

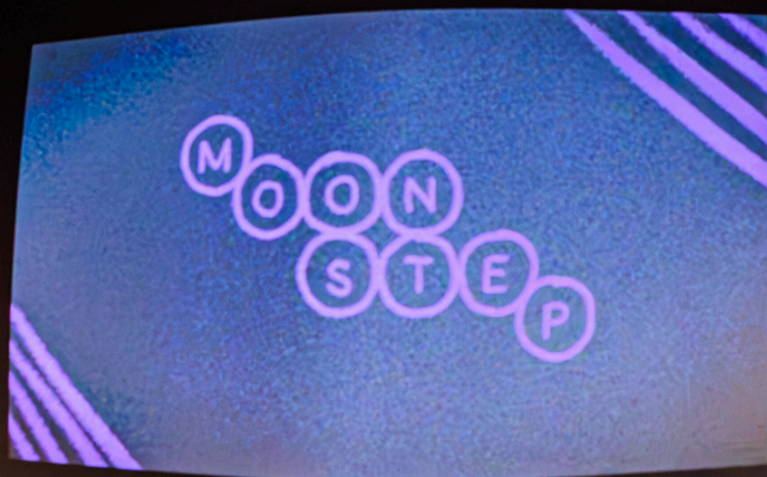


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Project BE-UNIT
Erasmus+ KA220YOU – Cooperation partnerships in youth
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APPEAL



Recommendations to enhance employability to youngsters
in the audiovisual field
and reduce barriers to cultural participation



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1. THE EUROPEAN BE-UNIT PROJECT AND THE CREATION OF THE MOONSTEP SHORT FILM FESTIVAL

Within the contemporary landscape of film festival organisation, the Erasmus+ funded BE-UNIT project stands out as an example of cultural experimentation rooted in youth leadership and international co-creation. This initiative gave rise to the Moonstep Short Film Festival, held in Turin from 19 to 21 September 2025, as the culmination of more than a year of training, collaboration and creative development. The festival is not only a core part of the project; it fully embodies its mission by placing young people at the centre of curatorial and organisational processes.

1.1. PROJECT ORIGINS AND EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Carried out from January 2024 to December 2025, BE-UNIT is a European project co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme KA220-YOU, and developed through the collaboration of four organisations: **Cooperativa Sociale ORSO s.c.s.– coordinator** (Turin, Italy), **Galileo Progetti Non-profit Kft.** (Budapest, Hungary), **POUR LA SOLIDARITÉ** (Brussels, Belgium) and **Epica Film** (Turin, Italy). The partners combined expertise in audiovisual production, youth policies, youth training and policy making.

BE-UNIT involved 45 young participants from Belgium, Hungary and Italy, with the goal to promote empowerment, capacity building and cultural innovation by engaging young participants directly in the learning and creative process. This approach allowed them to acquire technical, organisational and critical skills essential for working within the cultural and audiovisual sectors.

The main target groups were young adults aged between 18 and 25 from Belgium, Hungary and Italy, in particular those who need to be reactivated and involved in society, those who are studying/working but who need to strengthen their networks as well as their skills, to be less isolated or who need help to enter the world of work and who have a specific interest in the world of audiovisual production and youth-related subjects.

1.2. A EUROPEAN LABORATORY OF CULTURAL CO-CREATION

The creation of the **MOONSTEP INTERNATIONAL SHORTFILM FESTIVAL** took a long time and a process before to get greeted.

First, the European youths engaged in a summer residency in Sant'Anna di Valdieri in Italy (July 2024), where participants met in person for the first time and attended workshops on festival programming, public engagement and visual communication led by established professionals.



Between September and December 2024, the BE-UNIT project partners provided mentoring sessions and training meetings through which participants strengthened their competencies and built a developing professional identity.

After this training project partners and youngsters built the organisational structure of the Festival.

From the outset, BE-UNIT encouraged collective reflection on individual skills and learning goals. Participants were organised into thematic working groups—Advocacy, Sponsorship, Visual Identity, Social Media and Communication, Press Office, Logistics, Project Management and Artistic Direction, Advocacy and Facilitation—based on self-assessment supported by the international partners.



