

AVANTI

A program to support
the South Caucasian Film Community
on creative, legal and technical levels

Proposed and implemented by



Foundation for professional training
in cinema and audio visual media

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THE COUNTDOWN

After three and a half years since the first activities of the AVANTI program, the deadline for the transfer from **FOCAL** to the **Independent Filmmakers' Association - South Caucasus, IFA-SC**, has been set. It will be 30 June 2007.

In other words, it is at that moment that the European implementing organization will leave the field free for the South Caucasian NGO to deal directly with the funding institution - the **Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation** - with respect to its organizational development, activities and financing.

This might sound like a formal exercise, and therefore obvious and easy. The reality of the matter is more complex.

The first challenges in IFA-SC's existence, in particular *how* to gather filmmakers from the three countries around trans-national goals, have been taken up victoriously by its members and their national communities. And believe us, this *how* covers hundreds of discussions, meetings, general assemblies, working groups, negotiations, compromises, creative solution researches, communications, texts, etc.



Pierre Agthe, Derek Müller

Despite so many reasons which have threatened the existence of IFA-SC over many months, it does now exist, has now been working efficiently for over a year! And, as you can see from this Newsletter, it has even become a key player in the region.

We would like here to warmly thank and congratulate the many actors and actresses who have contributed to this admirable achievement.

However, all this offers no full guarantee for the future, and the job to securing a sustainable existence for IFA-SC remains to be done. This is why 30 June 2007 should and could also be the moment for new partners - on national, regional and international levels - to start collaborating with and, hopefully, co-financing this unique initiative within the regional film and audiovisual community.

The countdown has started and all of us (FOCAL, SDC and IFA-SC) will do our best to find these new partners, to convince them to come on board.

Derek Müller, Regional Director, Swiss Development Cooperation
in the South Caucasus

Pierre Agthe, AVANTI Project Leader

WORDS OF ADDRESS OF MR. LORENZO AMBERG, AMBASSADOR OF SWITZERLAND

Dear Readers,

It's a great pleasure for me to introduce this issue of AVANTI Newsletter. After taking up my new function at the end of August 2006, I had my first contact with IFA-SC activities in October during the 7th International Film Festival, at a reception in a Tbilisi hotel, where I met filmmakers from all three South Caucasus countries as well as consultants from Switzerland.

As a cinema fan for many years who is well aware of the world famous film tradition of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, I was delighted to witness concrete regional and international co-operation in a sphere where, like in no other, the final product is a result of the sophisticated combination of most various skills such as artistic inspiration, sound technical knowledge, managerial skills and last but not least marketing.

I wish all of you who are actively engaged in this excellent project further success in your endeavour and I am looking forward to seeing many new films bearing the IFASC-label.

With best regards and wishes

Lorenzo Amberg, Ambassador of Switzerland to Georgia and Armenia, Tbilisi

AVANTI - A few milestones

July 2003 - April 2004. **The Updating Program** brought together some fifty participants over four 10-day sessions to update their skills and revitalize film production in the region. Twenty-seven film projects - feature films, documentaries and short films - were developed by 37 filmmakers and producers from the film communities in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, from the original concept to the final production package, assisted by international mentors and consultants. Simultaneously, twelve lawyers addressed areas of law that are relevant to the film business in a market economy.

As follow-up, international juries awarded US\$ 450,000 to co-finance six feature films, six short films, three documentaries and four legal projects. This second step of AVANTI was named the **Co-Funding Initiative**.

The last step of AVANTI was the creation of a trans-national association for independent filmmakers in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. After the elaboration of an organizational concept and activities plan drawn up by a Task Force of filmmakers from the three countries, the **Independent Filmmakers' Association - South Caucasus, IFA-SC**, was officially registered in Autumn 2005.

The goal of IFA-SC is to assist the film communities of the three countries in the South Caucasus in their endeavours to grow into an established sector of society both culturally and economically. Funded by the **Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)**, IFA-SC is part of the SDC programme for the South Caucasus, which aims to foster social cohesion and strengthen democratic governance in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

This third issue of the AVANTI Newsletter presents the achievements of IFA-SC in its first year of existence. **More than fifty film professionals participated in the first four workshops organized by IFA-SC, and the association has already managed to become a respected partner in the film sector of the South Caucasus.** It also provides an overview of the current state of production of the awarded projects.



