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**PRESS RELEASE**

**More than 16 Mentors and Experts take a seat on SOFA –  
Successful start of SOFA's 8<sup>th</sup> edition**

Since August 18, 2020, the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of **SOFA – School of Film Advancement** is in full swing. Ten participants take part in the edition's first workshop that lasts until August 28 and that was originally supposed to be held in Warsaw but had to move online. This "eWarsaw" edition is the first station for the ten participating cultural managers on a busy one-year trip towards a precisely developed project that helps to shape a region's professional film structure or film community.

"We had a promising start with ten eager and open-minded participants. The SOFA spirit and group feeling sparked even on the very first online pre-session what gives us hope for the further productive collaboration", SOFA director Nikolaj Nikitin says. "We're proud of our fantastic line-up of international experts who now start working intensely with them at their exciting and more than ever needed projects."

One of SOFA's finest assets lies in its mentoring structure: each participant has an individually picked mentor that perfectly fits the project's needs. Another three tutors additionally working with them at budget, presentation and concept papers.

Mentors:

**Jeffrey Bowers**, USA, Senior Curator at VIMEO

**Silvia Cibien**, France, General Delegate at EUROVOD

**Jakub Duszyński**, Poland, Head of Acquisitions and Creative Director at Gutek Film

**Marit van den Elshout**, The Netherlands, Head of IFFR Pro at International Film Festival Rotterdam

**Heike-Melba Fendel**, Germany, Founder of Barbarella Entertainment

**Jurate Pazikaite**, Lithuania, Managing Director at Vilnius Film Office

**Jay Rinsky**, USA, Founder of Little Cinema

**Rasha Salti**, Lebanon/Germany, Independent Curator and Writer

**Tamara Tatishvili**, Georgia, Head of Training at MEDICI

Tutors:

**Oliver Baumgarten**, Germany, Artistic Director at Film Festival Max Ophüls Preis  
**Christine von Fragstein**, Germany, Facilitator/Process Supporter at Change Animal  
**Ewa Puszczynska**, Poland, Oscar-winning Film Producer at Extreme Emotions

Further guest experts complete this strong selection of professionals sharing experience. So does **Anna Radzikowska**, Polish Trainer and Consultant, give an intense talk on the psychological and social impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, hosted by SOFA's virtual Warsaw host **Izabela Kiszka-Hoflik**, while SOFA 2018 alumna and Script Writer **Agnieszka Kruk** from Poland conducts a mastermind session. In a closed internal screening director, **Magnus von Horn** will present and discuss his new film "Sweat", a Swedish-Polish co-production and part of this year's Cannes label. The film is produced by **Mariusz Włodarski** and it is worldwide sold by **Jan Naszewski**, CEO of New Europe Film Sale and SOFA 2013 alumnus, to set European film production in vivid relation to the participating projects. And finally, representatives from supporting institutions SDPZ – Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation and Polish Film Institute will join this active-minded "eWarsaw" SOFA edition.

**SOFA – School of Film Advancement** is a programme of workshops aiming at strengthening national film and audiovisual industries and the European cinematic landscape, as well as kick-starting projects in the realm of cinema. SOFA helps its participants to develop their ideas into concrete projects, opening up new avenues towards application for financing programmes and final implementation. SOFA's focus on cultural managers and film entrepreneurs rather than producers and directors has made it a unique programme on the international film/AV scene.

See more information on the 2020/21 participants and their projects on [joinsofa.org](https://joinsofa.org)

Dates for SOFA workshops 2020/21

August 18 – 28, 2020 in Warsaw (digital)

April 2021 in Tbilisi

June 2021 in Vilnius

**SOFA – School of Film Advancement** is a project of Filmplus gUG (Berlin) funded by German Federal Foreign Office/Civil Society Cooperation and Creative Europe – MEDIA Programme of the European Union. Besides, the 2020 Polish workshop is funded by SdpZ (Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation) and Polish Film Institute, and the Lithuanian session by the Lithuanian Film Centre. The organizers also wish to thank the strategic partners Goethe-Institut, EAVE, and Midpoint.