

Cinematographic Co-productions between Latvia and the Baltic States: Experience and Trends

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Co-productions have been a very important instrument in the development of the European audiovisual sector and in the cross-border circulation of European films since the beginning of the 1990s; the relevance of this topic was highlighted in 2019 by creating the document *Council Conclusions on Improving the Cross-border Circulation of European Audiovisual Works with an Emphasis on Co-productions*.

‘A large proportion of films produced in the EU are European co-productions and point to the advantages of co-producing, namely the possibility to reach larger audiences and markets than national films and to benefit from more financing sources, including public funding. Furthermore, co-productions [...] build bridges between different geographic and linguistic areas and contexts, having positive effects on both majority and minority co-production partners and on the entire audiovisual sector.’ (The Council of European Union 2019).

Since the European audiovisual sector is characterized by geographical and linguistic differences, which cause market fragmentation, co-productions may foster international circulation and distribution of films, promote the production and distribution potential of national cinemas and increase the competitiveness of national film industries. This stance is confirmed by data from the European Audiovisual Observatory — co-productions of a European scale have three times larger audiences than films produced in a single European country. It should be noted that, in 2019, 1881 films were made in the European Union, 1135 (60%) of which were feature films. 20% of the films produced in Europe during that year were co-productions (European Audiovisual Observatory 2020).

In present-day Europe, co-productions by several countries are not only creative, but also a legally framed project, where a balance must be struck between the filmmakers’ creative vision, film producers’ interests, and the share of financial contributions by various countries. To attract public funding for the production of a film in several European countries, project applicants (usually film studios) have to convince the experts of the potential of the conceived film, the compliance of the fundraising with international regulations, as well as detail the creative contribution of each participating country — representatives of various professions who will participate in the film project. This is one of the decisive criteria in the assessment of film projects by various European funds (Rietuma 2021: 111). At the same time, co-productions are regarded as an important form of international cooperation in the film industry, important for the development of national film industries as well as for a wider

distribution of the films. In order to understand co-production practices in present-day European cinema, a brief historical overview is needed, outlining the experiences of international cooperation in the Latvian film industry in a broader historical context.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the socio-political changes and the restoration of Latvian independence also marked significant changes in the film production and funding system. The Latvian film industry, from being centrally financed and organized according to a planned economy during the Soviet occupation, when films were made in the only state film studio (Rīga Film Studio), became an open and democratic system. Since then, filmmaking has been in the hands of small studios — creative groups. The way in which funding was attracted for filmmaking changed: instead of the previous Soviet institutions, which had centrally ensured the financing of films, new institutions were created, the task of which was to allocate state support — public funding — for film production. The National Film Centre, established as an institution subordinate to the Ministry of Culture in 1991, became such an institution in Latvia. Though the first decade of independence of Latvian cinema was characterized by minimal state support for film production, the beginning of the 1990s can also be considered the return of Latvian cinema to Europe. While practices of co-production can also be found in Latvian filmmaking of the pre-occupation period, in those days it was minimal (for more detail, see Rietuma 2021: 112). Yet, it is impossible to compare the making of co-productions in Latvia during the pre-occupation era with contemporary European practices, where co-production is regulated by international laws — since 2017, that law has been the Council of Europe Convention on Cinematographic Co-production (revised), replacing the Convention adopted in 1992.

It should be noted that the beginnings of international cooperation can be found in the experience of the Rīga Film Studio during the Soviet period. Typically, in the Soviet period, international cooperation of Latvian cinema manifested itself in including the creative forces of neighboring countries in film crews — yet even in such cases, films were funded from the budget of one particular film studio. Cooperation among Baltic filmmakers during the Soviet period is most obviously illustrated by the involvement of actors from neighboring states. Directors of the Rīga Film Studio frequently used Lithuanian actors in their films — for example, Vytautas Tomkus, a Lithuanian actor, played the protagonist in Aloizis Brenčs's drama *Redundant* (*Liekam būt*, 1976), and Rimanta Krilaviciute, a Lithuanian actress, in Gunars Cilinskis' film *Early Rust* (*Agrā rūsa*, 1980).