1.3. MOONSTEP SHORT FILM FESTIVAL: A MODEL OF YOUTH-LED CULTURAL GOVERNANCE

The Moonstep Short Film Festival embodies the core educational principles of the BE-UNIT project, offering an innovative model of cultural governance in a sector typically dominated by adult-driven structures.

Young participants played a leading role in all organisational and curatorial phases, from film selection to artistic direction and communication.

The festival addresses the need to value the perspectives of younger generations, who are particularly engaged with issues such as identity, sustainability, ecological crisis, technology and global inequalities.

Within this framework, cinema becomes an active language and a tool of social connection, engaging young audiences in reshaping cultural narratives.

1.4. CULTURAL ADVOCACY AND PROJECT IMPACT

The BE-UNIT project and the Moonstep Short Film Festival present a replicable model of participatory cultural planning that places youth empowerment at its core. Their experience demonstrates that young people's competencies represent a strategic resource for developing more inclusive, democratic and sustainable cultural policies.

In a Europe increasingly attentive to participatory processes, the Moonstep model stands as an example of cultural innovation responding to emerging generational needs and supporting new forms of active involvement in cultural life.

2. CONTEXT

2.1. LOW EMPLOYABILITY IN THE AUDIOVISUAL SECTOR IN BELGIUM, HUNGARY AND ITALY

Across all three countries involved in the BE-UNIT project, young people face the same structural problem: a high level of qualification does not translate into stable employment in the audiovisual field. At the European level, cultural and creative industries represent 3.8% of total employment (data by European Audiovisual Observatory, 2025), yet the audiovisual subsector remains dominated by temporary contracts, project-based work, and freelance positions. Permanent roles are rare, and the transition from education to the labour market is often long and uncertain.

In Belgium, the audiovisual sector employs around 13,000 people (according to statistics compiled by screen.brussels), but work is mostly project-based, limiting long-term opportunities. Even with hands-on experience, young people often struggle to secure stable positions.

Gabriela illustrates this reality: “Despite my experience in event management, I struggle to obtain a permanent position, as most opportunities are temporary or project-based, limiting the possibility of building a sustainable career.”

In Italy, employability issues are reinforced by structural opacity: **as Pietro highlights, access to work still relies heavily on word of mouth and personal networks.** Instead of fostering innovation, the sector remains closed and lacks transparent structures or agencies to guide newcomers. This creates a paradox: the industry claims it lacks trained talent, yet offers no real channels to recruit them. Without an internal “guarantor,” it is difficult to obtain first jobs, and nepotism often outweighs merit. These dynamics hinder generational turnover and keep the system stagnant.

In Hungary, the presence of large international productions creates prestigious opportunities, yet hidden asymmetries persist: domestic workers often remain in lower positions, while key roles are brought in from abroad. **As Borka, Rebeka and Károly explain, a strong divide has emerged between crews working on foreign productions and those working in domestic ones, reducing upward mobility for newcomers.**

Experiences from BE-UNIT participants reflect this reality: short-term contracts, irregular hours, limited social protection, and the expectation of prior technical skills—even when training systems do not provide them.

Gabriela adds another dimension: “Even without a university degree, I have gained practical experience, yet I find it challenging to secure employment in Brussels’ audiovisual sector. Those with higher academic qualifications sometimes have better access to jobs, even when I have more hands-on experience than some of them.”

Overall, employability in the audiovisual sector is structurally low, regardless of the country.

2.2. GAP BETWEEN EDUCATION AND THE LABOUR MARKET

A recurring issue in the three countries is the mismatch between academic training and industry expectations. Young people often leave university with strong theoretical knowledge, but employers expect advanced technical and practical skills that are rarely taught within formal education. Those without higher education face the opposite problem: even with solid practical experience, they are often overlooked compared to candidates with bachelor’s or master’s degrees.

