

# VIENNA SHORTS

## WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE STAND FOR

### **Compliance Guidelines**

for a Fair and Sustainable International Film Festival

 Second Edition / January 2023

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## I. PREAMBLE

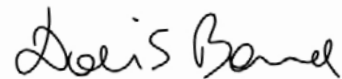
We regard life and cinema as inextricably linked: a result of time, experience and attitude that should be invariably challenged and celebrated—always with an eye on the past, which must not be forgotten, and on the present and the future, which must be fostered.

This intrinsically political and aesthetic approach interprets **cinema as an empathetic and utopian mirror of society**, and life as an adventurous and occasionally chaotic place that we want to build with confidence. Our festival thus takes an idiosyncratic position and will not be swept up in the mainstream.

A lot has happened in recent years: The amount of film productions has mushroomed; the ways in which movies are viewed have changed; life has become more diversified and adopted a faster pace. These are the developments a festival must address—not by chasing after fads but by taking a principled stance.

In our view, a festival must be **observant and inquisitive, sharp and incorruptible** in its selection, **rebellious and resilient** in its positions, without letting provocation and intervention deteriorate to a mere end in itself.

Organizing a festival takes dedication. Continuous, consistent, constant. And it requires trust. Trust from the team, the audience, and the filmmakers. But first and foremost, trust in the inextricability of life and cinema.



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Doris Bauer  
Festival Director & Executive  
VIENNA SHORTS



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## II. VIENNA SHORTS

VIENNA SHORTS is an international short film festival. The festival has taken place at several venues at the end of May/ beginning of June every year since 2004, and also online since 2020. It has drawn more than 10,000 visitors and about 500 accredited trade visitors.

Every year, VIENNA SHORTS shows between 250 and 350 short films from around the world in four competitions and curated programs. It is a qualifying festival for the Austrian Film Award, the British Academy Film Awards, the European Film Awards, and the Academy Awards®.

### A. FRAMEWORK

A short film festival is defined by the maximum run time of the films it presents, which can vary internationally between 20 and 60 minutes. VIENNA SHORTS bases its criteria on the European standard—i.e., films may not exceed a runtime of 30 minutes. Festivals often present the **most important analog platform** for short films, as they are rarely selected for regular theatrical release. By now, **the online market has also become a major factor**.

“In a distribution landscape that sees constant and long-term changes, film festivals have grown increasingly important in recent years. In light of the rising number of film productions all over the world, film festivals are often the only place where a film can find its audience. Their **temporal and spatial focus** allows film festivals to generate specific attention for cinema. Satellite activities (panel discussions or educational and ancillary programs) turn film festivals into events.” (Austrian Film Festival Report, 2016)

The VIENNA SHORTS festival is a member of the international **Short Film Conference (SFC)**<sup>1</sup> and the **Forum of Austrian Film Festivals (FÖFF)**<sup>2</sup> and complies with both these advocacy criteria for film festivals. Crucial for FÖFF are independence, non-profitability, self-determination, autonomy, contextualization, and professionalism, along with quantitative criteria (such as the number of films and the duration of the festival).

SFC defines a short film festival as “a **cultural event** that considers cinema and video as an art form and a film or a video as a work of art. A short film festival’s primary role is to present the state of the art within contemporary short film production as well as tendencies reflecting the current cultural, aesthetic, social and institutional trends.”

<sup>1</sup> The Short Film Conference has been in existence since 1970 as a non-profit association for the promotion of the short film. It has about ninety members.

<sup>2</sup> The Forum of Austrian Film Festivals has been in existence since 2012 as an association of Austrian film festivals. It has twentyfive members.



## B. STRUCTURE

**INDEPENDENT CINEMA** is a non-profit organization founded in 2003. Its goal is to present independent films and promote exceptional talent. To reach this objective, we have been organizing the annual short film festival VIENNA SHORTS since 2004. Furthermore, our association devotes its time the year round to various activities such as the organization of film screenings, film education programs, and the dissemination of short films by way of collaborating with different institutions.