By the same token, Latvian actors have played important parts in films of other Baltic States: Uldis Pūcītis — in the Estonian postmodern film noir *Dead Mountaineer's Hotel* (*Hukkunud alpinisti hotell*, dir. Griogri Kromanov, 1979, Estonia); Vija Artmane — in the Lithuanian film *Nobody Wanted to Die* (*Niekas nenorejo mirti*, dir. Vytautas Žalakevičius, 1965, Lithuania); Ingrida Andriņa — in the Estonian film *The Last Relic* (*Viimne reliikvia*, dir. Grigori Kromanov, 1969, Estonia). It is also worth mentioning Juris Strenga and Harijs Liepiņš's memorable supporting roles played in the Estonian *shelf film*, or a film banned by censorship, *Madness* (*Hullumeelsus*, dir. Kaljo Kiisk, 1968, Estonia), with a Latvian scriptwriter, Viktors Lorencs (Rietuma 2021: 112).

Practices of European co-productions

The European Convention on Cinematographic Co-production, adopted at the beginning of 1992 and joined by Latvia as early as 1993, plays a crucial part in strengthening practices of European co-production. In 2017, a revised Council of Europe Convention on Cinematographic Co-production was adopted; it was joined by Latvia in 2019.

The first Convention, adopted in the early 1990s, stipulated the amount of funding to be invested in the film project by each co-producing country. According to the Convention, in the case of a multilateral co-production, the minimum investment may not be less than 10% and the maximum must not exceed 70% of total production costs. In the case of a bilateral production, the minimum investment may not be less than 20% and the maximum must not exceed 80% of total production costs (Latvijas Vēstnesis, 1992). The required amount of investment was an important reason why, for a long time, it was problematic for Latvia to cooperate with filmmakers of the larger European countries, ensuring the necessary share of the funding. This is one of the reasons Latvian filmmakers' international cooperation developed with film industries of a comparable output and capacity — Estonia and Lithuania. The amount of financial investment was revised in 2017, stipulating the minimum investment of a co-producing country in a film's budget to be 5% and the maximum investment not exceeding 80% of the film's total budget, whereas in co-productions of two countries, the minimum investment may not be less than 10% and the maximum investment not more than 90% (The Council of Europe 2017). These changes are essential for countries with small film industries or low-capacity countries (a term which is used in regard to the film industries of small countries such as Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania).

A major milestone in the development of co-productions in Europe was the *Eurimages* Fund, created by the Council of Europe in 1989 with the aim of promoting the development of the European film sector and international cooperation. The annual budget of the Fund (about 27.5 million euros) consists of contributions from Council of Europe Member States; funding is allocated in a competitive process to co-produced film projects. Feature films whose production involves at least two countries from the circle of *Eurimages* members, which includes 37 European countries and (as of 2017) Canada, are eligible to receive financial support from the Fund (Council of Europe). Latvia has been a *Eurimages* member since 2002.

The principles of funding of European cinema are an important reason for creating co-productions. For film production, European filmmakers use allocations from funds which basically consist of public funding and government grants. However, according to the conditions set by the European Commission, assessing the compatibility of national support categories with the internal market of each individual country, a film project may receive only a limited amount of public funding (50%–80%) (European Commission 2014).

The amount of support is also restricted by the total amount of funding available in the country for film production. Consequently, the film's producer has to raise the remaining

funds necessary for production by seeking other sources of funding, including film funds of other European countries. In addition, support from other countries for a specific film project is undeniably a proof of quality and a matter of prestige, as well as an opportunity to apply for additional funding in the *Eurimages* Fund (Rietuma 2021: 116).

Co-productions are classified as either minority or majority co-productions, depending on which country provides the predominant funding in the budget of the particular film. It is also important that the co-productions — both minority and majority — are recognized as national films in all those countries that have financed the film in question. For a co-production to be eligible for public funding in Latvia, it has to comply with the definition of a Latvian film according to the Film Law, meeting certain criteria (Likumi.lv).

The Origins of Baltic Co-productions

In the late 1990s, an intensive cooperation of Latvian filmmakers with their Baltic neighbors — Lithuania and Estonia — began, creating the first co-produced films. During this time, there was a tendency for more active cross-border cooperation in the production of feature films, which can be explained by the high costs of this type of film. The budgets of feature films and animation films often are higher than the budgets of documentary films.

One of the first co-productions of the Baltic States was the film *Three Stories About... (Trīs stāsti par..., 1999)*, which was conceived at studio F.O.R.M.A. by producer Gatis Upmalis as a collaboration between the three Baltic States; however, it became a cooperation project between Latvia and Estonia.

