

FEST 2026

FILM SUBMISSIONS | RULES & REGULATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. FEST - New Directors | New Films Festival (hereinafter: the Festival) will have its next edition from **20th June to 28th June 2026** in Espinho, Portugal. (The festival reserves the right to change the dates and place for extraordinary circumstances.)

1.2. The Festival is organized by FEST – Associação Cultural (hereinafter: the Organization), a non-profit NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) developing work on film, media and education, registered at Rua 23 N.º 768, 4500-276 Espinho, Portugal.

1.3. The **22nd edition of the FEST** will take place with the following objectives:

- Promote sustainable development of film, screenings and promoting new talents in this area;
- Disseminate new innovative work and film discourses from around the globe, providing a privileged window into the world of New Cinema;
- Create new audiences for cinema;
- Promote the interchange of experiences between participants in the event;
- Elevate the skills of participants;
- Promote the city of Espinho as a quality cultural tourism destination;
- Offer a quality cultural event accessible to every individual.

2. KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

2.1. **The applications will be admitted between the 15th of September 2025 and the 2nd of February 2026, at 23:59 UTC:**

- **Early Bird:** Period from September 15, 2025, to October 15, 2025 (until 11:59 PM GMT);
 - **Regular Period:** Period from October 16, 2025, to January 4, 2026 (until 11:59 PM GMT);
 - **Extended Deadline:** Period from January 5, 2026, to February 2, 2026 (until 11:59 PM GMT).
- All applications submitted after this date may be disqualified.

2.2. The films must have been concluded after the **1st of January 2025** and they must not have been screened in previous editions of the Festival.

2.3. All links/online screeners must be made available until the **31st of May 2026**. It is also obligatory that all films are made available with English subtitles.

2.4. The exhibition copies must be sent by **10th of May 2026**, unless both parties have a written agreement claiming the opposite.

2.5. The Organization of the Festival will inform the applicants that have been selected for the competitive section by email or phone, latest by the **31st of May 2026**.

2.6. In case a film is awarded, it will be rescreened on the **28th of June 2026**, without additional costs or fees.

2.7. The Organization ensures the delivery of prizes if no representative of the film is present at **the closing ceremony**, which will take place on the **27th of June 2026 in Espinho**. The prizes consist of a special trophy that will be **sent via post by the end of December 2026**. The festival regards the right to send the prize **only one time**.

3. ELIGIBILITY

- 3.1. The Festival has two distinct types of competition, competitions focused on **Feature Films** (upwards of 55 minutes length) and competitions for **Short Films** (up to 54 minutes). These competitions are represented in the sections Golden and Silver Lynx, NEXXT, Portuguese Grand Prix and FESTinha.
- 3.2. The Festival has other sections, this time non-competitive, such as the ECHOES, Be Kind Rewind and other special sessions.
- 3.3. We accept Fiction, Documentary, Animation, Experimental Non-Narrative and Children films (features and shorts) by authors who have produced no more than two feature films (works longer than 55 minutes). All works produced by that author, after he or she has completed the second feature film will be automatically considered invalid.
- 3.4. The feature film competition accepts films that are **first or second feature length productions** (regardless of the director's age).
- 3.5. The films must have been concluded after the **1st of January 2025** and they must not have been screened in previous editions of the Festival.
- 3.6. Film submissions will not be discriminated against in terms of theme, genre, race, creed or any other limitations, apart from the elements described in these regulations. As such, all submissions will be analyzed with the same rigor and dedication.
- 3.7. Submissions which do not fit these requirements will be considered automatically invalid, and FEST reserves the right to not let the applicant know that his or her application has been disqualified.