The association is headquartered at **Q21 at MuseumsQuartier** in Vienna. It currently has more than 50 members, which make up the general assembly. The board, biennially elected by the general assembly, entrusts the two managers with managing the association's business. Management in turn represents the association externally and is in charge of its development.

Independent Cinema's activities are not limited to Austria but span the globe. It is represented in international cooperations and networks. As a coordinator, the association is part of the EU-sponsored **European Short Film Network (ESFN)**, which is dedicated to mutual support and better visibility of European short films on both an analog and a digital level, including with the streaming project **THIS IS SHORT**.

Furthermore, Independent Cinema is also part of the EU-sponsored **European Network for Film Discourse (The END)** and its platform for film criticism, Talking Shorts, as well as the **European Film Awards**, whose award procedure is devised by the European Film Academy in close cooperation with the participating festivals.



## C. CONTENT

VIENNA SHORTS focuses on the **short cinematic form in all its manifestations**: live action and documentary, animation and experimental film, music video and all kinds of hybrid formats. The program structure is divided into **five distinct sections**, comprising competitions, thematic programs, live formats, as well as industry and educational programs. Outside the competition, the festival focuses on the promotion and presentation of exceptional talent and influential artists with a distinctive style and remarkable creative vision.

For the official **SELECTION**, films are chosen from a pool of more than 5,000 submissions. The international section is divided into two parts: “Fiction & Documentary” focuses on live-action and documentary shorts, while “Animation Avantgarde” zeroes in on animation and experimental works. The national section honors films in the “Austrian Competition” and with the “Austrian Music Video Award.”

With the **EXPEDITIONS** we pursue the objective of creating a dialog among the films and programs. We also want to explore their contemporary as well as historical facets on the basis of different aspects, e.g. a theme, a genre, a region or an aesthetic approach.

Our **EXPANSION** line accommodates the immediate event character of each festival, placing a focus on live formats (audio-visual live performances, film concerts, virtual reality) that transcend the movie screen.

Our **INTERACTION** line, in turn, provides the suitable frame for educational programs and professional exchange to strengthen discursive investigations of filmic genres, working methods, and sociopolitical topics.

Our **ATTRACTIONS** celebrate the kind of festive events (opening and award galas, receptions, and parties) that provide a

frame for our festival—creating an atmosphere that is at once ceremonial and relaxed.



## III. PRINCIPLES FOR THE FESTIVAL

### OUR HIGHEST MAXIM: MAKE FILM CULTURE VISIBLE AND TANGIBLE.

At the heart of VIENNA SHORTS is the short film as an art form. We see our task in condensing experiences in and outside the movie theater, in presenting the new and letting viewers experience the old, and in making visible the thread that runs through it all. VIENNA SHORTS wants to create tension and spark people's imagination, kindle their curiosity, trigger discussions, in short: make people hungry for short films. Whether narrative or documentary films, animations or experiments: at VIENNA SHORTS, professionals and audiences come together to celebrate the short film as an art form—and to strike up a conversation.

### WE VIEW OURSELVES AS AN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL IN VIENNA.

VIENNA SHORTS is an international film festival based in Vienna. Being oriented and open toward an international audience is as important to us as fostering our strong relationship with regional institutions and players in the local industry. For our competitions we accept submissions from all countries; diversity is key in our selection process. All films are screened in their original language, with English subtitles. The festival's main language is German; the catalog and all submission documents are bilingual (German and English). The festival moderations are primarily in English so as not to exclude the international audience.

### WE VIEW OURSELVES AS A POLITICAL FILM FESTIVAL.

We take a clear political stance as a film festival that we not only represent to the outside world but also live internally as an organization. To be a political festival means to cement our fundamental attitude in our own actions. By its own statutes VIENNA SHORTS is independent of the public sector, churches, or political parties. It is also independent in its financial management, acting with transparency and accountability as a publicly subsidized institution. We oppose any kind of discrimination and profess fairness, antiracism, feminism, and core democratic values. We value personal and human rights and make decisions in relation to people based on factual considerations. We reject all forms of violence, intimidation, and mobbing. We view ourselves as an inclusive festival advocating accessibility for people with and without disabilities.