The film consisted of three novellas: *Tristan and Isolde (Tristans un Izolde)* by Askolds Saulītis, and the works of two Estonians, Peeter Simm and Ervin Õunapuu — novellas *Aida* and *Der Mond*. Successful cooperation with Estonia was continued in the production of the film *The Good Hands (Head kāed, 2001)*, with the action set near the border of Latvia and Estonia; this film, too, was directed by Estonian Peeter Simm, who, in two successive years, won the Latvian National Cinema's *Great Kristaps (Lielais Kristaps)* Award for Best Director (2000 and 2001). The third cooperation project by the studio F.O.R.M.A., a co-production with the Estonian studio *Allfilm*, was a family film, *Waterbomb for the Fat Tomcat (Ūdensbumba resnajam runcim 2004)*, director Varis Brasla).

The year 2002 became an important point of reference in the practice of co-production, when Latvia became a member of the Council of Europe's *Eurimages* Fund. Compliance of the financing with the international criteria defining the status of each particular country in the co-production (a majority or minority producing country) became an important condition for the creation of subsequent co-productions. In addition, compliance with these criteria makes co-production film projects eligible for *Eurimages* funding. After Latvia's

accession to *Eurimages* in 2002, co-productions have been made on regular basis, though not all co-production projects with Latvian involvement have gained support from the Fund due to substantial international competition (for details, see the database of supported projects (Council of Europe. *Eurimages*)).

Between 2002 and 2020, the National Film Centre allocated funding, through a competitive process, to 56 film projects in which Latvia participated as a majority or minority co-producer. And, while a rapid development in the creation of co-production films was hampered by the modesty of total funding available to the film industry, since the early 2000s co-productions have been made regularly, with the majority being co-productions with other Baltic states. 47 films have been produced in collaboration with at least two Baltic states (including cooperation with other European countries) (NFC).

According to quantitative data, 25 of the 47 films are feature films, 18 are documentaries, and four are animation films. 23 of the films can be classified as Latvian majority co-productions, and in 24 films, Latvia is a minority co-producer (NFC).

Even though most of the co-produced films are feature films, at the beginning of the 2000s a number of documentaries were made as cooperation projects among the Baltic states. These projects are characterized by themes that are attractive to wider audiences — not only to audiences in Latvia, but also in Lithuania and/or Estonia — which made it possible to attract national funding as well as creative forces from the respective countries. The documentary by Laila Pakalniņa, *Bus (Autobuss)*, 2004) — a co-production of Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Finland, in which Latvia was the majority co-producer — is one such example. This documentary, told in an observational style, captures a bus journey from Tallinn to Kaliningrad — a route which was once within the borders of a single country (USSR) and which, in the early 2000s, traversed four countries. Pakalniņa is one of the first who started creating co-productions, regularly cooperating with Estonian cinematographer Arkko Okk. He was also the director of photography in Pakalniņa's second feature film, *The Hijacker (Kīlnieks)*, 2006), which was funded by Latvia, Estonia, and Slovenia. Notably, Laila Pakalniņa is one among a group of directors that has been regularly creating international co-productions since the 1990s. Pakalniņa's first feature film, *The Shoe (Kurpe)*, 1998), was also created as an international co-production, attracting funding not only from Latvia but also from Germany and France.

The documentary *Herdsmen's Time (Gana laiks)* by Latvian director Dainis Kļava was made in 2007; *Nazis and Blondes (Nacisti un blondīnes)*, a film by Estonian director Arbo Tammiksaar exploring the phenomenon of Baltic actors who were often entrusted with Nazi roles in Soviet-era films, was made in 2008. Both documentaries were co-productions of Latvia and Estonia. The documentary *Singing Grandmas (Vecmāmiņu koris)*, dir. Ilze Ramāne, 2010) was made in cooperation with Lithuania.

One of the most financially intensive types of film is animation, particularly animated feature films. Therefore, cooperation in the production of such films is particularly important

for countries with lower-budget film industries. In 2006, the first Estonian and Latvian co-produced animated feature film, *Lotte from Gadgetville* (*Lote no izgudrotāju ciema / Letutajatekiila Lotte*), was released, launching a successful collaboration between the animation studios Eesti Joonisfilm (Estonia) and Rija Films (Latvia).

It was continued in two other animated feature films, *Lotte and the Moonstone Secret* (*Lote un Mēness akmens noslēpums / Lotte ja kuukivi saladus*, 2011) and *Lotte and the Lost Dragons* (*Lote un pazudušie pūķi / Lotte ja kadunud lobed*, 2019). This is considered to be the most important cooperation of the Baltic States in the field of animation; animation is the area with the fewest co-productions. Vladimir Leschiov's short film *Villa Andropoff* (2012) was another film made in cooperation between the Baltic States.