Lorenzo Amberg

For details about The Updating Programm and previous steps of the Co-Funding Initiative please see the Newsletter 1 at <http://www.focal.ch/AVANTI/newsletter/index.html> and the Newsletter 2 at <http://www.focal.ch/AVANTI/newsletter2/index.html>



IFA-SC, THE INDEPENDENT FILMMAKERS ASSOCIATION – SOUTH CAUCASUS

21 Members of the Independent Filmmakers' Association - South Caucasus

Armenia

Arsen Arakelyan, *Film Director*
Vigen Galstyan, *Film Director/Producer*
Arzuman Harutunyan, *Film Director*
Vrej Kassouny, *Animator, Painter*
Harut Kbeyan, *Screenwriter*
Mariam Oganyan, *Film Director*
Aram Zarian, *Producer*

Azerbaijan

Alina Abdullayeva, *Film Director*
Mirsadig Agazade, *Film Director*
Ali Isa Jabarov, *Film Director*
Arzu Mamedova, *Film Director*
Nariman Mammadov, *Laywer/Producer*
Aynur Mustafayeva, *Producer*
Shamil Najafzade, *Film Director*

Georgia

Levan Adamia, *Film Director*
Irakli Bagaturia, *Producer*
Rusudan Glurjidze, *Film Director*
Vasil Janjgava, *Manager*
Rusiko Pirveli, *Film Director*
Tamara Tatishvili, *Lawyer*
Vakhtang Varazi, *Film Director*

Words of address by the Members of the Board

One year already!

It is our pleasure, as Board Members of IFA-SC, to address and greet the readers of the Newsletter.

Already a year has passed since filmmakers from the South Caucasus officially established the "Independent Filmmakers Association – South Caucasus".

We are pleased to announce that, due to its strong commitment, the Association has become a young dynamic and multi-cultural organization whose members and managing team are doing their best to carry out certain sector-specific projects and activities.

Within the year 2006, IFA-SC has started the organization of four professional training programs, such as script and project development of South Caucasian Films; improving promotion of South Caucasian films and projects; Direct Sound Recording and Post Production. Furthermore, IFA-SC is in the process of carrying out market research in the three countries, the results of which are to be produced in early 2007.

In this regard, IFA-SC has already set up successful cooperation with different organizations, working not only in the film sector but also in other aspects of the cultural scene, on state and/or non-governmental levels. This list includes, but is not limited to, the following stakeholders: National Cinema Centre of Georgia, Caucasus Media Institute, Union of Filmmakers Azerbaijan, Georgian Film School, Caucasus Environmental Network - CENN and others.



IFA-SC Members

IFA-SC has also closely cooperated with two major Film Festivals in South Caucasus: Yerevan International Film Festival "Golden Apricot" and Tbilisi International Film Festival.

We are honored to announce that IFA-SC's professional network is expanding thanks to the training programs' participants. Within the past year, we took more than 50 participants on board of our training programs, and started to introduce them to the complex know-how of filmmaking: development, production, sales and still more.

Members of the Board (1st year)

Ashot Mkhitarian, *Armenia*
replaced by **Arzuman Harutunyan**
Nariman Mammadov, *Azerbaijan*
Tamara Tatishvili, *Georgia*

Members of the Board (2nd year)

Arsen Arakelyan, *Armenia*
Shamil Najafzade, *Azerbaijan*
Vakhtang Varazi, *Georgia*

Chairperson (1st year)

Nariman Mammadov, *Azerbaijan*

Chairperson (2nd year)

Vakhtang Varazi, *Georgia*

Executive Director

Tamara Tatishvili, *Georgia*

Managing Team IFA-SC Tbilisi Office

Sophie Khoperska, *Accountant*
Salome Sepashvili, *Project Coordinator*
Anuka Tskipurishvili, *Assistant*
Mathias Noschis, *Assistant to the
Director*

Baku Office

Leyla Dostallzade, *Assistant*

Yerevan Office

Magda Markosyan, *Assistant*

Activity assistants

Irma Janjgava, *Market Research
Coordinator*
Nika Paniashvili, *Sound Assistant*

The AVANTI Coaching Team for the Trans-national project

Pierre Agthe, *Project Leader*
Luciano Gloor, *IFA-SC Head Consultant
and Head of Training*
Jeanne Berthoud, *IFA-SC Consultant*

We strongly believe that our activities and close work with different individual filmmakers from the three countries will have a long-term positive impact on the film communities and will truly strengthen the film sector in the South Caucasus.

