

Dear members and friends of UNICA,

In our newsletter we want to inform you about what has happened in the UNICA Committee in the past year and how we envision the future.

We have therefore compiled a great deal of information for you on the following topics.

- **The development of UNICA in 2020**
- **The concepts for the future of UNICA**
- **Information and documents from the work of the Committee**
- **How we see the future development**

The development of UNICA in 2020

In 2020, not only at UNICA, but in all areas of life around the world, the usual activities had to be very much reduced. So, of course, this pandemic has hit us at the most vulnerable point: UNICA 2020 in Birmingham had to be cancelled.

This also meant that the possibility of us seeing each other again and exchanging experiences has been lost.

Unfortunately, we also did not have the opportunity to have a General Assembly. We looked into the possibility of an online General Assembly, but for technical reasons and also because of the costs, this possibility did not seem realistic.

Other possibilities, such as written or email variants, are currently under discussion, as we want to deal with the reports and proposals in an open discussion at this General Assembly on the one hand, and on the other hand, we still have to hold an important election this year, that of a President.

Due to the Corona Regulations, proclaimed by the Swiss Government, we now definitely have the possibility to organize a written General Assembly, even if our Statutes do not explicitly provide for it. We will therefore inform you in January when and how we will organize the General Assembly in February to March 2021.

Our urgent request to all National Organizations is to start looking for candidates for the positions of President and advisors of the Committee in their own Association and to suggest names of suitable persons.

In July 2020, our President Dave Watterson has stepped down from office. Similarly, Zuzana Školudová from Slovakia and Mike Whyman from the UK have left the Committee.

We thank Dave, Zuzana and Mike for their work for the UNICA Committee.

Dave Watterson has greatly influenced UNICA with his commitment, ideas and experience and he has supported and enriched the team on the Committee. Thank you, Dave and all the best for the future

We were very pleased in 2020 that our Norwegian friends around Halvor Larsen offered a well-attended and very well organised online Film Show, the alternative for the cancelled UNICA Congress in Birmingham.

In Memoriam

Borys Ivanovicz Sergyev

Andrzej Przezdziecki wrote:

Borys passed away on 08.12.2020 at the age of 74. He devoted his whole life to cinema. For almost 30 years he was the chairman of the non-professional filmmakers in St. Petersburg. Every year, international film festivals were organized under his chairmanship: "White Nights", "Animator", as well as a children's Film festival "Petersburg Screen" and all-Russian Film festivals "Culture and History" and "Thread". Thanks to Borys Ivanovicz Sergyev, the Russian Association of Non-Professional Filmmakers became a member of UNICA in 1998. He was awarded the UNICA Gold Medal for his commitment. He was a director, educator, dear husband, father and grandfather.

Witold Kon

Text: Andrzej Przezdziecki Photo: Serge Michel



Out of the blue, the information about the death of Witold Kon reached us on 17 January 2021.

Polish non-commercial cinema has lost its most important representative and friend. It will be very difficult to cope with his loss, in every aspect.

Witold Kon was not only in Europe well-known among friends of non-commercial cinema. Since 1993 he was the chairman of the Polish Federation of Independent Filmmakers.

He founded the Children's and Youth Film Festival (MFF "Dozwolone do 21") and was its festival director for 12 years. Several times he served as a jury member in Poland and abroad.

Among his great successes was the organisation of three UNICA festivals in Warsaw in 1993 and 2003 and in Gdansk in 2009.

He was the founder and chairman of Cinema Art-Foundation (young filmmakers) filmfestival of graduate films of filmschools from all over the world.

His most important legacy in recent years has been the GRAND OFF Festival. The best non-commercial cinema in the world was rewarded with the "Oscar of Independent Cinema".

Witold, you will remain in our memory!

Vladimir Iliev

Dave Watterson wrote on the UNICA Facebook page:

Vladimir was the great powerhouse for non-commercial film work in Bulgaria - even in the days when that meant travelling over 300 km each way by bus to Sofia to borrow "the camera" and the same trip again to return it. He was a prolific film maker - especially of documentaries about his hometown.