However, in the period between 2003 and 2010, only eight co-production films were created in cooperation with the other Baltic States; in six of them, Latvia was the majority co-producer — the film's budget was based on Latvian funding and its creative team mainly consisted of Latvian staff. This period can be considered as an initial, preparatory phase for the much more intensive cooperation that occurred in the second decade of the twenty-first century, during which 39 films were financed with the participation of Latvian studios, including majority and minority co-productions.

Co-productions of All Three Baltic States

Over the past decade, Latvian filmmakers have had intensive cooperation with filmmakers from both Estonia and Lithuania. This decade is also marked by the first films that have been made as official co-productions of all three Baltic States, involving creative as well as financial resources of all three countries. Among these films are documentaries and feature films.

One of the first cooperation projects among all three Baltic states was implemented in 2014 — the documentary film *Over the Roads, Over the River* (*Pāri ceļiem un upei*). It was followed by the documentary *The Master Plan* (*Ģenerālplāns*, 2016). The majority co-producer of both these films was a Latvian studio, Mistrus Media, and the films were thematically designed to appeal to wider audiences, including in Lithuania and Estonia. For example, the theme of the film *The Master Plan* was Russia's soft power.

The successful cooperation among documentary filmmakers of the Baltic States continued with the film *Bridges of Time* (*Laika tilti*, 2018). This project was launched by VFS Films (Vides Filmu studija) and producer Uldis Cekulis, attracting funding in the competition for the creation of Latvia's centenary film program. Subsequently, the project was also funded by Lithuania and Estonia and received support from *Eurimages*. In co-production practices, this is one of the rare films with collaboration between two directors from two different countries — Kristīne Briede (Latvia) and Audrius Stonis (Lithuania). The theme of this

documentary is an exploration of documentary film history in the Baltic States, analyzing the tradition of so-called poetic cinema, which was typical for documentary filmmakers in Latvia as well as Lithuania and Estonia during the 1960s. Conceptually, this is one of the most important Baltic cooperation projects in the field of cinema, which has also gained significant international acclaim (the film won an award at the Shanghai Film Festival; it premiered at the Karlovy Vary Festival in 2018). VFS Films (Vides Filmu studija) has successfully continued collaboration with its Lithuanian partners, creating the film *The Jump* (*Suolis / Lēciens*, dir. Giedrė Žickytė, 2020), which portrays Simas Kudirka, a Lithuanian dissident and defector from Lithuania to the USA in 1970. In this film, Latvia is a minority co-producer — Krišs Roziņš and Gatis Belogrudovs participated in its editing process. Latvia is a minority co-producer, together with France and Germany.

Films with Latvia as a minority co-producer have been more intensively made since 2015, when the National Film Centre started to organize competitions to support international projects of this kind, annually allocating 300,000 euros for this purpose; the support for a minority co-production project typically ranges from 25,000 to 95,000 euros (database of projects supported by NFC). This amount of funding covers some specific creative necessities (for example, the work of the Latvian professionals involved in the project — director of photography, artist, composer), as well as other costs related to the film's shooting or post-production (Rietuma 2021: 119).

Even though feature films are the most financially intensive type of films, collaboration between all three Baltic States in the production of feature films started late — only in 2016, with the feature film *Pretenders* (*Teesklejad*, 2016), with Estonia as the majority co-producer and Latvia and Lithuania as minority co-producers. The film was included in the program of the prestigious San Sebastián Film Festival, introducing an international audience to an artistically idiosyncratic contemporary relationship drama, directed by the Estonian Vallo Toomla. Latvia's artistic contribution was music by composer Kārlis Auzāns. Auzāns also wrote the score for another internationally recognized film, *Motherland* (*Gimtine*, 2019, dir. Tomas Vengris), which was made as a co-production of Lithuania, Latvia, Germany, and Greece.

In 2021, at the Tallinn International Film Festival, another feature film made in collaboration between the three Baltic States was premiered — a film by Lithuanian director Kristijonas Vildžiūnas, *Songs for a Fox* (*Dainos Lapei / Dziesmas lapsai*, 2021), with a rock musician in crisis as its protagonist. In this film, Latvia made a major creative contribution — the cinematographer is Jurgis Kmins, the production designer is Jurgis Krāsons, and the actress portraying the protagonist is Agnese Budovska (Cīrule).