## **WE PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT.**

As festival organizers, we are aware of our responsibility with regard to the environment and our habitat's limited resources. We therefore pledge to include environmental sustainability in all our activities. An environmentally friendly event organization is an integral part of our work. This means not only adhering to the existing laws and regulations on environmental protection and sustainability but also avoiding the use of nonrenewable resources whenever possible. As holders of the Austrian Eco label, we follow the guidelines for green events, especially with regard to waste avoidance and disposal, the choice of our cooperation partners, and travel and accommodation. Expenses for filmmakers and industry guests are connected with environmentally responsible travel. If air travel is unavoidable, we will pay the corresponding carbon offset.

## **WE ARE COMMITTED TO DATA PROTECTION AND SECURITY.**

We strictly adhere to the VIENNA SHORTS privacy policy, the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and all applicable data protection laws. We treat personal, film-specific, and other data with great care and make sure that there is no infringement of personal rights and copyrights. Protecting these data and preventing data abuse are our highest priority. A special data security officer is appointed by the festival and the association.

## **WE ADHERE TO THE APPLICABLE LAWS AND INTERNAL REGULATIONS.**

Applicable laws and internal regulations must be obeyed. The same is true for the association's guidelines, such as statutes and compliance rules. Furthermore, VIENNA SHORTS obeys the Code of Ethics drafted by the Short Film Conference and the Film Charta of the Forum of Austrian Film Festivals. We vow to fulfill all the contracts and agreements we make. All taxes and dues are paid properly and in a timely manner.





## A. INTERACTION WITHIN THE TEAM

### **TEAM MEMBERS TREAT EACH OTHER WITH RESPECT AND WORK TOGETHER.**

We view festival work as a well-oiled team effort in which cooperation to reach a big goal and personal responsibility for one's own tasks interleave in a meaningful way. We pledge to treat each other with respect, trust, and appreciation, and to work at eye level. We support a creative and reliable working process, communicate regularly to exchange ideas, create spaces for open and honest dialog, and strengthen the team spirit. Working on a festival like VIENNA SHORTS can only lead to success if all the people involved pull together.

### **WE TAKE CARE OF OUR TEAM.**

VIENNA SHORTS makes sure we adhere to the legal requirements of workplace health and safety as well as the working time codes. Workplace safety for our team is just as important to us as fairness and legality. Though high stress levels and high standards are part and parcel of this line of work, our aim is to provide a sound work environment—with equal opportunities for all employees—and to support training opportunities as well as educational leave. To us, this involves the best possible work reintegration after parental or sick leaves.

### **WE ARE COMMITTED TO FAIR PAY AND SOCIAL SECURITY.**

Adhering to all regulations, laws, and norms of the Austrian Employment and Social Security Act is just as fundamental to our mission as fair pay and social security. As there are neither minimum wage regulations in Austria nor collective contracts in our sector, we base our system on the salary and wage plans of the Forum for Austrian Film Festivals. We thus pledge to avoid false self-employment in freelancers, to reject illegal employment, and to promote voluntary work by dedicated interns who support VIENNA SHORTS in compliance with the purposes of the association.



## **WE ARE ACTIVELY WORKING ON A SAFE WORK ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL.**

A line of work like ours, in which people work closely together over extended periods of time, it is important that all employees feel safe and protected in their work environment. So we are actively devoted to secure a professional environment that has no place for discrimination, mobbing, harassment, sexual misconduct, or violence. Should a conflict arise within the team or the association, two ombudspersons have been appointed to take on the function of a work council. They may be contacted with any problems within the team and offer support in cases of conflict. They are also the persons of trust when team members see their basic rights violated.