Given all this experience to date, together with the strong motivation and willingness involved, we see the prospects for the Association's future in a far brighter light with respect to developing new concepts, establishing a wider network, and lobbying for the integration of South Caucasian Filmmakers into the international film community.

We do hope that IFA-SC will implement many interesting and productive projects/activities, and that it will make a great difference in the development of the film sector of the South Caucasus.

It will be our pleasure to keep you updated on the successful accomplishments of IFA-SC in the future!

Sincerely,

IFA-SC Board

THE IMPACT OF IFA-SC IS MORE THAN THE MERE ADDITION OF ITS COMPONENT ACTIVITIES

The following report presents some of IFA-SC's recent and current activities. Having very closely accompanied these activities, we would like to share some of our observations with you. The commonly known piece of wisdom to which the title of our contribution refers is well worth applying to the unique experience of IFA-SC.



Luciano Gloor, Jeanne Berthoud

The Activities Report sticks to facts directly related to what IFA-SC does, but the reality is much richer and consists of many different interlinked facets and layers.

- When national festivals start talking about cooperation thanks to contact established via IFA-SC,
- When public film funding bodies plan to introduce into their procedures professional tools that they learned about during training conducted by IFA-SC,
- When a group of young filmmakers from the three countries approaches IFA-SC full of enthusiasm and asks about the possibilities for co-operation,

then, even if unplanned, all this can – and must – be considered as a direct or indirect result of IFA-SC's very existence.

Many more such examples could be given. They all show the role that IFA-SC has the potential to grow into in the future: to be a point of reference and professional consultation for the film communities of the South Caucasus. And even more, to be a point of reference on the international level. For instance, IFA-SC has already been approached by foreign institutions searching for contacts with South Caucasian films and filmmakers.

We wish IFA-SC all the success it deserves on its future path.
Jeanne Berthoud, IFA-SC Consultant
Luciano Gloor, IFA-SC Head Consultant and Head of Training

IFA-SC - A unique platform established by professionals for professionals

A closer look at some of the IFA-SC activities over the past year

Expert

Christa Saredi, Sales Agent

23 participants

7 Producers

5 Film Directors

4 Writer-Directors

3 Directors-Producers

2 Journalists

1 Art Manager

1 Animator, Painter

Male: 70%

Female: 30%

Armenian participants: 34%

Azeri participants: 27%

Georgian participants: 39%

Training in "Promotion of South Caucasian Films and Film Projects"

During the International Film Festival Tbilisi in October 2006, the IFA-SC held the first session of the 5-day training for film professionals - mostly in the production and distribution sectors - to teach them how to make use of film festivals for networking in order to promote their own film projects or to sell their films. Follow-up sessions will be held in 2007 during film festivals in Armenia and Azerbaijan.



Christa Saredi



A great stimulus

"I learnt how to pitch my project: How to present the content and vision of my project in a clear, short and convincing way to sell it to potential producers and investors. Thanks to this workshop, I acquired a more serious attitude to festivals in general. Before this training, I had attended many festivals, including the festival of Oberhausen in Germany, yet I never tried to network during the festivals. It is a well known practice that film makers go to festivals to have a rest and enjoy themselves. Thanks to the training, I understood that it was my aim at this festival to meet its guests and to talk to them about my project.

And this is what I did during the workshop at the International Film Festival in Tbilisi: I presented my project to producers and directors from Germany and France. I met my colleagues from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia - producers, scriptwriters and directors - and I hope that in future I will be able to inform you about my cooperation with these persons.

For a creative person such training and festivals are a great stimulus for future professional projects. Personally, I understood that I had to prepare a new script for a feature film. I am very grateful to everyone for the opportunity of participating in the training and I also hope to participate in other training courses, namely, in the training for scriptwriters and producers."

Lusine Gevorgian, Armenia

"Purchase of digital direct sound and post-production equipment"

In order to contribute toward the technical improvements needed for high quality film production in South Caucasus, IFA-SC purchased three sets of direct sound recording equipment. To maintain sound quality in post-production, the association purchased one set of post-production equipment. Thereby, the film community will be given access to state-of-the-art sound equipment to replace analogue, mono techniques. IFA-SC will design an equipment loan scheme in order to generate a certain income and to reinvest it in other upcoming activity plans.



Expert

Andreas Litmanowitsch, *Sound Engineer*

9 participants
 Sound Engineers
 Male: 89%
 Female: 11%
 Armenian participants: 56%
 Azeri participants: 22%
 Georgian participants: 22%

“Training in direct sound recording”

In order to spread the know-how for working with digital sound recording in the South Caucasus, IFA-SC organized in October 2006 the first session of the 7-day training for sound technicians. The training course, consisting of both theoretical and practical instruction, will continue in early spring 2007.



