

FEST – PITCHING FORUM 2026

RULES & REGULATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. FEST – Pitching Forum (hereinafter: the Event) is an international financing and co-production event dedicated to facilitating the development and support of creative and visually strong cinematic film projects.
- 1.2. The Event is a part of FEST - New Directors | New Films Festival (hereinafter: the Festival), which will have its next edition from the **20th to the 28th of June, 2026** in Espinho, Portugal.
- 1.3. Both the Festival and the Event are organized by FEST – Associação Cultural (hereinafter: the Organizer), a non-profit NGO developing work on film, media and education, established in 2004 in Espinho, Portugal.

2. KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

- 2.1. The applications will be admitted between the **18th of December 2025 and the 6th of April 2026, at 23:59 UTC**:
 - the “Early Bird” discount for the application fee will apply between the **18th of December 2025 and the 19th of January 2026**;
 - the “Regular Bird” fare for the application fee will apply between the **20th of January 2025 and 30th of March of 2026**;
 - the “Late Fee” fare for the application fee will apply between the **31st of March 2026 and the 6th of April 2026**.
- 2.2. The notification about selection will be given by the **31st of May, 2026** at the latest.
- 2.3. The selected applicants will need to confirm the participation of the project in the Event and indicate the project representative(s) by the **4th of May, 2026** at the latest.
- 2.4. FEST - Pitching Forum training sessions will be held from the **23rd of June to the 25th of June, 2026** in Espinho, Portugal, during FEST - New Directors | New Films Festival.
- 2.5. FEST - Pitching Forum final pitch sessions will be held from **26th of June to the 27th of June, 2026** in Espinho, Portugal, during FEST - New Directors | New Films Festival.
- 2.6. The jury will decide on the awards after all the project pitches are over and the winners will be announced during Closing Ceremony of the Festival.
- 2.7. The details regarding claiming the awards will be sent to the winners **by the end of December 2026**.

3. ELIGIBILITY

- 3.1. FEST - Pitching Forum accepts projects in four competitive categories, **Feature Gems** and **Work In Progress** are categories for Feature Films (productions with a minimum of 55 minutes), **Make It Short** is a category dedicated to Short Films (productions up to 55 minutes), and **Series** is a category dedicated to series:
 - **Feature Gems** - Feature film projects in early stages of development, looking for financing or international co-productions (with priority for financed projects);
 - **Work In Progress** - Feature film projects in post-production looking for financing or post-production services;
 - **Make It Short** - Short film projects in any development phase, from concept to post-production, looking for financing, international co-productions or post-production services (it's not required for the project to have funding);



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- **Series** - Series projects in any development phase, from concept to post-production, looking for financing, international co-productions or post-production services (it's not required for the project to have funding).
- 3.2. The projects can be of all genres and filmmaking techniques, including animation and experimental.
- 3.3. The Event is open both to experienced and emerging artists. There is no age limitation.
- 3.4. The main selection criteria will be the artistic merit of the project, its estimated potential for success and its capacity to attract the necessary funding.
- 3.5. Project applications 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 analysed with the same rigour and dedication.

4. APPLICATION

- 4.1. The applications will be admitted between **the 18th of December 2025 and the 6th of April, 2026 at 23:59 UTC**. Only applications that are duly completed and paid before the deadline will be considered.
- 4.2. Project applications are only accepted when submitted via one of the following options:
 - Using our form that can be found on our page www.fest.pt;
 - Using our page at **FilmFreeway** (<https://filmfreeway.com/FESTPitchingForum>).The submission process is described on the Festival website: www.fest.pt
- 4.3. It is allowed for the applicant to submit more than one project, but the projects must be submitted in separate entries (one form and one application fee per each project).
- 4.4. All materials must be **in English**. Alongside the obligatory information, we strongly encourage the applicants to upload additional materials like a business plan, visual book/mood board or professional portfolio, on the application form.

5. SUBMISSION FEES

- 5.1. The FEST - Pitching Forum application fee will be reduced within the period of the **18th of December 2025 and the 19th of January, 2026** when the “Early Bird” promotion will apply with the price of **50,00 EUR**. All the applications completed after this period will have to pay the regular fee (as indicated on p. 5.2).
- 5.2. The FEST - Pitching Forum application fee during the “Regular Bird”, between the **19th of January 2026 and the 30th of March 2026**, will be **60,00 EUR**. The payment must be completed using the PayPal link at the end of the submission form indicated in point 4.2.
- 5.3. This payment will be increased between the **31st of March 2026 and the 6th of April 2026**, when the “Late Fee” fare will apply with the price of **85,00 EUR**. All the applications completed after this period will be disqualified.
- 5.4. All applications that are predominantly Portuguese will benefit from a 50% discount on the submission fee, with the aim of encouraging national participation. This discount does not apply to projects from other Portuguese-speaking countries or regions.
- 5.5. If an applicant encounters any significant technical problem with the payment, it must be reported via email to pitching@fest.pt to discuss alternative payment methods. These situations will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and the Organizer reserves the right to not provide an alternative payment method.
- 5.6. If an applicant wishes to receive an invoice, it must be requested within the first 30 days after making the payment. The invoice request must be sent via email to pitching@fest.pt and it must have the



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payment confirmation attached and contain the invoice details of the applicant or company submitting the project (name, postal address and TAX/VAT number).