4. FILMS SUBMISSIONS

- 4.1. All films to be considered for selection must be submitted using only one of the following options:
- Using our own page at **FilmFreeway** (<https://filmfreeway.com/festival/FestNewDirectorsNewFilmsFestival>), where the largest possible amount of information about the production should be made available. If you choose to not use the FilmFreeway streaming service, we would be thankful if the submitters would leave the download option activated, but this is not mandatory;
 - Using our page at **Festhome** (<https://festhome.com/f/1524>), where the largest possible amount of information about the production should be made available.
- 4.2. There are three submission periods: a) Early Bird, which starts on September 15, 2025, and ends on October 15, 2025, at 11:59 PM GMT; b) Regular, which starts on October 16, 2025, and ends on January 4, 2026, at 11:59 PM GMT; c) Extended deadline, which starts on January 5, 2026, and ends on February 2, 2026, at 11:59 PM GMT. **All applications submitted after the mentioned deadline may be automatically disqualified.**
- 4.3. All links/online screeners must be made available until the **31st of May 2026**. It is also obligatory that all films are made **available with English subtitles** (including Portuguese productions) unless all dialogues are already in English.
- 4.4. If the submitter has any problem completing the application or making the online screener available via streaming, he or she must get in direct contact with the Organization of the Festival via the following address films@fest.pt between the **15th of September 2025 and the 2nd of February 2026** (the email title/subject must contain the title of the film and the name of the director in the title). The organization reserves the right to not reply to requests and queries sent outside of the mentioned period.

4.5. The applicant will indicate on the entry form the category of their film. Only one of the following options must be chosen: Fiction; Documentary; Animation; Experimental.

- If the film in question is a hybrid, where different styles and genres are mixed, the candidate must choose one single genre.
- The Organization reserves the right to choose a different style or genre than the one selected by the candidate and indicated in the submission form.

4.6. It is permitted for the applicant to submit more than one film (in separate entries); The candidate cannot submit the same film in different categories or genres, as described in point 4.5.

4.7. Once a film is submitted to the Festival, it cannot, for any reason, be removed from the program by the person or institution who submitted it.

4.8. By filling in the form and sending the application and film, the applicant provides full legal authorization for the Organization to exhibit the film in the Festival and in public presentations. However, each selected candidate will be contacted in order to sign and send us an exhibition license, either as an individual or as a group, for legal purposes.

5. SUBMISSION FEE

5.1. All film submissions are dependent on a submission fee. The payment will be completed using Paypal and the submission platforms mentioned above in 4.1.

- Between **September 15, 2025, and October 15, 2025**, the **Early Bird** discount will apply, with a submission fee of **€10.00** per short film and **€15.00** per feature film;
- Films submitted between **October 16, 2025, and January 4, 2026**, will be subject to the regular submission fee of **€14.00** per short film and **€20.00** per feature film;
- Films submitted between **January 5, 2026, and February 2, 2026**, during the special extension period, will have an increased fee of **€20.00** per short film and **€30.00** per feature film.

5.2. All Portuguese majority productions are exempt of any submission fee in order for the organization to promote the participation of the Portuguese artists and industry members. This exemption does not apply to other Portuguese speaking nations and regions.

5.3. All productions from countries currently under sanctions by the European Union or the Portuguese Republic, or with significant obstacles to PayPal access or impossibility of international bank transfers, may be exempt from paying the submission fee.

5.4. All of these situations will be dealt on a case by case basis, as such, it is vital that these candidates get in touch with the Organization of the Festival, before completing the submission, via this email: films@fest.pt.

- If a candidate has any significant technical problem in the payment of the submission fee, he or she must get in touch right away with the organization via email to films@fest.pt in order to initiate a discussion on alternative payment methods. These situations will be dealt with on a case by case basis and the Organization reserves the right to not provide an alternative to PayPal as a payment method.

5.5. If a candidate requires a Fee Waiver, they will have to get in touch with the organization via email to films@fest.pt, explaining with great detail the reasons behind their request. The Organization reserves the right to deny any Fee Waiver.

5.6. The organization is not obligated to refund submission fees.

5.7. If the purchaser wishes to receive an invoice:

- If the submission was done on our platform and site, it must be requested within the first 30 days after making the payment. The invoice request must be sent via email to films@fest.pt and it must have the payment confirmation attached and contain the invoice details of the purchaser (name, postal address, and tax / VAT number).
- If the submission was done on other platforms, as written above, in point 4.1 (FilmFreeWay, FestHome), the invoice must be requested directly to those platforms.