Andreas Litmanowitsch

Expert

Florian Eidenbenz, *Sound Engineer*

9 participants
 Sound Engineers / Sound Directors
 Male: 67%
 Female: 33%
 Armenian participants: 22%
 Azeri participants: 22%
 Georgian participants: 56%

“Training in digital sound post-production”

In October 2006, IFA-SC organized a first 7-day training in digital sound post-production for sound technicians. The main purpose was to spread know-how in premixing / mixing based on direct digital sound recording, and to lend support to sector-specific specialists seeking to establish themselves as professional sound mixers and engineers. A follow-up session will take place in spring 2007.

**A real example of building bridges**

“First of all I was interested in the sound post-production seminar to learn and understand how a professional sound studio in Switzerland works and, finally, to be able to work on a Pro Tools station I have heard a lot about but never worked with.

After the first part of our workshop was over, I have to say that all the expectations I had in the workshop came true and even more because the expert appeared to be a real professional not only in sound engineering but as a teacher as well. His deep knowledge in such areas - at first sight not even not connected to sound engineering, like programming and mathematics - showed me absolutely new boundaries and possibilities of my profession.

I obtained a lot of useful information, many tricks, which are not to be found in any special literature and, finally, I met like-minded people who became my friends. And it doesn't matter where they are from Armenia, Azerbaijan or Georgia - this seminar joins us together in one community to know more, share our experiences and hope to create some great projects together in the future.

Although the programme of the workshop was very intense and demanding, I can say I had a great time. That's the real example of “building bridges” between our three countries to make them closer to solve any existing problems - sitting together learning and afterwards celebrating a birthday just proves that.”



Florian Eidenbenz

Stanislav Zhdanov, Georgia

Experts

Clare Downs, *Script Consultant*
Cedomir Kolar, *Producer*

36 Participants
13 Screenwriters
12 Producers
3 Directors-Producers
2 Film Directors
1 Animator, Painter
1 Film Critic
1 Music Critic
1 Art Manager
1 Biologist, Writer
1 Manager
Male: 60%
Female: 40%
Armenian participants: 34%
Azeri participants: 31%
Georgian participants: 35%

Training in "Project and Script Development of South Caucasian Films"

In November 2006 IFA-SC conducted the first session of the 5-day training for writers/directors, producers and promoters of films (distributors, exhibitors, sellers) to improve skills in writing and analyzing screenplays, project development, market analysis of projects and their respective interrelations.

Follow-up workshops will be held in 2007.

Tako Tatishvili,
Cedomir Kolar,
Clare Downs



A creative input (Selected statements from participants)

"It was very important to learn about what exactly is the producer's function in a film. Since this profession is new in our countries, we lacked this knowledge"

"I have learnt how attentive and creative one has to be to do a proper pitching of a project."

"I got to know a new model of story structuring, so different from the one we were taught at the "Russian" school of cinema. The workshop has given us a stimulus to develop further as professionals. We have received useful advice and witnessed a brilliant analysis of the structure and ideas of our projects"

We were charged with fresh energy

"Communication with such high-class professionals as the invited experts is a deep emotional and professional experience. They charged all the participants of the training with fresh energy and taught them the right attitude to their work. This is very important, taking into account the fact that the majority of the participants had very little, if any, practical and theoretical education in the field of cinema. Due to the difficult state of filmmaking in the Caucasus, the young filmmakers are unable to get real practice of filmmaking. Therefore, this event, organized by IFA-SC, is of special importance.

Besides, we got a real opportunity for dialogue between film-directors, scriptwriters and producers from the three countries. It turned out that, despite territorial closeness, we have little understanding of the processes taking place in our neighboring countries.

The training has met my expectations and I was delighted with the dedication of the experts to their work. For young Azeri directors such meetings are of great value. Communication with people who have reached such professional heights opens new horizons for us.

At present Azerbaijan is excluded from worldwide filmmaking processes. This country simply does not exist on the map of cinema. This "Terra Incognita" is still expecting its Columbus. The film-industry is still non-functioning. The training of young directors is almost ignored. The traditions of the Soviet school of directing have been lost. Naturally, Azerbaijan has to overcome this crisis by its own efforts and I am confident that in the nearest future the situation will improve.