Among many other things he organized the Danube Festival in Ruse attracting people from all over Europe for films and festivities. He attended UNICA several times usually with one of his daughters to translate when needed. I never saw him flustered or angry.

Reg Lancaster

Dave Watterson wrote on the UNICA Facebook page:

Reg Lancaster was a great photographer, a fine film maker, an inspiring club leader and a fine leader of IAC. He was born in Manchester in '35 and had been a film maker since 1970. He served on many juries at local, regional and national festivals in Britain, and was a regular jury member at the Festival Mondial du Courts Metrages in Huy, Belgium. In 2001 he was a member of the UNICA Jury. He was also one of the reasons UNICA is in my life.

He first attended UNICA at Ste Nazaire in 1983. At that time Britain was not a member, and for years he and his wife Annabelle were the only Brits regularly attending UNICA, while campaigning back home for Britain to re-join the UNICA family.

They will all be deeply missed; they meant a lot for UNICA.

The concepts for the future of UNICA

Within the framework of a large analysis mission by members of the committee and by committed authors, jurors and visitors, we have investigated the reasons why UNICA congresses have had fewer visitors in recent years and why it is becoming increasingly difficult to find host countries for a UNICA congress. On the one hand, one reason certainly is the increased costs for the organizers. On the other hand, the duration of a UNICA congress and the costs for visitors and authors are also a major reason for the increasing reluctance to participate.

Three concepts have emerged from the analysis mission, by Rolf Leuenberger (Switzerland), Eugy van Gool (Belgium) and Bernhard Lindner (Germany), which will make a UNICA Congress in the next few years shorter and thus significantly cheaper for the organizers and visitors.

Essentially, the concepts will reduce the time for film-only projection to 3 -4 days; public jury discussions will run in the evening and in some concepts, excursions can be held before or after the UNICA Congress, if required (optional), depending on what the organizer offers.

In two concept formats the length of the country programmes will be shortened to 40 minutes and the member countries may enter a maximum of 4 films each.

In the hybrid concept format, the use of an online nomination phase is proposed, which will take place about one month before the UNICA Congress. In this nomination phase, interested participants could also get an overview of the submitted films. A third format concept deals essentially with the organisation of a UNICA Congress on the Internet.

The concept formats will be examined and intensively discussed until spring 2021. By then we hope to have developed a procedure that will also meet the challenges and ideas in the near future. If required, we can send the concepts to interested parties by e-mail. Please contact us with your e-mail address

For the further work in 2021 we have another urgent request:

As our friends in Poland will not be able to host the UNICA Congress in 2021, please let us know if you can host a UNICA, preferably in a new format.

Unfortunately, the earlier suggested possibility in Montecatini (Italy) cannot be realised.

For 2022 we very much hope that the effects of the pandemic will have weakened so much that we can look forward to meet in the Ukraine (Kershon).

We ask our friends in the Ukraine to send us the already available information.

Information and documents from the work of the Committee

The members of the UNICA Committee have unfortunately only been able to meet virtually due to the pandemic. The question of a film show was discussed in June. The details of the film show were discussed in an online meeting in July.

From the section: General Secretary

Halvor Larsen had a lot of work this year. Since UNICA 2020 was cancelled, the committee had decided to organise a UNICA film show in 2020. The films in the show could be viewed on the internet during the last week of August after registration, with 29 and 30 August being the highlight. A total of 34 films from 19 countries were shown. Compliments to the team in Norway around Halvor Larsen and of course to all the countries and authors who had sent in films.

Unfortunately, Halvor will leave the committee for health reasons. A successor is urgently needed.

A short report on the film show by Halvor Larsen is attached to this newsletter.

From the section: Vice-President

Andrzej Przeździecki visited the festival in Konin (Poland) as part of his work as Vice-President and responsible in the team for public relations and patronages. This festival is under the patronage of UNICA. The UNICA medal was handed over. Furthermore, Andrzej is working on a UNICA trailer with a club from Poland. We hope that our friends in Poland will be successful.

