelled communism. The costumes helped to show that the film took place in the past. The characters were portrayed well by the actors. The camera work tied in with the emotions of the characters¹.

In addition to films taking part in the main competition, the program of the screenings included many other productions, followed by discussions and interviews with artists. Particularly noteworthy is the Turkish film *Never Leave Me* (directed by Aida Begic, 2017), showing the problem of migration of war in Syria and the Middle East from the perspective of a child.

Members of the jury also had the opportunity to visit all Brussels cinemas – from modern, focused on mainstream movie projections, to small studio cinemas, organized in post-industrial spaces, centers of alternative culture (for the Polish jury, a nice surprise was the fact that in majority of cinemas one of the most popular films was *Cold War* by Paweł Pawlikowski). The offer of work-

¹ https://www.facebook.com/filemonfestival/?__tn__=%2Cd%2CP-R&eid=ARDNUQm-hoLNmLZFMpO78xc7T81WZ01X9rajgnSkw38bSbs1gPbg5z2EOWxBTHG7tG-9bQTS12XtSxrXH. Justification of the verdict available on the official fanpage of FILEM'ON Festival (31.03.2020).

shops proposed by the organizers also included those that developed practical skills and creativity; during the workshops on creating stop-motion animation, jury members learned how to create their own animated film with the help of a simple program and any materials (plasticine, sand or pasta).

FILEM'ON is an event dedicated to children and youth, but above all – co-created by children and young people. Immediately after arriving in Brussels, the international jury was divided into four groups; each of them was to help in organizing the festival in some way, which required cooperation with young people from other countries. The task of the first group was to regularly report events on social media and make and assemble a summary video, displayed during the gala closing the festival. The second team dealt with the organization of the final farewell party for all the juries; they were required to arrange their budget, make purchases and prepare the room. The third group took part in an additional film screening and had to prepare themselves for a discussion with professionals, directors of chosen watched productions. The fourth team had definitely the most difficult task, requiring a lot of courage, control of stress and participation in rehearsals – the challenge was to co-lead the gala closing the festival.

The integrating activity was a walk through Brussels, organized by the Belgian jury and native inhabitants of the capital of Europe. Each group received a map with a point characteristic for the city and was obliged to take a group photo of it and return as soon as possible. Thanks to the hospitality of the hosts, the young jurors could experience another non-touristic side of Brussels, see this unique, multicultural city thorough the eyes of its residents. During FILEM'ON there was also the Night of Museums in Belgium, so the members of the jury also had the opportunity to participate in the cultural life of the European capital outside the festival. Polish group visited MIMA Gallery which presents a great collection of artistic posters.

The example of the FILEM'ON festival shows how, through film education, confront a young viewer with a high-artistic cinema, promoting the attitude of an open, conscious citizen of Europe among the youth. Crossing their own barriers has already begun at the language level – many students had to overcome their shyness and start using English, which, alongside French, was the official language of the festival. The sense of shared responsibility for organizing the whole event, exchanging impressions during the discussion, attempts to formulate precise comments in a foreign language and gathering new experiences constitute the extraordinary value of the festival. The youth returned from Brussels richer with new knowledge and skills, but above all, they gained something that can not be measured – courage and willingness to confront the Other.