



Karlovy Vary International Film Festival

Press Release
Karlovy Vary IFF
June 16, 2026

KVIFF INDUSTRY DAYS UNVEILS 11 DIRECTORS SELECTED FOR KVIFF CENTRAL STAGE AND LAUNCHES BOOK-TO-SCREEN AT KVIFF IP ADAPTATION SHOWCASE

Doubling down on the Central-European co-production focus, KVIFF Promises has just unveiled the films selected for this year's KVIFF Central Stage showcase, as well as 8 books selected for the first edition of Book-to-Screen at KVIFF, the brand-new IP adaptation showcase.

The 11 upcoming films, selected for **KVIFF Central Stage** in partnership with 8 national film institutes across the region, are directed by established filmmakers with extensive festival pedigrees, including Nicolas Steiner, Antonio Lukich, Olga Chajdas or Cristina Groşan.

These films in the making, seeking co-production, financing, sales, distribution, and festival premiere opportunities, will be showcased during an interactive talk show on the Film Industry Main Stage on **Monday, July 6**. The participating projects will also gain access to exclusive post-production advantages through partnership with industry-leading studios UPP and Soundsquare and are eligible for the €20,000 Eurimages Co-Production Development Award.

The festival also unveiled the 8 literary works selected for **Book-to-Screen at KVIFF**, a new showcase that seeks to create a market for film adaptation rights to original IPs from Central and Eastern Europe and strengthen cooperation between the film and publishing industries. The award-winning books, selected by an international jury for their strong cinematic potential, will be presented to domestic and international producers in a talk show moderated by Niki Théron of the Frankfurt Book Fair on **Tuesday, July 7**.

In total, this year's KVIFF Promises will present **38 projects** across 5 programs to producers, sales companies, distributors, festival programmers, and other professionals seeking quality emerging films or works available for adaptation: 11 feature films in [KVIFF Central Stage](#), 9 treatments in [Works in Development – Feature Launch](#) and 4 in [Works in Development – Focus Queer](#), 6 feature film or series projects in [KVIFF Talents](#) and 8



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original literary IPs in [Book-to-Screen at KVIFF](#). Details about all the showcases can be found on the [KVIFF website](#) or the Book of Projects.

KVIFF Central Stage Introduces 11 Upcoming Films From the Central European Region

The aim of KVIFF Central Stage, created by the KVIFF Film Industry Office in cooperation with selected national film institutes of eight Central European countries, is to showcase upcoming feature films of established filmmakers in late-stage development, production or post-production.

“This format addresses a notable gap in the Central European film landscape, where mid-career filmmakers typically have fewer opportunities for visibility and financing than emerging ones. Thanks to cooperation with film institutes across the region, including Swiss Films as a new partner this year, we present experienced filmmakers working on anticipated projects already resonating with audiences,” says Hugo Rosák, the Head of KVIFF Film Industry Programs.

Switzerland will be represented by the project **Flying Mountain**, written and directed by Nicolas Steiner, whose previous films, such as *Above and Below*, were screened at Berlinale, IFF Rotterdam, and KVIFF.

Ukraine will present two co-productions by filmmakers with extensive festival credentials: **Screaming Girl** by director Antonio Lukich, whose comedy-drama *Luxembourg, Luxembourg* premiered at Venice and whose previous film *My Thoughts Are Silent* was also shown at KVIFF (Special Jury Prize, East of the West 2019), and **Noah** by director and screenwriter Marysia Nikitiuk. The documentary *Traces*, which she co-directed, had its world premiere and won the Audience Award in the Panorama section of this year's Berlinale. Her debut feature *When the Trees Fall* earned a nomination for best debut at the 2018 Berlinale and received the Krzysztof Kieslowski ScripTeast Award for best Eastern European screenplay in 2016. Her films were also shown in Cannes or at Tallinn Black Nights.

The **Czech Republic** has two representatives in the selection. Tomáš Hodan (*Poslední závod, Prezident Blaník*) will showcase the upcoming film **The Stones Are Rolling to Prague**, which recalls an iconic moment of the Czech 1990s through the story of



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preparations for the Rolling Stones' mega-concert in Prague in 1990. Czech cultural phenomena—namely cottage culture—are also explored in the comedy **A Few Branches Off** by Tomáš Pavlíček.

Romanian-Hungarian director Cristina Groșan (*Ordinary Failures*, premiered and awarded at Venice) will present her upcoming mob drama **Lesdenzero**, a co-production between Czechia, Switzerland, **Hungary**, and Romania.