Andrzej has been invited as UNICA representative to the seminar in Berlin in March 2021. The seminar will be organised by Rainer Hasselbarth. The title of the seminar is: "International non-commercial film, its international dimension and its importance for international understanding". Another contribution to the goals of UNICA. We hope that the current pandemic will make it possible to realise it.

From the section: Finances and Film Archive

Due to illness, the report on the finances could not yet be completed. The documents will be sent later.

We have attached the report from the film archive.

From the section: Youth

Franka Stas has mastered the youth activities and workshops in UNICA 2019 Zeist with much commitment and idealism.

In 2020, it already became apparent that we all have to adapt to new forms in the future. In this context, Franka has developed a good concept for youth participation and workshops at UNICA congresses, which is very flexible to apply. This is very important, as youth activities can now be carried out at various congresses, from large festivals to smaller UNICA events.

Many thanks also to Franka for her willingness to write the minutes of the committee meetings.

Attached you will find the concept which we will also add to the UNICA Congress Handbook.

From the section: Patronage and Public Relations

Wolfgang Allin has worked hard to redraft the regulations for UNICA patronages. The regulations were voted on in the Committee and are valid with immediate effect. The advantage of these new regulations lies in the fact that national festivals can now also receive a patronage from UNICA. The conditions have been described more clearly and the application has been simplified. In order to improve the awareness of UNICA and to bring the aims of UNICA closer to the people, we ask all member associations to notify us of further festivals.

Furthermore, Wolfgang Allin is working on calls for the creation of a UNICA trailer, which UNICA can show from the website and at various events. Unfortunately, the result is poor, so far. We have not given up hope and continue to ask all national associations to promote the creation of a trailer.

A report from Wolfgang is attached to this newsletter.

From the section: Friends of UNICA

Tatiana Alahverdzhieva is the responsible advisor in the committee for the Friends of UNICA. As with many events this year, the UNICA Congress in Birmingham / Great Britain fell victim to the virus pandemic. Thus, of course, the meeting of the "Friends of UNICA" could not take place either. We regret this very much and hope that at least with this newsletter we can inform our friends of UNICA sufficiently. We are very aware that especially the Friends of UNICA are a valuable part of UNICA, whose idealism and support are very much appreciated. Tatjana has told us that she will contact you in the future with messages and information.

A first letter from Tatjana is attached to this newsletter.

From the section: UNICA website

Eugy Van Gool, our webmaster of Digital Infrastructure has put a lot of work and idealism into creating a new website. The website is now up and running, but there is still a lot to do. The possibility of archiving the documents from the previous version is still under consideration if this should be an objective for the website. Refining the website will still require a lot of work and ingenuity from Eugy in the field of design.

The UNICA Committee thanks Eugy very much for the work he has done and wishes him many more good ideas.

A report by Eugy Van Gool is attached.

How does the Committee see the future of UNICA Congresses:

We are in the process of planning the next year and we would like to organize another UNICA Congress in 2021, including a regular General Assembly.

This General Assembly in 2021 is also important because:

- * A new UNICA President, Vice-President must be found
- * The entire committee is to be re-elected
- * A decision has to be made about the UNICA of the future
- * And above all: after a year of abstinence, we will hopefully be able to meet each other again

As you can see from our newsletter, we came to the point where a reconstitution of the UNICA Committee is urgently needed. The most important task ahead of all of us is the next election to once again form a team that can deal with the challenges we face in the near future.

If you are interested in organizing a UNICA Congress, preferably in a new and shorter format, or if you know of an organizer who would like to host a UNICA - we would be grateful for any suggestion.

Likewise, we ask you to look for suitable candidates for the committee in your national associations.

One thing very likely to remaining the same in the future:

A future UNICA will certainly be just as interesting, probably shorter and cheaper, possibly with new formats and partly on the internet, but in any case, again.

a meeting and reunion of the UNICA family.

With this in mind, I wish you lots of fun, great conversations and interesting discussions about films.

For Christmas and New Year, we wish you reflective holidays, many new and creative ideas and good health.

As President of UNICA

Bernhard Lindner

Vice President

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[*Translation Franka ver. 2021/01/03 18:16*]