In Italy and Belgium, the majority of audiovisual companies are small or micro-enterprises, which limits their capacity to invest in structured training. As a result, learning frequently happens “on set”, creating pressure for newcomers and reducing efficiency. Pietro notes that the lack of transparent pathways reinforces this mismatch: without clear entry channels or professional networks accessible to all, young graduates remain dependent on informal contacts rather than on structured recruitment.

In Hungary, creative autonomy is further limited by structural problems in higher education. Students at SZFE (University of Dramatic Arts and Cinematography of Budapest) do not fully own the copyright of their own work, preventing them from freely using or monetising their creations—an issue also highlighted by Borka, Rebeka and Karoly.

These structural gaps make it difficult for young people to access stable work, grow professionally, or receive adequate recognition for their skills.

2.3. UNDERPAID OR UNPAID INTERNSHIPS AND STRUCTURAL INEQUALITY

Across Europe, internships remain one of the main entry points into the audiovisual sector, but they often reinforce social inequality instead of facilitating fair access.

Unpaid or low-paid internships are widespread. According to the European Youth Forum, an unpaid internship costs young people more than €1,000 per month, leading many to take multiple unpaid positions before securing paid work. Research from the Sutton Trust and the ILO shows that paid internships lead to higher salaries and faster employment, while unpaid internships correlate with weaker long-term outcomes.

Testimonies from BE-UNIT participants confirm these findings.

Jacopo shares: “My background is in cinema and event management, and I have contributed to various film festivals, yet just a single experience was recognised as proper paid work. All the others were unpaid despite being full responsibilities.”

He adds: “My experience reflects how unpaid internships block access to fair hiring. I worked in several roles that required responsibility but provided no proper salary—or in many cases no salary at all—and this made it harder to move forward professionally. These conditions benefited people with financial support, not those relying on their own income.”

These experiences mirror the situation across the three countries: even after completing internships, young people often receive no job offer or accept low compensation simply to maintain professional relationships. This system creates a discriminatory pipeline where only those with financial support can build a career.

2.4. LIMITED ACCESS TO CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

Cinema and film culture can play a crucial role in promoting democratic values, dialogue and mutual understanding among young Europeans. However, access to culture remains uneven.

Surveys collected during BE-UNIT “OFF events” held in Brussels (24 May 2025), Budapest (7 and 8 June 2025) and Turin (6, 7 and 8 June 2025) show that the two main obstacles are ticket prices (46.8%) and lack of information (46.8%). Even when discounts exist for students and young people, they are poorly advertised. Promotions often fail to reach new audiences, and cultural events can appear exclusive or “not meant” for them.

Data collected in Italy in 2021 illustrates this trend: only 16% of young people aged 18–24 go to the cinema at least seven times a year. Participation is much higher in metropolitan areas, while rural regions remain largely excluded. Film festivals show the same pattern: although 60% of festival audiences are aged 15–34, these are mainly regular attendees rather than new spectators. Festivals are often perceived as elitist, reinforcing barriers to access.

In Hungary, disadvantaged groups—particularly the Roma population—face additional obstacles. As highlighted by Borka, Rebeka and Karoly, barriers include social exclusion, economic hardship, and cultural spaces perceived as unwelcoming. Underfunded Roma institutions and weak implementation of integration policies further limit participation. Targeted outreach, partnerships with NGOs, and the organisation of cultural events within marginalised areas are essential to foster real inclusion.

2.5. LACK OF DEMOCRATIC DIALOGUE AND SHRINKING CULTURAL SPACE

In Hungary, the cultural sector faces additional challenges linked to politicisation, institutional control and centralised decision-making. According to multiple reports, access to public support can depend on political proximity, with critical or independent productions often excluded from funding schemes. Professional organisations have become divided into parallel pro-government and anti-government structures with unequal access to resources.

As Borka, Rebeka and Karoly explain, this climate encourages self-censorship as creators avoid politically sensitive topics to secure funding.

Independent documentary production is especially vulnerable, as most national funds reportedly go to pro-government projects. This politicisation reduces creative autonomy, limits representation, and weakens cinema's role as a democratic space.

More broadly across Europe, audiovisual productions do not always reflect the experiences of young people living in an environment marked by discrimination, intolerance, and social fragmentation. This lack of representation contributes to a shrinking cultural dialogue and increases the vulnerability of younger generations.