Polish director Olga Chajdas, known to Karlovy Vary audiences from *Imago* (Proxima competition and FIPRESCI Prize, 2023), will present her female road movie **Tribe**.

German multidisciplinary artist Sebastian Fritsch, whose debut *Endzeit* premiered at Berlinale, will present the visually and atmospherically rich upcoming film **Trainrider**.

Slovenian writer and director Goran Vojnović will present the upcoming film adaptation of his own book *Yugoslavia, My Fatherland*. The selection concludes with the **Slovak** coming-of-age drama **Cowgirl** by Michal Blaško (*Victim*) and **Austrian** director Sebastian Brauneis's boxing biography **Hansi**, which captures 1960s Vienna.

Moving beyond traditional pitches, the projects will be showcased through interactive conversations about the filmmakers' career paths and co-production possibilities across the participating countries. The most promising films in development, selected by an international jury, will be eligible for the €20,000 Eurimages Co-Production Development Award.

The participating projects will also gain access to exclusive post-production advantages through a generous partnership with industry-leading studios UPP and Soundsquare. Films that meet the criteria for the Czech Audiovisual Fund's 35% digital production incentive will receive an additional 15% discount on comprehensive audio-visual post-production services from both studios. This distinctive package, complete with administrative assistance, showcases the growing strength of the regional audiovisual industry while making premium post-production services more accessible to regional filmmakers.

The KVIFF Central Stage showcase will take place at **2 pm on Monday, July 6**, on the Industry Main Stage in Kaiserbad.



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Detailed list of KVIFF Central Stage selected projects:

The Flying Mountain (Switzerland, Ireland, Austria)

Director, Screenplay: Nicolas Steiner

Production: Katrin Renz, Stefan Jäger, Nicolas Steiner, David Collins, Eamon Hughes, Alexander Dumreicher-Ivanceanu, Bady Minck

Screaming Girl (Ukraine, Ireland)

Director: Antonio Lukich

Screenplay: Antonio Lukich, Ailbhe Keogan

Production: Volodymyr Yatsenko, Anna Yatsenko, Jessie Fisk, Annie Barclay

Noah (Ukraine, Croatia, Belgium)

Director, Screenplay: Marysia Nikitiuk

Production: Igor Savychenko, Hrvoje Osvadić, Sébastien Delloye

Lesdenzero (Czech Republic, Switzerland, Hungary, Romania)

Director: Cristina Groșan

Screenplay: Arne Kohlweyer, Cristina Groșan

Production: Marek Novák

The Stones Are Rolling to Prague (Czech Republic, Slovakia)

Director, Screenplay: Tomáš Hodan

Production: Jakub Kraus, Martin Palán, Tibor Búza

A Few Branches Off (Czech Republic)

Director, Screenplay: Tomáš Pavlíček

Production: Eva Váchová, Pavel Vácha

Tribe (Poland, Albania)

Director, Screenplay: Olga Chajdas

Production: Karolina Galuba

Trainrider (Germany)

Director: Sebastian Fritzsch

Screenplay: Jan Bredehöft, Sebastian Fritzsch

Production: Corinna C. Poetter, Daniel Ehrenberg

Yugoslavia, My Fatherland (Slovenia, North Macedonia, Serbia)

Director: Goran Vojnović



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Screenplay: Goran Vojnović, Aleksandar Popovski
Production: Boštjan Ikoč, Miloš Ivanović

Cowgirl (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary)

Director: Michal Blaško
Screenplay: Jakub Medvecký
Production: Jakub Viktorín, Tomáš Hrubý

Hansi (Austria)

Director: Sebastian Brauneis
Screenplay: Sebastian Brauneis, Helmut Emersberger
Production: Ulrich Gehmacher

The KVIFF Central Stage showcase is presented in partnership with Austrian Films, Czech Film Center, German Films, Polish Film Institute, Slovenian Film Centre, Slovak Film Institute, Ukrainian Institute, Swiss Films, Soundsquare, and UPP.

Book-to-Screen at KVIFF: Establishing a Central-Eastern European Market for IP adaptations

A new collaboration with the Frankfurt Book Fair, Moravian Library in Brno, and Book World, supported by the PPF Foundation, brings literary adaptations firmly into the KVIFF Industry Days program. Inspired by a successful Berlinale program, Book-to-Screen at KVIFF will spotlight 8 books with strong screen potential, written by authors from Central and Eastern Europe, a region that Hugo Rosák describes as still underrepresented when it comes to IP development and the systematic handling of literary rights.