6. AWARDS AND JURY

6.1. The Festival's competitions are structured in different sections, each with its own jury members. Each section, jury and award is structured as follows:

- **Golden Lynx Competition (Feature Films):** All feature films selected for the Golden Lynx competition will compete for: Golden Lynx Award for Best Fiction Feature Film; Golden Lynx Award for Best Documentary Feature Film. These films will also compete for the **Audience Award for Best Feature Film**.
- **Silver Lynx Competition (Short Films):** All short films selected for the Silver Lynx competition will compete for: Silver Lynx Award for Best Fiction Short Film; Silver Lynx Award for Best Documentary Short Film; Silver Lynx Award for Best Animation Short Film; Silver Lynx Award for Best Experimental Short Film. These films will also compete for the **Audience Award for Best Short Film**.
- **National Grand Prix (GPN Grande Prémio Nacional):** All short films selected for the National Grand Prix, limited to Portuguese majority productions, will compete for the **National Grand Prix Award**.
- **NEXXT Competition:** All short films selected for the NEXXT competition, limited to films produced in an academic context, will compete for the **NEXXT Award**.
- **FESTinha (Children & Teen Audiences):** All feature and short films selected for the FESTinha section, focused on content for children and teenagers, will compete for one of the following awards: FESTinha Sub6; FESTinha Sub10; FESTinha Sub12; FESTinha Sub16.

6.2. The Festival Organization will create different separate jury groups (each consisting of between 2 and 5 members), who will have complete freedom, without any interference or suggestion from the organization, in deciding the award recipients.

6.3. The winners of the **FESTinha** competition will be defined in a different format, where a pre-defined group of children and teenagers, through a workshop method, will decide on the 3 winning films, without any interference by the Organization which may put in question the independence and neutrality of the jury.

6.4. The two **Audience Awards** (one for feature and another for short films) will be defined through a ballot paper vote.

- Only the films exhibited in the context of the Golden and Silver Lynx competitions will be eligible for the Audience Award.

6.5. The final Jury attributes awards without appeal and according to rules based on general principles determined by the Organization. The final jury has the right to not award any one of the prizes if the criteria, according to their belief, are not met.

- The Jury **may not choose to award more than one** winning film in each category.
- The Jury may distribute a maximum of two **Honourable Mentions** per category, although it has the right to not attribute any mention if it sees fit.

6.6. Media representatives present at the Festival may provide a **Film Critics' Award** without the interference of the Organization.

6.7. The Organization ensures the delivery of prizes if no representative of the film is present at **the closing ceremony**, which will take place on the **27th of June 2026 in Espinho**. The prizes consist of a special trophy that will be **sent via post by the end of December 2026**. The festival regards the right to send the prize **only once**.

6.8. Additional rewards are not guaranteed, and if confirmed will be made known via our website <https://site.fest.pt/en/>, together with additional rules specifically defined for that purpose, if necessary. These new rules will not change or affect any other rule published in this document.

7. SELECTION PROCESS

7.1. The selection of the Festival is made by a secret group of programmers which should not be contacted directly by the applicants, as such any direct dialogue with programmers can be regarded as an unfair advantage and can be a strong enough reason for the Organization to disqualify the submissions.

- All information, questions, queries or sending of additional material or updated news of the film or filmmakers recent career must be sent to films@fest.pt (the email title/subject must contain the title of the film and the name of the director in the title).
- The Organization reserves the right to not share information about the chances of selection of a submission during the period of analysis.

7.2. The Organization of the Festival will inform the applicants that have been selected for the competitive section by email or phone, latest by the **31st of May 2026**.

- The Organization reserves the right to not contact non-selected submissions, yet the organization commits itself to do all the necessary efforts to contact every single submitter if possible. The official selection will be published on the festival website <https://site.fest.pt/en/> and on our official Instagram and Facebook accounts.
- The Organization reserves the right to not use the contact options and selection news services within the partner platforms (FilmFreeway, Fest Home).