2.6. REFERENCES

All references used for this appeal are organised in a centralised link, ensuring full transparency and credibility. Please refer to the following URL to view all cited sources: <https://linktr.ee/beunitproject>

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- ResearchGate — Hollywood Runaway Productions in Socialist/Post-socialist Hungary
- ResearchGate — Spillovers behind the scenes
- SZFE / Copyright Study (Hungary)
- Hungary Cultural Policy Profile (2025)
- Italian Statistical Yearbook (2021)



3. MESSAGES: RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE ATTENTION OF THE DECISION MAKERS

3.1. REDUCING BARRIERS TO CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

Culture remains inaccessible to many groups due to structural and socio-economic barriers. Limited cultural education reduces people's confidence and skills to engage in cultural life, while financial constraints—such as ticket or travel costs—further restrict access. As a result, cultural opportunities are unevenly distributed, benefiting the privileged and excluding Nonprofit entities, local and cultural organisations often lack resources and rely on external acceptance, reducing their ability to create or promote cultural programmes and deepening their marginalisation from public cultural life.

Targeted outreach is essential for reaching groups that are usually excluded from cultural programmes. This can include advertising on platforms and in schools or districts that lie on the periphery of the middle class, ensuring that information reaches communities with fewer opportunities. Making programmes free of charge and organising preparatory or follow-up workshops can also help participants better understand and engage with the cultural content.

When organising larger events, such as festivals, hosting them directly in segregated or marginalised settlements can strengthen community involvement and facilitate genuine interaction with local residents, as example in the case of Roma communities. It is important not only to invite them as participants but also to incorporate elements of local minority cultures into the programme itself, such as dedicating a section to their art, music, or traditions, and involving creators or guests from minorities or with a migrant background. This approach supports mutual cultural exchange and promotes inclusion.

Many non-profit organisations work with disadvantaged groups, focusing on inclusion, often initiating dialogue with local communities and developing joint projects that support cooperation and cultural exchange. To broaden the reach of these initiatives, partnerships with large companies can also be beneficial. By seeking corporate support and organising programmes for employees, these collaborations can help disseminate cultural awareness across different social classes, ensuring that information and opportunities spread far beyond the immediate target groups.

It is also essential for political actors and public institutions to take an active role in promoting cultural inclusion, as such a significant responsibility cannot rest solely on civil organisations. This is particularly important in countries, as Hungary, where the operating space and funding opportunities of NGOs are often limited by regulatory and political constraints. Relying exclusively on civil initiatives risks leaving critical cultural and social issues under-resourced and inconsistently supported. Therefore, government involvement—through policy development, stable funding, and long-term strategic planning—is crucial to ensuring that cultural participation becomes accessible to all social groups and is not dependent on the fluctuating capacities of non-profit organisations.

3.2. INVOLVING NEW AUDIENCES IN THE FILM CULTURE

Attracting new audiences into film culture is similarly hindered by low cultural participation in Europe, mainly due to high costs and poor access to information. The surveys collected during the OFF EVENTS in Brussels, Budapest, and Turin show that many people—especially young people—believe that the costs for cultural participation are too high, and they are often unaware of affordable cinema options.

At the same time, promotional efforts of these events feel distant or ineffective, failing to attract audiences new to the cinema environment. As a result, cinema attendance (e.g., in Italy) remains low, particularly outside major urban areas, and film festivals continue to attract mainly repeat “enthusiast” attendees, reinforcing their image as exclusive rather than accessible cultural events.

The dual nature of the lack of cultural participation creates serious inequality, which could be solved with targeted solutions. Enhancing seasonal promotions to cinema entries and discounts for students is not enough: we need to incentivise an active participation in events related to the film industries which would benefit the involvement of new audiences, especially among young people.

At the same time, the promotion of film culture should be effectively held through schools, educational centres, youth organisations and associations, without forgetting the most disadvantaged communities.