Producers seeking new material for film and television adaptations will have the opportunity to discover these literary works during an interactive talk show hosted by Niki Théron, Senior Manager International Projects and Film at the Frankfurt Book Fair, on **Tuesday, July 7** (10:30 am Film Industry Main Stage).

“For this first edition, we were delighted to receive more than 70 submissions from 14 countries. Selecting just eight was a real challenge, but the final line-up now reflects the region’s diversity of countries, genres and themes, from historical epics and folk horror to children’s stories and bold contemporary voices. We look forward to spotlighting these



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stories at KVIFF and helping pave the way for new book-to-screen partnerships across Central and Eastern Europe,” says Théron.

True Way Out, journalist Patrik Banga’s memoir about growing up in a Roma community in Prague’s Žižkov neighbourhood in the 1990s, won the Magnesia Litera award for Best Debut in 2023.

Playing Wolf is “a village novel you want to read in the safety of the city.” This folk-horror thriller by writer and literary scholar Zuzana Říhová, former Head of Czech Studies at Oxford, was successfully published in France and the USA by Éditions du Seuil and Catapult, respectively.

In the graphic novel **The Zone** by Slovak author and playwright Daniel Majling, a mysteriously hostile space takes on the title role itself. Absurd characters, dark humor, striking visuals, and cult status among Central European comics fans (the novel received the Czech Muriel Prize) all contribute to its strong adaptation potential.

Queen of Hearts, a dystopian satire by Moldovan author Iulian Ciocan, explores an ever-expanding, all-consuming crater in the middle of post-communist Chişinău.

Aspic Bistro by Ieva Dumbrytė, set in a surreal, almost Orwellian-controlled kitchen environment, won several awards in her native Lithuania, including the prize for the Most Creative Book of the Year.

The historical drama **Cupid at the Kremlin Wall** takes place during a tragic train journey across Georgia, at the height of the Stalinist terror in the 1930s. Historian Aka Morchiladze, its author, is an accomplished writer who has over 30 novels published in 15 countries. He has written several screenplays, and his previous book *Journey to Karabakh* was adapted into a film.

The selection also includes a strong representative of children’s literature, the Polish title **The River Odyssey of Kora from Willow Meadow** by Adam Robiński. The story of a young beaver named Kora offers strong potential for visually and emotionally compelling family film with ecological relevance.

The war in the Donbas serves as the starting point in **Amadoka**, a novel that combines an intimate human story with the vast historical trauma of Eastern Europe in a deeply cinematic way. Writer Sophia Andrukhovych won the International Hermann Hesse Prize



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2024 for it. Her debut novel *Felix Austria* already won the BBC Ukrainian Book of the Year award and was adapted into a film titled *Devoted*.

The showcase will be complemented by an IP-focused producers' think-tank and networking session. "Our long-term ambition with Book-to-Screen at KVIFF is to become a true Central-Eastern European IP market that helps develop dialogue between the film and publishing industries and create a more transparent environment for adaptation rights in the region," says Hugo Rosák.

Full list of Book-to-Screen at KVIFF 2026 projects:

Playing Wolf (Czech Republic)

Author: Zuzana Říhová

Genre: folk horror, psychological thriller

Publisher: Argo

The True Way Out (Czech Republic)

Author: Patrik Banga

Genre: coming-of-age, autobiography

Publisher: Host

Cupid at the Kremlin Wall (Georgia)

Author: Aka Morchiladze

Genre: historical drama, detective novel

Publisher: Sulakauri Publishing

Aspic Bistro (Lithuania)

Author: Ieva Dumbrytė

Genre: magic-realism satire

Publisher: Kitos knygos

Queen of Hearts (Moldova)

Author: Iulian Ciocan

Genre: dystopian novel

Publisher: Polirom

The River Odyssey of Kora from Willow Meadow (Poland)

Author: Adam Robiński



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Genre: children's literature

Publisher: Widnokrąg

The Zone (Slovakia)

Author: Daniel Majling

Genre: graphic novel

Publisher: Brak

Amadoka (Ukraine)

Author: Sophia Andrukhovych

Genre: historical/war novel

Publisher: The Old Lion Publishing House

KVIFF Industry Days are supported by the PPF Foundation and the Ministry of Culture Czech Republic. The media partner is Deadline.

More about the KVIFF Industry Days mission, its KVIFF Promises platform and other activities can be found [here](#).