With this in mind, I consider that the knowledge obtained from famous European experts cannot be overestimated. In this connection, I would like to thank all the organizers of the training and express my special gratitude to the experts of the work-shop."

Ilgar Safat, Azerbaijan



Vano Arsenishvili, Luciano Gloor,
Clare Downs

PUBLIC EVENTS OF IFA-SC OVER THE PAST YEAR



Tako Tatishvili

10 June 2006, IFA-SC presentation in Tbilisi

IFA-SC presented its objectives and activities schedule. The presentation, followed by a cocktail party, was attended by 120 guests. The event was covered by several TV stations and print media.



19 June 2006, IFA-SC presentation in Baku

An identical IFA-SC presentation event was held in Baku and attended by 35 persons. The event was covered by several TV stations and print media.

11 October 2006 IFA-SC Wine party during the 7th International Tbilisi Film Festival

IFA-SC hosted a wine party as a promotion event during the Festival. The event was attended by 150 guests, including the Swiss ambassador Lorenzo Amberg and diplomats from other countries. The event was covered by several TV stations.

In addition, **public lectures** on "Promotion of South Caucasian Films and Film Projects" and **public events** addressing the consequences of working with direct sound recording were successfully held in **Baku, Yerevan and Tbilisi**.



Nino Kirtadze, Mariam D'Abo, Tako Tatishvili, Nino Anjaparidze



NEXT STEPS.... THE UPCOMING ACTIVITIES OF IFA-SC IN 2007

For any further information about IFA-SC, or if you would like to be included in its mailing list, please contact one of the IFA-SC offices

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February

- Training in direct sound recording, follow-up workshop
- Public presentation and debate in Baku, Tbilisi and Yerevan of the market research results

Spring

- Training in "Project and Script Development of South Caucasian Films", follow-up workshop
- Training in digital sound post production, follow-up workshop
- Public demonstration and debate in Baku, Tbilisi and Yerevan: "Advantages and consequences of shooting with direct sound recording"

June

- Public panel discussion on market research results on a trans-national level, Tbilisi
- Ceremony and party celebrating IFA-SC's entry into a direct contractual relationship with SDC

July

- Training in "Promotion of South Caucasian Films and Film Projects", follow-up workshop, during the "Golden Apricot" Film Festival, Yerevan



IFA-SC Team

THE CO-FUNDING INITIATIVE - The state of the awarded projects production

The AVANTI Team monitoring the Co-Funding Initiative

Pierre Agthe, *Project Leader*
Joelle Com , *Documentary Films*
Julius Effenberger, *Legal Projects*
Martin Hagemann, *Feature Films*
Denis Rabaglia, *Short Films*

As a reminder, the following grants have been awarded:

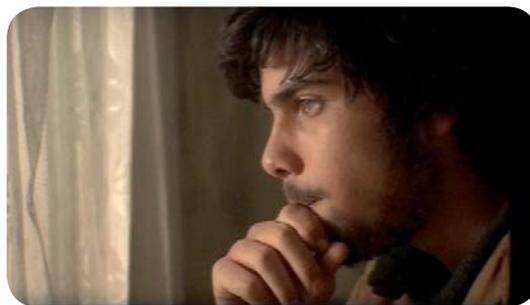
- To six short films (Georgia 4, Armenia 1, Azerbaijan 1), the sum of \$ 10,000 each.
- To six feature films (2 per country), the sum of \$ 50,000 each.
- To three documentaries (1 per country), the sum of \$ 20,000 each.
- To four legal projects (Georgia 1, Armenia 1, Azerbaijan 2), the sum of \$ 10,000 per country.

Although offering no guarantee that the production of the films or projects will be brought to completion, these grants do represent a serious incentive for other partners to co-fund the awarded films and projects.

To this day, seven films have been completed, three others are currently in post-production, and three legal projects have been successfully implemented.

This means that by mid-2007, the entire grants process for the short films, documentaries and legal projects will have been completed. Only the feature film funding shall remain an open opportunity for the five awarded-winning films not yet in production.

Yet, despite the completion of all the short and documentary films, the question of whether or not the Co-Funding Initiative has managed to provide the impetus it was meant to give will only be answered by the production of at least one feature film in each country. A challenge which our South Caucasian colleagues - with the help of a couple of European producers - are working hard to meet!



SHORT FILMS - Soon on DVD !