## **WE PROMOTE AUTONOMY AND TEAM PARTICIPATION.**

Especially considering the flat hierarchies within our organization, we think it essential for every member to be aware of their own responsibilities in the team and know how to facilitate the project's success. Autonomous thinking and work must therefore be promoted in the long term. Whoever works for the festival may also get involved in the association as a full member and thus help shape the course of Independent Cinema.

## **WE TREAT THE ASSOCIATION'S PROPERTY RESPONSIBLY.**

We and all team members treat the material and intangible property of VIENNA SHORTS and Independent Cinema with care and do not use it for private purposes. The equipment, tools, documents, e-mail accounts, online cloud services, and data provided to us to complete our tasks are the sole property of VIENNA SHORTS and Independent Cinema. We treat these assets and data responsibly and diligently and do not make inappropriate use of them. We will not accept negligent or deliberate misuse of this property.



## B. INTERACTION WITH FILMMAKERS

### **WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD THE FILMS AND THEIR AUTHORS.**

As a film festival in Vienna, VIENNA SHORTS is not only a place of presentation, reflection, and exchange dedicated to the short film in all its forms and appearances, but also part of an international film industry that has a responsibility toward the authors and their artistic work. Our decisions and actions must honor to this responsibility toward the filmmakers and artists with whom we work as well as the films we screen, evaluate, and select.

### **WE ABIDE BY OUR STATED SUBMISSION PROCESS.**

Our submission guidelines are clearly stated in the festival's rules of submission and terms of participation. Each submission will be viewed, registered, and evaluated by our screening team. All submitters will be informed about whether their films have been chosen or rejected. Respecting the copyright of each selected film, the copyright holder is asked to give a final participation confirmation after their film has been selected.

### **WE ABIDE BY OUR STATED SELECTION PROCESS.**

All films and directors of films selected for competition are treated equally, including with regard to the invitation to the festival as well as the quality and conditions of the screenings. In order for one representative of each film to attend the festival, we support them in terms of travel expenses and accommodation in Vienna. The films will be shown at least once publicly and made available to view for professionals in our online video library. Should the festival not be able to take place as an in-theater event due to regulatory or health-related requirements, we will work on a fair adaptation of the presentation in accordance with the copyright holders of the films.



## **AS A FESTIVAL WE ARE COMMITTED TO PAYING SCREENING FEES.**

As a festival we are well aware of our role in the distribution cycle and are completely committed to the payment of screening and licensing fees, independent of the form of presentation—whether in theaters or online. For films that are shown out of competition, we proactively offer to pay screening fees. It is our responsibility to obtain the screening rights. We will not show films whose rights we have not cleared or whose copyright holders have not given us permission to screen it.

## **WE RESPECT THE PREMIERE STATUS OF FILMS.**

There are no explicit rules for premieres at festivals. To guarantee that the audience and trade professionals are presented highly relevant films in the competition selection, we prioritize for the competition categories all films that haven't been shown online or in theaters in Austria prior to VIENNA SHORTS. The festival reserves the right to show films either not at all or—in case a film was screened in Vienna in the months leading up to the festival—out of competition. Conversely, we make sure that the selected films can adequately celebrate their premieres in the theater (including tickets reserved for film crew). If the film is screened online for trade and private audiences, we respect regional restrictions (geoblocking) so as not to jeopardize the film's premiere status of the film in other countries or regions.

## **THE SELECTION IS THE FESTIVAL'S DECISION ALONE.**

The festival's programmers and screening team are personalities who bring a lot of experience and expertise to the table. They work independently and make their decisions without external influences. Additionally, they write their own texts about the films, which everyone is free to use if proper mention is made of the author and the festival name. The selection of films for the competition rests with the respective heads of programming together with the festival directors. Should there be any conflict of interest (e.g., if a programmer played a pivotal role in the making of a film), the film in question will not be considered for the competition.