In 2021, Latvia (the National Film Centre) allocated funding to a children's film by Estonian director Ilmar Raag, *Eric Stoneheart* (*Erik Kivisüda*, 2022), which is currently still in production, with Latvia and Lithuania, along with other countries, participating as minority co-producers. Latvia's creative contribution in this film, among other things, is music by Renārs Kaupers.

However, instances of films — both documentaries and features — financed by all three Baltic States are relatively rarely, as film producers do not treat the cooperation among the three Baltic states as an end in itself if there is no conceptual or creative justification for it.

Cooperation Projects between Two Baltic States

The number of films where film studios of two Baltic States have collaborated is much higher, often involving filmmakers from other countries as well. Since 2003, 23 film projects have been supported in which Latvian studios have collaborated with Lithuanian film studios, and 24 film projects where Latvian studios have collaborated with Estonian film studios (This does not exclude the participation of studios from other countries). Predominantly, these have been feature films with Latvia as a majority or minority co-producer (see Table 1).

Traditionally, at least in the local audience, more attention has been given to films which started as Latvian projects and subsequently attracted international funding; in other words, to films in which Latvia is a majority co-producer. *Oleg* (*Oļegs*, dir. Juris Kursietis, 2019), a film produced by the Latvian studio Tasse Film, can be considered one of the most successful co-productions of this kind. It should be noted that the film was made as a co-production by four countries: Latvia, Lithuania, France, and Belgium. It premiered at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival. The protagonist of this harsh social drama is a Russian from Latvia, a guest worker in Brussels, convincingly played by Lithuanian actor Valentin Novopolskij.

Similarly, the historical drama by Latvian director Dāvis Sīmanis, internationally known by the title *Exiled* (*Pelnu sanatorija*, 2016), was created as a co-production with Lithuania, Latvia being the main producing country. The action of this artistically complex film takes place in Latvia during World War I; the central character is played by German actor Ulrich Matthes. Notably, this director's latest film, *The Year Before the War* (*Gads pirms kara*), set in the chaotic time preceding World War I, was made in cooperation with Lithuania, too.

Both films were produced by Latvian studio Studija Lokomotīve, headed by producer Roberts Vinovskis and the Lithuanian company Uljana Kim Studio with producer Uljana Kim. The collaboration of both studios started with Latvia's participation in the Lithuanian film *The Gambler* (*Lošėjas*, 2013, director Ignas Jonynas), with Jānis Eglītis as cinematographer. Between 2013 and 2020, six feature films were made as a result of collaboration of these studios, with participation of Estonian co-producers in some individual projects: *The Gambler* (2013, Lithuania, Poland); *Exiled* (Lithuania, Latvia); *Seneca's Day* (*Senekas dienas*, 2016, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia); *Pretenders* (*Lomu spēles*, 2016, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania); *The Year Before the War* (2020, Latvia, Lithuania); *Songs for a Fox* (*Dainos Lapei / Dziesmas lapsai*, 2021, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia). Two of the films are historical dramas by Dāvis

Šimanis, with Latvia as the majority producer, whereas two others, *Seneca's Day* and *Songs for a Fox*, are films made by Lithuanian director Kristijonas Vildžiūnas; this indicates sustained creative partnerships in the co-production filmmaking process.

Other Lithuanian studios, too, have participated in the creation of other Latvian feature films — Ināra Kolmane's film *Bille* (2018) was made in collaboration with Lithuania (Studija 2) and Czechia. This was one of the films of the Latvian centenary film program, with a little girl in the pre-war Latvia as the protagonist, based on Vizma Belševica's memoirs. The film *January (Janvāris)* by director Viesturs Kairišs, which tells about the events in 1991 Latvia — the time of the barricades and the struggle for independence — and is rooted in the director's own autobiographical experience, was made as a co-production with Lithuania (and Poland). Both aforementioned films have the features of historical dramas, and both have received financial support in Lithuania and have been created as co-productions. Director Laila Pakalniņa has had successful collaboration with Lithuanian partners — her radical feature film *In the Mirror (Spoguļi, 2020)*, which uses selfie aesthetics, was made in partnership with Lithuanian studio Just a Moment and producer Dagne Vildžūnaite. *In the Mirror* premiered at the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival in 2020; it has also been screened at a number of other international festivals. Lithuania was one of the co-producing countries (the other was Norway) of Laila Pakalniņa's documentary film *The Spoon (Karote)*. The latter film follows the process of the making of a spoon from the moment of oil extraction to the moment when the plastic spoon is thrown into a landfill. Similar to other films by director Laila Pakalniņa, this film premiered at an important festival, the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival. The feature film *Ausma*, which offers an original vision of post-war Latvia, was made in 2015 by the same director as a co-production with Estonia and Poland.