The short film projects were mentored
by Swiss Screenwriter and Consultant
Antoine Jaccoud

From the beginning, AVANTI was intended as an initiative for young professionals to access opportunities to create new images of the South Caucasus and convey the region's atmosphere. With the newest technology now available on the market, and given proper coaching in terms of content, professional results can be achieved relatively easily. Filmmaking is still a profession, even if, clearly, "digital freedom" has impacted on the former very notion of "film" as a privileged medium. Although short films can only have a career limited to festivals, they are a sign for the filmmaking of tomorrow and represent an opportunity to express freedom of speech through art.

As a whole, these six films show of wide range of filmmaking forms and genres: from naturalism to experimental films, from comedy to drama. They all give a special place to visual language and as such, they are in the direct line of the South Caucasian filmmaking tradition that has always favoured images (over dialogue).

To this day, of the six awarded-winning short films, four have been completed and two others are still in post-production. All the films were shot in Mini-DV in 16:9, except for the Azeri one, which was shot in 35mm and post-produced in video (a first in Baku!). It is interesting to note that the filmmakers had the choice between working with a producer or producing their short films themselves. The AVANTI Team noticed that delivery was easier in the case of the two films that were not produced by their directors; the four others all faced delays, as if the amount of work involved in writing-directing-producing a film somehow slowed things down.

We expect to launch the production of a special DVD sometime this spring. It will feature a presentation of the filmmakers, English and Russian subtitles and a photo gallery. By offering a collection of short films that will have been developed and produced in the same creative environment, this DVD will contribute to the birth of a new generation of South Caucasian filmmakers.



Films completed in 2006

"Try Not to Breathe" (Azerbaijan - 2006 - 15'), written and directed by Alina Abdullayeva, produced by Aynur Mustafayeva.

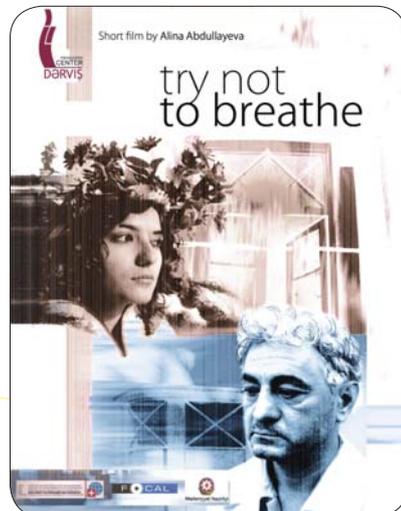
Co-funded by the Ministry of Culture of Azerbaijan.

A young lady who has her whole life ahead of her meets an old man with only one night left to live.

Awards:

Special prize of the jury, National Film Awards "Zolotaya lampa", Baku 2006.

"Best producer", 6th International Audiovisual Festival Baku, 2006.



“Curfew Hour” (Georgia - 2006 - 20’), written by Levan Adamia & Irakli Solomanashvili, produced and directed by Levan Adamia.
Co-funded by the National Cinema Center (NCC) of Georgia.
Nothing keeps people from meeting, not even a curfew hour..
Selected at Tbilisi International Film Festival 2006.



Films already completed in 2005

“The First Word is Missing” (Georgia - 2005 - 23’), written by Levan Lagazidze († 27 April 2004), directed by Giorgi Tsikharishvili, produced by Lela Mosemgvdlishvili and Irakli Bagaturia.
The return of a long-forgotten mother upsets the daily life of a young man.
Selected at Tbilisi International Film Festival 2005, Georgia and Cork International Short Film Festival 2006, Ireland.

“The Window” (Georgia - 2005 - 18’), written, directed and produced by Rusudan Pirveli.
Locked up by her husband, a young spouse has only the kitchen window through which to be part of the real world.
Awards:
Best Georgian Short Film, Special Prize by Videoscope, Tbilisi International Film Festival 2005, Georgia.
Honorary Diploma, Isfahan International Short Film Festival 2005, Iran.
Bronze Medal, Festival of Nations for Film and Video of Ebensee 2005, Austria.
Selected at International Panorama of Greece 2005, Mediterranean Film Festival of Montpellier 2005 in France, Izmir International Film Festival 2005, Turkey and many other festivals.

Films currently in post-production

“Wild Dogs” (Georgia), written, directed and produced by Irakli Paniashvili.
A man’s obsession with his BMW leads to a tragic outcome for him and his family.

“The Enemies” (Armenia), written, directed and produced by David Matevossian.
An Armenian soldier and an Azeri soldier, both badly injured, share some companionship on the battlefield.