- 5.7. The application fee covers the cost of project evaluation by the selection committee and will not be reimbursed to applicants, regardless if the project was selected or not. The benefits granted to selected projects are described in section 8. PARTICIPANTS ENTITLEMENTS.

6. SELECTION

- 6.1. All the applications that are duly completed and paid before the submission deadline (as indicated in point 4.1.) will be considered by the selection committee.
- 6.2. The project selection of the Event is made by a selection committee which should not be contacted directly by the applicants, as such any direct dialogue with the committee can be regarded as an unfair advantage and can be a strong enough reason for the Organization to disqualify the applications.
 - All information, questions, queries or sending of additional material or updated news of the project or filmmakers' recent career must be sent to pitching@fest.pt (the email subject must contain the title of the project and the name of the applicant).
 - The Organization reserves the right not to share information about the chances of selection of an application during the period of analysis.
- 6.3. The main selection criteria (as described in point 3.5.) will be the artistic merit of the project, its estimated potential for success and its capacity to attract the necessary funding.
- 6.4. The Organizer aims to select 24 projects for FEST – Pitching Forum; at the same time the Organizer reserves the right to select more or fewer projects, depending on the number and the quality of applications. The notification about selection will be given by the **31st of May, 2026** at the latest. All the applicants will be informed about the selection results via email. The selected projects list will also be published on the Festival's website: www.fest.pt.
- 6.5. The selection committee decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into regarding the outcome. Feedback is not guaranteed if your application is unsuccessful.

7. ATTENDANCE CONFIRMATION

- 7.1. After the announcement of the selection results, the selected applicants will be provided with the preliminary schedule of the Event, including the timeframe for the final presentations in each pitching category.
- 7.2. The selected applicants will be asked to confirm the participation of the project in the Event and indicate the project representative(s) by the **7th of May, 2026** at the latest.
- 7.3. A project representative is a person who will attend the Event to present the final pitch. It should be the director, writer or producer of the project. **A representative at the final pitch session for an adequate project category is obligatory**, as the Jury will judge the projects based on the final pitch, not on the previously submitted materials. **The presence of a representative at the pitching training sessions and the final pitch sessions for other categories is optional (yet highly recommended).**
- 7.4. The project representative is eligible for the PARTICIPANTS ENTITLEMENTS described in section 8; the conditions of adding another crew or cast member as an accompanying person are described in point 8.4.
- 7.5. The attendance confirmation should contain the name of the representative (and the accompanying person, if applicable), their role in the project and contacts. In case of the lack of confirmation and/or not indicating the representative(s) before the deadline, the Organizer does not guarantee any entitlements and reserves the right to exclude all the selected but non-confirmed projects from the Event.



8. PARTICIPANTS' ENTITLEMENTS

- 8.1. All confirmed projects will be featured in the Festival publications (on the conditions described in detail in section 9. PUBLICATIONS).
- 8.2. The declared representative of each confirmed project will be granted the following:
 - access to **FEST - Pitching Forum training sessions** (described in detail in section 10. PITCHING TRAINING SESSIONS);
 - access to **FEST - Pitching Forum final pitch sessions** described in detail in section 11. FINAL PITCH SESSIONS);
 - Free of charge **PRO accreditation**, in 2026, giving full access to all the screenings and events (including industry events) taking place at FEST - New Directors | New Films Festival (all the credentials details are described at the Festival website www.fest.pt).
- 8.3. **The Organizer does not cover travel or accommodation costs.** The PRO accreditation does not include catering (i.e. Networking Dinners, that require purchasing a special pack on the conditions described at the Festival website www.fest.pt).
- 8.4. **The representative can have one other crew or cast member accompanying him/her during the training and co-presenting the final pitch.** The accompanying person's name and role in the project should be included in the attendance confirmation. Only two representatives of each project are eligible for the participants' entitlements described in points 8.2.
- 8.5. All representatives of the selected projects will have a 50% discount on an upcoming project application for the FEST - Pitching Forum.

9. PUBLICATIONS

- 9.1. All the confirmed projects will be featured in:
 - **FEST - Pitching Forum Book of Projects**, which will be distributed among the jury, panel and participants of the Event;
 - **FEST – New Directors | New Films Festival Catalogue**, which will be distributed among the Event jury and the Festival guests, and available for sale in the Festival shop;
 - The **FEST - Pitching Forum section** on the Festival's website (www.fest.pt);
 - Publications for social media and digital platforms of the Festival, and media.
- 9.2. The information about the project, the visual materials and the authors' profiles for the publication will be **based on the information and materials submitted in the application**. The Organizer is not responsible for any spelling or grammar mistakes or wrong information provided in the application.
- 9.3. Changes requested by the applicants after submitting a project 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.
- 9.4. The Organizer reserves the right to not include all the submitted information in the publications described in point 9.1. and to choose only specific sections to be featured in each publication.