To overcome the lack of information, social media campaigns, such as “culture now” posts on Instagram or TikTok promoting local events, could also help. In the longer term, support systems such as nationally-promoted cultural vouchers could be introduced to enable low-income individuals to attend big cinema events and festivals. Language and distance barriers could be overcome with online streaming events or locally organised mini-workshops that bring culture closer to communities.

Lastly, it is important to create a community around film culture, to enable young people and disadvantaged groups without a “cinematic background” to feel welcomed to the cinema community and find in the audiovisual language a way to express themselves and their unique perspective. Community-building processes would highly encourage the participation in the cinema culture, especially in rural and peripheral areas which are often excluded from the cultural offer compared to the big cities.

To effectively tackle these issues, at the national level, it is recommended to the governments to create and promote a basic cultural allowance for cinema for young people from 18 until 30 years old, with a special attention to youngsters coming from rural and peripheral areas.

At the same time, it is recommended to the European Commission, and its relevant programmes such as Creative Europe, to fund community-based projects to attract audiences from marginalised communities in the EU and foster community building around cinema in peripheral areas.

Moreover, it is urgent that academics, practitioners in the cultural field and relevant think-tanks work together and effectively rethink the concepts of audience design and cinema culture in the EU today. This is a necessary step to understand what the adjustments are needed to put into place to overcome these challenges.

Lastly, it is needed that the private creative sector – comprising production companies, distributors and cinema agencies – amplifies young people’s voices in the film and the audiovisual sector, in order to introduce a new and fresh perspective in our contemporary cinema and to reach the widest range of people.

3.3. FILM AS A TOOL FOR PROMOTING INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND UNDERSTANDING

The use of cinema as a tool for promoting intercultural dialogue is part of a broader framework of structural inequalities that still affect access to culture in many European countries.

As already mentioned, cultural enjoyment remains strongly marked by socioeconomic and educational barriers: where education does not provide adequate tools for cultural and visual literacy, and where families' economic resources are limited, cinema, despite being a universally recognisable language, struggles to become a true vehicle for mutual understanding.

This results in a profoundly uneven distribution of cultural opportunities, which risks further separating social groups already distant in origin, living conditions, or community history. This dynamic takes on different forms in the countries involved.

1. In Hungary, for example, the Roma community continues to be exposed to persistent forms of social exclusion that are also reflected in access to culture: segregated or lower-quality schooling, limited resources for Roma cultural institutions, and often marginalised public representation contribute to restricting the scope for cultural and audiovisual participation.
2. In Italy, despite a different context, significant inequalities persist between central and peripheral urban areas, and young people with migrant backgrounds still struggle to identify with media and film narratives, which have only recently begun to reflect the country's cultural complexity.
3. Belgium, characterised by strong linguistic and cultural heterogeneity, also faces disparities in access to cinema, especially for families with fewer economic resources or for young people who lack a solid education in audiovisual languages.

Faced with these critical issues, it is necessary to develop strategies that not only make cinema more accessible but also transform it into an experience of encounter and mutual recognition.

A first area of intervention concerns territoriality: bringing cinema into marginalised communities through free screenings, traveling festivals, and workshops in peripheral schools or community centres, thus reducing physical and symbolic distances and creating safe spaces for intercultural exchange.

Specific projects can strengthen this dynamic:

- in Hungary, initiatives that directly involve Roma authors and cultural workers, through films made by community directors or audiovisual training programmes, would foster more authentic representation and two-way dialogue,
- In Italy, activities co-curated with migrant associations and local organisations could help construct plural narratives, giving young viewers the opportunity to identify traits of their own identity in images.
- In Belgium, multilingual experiences and film projects that highlight the country's cultural complexity could encourage greater participation and a stronger sense of shared belonging.

Added to this is the importance of including image and media education in school curricula, so that children and adolescents acquire the tools to critically decode representations and use cinema as a space for understanding others.

The effectiveness of such interventions, however, depends on the involvement of a variety of factors. Nonprofit organisations working with disadvantaged groups play a crucial role in building bonds of trust with communities and promoting participatory initiatives. Similarly, schools and universities represent the most stable places to implement media literacy programmes, while film festivals, especially those rooted in local communities, can become privileged spaces for promoting intercultural narratives and giving visibility to filmmakers from minority groups or diverse backgrounds.