FEATURE FILMS

Awarded feature films

Armenia

"Bonded Parallels"

Writer-Director & Producer: *Hovhannes Galstyan*

"Chnchik"

Director: *Aram Shahbazyan* Writers: *Aram Shahbazyan, Ara Mnatsakanyan, Mariam Asriyan, Harut Kbeyan*
Producers: *Ara Mnatsakanyan, Melik Karapetyan*

Azerbaijan

"Enemies of the Sun"

Writer-Director: *Mirsadig Agazadeh*

"40th Door"

Writer-Director: *Elchin Musa*

Georgia

"Keep Smiling"

Writer-Director: *Rusudan Chkonia*
Producer: *Sofia Damian*

"Naturmorte 1937"

Writer-Director: *Givi Odisharia*
Producer: *Tornike Berishvili*

Feature films are the pride of all film communities. For good or for bad, it is based upon the national and international renown of their feature films that the good health of a film community is judged. Have a film released in Cannes, and your country is back on the map!

The truth is far more complex. The new Europe of today is flooded with films. A region like the South Caucasus, whose films have been absent from the international scene for such a long time, must come back with strong films to attract attention again. Yet, the very fact that few films have been produced in the region in recent years does represent a chance for those actually completed.

This challenge has been taken up by Hovhannes Galstyan with the production of his first feature film **"Bonded Parallels"**, co-funded by AVANTI. Since the project entered the AVANTI training program - coached by Polish master Krzysztof Zanussi and American consultant Thomas Schlesinger - the Armenian writer-producer-director has come a long way, including the setting up of his own production company - Parallels Film LCC - to handle the project.

Co-produced by the Cultural Ministry of Armenia through the State Studio Haifilm and the Armenian-Russian distributor Paradise, a first part of the shoot was done in September 2006 in Armenia. Hovhannes Galstyan then spent nine months looking for additional financial resources outside Armenia. Based on the material already shot and edited, he managed to secure financing in France (Quasar Films, Paris) and Norway (US\$ 80,000 from the Norwegian Film Fund through Original Film AS, Oslo). Twelve days of shooting were then achieved in Norway in July 2007.

An additional grant from the Hubert Bals Fund in the Netherlands allowed Galstyan to complete post-production in the best conditions: sound editing and mixing is to take place between Yerevan and Moscow and will be finalized in Dolby 5.1 (a first for a South Caucasian film!). The AVANTI Team wishes to congratulate Hovhannes Galstyan for opening the path of international co-production, and looks forward to seeing the first of its feature films on the big screen!



The prospects look good for two other projects to be realized in the near future:

- The Armenian feature film **"Chnchik"** by Aram Shahbazyan is to be co-produced by Dutch producer Els Vandevorst (Isabella Films) and has been pre-sold to Swiss Television by Swiss producer Andrès Pfaeffli (Ventura Film SA). Over the years, this drama has attracted a lot of interest from many different potential co-producers. Yet financing for a film of such a violent nature remains a challenge. Nonetheless producers Ara Mnatsakanyan and Melik Karapetyan are hoping they get the film off the ground by the end of 2007.
- The Georgian feature film **"Keep Smiling"** by Rusudan Chkonia is in the hands of German-Georgian producer Sofia Damian. She brought the project to EAVE, the prestigious European training program for young producers. Like most films developed within this program, this bitter-sweet drama will probably end up being made rather late in the day.

Although three of its program's feature films should be completed between 2007 and 2008, the AVANTI Team believes that the objective of one-film-per-country may not be attained. In any case, current news on the Azeri feature projects production leaves little hope to the contrary.

DOCUMENTARY FILMS

The documentary film projects were mentored by French Documentary Film Director Denis Gheerbrant and by Russian Documentary Film Director Alexander Gutman

Of the six documentary film projects developed within AVANTI, three were awarded funding and all have now been completed.

The film **"The Dwellers of Forgotten Islands"**, directed by Hrant Hakobyan and produced by Ara Mnatsakanyan, chronicles a world of unprotected, forgotten and simple people who lead a tough life in a remote corner of an Armenian suburb. It was released in summer 2006.

The two versions of the film – a long 128-minute version (director's cut) without music, and a 52-minute one edited by the producer with an original score - are both devoid of either commentary or dialogues.

The film won first prize in the Armenian Panorama section at the Golden Apricot International Film Festival in Yerevan, 2006. The international jury strongly supported the film and congratulated the director and producer, stressing its appreciation of the AVANTI initiative.