10. PITCHING TRAINING SESSIONS

- 10.1. FEST - Pitching Forum training sessions will be held between the **23rd and 25th of June, 2026**, in Espinho, Portugal;
- 10.2. The training will be conducted **in English**.
- 10.3. The training will focus on pitch development and will be headed by two renowned experts, to prepare the final presentation.



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- 10.4. **The presence of a project representative at the pitching training sessions is optional** (not required for the project to take part in the Event and be presented at the final pitch session) yet highly recommended.
- 10.5. The project representative may have at maximum one other crew or cast member as an accompanying person during the training.

11. FINAL PITCH SESSIONS

- 11.1. FEST - Pitching Forum final pitch sessions will be held on the **26th and 27th of June, 2026**, in Espinho, Portugal, and will be broadcast online to a selected audience of industry professionals.
- 11.2. The sessions are conducted **in English**.
- 11.3. The sessions will be divided into four categories:
 - **Feature Gems** - Feature film projects in early stages of development, looking for financing or international co-productions (with priority for financed projects);
 - **Work In Progress** - Feature film projects in post-production looking for financing or post-production services;
 - **Make It Short** - short film projects in any development phase, from concept to post-production, looking for financing, international co-productions or post-production services (it's not required for the project to have funding);
 - **Series** - Series projects in any development phase, from concept to post-production, looking for financing, international co-productions or post-production services (it's not required for the project to have funding).
- 11.4. The presence of the representative at the final pitch session for an adequate project category **is obligatory**. The presence at the final pitch sessions for other categories **is optional** (yet highly recommended).
- 11.5. The projects will be presented to the jury in front of the public composed of the film industry decision-makers and Festival participants who hold the PRO accreditation.
- 11.6. The jury comprises world-renowned experts, including producers, distributors, project developers and financiers, etc. All the experts will receive the Book of Projects, with the description of all selected and confirmed projects. However, the Jury will judge the projects based on the final pitch and not on the previously submitted materials. The names and profiles of the experts present at FEST - Pitching Forum will be announced on the Festival Website www.fest.pt
- 11.7. **PRESENTATION:** The final pitch can take up to 5 minutes. The presentation must contain visual materials. The project representative may have at maximum one other crew or cast member as a co-presenter during the final pitch.
- 11.8. **IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK:** The pitch is followed by 5 minutes of immediate collective feedback and discussion with the jury (also in front of the audience).
- 11.9. **JURY DECISION:** The jury will decide on the awards after all the project presentations are finished, and the winners will be announced during the Closing Ceremony of the Festival (the prizes are described in Section 12).
- 11.10. **PRIVATE FEEDBACK:** At the end of the Event, the representative of each project will have the opportunity to take part in a 5-minute individual meeting with all the experts, for private feedback and counselling about their project. The jury spokesperson will give the group feedback and constructive advice to improve the projects. The feedback session will be followed by Industry Meetings, where the decision-makers present at the Event will be able to talk individually with the representatives of the projects in which they are interested.



12. AWARDS

- 12.1. At the end of each pitch session the Jury will decide the prizes, these prizes will be announced and described at www.fest.pt.
- 12.2. The Jury attributes awards according to rules and based on general principles determined by the Organization, and they will judge the projects based on the final pitch, not on the previously submitted materials.
- 12.3. The 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 distribute a maximum of two FEST FILM LAB Awards per category, although it has the right to not attribute any prizes if it sees fit.
- 12.4. The details regarding claiming the awards will be sent to the winners by the **end of December 2026**.
- 12.5. Additional rewards are not guaranteed, and if confirmed will be made known via email or published on our website www.fest.pt, 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.
- 12.6. The prizes awarded to the winners of the Event are provided through partnerships and sponsorships established by the Organizer. The selection of winners is conducted by the Jury; however, the execution and delivery of the prizes are the sole responsibility of the respective partners and sponsors.
 - The Organizer shall not be held liable for any failure in the delivery of prizes, including, but not limited to, cases of insolvency, business closure, or any other situation preventing the partner from fulfilling the prize offering. In such circumstances, the Organizer will make reasonable efforts to find an alternative solution but does not guarantee replacement or financial compensation for the prize winners.

13. POST SELECTED FEST – PITCHING FORUM TERMS

- 13.1. All the projects presented at the Event, once they are finalised, must include in the opening credits the logo of FEST - Pitching Forum and the following sentence: “**[FILM TITLE] has been presented at FEST - Pitching Forum during FEST – New Directors | New Films Festival 2026**”. The logo of FEST - Pitching Forum must also appear in the end credits.
- 13.2. The Organizer is not legally responsible for the production of the films and cannot be held accountable for any production problems, plagiarism cases or any other factors related to the preparation, execution, distribution and exhibition of the final versions of the projects.

14. FINAL RESOLUTIONS

- 14.1. 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 agreements with the Organization can be changed.
- 14.2. All eventual doubts or omissions in the regulations will be solved by the Organizer following rules of equity and good and fair judgment.
- 14.3. The application of a project to FEST - Pitching Forum implies full acceptance and no reservations regarding the rules and regulations.