As minority co-producers, Latvian studios have participated in the production of a number of Lithuanian feature films. In most cases, these are feature films with international film festivals as the principal audience. For example, *Breathing into Marble (Kvėpavimas į marmurą, 2018)*, a drama by Lithuanian director Giedrė Beinoriūtė, is a co-production of Lithuania, Latvia, and Hungary. The film's score was written by Latvian Vestards Šimkus, and it was premiered at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in 2018, whereas the 2018 program of San Sebastián International Film Festival included the work of Lithuanian director Ignas Jonynas *Invisible (Nematoma, 2019)*. In this film, a contemporary drama, Latvian studio Studija Lokomotīve was a minority co-producer; the music for the film was written by Latvian composer Toms Auniņš.

Most of these films belong to auteur cinema, and international festivals play a significant part in their distribution; thus, most of the co-production films are premiered at important international festivals. However, from time to time, Baltic filmmakers also collaborate to create projects with the purpose of attracting larger audiences — commercial genre films. One such project is the spy thriller *Dawn of War (Suflieris, with the original title O2, 2020)*, with the action set in the 1930s; the film was made as a co-production of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Finland, with participation of Latvian actors Kaspars Znotiņš, Agnese Cīrule (Budovska), and others. The majority co-production of Studija Lokomotīve, *Christmas in the Jungle*

(*Ziemassvētki džungļos*, 2020), made by Latvia and Estonia and directed by Estonian Jaak Kilmi, is a children's film. This director has made a few other films with Latvia as the main funder, documentaries produced by studio Mistrus Media: *My Father the Spy* (*Spiēgs, kurš mans tēvs*, 2019) and *Over the Roads, Over the River* (*Pāri ceļiem un upei*, 2014), one of the seven parts of the film).

Distribution of Co-productions

It has already been mentioned that co-productions promote the international distribution of films and provide for an approximately three times larger audience, as internationally produced films are premiered in all cooperating countries. (For a long time, the principal condition for allocating public funding was the release of the film to cinemas. However, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019–2021 introduced changes to this requirement, when institutions allocating public funding started accepting film-screening on digital platforms as well).

Despite the optimism of European institutions and statistical data, the release of minority co-production films in Latvian cinemas remains a challenge. So far, animation films for family audiences and comedy films have proven to be most successful. For example, *Lotte and the Lost Dragons* gathered an audience of 76,680 in Estonia and 23,435 in Latvia (Rietuma 2019); the film was successfully distributed on various internet platforms.

So far, the most successful minority co-production feature film released to Latvian cinemas has been *The Dissidents* (*Sangarid*, 2017), with Estonia as the majority co-producer and Latvia and Finland as minority co-producers. The director of photography of this film is Latvian cinematographer Aigars Sērmūkšs. This is also the only film from the Baltic States available on the global platform Netflix.

The film's appeal to the audience is ensured by its genre (comedy), as well as by the nostalgically created settings of Soviet Estonia during the 1980s. It tells the story of three young men who escape from Soviet Estonia to the West. In Estonian cinemas, the film had an audience of 85,306, while in Latvia the number was 4,605; this audience gap illustrates a trend that is typical of screening co-produced films in countries which are minority co-producers.

The practice of cooperation among Baltic filmmakers confirms that the main audience of co-produced films is to be found in the country which is the major co-producer, as the film's plot, principal actors, director, and other creative forces, in most cases, come from the country which has contributed the major part of the funding to the film. These conclusions are linked to the results of the film's release to cinemas.

That *The Dissidents* has become the first feature film from the Baltic States to attract Netflix's attention highlights the current developments in film demonstration and distribution,

where a film's release at cinemas constitutes only one of the forms of film distribution. Film screening on various online VOD platforms plays an increasingly important role, and international co-productions have a greater potential to be noticed. This is evidenced by the film *The Dissidents* coming to the attention of Netflix three years after the film's active release to Latvian and Estonian cinemas.

A different example of international collaboration is the project *Swingers* (*Svingeri*) by director and producer Andrejs Ēķis. Having successfully premiered in Latvia in 2016, Ēķis started exporting the film to other European countries, repeatedly re-filming the script by Rasa Bugavičute-Pēce with the involvement of actors of the respective countries. Versions were made in Estonia, Ukraine, Poland, Norway, Russia, and the Netherlands. In 2017, the Estonian version of *Swingers*, directed by Andrejs Ēķis, became the second most popular 'Estonian' film at Estonian cinemas, gathering an audience of 79,346, only slightly smaller than the audience of the aforementioned Estonian, Latvian, and Finnish co-production film *The Dissidents*.