## **DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE FILM SELECTION IS CRUCIAL.**

The festival aims to provide gender-equal screen representation of filmmakers and their films in all competitions. We foster an awareness of the films' political contexts and production correlations. It is our professed concern to create gender-equal and diverse programming and to strengthen filmmakers identifying as female and underrepresented social groups in the film industry. The basic political attitude of VIENNA SHORTS must be reflected in the selected films.

## **AN INDEPENDENT JURY AWARDS THE BEST FILMS.**

Each competition's jury is made up of three industry professionals. Each jury is international, reflects gender diversity and the diversity of their respective discipline, and operates completely independently. Their expertise is given upon invitation. Jury decisions must be accepted by the festival and the participating organizations. Each prize is handed to the winner in a dependable and timely fashion, regardless of whether or not the director has attended the festival.

## **THE BEST POSSIBLE SCREENING CONDITIONS ARE OUR TOP PRIORITY.**

We respect the work of filmmakers and do our best to show the work in the best possible quality. For a theatrical screening, this means showing the film in its original version and original format, and in accordance with its technical requirements. This requires examining the quality of the screening copy, safeguarding that the film is insured in such a way as to cover all risks or possible damage of the copy/DCP between receiving and returning it, and realizing a screening that is as technically flawless as possible. For the online presentation in the video library (for accredited persons) or on the streaming platform, the festival doggedly pursues the goal of protecting the data in the best possible way and to prevent external access or abuse. Both online options can only be used after registration.



## C. INTERACTION WITH PARTNERS

### **WE TREAT OUR PARTNERS RESPONSIBLY AND WITH RESPECT.**

Responsibility and respect in our interactions are not just two fundamental principles of cooperation within our festival structure but also apply—as do lawfulness, honesty, reliability, and trust—to any public appearances and any cooperation with our partners: the filmmakers, the festival and industry partners, the audience as well as funding institutions, sponsors, and all other cooperation partners.

### **1. INDUSTRY**

#### **WE PROACTIVELY PROMOTE COMMUNICATION WITH AND AMONG INDUSTRY GUESTS.**

VIENNA SHORTS is a place of reflection and exchange, a place where the regional, national, and international film industry come together to network. Providing opportunities for professional visitors to meet and connect with each other and other festival guests is one of our main tasks as a film festival. Select industry professionals (including jury members, journalists, distributors, curators, festival organizers) are offered hotel accommodation or (partial) reimbursement of travel expenses for an environmentally friendly journey to the festival.

### **WE PUSH FOR LONG-TERM INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKS.**

Out of our conviction that collaboration always produces better results for festivals than going it alone, VIENNA SHORTS has focused on creating industry networks and entering international partnerships. These collaborations may concentrate on content, technologies, and form. They aim to represent mutual interests, protect one's own resources, and give short films wider circulation. Along with memberships in formal networks such as the Short Film Conference, IG Kultur, or the Forum of Austrian Film Festivals, VIENNA SHORTS is also part of the European Short Film Network (since 2018), the European Film Academy (since 2019), and the European Network of Film Discourse, the network behind the film criticism platform Talking Shorts (since 2020).



## **WE ACT AS AN AUSTRIAN CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FOR THE SHORT FILM.**

As an Austrian center of excellence for the short film, our association—operating under the brand VIENNA SHORTS—is committed to promoting the use, distribution, and educational propagation of short films in Austria and abroad, beyond the festival duration the year round. This includes the organization of film screenings for other Austrian and international festivals and institutions as well as workshops, film education programming, exhibitions, and research activities with event partners from the fields of culture, business, and science. Our focus lies on the long-term promotion of the global film scene, which also includes the maintenance of a large, publicly accessible short film archive.

## **2. AUDIENCE**

### **WE PROACTIVELY PROMOTE INTERACTION WITH FILMMAKERS AND INDUSTRY.**

VIENNA SHORTS is a place of vision and discovery, of reflection and exchange. Offering opportunities for audiences to meet filmmakers and industry players—for immediate experiences and discussions—is one of our major tasks as a film festival. Conversations with artists about their work and a critical reflection of it are at the center of our endeavors—be it after the film screenings during the Q&A, in a satellite event (such as a workshop talk or masterclass), or in a more relaxed setting over a drink at the bar.