For these reasons, the role of public decision-makers is crucial: ministries, local authorities, and European institutions are called upon to develop inclusive cultural policies, provide ongoing funding, and support structured cultural participation strategies.

Only through the coordinated collaboration of all these stakeholders can cinema be valorised as a shared space for listening, recognition, and intercultural dialogue, capable of strengthening social cohesion and fostering a deeper understanding of the differences that exist within our societies.

3.4. ENHANCE EMPLOYABILITY TO YOUNGSTERS IN AUDIOVISUAL FIELD

Enhancing employability in the audiovisual field means giving young people the skills, confidence and professional exposure they need to enter a rapidly evolving creative industry. The audiovisual sector increasingly requires not only technical abilities, but also adaptability, digital literacy, teamwork, intercultural communication and creative problem-solving.

Strengthening employability also means reducing barriers to entry. Many young Europeans lack access to equipment, professional guidance or safe spaces to experiment and learn. Providing accessible, structured learning environments allows them to explore different audiovisual roles, identify their strengths and develop a clearer career pathway. It encourages inclusion by giving a voice to youths from diverse backgrounds and enabling them to express themselves through contemporary digital formats.

Moreover, empowering youngsters in the audiovisual field increases their ability to enter the labour market with a portfolio, practical competences, and an understanding of industry standards. It fosters their sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, essential in a sector where freelance work, project-based collaboration and creative innovation are the norm.

Investing in employability in the audiovisual domain therefore has a double impact: it opens concrete opportunities for young people at a decisive moment in their professional lives, and it enriches the European cultural landscape with new perspectives, skills and creative energy.

To make these priorities truly effective, different actors need to work together.

At the European level, the European Commission and the Erasmus+ agencies can strengthen this effort by supporting small and accessible initiatives, encouraging international exchanges and mentorships, and creating online platforms where young people can find training, opportunities and useful resources.

National governments can help by bringing audiovisual education into schools, connecting the education system with the creative industry and encouraging companies to welcome and guide young talents.

The audiovisual sector itself can play a major role by opening more entry-level opportunities, offering short training experiences, promoting fair access to jobs and supporting networks where young creators can meet, share their work and collaborate.

By combining these efforts, Europe can build an environment where young people feel supported, inspired and able to imagine a future in the audiovisual field.



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4. CREDITS

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This APPEAL is part of “BE-UNIT” project, co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme. BE-UNIT aims to develop the skills of young adults from Belgium, Italy, and Hungary in the fields of audiovisual media, event management, and advocacy strategies. The project has been carried out from January 2024 to December 2025 by 4 partners:

- Cooperativa Orso, leader (Italy), <https://www.cooperativaorso.it/>
- Epica Film (Italy), <https://www.epicafilm.it/>
- Galileo Non Profit (Hungary), <https://galileoprogetti.hu/language/hu/home/>
- POUR LA SOLIDARITÉ (Belgium), <https://pourolasolidarite.eu/en/>.



These 4 partners and the youngsters involved from the 3 countries achieved the following main results:

- **Technical and vocational training**, both face-to-face and online, for 45 young adults wishing to work in the audiovisual sector. Face-to-face trainings took place in Sant’Anna di Valdieri (Italy) in July–August 2024, while online trainings took place from November to December 2024;
- **3 local OFF events** involving a wider group of young people, encouraging debate and discussion and the selection of videos for the festival. These local events took place from May to June 2025, one in Brussels (24 May 2025), one in Turin (6, 7 and 8 June 2025) and one in Budapest (7 and 8 June 2025);
- **International Moonfest festival of short movies**, produced entirely by young people with the support of project partners and experts. The festival took place in Turin from 19 to 21 September 2025;
- **This advocacy document**: An “Appeal” launched by young people to decision-makers, co-constructed with young people during the BE-UNIT project, to give visibility to the issues addressed by the project, raise awareness of the challenges and put forward concrete suggestions to promote the social inclusion and socio-professional development of young European adults.

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