However, this initiative cannot be regarded as a co-production practice typical for Europe; besides, there is no public funding invested in the commercially oriented project which is the *Swingers* franchise.

The Importance of International Co-productions

International co-productions provide an opportunity for Latvian film studios to attract additional funding and creative forces to Latvian film projects as well as to participate in projects of internationally acclaimed directors, and the authors of these films have the potential to gain wider recognition. There are successful examples of filmmakers' collaborations among the Baltic States and between the Baltics and other European states.

For instance, the film by Lithuanian classic Šarūnas Bartas, *In the Dusk* (*Sutemose*, 2019), was included in the Cannes official selection in 2020. This harsh drama, its action set shortly after World War II, was created as a co-production of six countries: Lithuania, France, Czechia, Serbia, Portugal, and Latvia. The Latvian studio Mistrus Media was one of its minority co-producers; in fact, the entire film was shot in Latvia.

Participation in successful co-production films ensures the international prestige of the state and its film industry, and the recognition gained at festivals is equally essential. In recent years, Latvian film studios have successfully participated in projects of this kind, demonstrating the industry's ability to work on an international level.

Conclusions

Even though the creation of international co-productions is a complex task in terms of production, where it is necessary to balance both financial and creative contributions, this practice promotes the development of the film industry, increases the number of films produced by each individual country, and expands the market and audience for these films.

As the capacity and market scale of the film industries in the Baltic states are limited, it is very important for these countries to cooperate, offering films — stories with appeal to a larger audience, by no means excluding but rather fostering cooperation with other European countries. Similar historical experiences, cultural heritage, and remarkable collaborations among professionals and institutions of the film industry are beneficial factors for continuing to create co-produced films in the Baltic States.

Even though it is easier to appeal to audiences with films targeted to child and youth audiences and with commercially oriented films, it is essential to continue the cooperation to create films that show a signature style of the director — *auteur* cinema.

Cooperation of the Baltic States in film production offers material for further studies, which should also include an analysis of the creative and artistic aspects of such collaboration.

It should be concluded that two of the principal tasks of film institutions and professionals are to intensify the circulation of Baltic films across both Baltic and European distribution networks (cinemas, TV and internet platforms) and to promote the interest of the Baltic people in the films produced in the Baltics, including co-productions.

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Appendix No 1. Table 1

Latvian co-productions in cooperation with the Baltic states 2001 - 2020									
Year	Type	LV Major	LV Minor	Bal-tic	Title EN (LV)	Director	Latvian producing studio	Producer	Co-producers
2003	documentary		1	1	The Wounded Sun (<i>Ievainotā saule</i>)	Urmas E. Liiv	VFS Films	EE	LV
2004	documentary	1		1	The Bus (<i>Autobuss</i>)	Laila Pakalniņa	Kompānija Hargla	LV	EE
2004	feature	1		1	Waterbomb for the Fat Tomcat (<i>Ūdensbumba resnajam runcim</i>)	Varis Brasla	F.O.R.M.A.	LV	EE
2006	animation		1	1	Lotte from Gadgetville (<i>Lote no izgudrotāju ciema</i>)	Heiki Ernits, Janno Poldma	Filmu Studija Rija	EE	LV
2006	feature	1		1	The Hostage (<i>Kļīnieks</i>)	Laila Pakalniņa	Kompānija Hargla	LV	EE, SI
2007	documentary	1		1	Herdsmen's Time (<i>Gana laiki</i>)	Dainis Kļava	VFS Films	LV	EE
2008	documentary	1		1	Nazis and Blondes (<i>Friči un blondīnes</i>)	Arbo Tammiksaar	Subjektīva Filma	LV	EE
2010	documentary	1		1	Singing Grandmas (<i>Vecmāmiņu koris</i>)	Ilze Ramāne	VFS Films	LV	LT
2011	animation		1	1	Lotte and the Moonstone Secret (<i>Lote un Mēness akmens noslēpums</i>)	Heiki Ernits, Janno Poldma	Filmu Studija Rija	EE	LV
2012	animation	1		1	Villa Antropof	Vladimirs Leščovs, Kaspar Jancis	Lunohod	LV	EE
2012	feature		1	1	Lonely Island (<i>Vientuļā sala</i>)	Peeter Simm	F.O.R.M.A.	EE	LV, BY
2013	feature		1	1	The Gambler (<i>Spēlmanis</i>)	Ignas Jonynas	Studija Lokomotive	LT	LV
2014	documentary	1		1	Over the Roads, Over the River (<i>Pāri ceļiem un upēi</i>)	Ivars Seleckis and 6 others	Mistrus Media	LV	LT, EE
2014	documentary		1	1	Radviliada	Ramune Rakauskaite	Vides filmu studija	LT	LV