### **WE THROW OUR WEIGHT BEHIND FILM EDUCATION.**

To promote an early understanding of the power of images and a critical reflection of it, VIENNA SHORTS offers educational programs for children and teenagers. Our objective is to give children and teens, who navigate a pluralistic and increasingly fragmented media landscape, tools and knowledge to deal with media competently, to retain their own agency, and to become discerning consumers and inspired creators of media. We are convinced that media competence must be taught, and this is why we dedicate our concerted efforts to film education.



## **WE EVALUATE SURVEYS AND TAKE FEEDBACK SERIOUSLY.**

The audience is a pivotal part of any festival, which is why we place high importance in conducting periodic visitor surveys in order to get feedback about our programming and organization and to gain a better understanding of how the festival is perceived from the outside. We evaluate the questionnaires with great care and take our audience's feedback seriously, so that we may react to it accordingly in future festival editions. In addition, VIENNA SHORTS lets the audience rate the films in its programs and gives out audience awards each year.

## **3. COOPERATION PARTNERS, FUNDING PARTNERS & SPONSORS**

### **WE ABIDE BY OUR POLICIES AND AGREEMENTS WITH OUR PARTNERS.**

Each year VIENNA SHORTS collaborates with several dozen cooperation partners such as movie theaters and other event venues, hotels, technology partners, press and marketing partners, and external curators and program partners. What connects us with all of them is a relationship of trust that we take very seriously. We abide by our commitments, written arrangements and agreements in the interest of a fruitful and proper collaboration. A record of the agreed-upon cooperation will be forwarded to each partner after the festival in the follow-up phase.

## **WE USE PUBLIC FUNDING AND SPONSOR MONEY RESPONSIBLY.**

We appreciate the trust our funding partners put in VIENNA SHORTS and vow to use the pledged funds diligently, economically, and correctly. We abide by the respective funding guidelines and cooperation agreements. In the follow-up to the festival we issue an activity report and an annual report including proof of the appropriate use of granted funds. Each year the festival's key data are sent to Statistik Austria and the Austrian Film Institute for publication in the Economic Report on Austrian Film.





## IV. IMPLEMENTING THE GUIDELINES

### A RULEBOOK AS AN INSTRUCTION MANUAL AND REFERENCE.

The Compliance Guidelines are designed as an instruction manual for festival team members and can be seen as a reference for everyone who interacts with the association and the festival. All team members and executives are to follow this code of ethics and ensure to breathe life into each point. Each philosophy is to be implemented as fully and thoroughly as possible.

### IMPLEMENTING DECISIONS.

Management is responsible for all decisions internally and externally. Generally, all decisions are made in the festival's core team at weekly jour fixes or in board meetings. If we are uncertain about a decision, we consult our conscience and discuss it with the people responsible in the respective departments. From time to time, there may be cases or situations that the guidelines will not have antici-

pated. In such cases, management, the association's board, and the ombudspersons are responsible.

### EXECUTIVE RESPONSIBILITY.

Management is responsible for the way VIENNA SHORTS positions itself and for its team members. The festival hierarchy is generally flat; the executives are always available for discussions and can be consulted whenever team members have questions and concerns or are faced with uncertain situations. The executives in turn can consult the board, who together with the controllers is responsible for the association's financial management.

### PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND CONSEQUENCES.

Adhering to and implementing the Compliance Guidelines is based on mutual respect on all levels as well as a high

degree of personal responsibility of everyone involved. In the event of infringements, the respective superior within the organization is in charge. Generally, adherence to the laws and guidelines must always have the highest priority; violations thereof will not be tolerated and will have consequences.



## V. CONTACTS

### FESTIVAL DIRECTORS & EXECUTIVES

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