The film also won first prize in the "digital and video films" section at the Kinoshock Festival in Anapa in 2006..



The film **"No Way Out"**, produced and directed by Nasimi Aliev, was completed in 2005 and released in early 2006. This 52-minute intimate portrait of Ali, a disabled musician struggling to make a living by teaching and composing music in Baku, was selected for the Saratov Film Festival in Russia. It was awarded "Best Documentary" at the 5th Central Film Festival of Azerbaijani Cinema entitled "Gold Lamp", which was held in Baku in August 2006.

It won the Grand Prix and the Best Film award at the 6th International Youth Festival of Audio-Visual Works held in November 2006 in Baku.

It was broadcasted on several Azeri TV channels in 2006.

As a direct result, the director, Nasimi Aliev, was admitted into the Union of Azeri Cinematographers. For his next film, support by the Ministry of Culture of the Azerbaijan Republic is also foreseen.



Nasimi Aliev

The film **"Children of War"**, directed by Malkhaz Kukianidze and produced by Gia Saghinadze (SDF Film), was completed in May 2005. The 52-minute film depicts a special train journey from Tbilisi to the seashore in Western Georgia, as taken by a small group of young boys and girls returning to the seaside for the first time since the war ten years ago. As the train starts moving, they tell us about the dramatic circumstances surrounding their departure from Sukhumi: terrible memories begin to unfold as the train brings them closer to the events that so brutally interrupted their childhood innocence

LEGAL PROJECTS

Two of the four legal projects funded through AVANTI have been completed to this day. The results of a third are still expected, while the fourth has been directly implemented into current practice.

The Armenian project was headed by Andranik Vahanyan and his associates Armine Parsadanyan, Gohar Sardaryan and Artiom Kostandyan. It ran from February 2005 through February 2006, under the title **Lawyers for Armenian Cinematography**. The project entailed legal services, organization of an Essays Competition, a research publication of its own, and student training. It attracted professionals and interested persons not only from the film sector, but from all walks of life.

Constructive and close cooperation between the participants led to an appreciable input of IP law knowledge, especially regarding copyright law and the ensuing moral rights for the Armenian film community. The published booklet deserves attention in Armenia and abroad by cinema professionals interested in working in that country.

In Azerbaijan, the **Copyright Centre** project by Fikrin Bektashi and his associates, Ismail Akhmadov and Javidan Nabiyeva, started end February 2005, and was also completed within six months. It elicited a strong response in the Azeri medias, especially in the press, thus rendering the AVANTI initiative well known throughout the country. The legal assistance to film professionals, the Copyright Enforcement seminar in cooperation with the Baku State University, the joint conference on Copyright Law with State Copyright Agency and State TV & Radio Council, the Round Table at the International Press Club, the distribution of a thematic leaflet and the training course on "Copyrights & Audiovisual Production" with eminent experts from the university and legal sectors – all deepened or created the basis for copyright awareness in the Azeri film sector.

Elmari Jabir Mamishov heads the second Azeri project group, which he initiated with his Associates Nigar F. Melikova and Parviz I. Isgandarov. The project targeted **Legal Consulting and Enlightenment in the Field of Film Production**, and featured the following activities: identifying copyright violations, creation of a webpage with a copyright infringements collection, seminars, a round table, free legal counseling. An AVANTI Legal Project public presentation took place at Baku's International Press Center. Training sessions with the Chairman of the Copyright Agency, Kamran Imanov, were attended by 28 students. Finally, 10 000 booklets on copyright law were published. In January 2006, the group was solicited to develop a course for universities on copyrights and to put it into practice, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, by teaching it.

The head of the project in Georgia, Tamara Tatishvili, has been solicited on several fronts, including for the leadership of the IFA-SC initiative. She was hence invited to spend several months in London in 2005 and 2006 to attend courses in British Politics and Global Public Policy at the London School of Economics and Political Science. For this reason, a prolongation of the one-year project, started in February 2005, has been granted. Still, Tamara Tatishvili and her Associates, Dr. Irma Kavtaradze and Tamuna Ramishvili, are expected to complete the project, which consists in the publication of a **Legal Guidebook** in Georgian language (with Russian and English summaries) for the film sector. The guidebook will provide professional information to the non-lawyer reader in the country and abroad, regarding legal aspects of film production in Georgia.

For any further information about IFA-SC, or if you would like to be included in its mailing list, please contact one of the IFA-SC offices

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