

Visegrad Animation Forum has awarded the most promising animated projects in development

The fifth edition of the VAF Trebon, a key industry meeting for animation professionals took place in Trebon, Czech Republic, May 2-4, 2017. Since the creation, the VAF has become a crossroad for animation industry between Western and Eastern Europe.

Even if the pitching competition is open to all European animated projects in development, the focus of the whole event is on the Central and Eastern Europe. The producers from this region (Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) could meet colleagues from France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Finland, Denmark, Italy, Portugal and Germany. Besides that, the event attracted also filmmakers from outside of the EU – Macedonia or Serbia. All this co-production power was brought together within a framework of **VAF Co-production Minority Pool**, organized for the first time initiated by a project called **VAF Red Bricks**. The Co-production pool was opened to all producers, distributors, TV broadcasters and decision-makers from Europe and put in place to enable producers' networking. Cooperation was the main focus and priority. Each producer, presented his company and his slate of projects during a 2-minute pitch. Then there were ten projects showcased as possible co-production.

The participants were quite excited as the pool seems to be an effective and straightforward tool for establishing first contacts so much needed for cross-border cooperation.

VAF Red Bricks – aimed at re-establishing CEE animation market and building a strong producers network – initiated in 2016 the first official meeting of representatives of national film funds from the CEE region. Since then, four official meetings were organized. Now in Trebon the topic followed the outcome of the last meeting (Berlinale 2017). The representatives of film and media funds, of national broadcasters and of associations of animation producers from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia met to seek ways for closing the gaps between various funding systems and financial resources that support the animation in the individual countries but also across the whole region.

The **pitching competition** was again opened in two categories.

The award for the best animated short film in development was received at the festive ceremony by British director Joseph Wallace for his project **"SALVATION HAS NO NAME"**, producer Loran Dunn. The jury felt it was a very professional pitch and adds: *"The project presents contemporary issues in a classical setting with a strong story outline."*

Special mention was awarded to Czech directors Jan Saska and Vojtěch Kiss for their short film **"HURIKAN"**, to be produced by Alžběta Janáčková and Kamila Dohnalová. Jan Saska attended already VAF Třeboň 2013 where he received a special mention too – then it was for his short film Happy End, one of 10 finalists for an 2016 Academy Award nomination. *"This is an exciting new project from proven filmmakers who are running the style and technique forward. This film speaks not only of the hangover of the main character, or the hangover of the city, but the hangover of the world. We hope team will be able to produce the film before the end of the world."* explains the jury.

The Main Prize in the Series / TV Specials category went to the Hungarian project **"CASTAWAYS"**, educational animated series about a grandpa's and his grandson's adventures on a stranded island (director Péter Szeiler, producers Patricia D'Intino, Gábor Osváth and Peter Csornay). *"The main character and his Grandpa made us feel the importance of trans-generation relationship. The project brings us close to nature, has strong visuals, nice colour palette and texture. It's giving many*

opportunities for imaginative storytelling and will work very well across all media.“ justified the TV Series jury their choice.

Also, a TV Special got a prize for the first time in the history of VAF Trebon. Special mention went to Christmas TV Special “**MIMI & LISA**“ by Slovak director Ivana Šebestová, scriptwriter Katarína Moláková and producer Katarína Kerekesová. „*This visually rich project has a unique and clear story and its idea is very original. We love two strong female characters reaching out to every single child, with a special tenderness to disabled kids. It wakes imagination and it would travel well all around.*“ clarified the jury.

The winning projects in both categories received 2,000 EUR for further development. The winner and the special mention of the category Series / TV Special have direct access to **Cartoon Forum 2017** without the need to undergo their competitive pre-selection.

Newly at VAF Trebon 2017, the director of **Maia Workshops**, Graziella Bildesheim followed both categories in order to select the most promising emerging producer. The MAIA Award went to Czech producer **Kamila Dohnalová** (short film *Hurikan*) together with a scholarship and an automatic selection to take part in next year’s Maia Workshops.

Last but not least, the official launch of the [VAF New Talents 2017](#) took place in Trebon. This is the traditional selection of best short films made by young and debuting artists from the Central and Eastern Europe produced in the previous year, which then travels worldwide festivals for the whole coming year. In 2016, New Talents have been successfully screened on more than 20 festivals. In 2017, New Talents is also adding additional activities including cinema distribution in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.