7.3. The Organization is not obliged to provide reasons for the non-selection of a film.

7.4. The Organization is not obliged to cover screening fees, as such applicants recognize this situation at the time of submission.

8. EXHIBITION FORMATS AND TRANSIT OF SCREENING COPIES

8.1. Expenses for the shipping and screening of films are to be met by the film's applicants; unless there is a previous written agreement between the applicant and the Organization stating the contrary.

8.2. All applications or film copies sent with remitted expenses to be paid at the destination will be returned and considered invalid.

8.3. The exhibition copies must be sent by the **10th of May 2026**, unless both parties have a written agreement claiming the opposite.

8.4. The Festival accepts the following formats for exhibition: **DCP, Blu-Ray, digital file .MP4 or .MOV, 1080p or 720p**. However, the final screening format will be defined according to the technical capabilities of each venue hosting the screenings and the production of each film. These formats can be changed by the Organization of the Festival at any moment. 5.1 Audio may not be available.

- All exhibition copies must have no embedded subtitles and shall be accompanied by a **srt. file** with the correct time codes and clear English subtitles;
- We do not accept copies with dialogue lists.

9. INFORMATIONS ABOUT THE SCREENING AND SELECTION

9.1. The Organization reserves the right to define the date of the screening and does not guarantee that the date can be altered at the convenience of the applicant. FEST also reserves the right, in case of extraordinary reasons, to change the date and time of the screening at the last minute.

- In case a film is awarded, it will be rescreened on the **28th of June 2026**, without additional costs or fees.

9.2. All selected filmmakers will be provided with **free accreditations** that give full access to all film screenings, masterclasses and workshops.

9.3. All selected filmmakers have the right to submit, free of charge, one single project application to the **2027 edition of FEST – Pitching Forum**.

9.4. All selected filmmakers will be provided with up to **10 tickets** for the official screening, which must be requested by the **13th of June 2026**.

9.5. The Organization cannot guarantee any support or reimbursement of travel, accommodation and food expenses by any member of the cast and crew of a selected film. The applicant recognizes this situation at the time of submitting the film.

9.6. All films and materials sent to the Festival will not be returned and will remain in the event's archive, unless there is a previous written agreement between the applicant and the Organization stating the contrary.

9.7. All the confirmed films will be presented in:

- physical and online programming on our website (<https://site.fest.pt/en/>);
- *FEST – New Directors | New Films Festival* Catalog, which will be distributed among the jury and Festival guests, and available for sale in the Festival shop;
- publications for social media and digital platforms of the Festival, and media.
- The information about the film, the visual materials and the directors' profiles for the publication will be based on the information and materials submitted in the submission. The Organization is not responsible for any spelling or grammar mistakes or wrong information provided in the submission form.
- Equally, title changes made by the filmmakers after the submission, may not be possible to alter, as such the applicant recognizes this at the moment of completing the submission.

9.8. Changes requested after submitting a film or after the announcement of the selection results may not be possible to alter, as such the applicant recognizes this at the moment of completing the submission.

9.9 The Organization reserves the right to not include all the submitted information in the publications described in points 8. and 9. and to choose only specific sections to be featured in each publication.

10. FINAL STIPULATIONS

10.1. The Organization is not under any obligation to pay compensation where any change to or cancellation of the Festival program is caused by circumstances outside our control, namely: war or threat of war, riots, civil strife, industrial dispute, airline grounding, terrorist activity, natural or nuclear disasters, pandemics and epidemics, fire or adverse weather conditions and all similar events.

- All deadlines and/or agreements set in these regulations or written agreement with the Organization can be changed.
- The organization is not obligated to refund submission fees.

10.2. All eventual doubts or omissions in the regulation will be solved by the Organization following rules of equity and good and fair judgment.

10.3. The submission of a film to FEST — New Directors | New Films Festival translates to full acceptance and no reservations in the terms of the regulation.