2015	documentary	1	1	Hey, Rasma! (<i>Čau, Rasma!</i>)	Laila Pakalniņa	Kompānija Hargla	LV	EE
2015	feature	1	1	Dawn (<i>Ausma</i>)	Laila Pakalniņa	Kompānija Hargla	LV	PL, EE
2016	documentary	1	1	The Master Plan (<i>Ģenerāļplāns</i>)	Juris Pakalniņš	Mistrus Media	LV	EE, LT
2016	documentary	1	1	Close Relations (<i>Radinieki</i>)	Vitaly Mansky	Ego Media	LV	DE, EE, UA
2016	feature	1	1	King's Shift (<i>Karaliskā maiņa</i>)	Ignas Miškinis	Film Angels Productions	LT	LV
2016	feature	1	1	Pretenders (<i>Lomu spēles</i>)	Vallo Toomla	Studija Lokomotive	EE	LV
2016	feature	1	1	Exiled (<i>Pelnu sanatorija</i>)	Dāvis Sīmanis	Studija Lokomotive	LV	LT
2016	feature	1	1	Seneca's Day (<i>Senekas diena</i>)	Kristijonas Vildziūnas	Studija Lokomotive	LT	LV
2017	documentary	1	1	Wonderful Losers. A Different World (<i>Gladiatori. Cita pasaule</i>)	Arunas Matelis	Vides filmu studija	LT	LV
2017	feature	1	1	Foam at the Mouth (<i>Ar putām uz lūpām</i>)	Jānis Nords	Tasse Film	LV	LT, PL
2017	feature	1	1	The Dissidents (<i>Ātrie igauņu puīši</i>)	Jaak Kilmi	Film Angels Productions	EE	FI
2018	documentary	1	1	Bridges of Time (<i>Laika tilti</i>)	Audrius Stonys, Kristīne Briede	Vides filmu studija	LV	LT
2018	feature	1	1	Bille	Ināra Kolmane	Filmu Studija Deviņi	LV	LT
2018	feature	1	1	Motherland (<i>Dzimtene</i>)	Tomas Vengris	Studija Lokomotive	LT	LV
2018	feature	1	1	Breathing into Marble (<i>Elpa marmorā</i>)	Giedre Beinoriute	Mistrus Media	LT	LV
2019	animation	1	1	Lotte and the Lost Dragons (<i>Lote un Pazudušie Pūķi</i>)	Heiki Ernits, Janno Poldma	Filmu Studija Rija	EE	LV
2019	documentary	1	1	My Father the Spy (<i>Spiegs, kurš mans tēvs</i>)	Jaak Kilmi	Mistrus Media	LV	DE
2019	documentary	1	1	The Spoon (<i>Karote</i>)	Laila Pakalniņa	Kompānija Hargla	LV	LT, NOR
2019	documentary	1	1	Delta Zoo (<i>L-komanda</i>)	Andrius Lekavicius	Tanka	LT	LV

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2019	documentary		1	1	Immortal (<i>Nemirstāģie</i>)	Ksenia Okhapkina	Vides filmu studija	EE	LV
2019	feature	1		1	Oleg (<i>Oļegs</i>)	Juris Kursietis	Tasse Film	LV	BE, LT, FR
2020	documentary		1	1	The Jump (<i>Lāciens</i>)	Giedre Žickite	Vides filmu studija	LT	FR, LV
2020	feature		1	1	At Dusk (<i>Mijkrēslī</i>)	Šarunas Bartas	Mistrus Media	LT	LV, FR, RS, CZ
2020	feature	1		1	City on the River (<i>Pilsēta pie upes</i>)	Viesturs Kairiņš	Ego Media	LV	CZ
In the making	documentary		1	1	THI Tomas Hendrik Ilves (<i>THI Tomass Hendriks Ilvess</i>)	Jaan Tootsen	Ego Media	EE	LV
In the making	feature		1	1	Invisible (<i>Neredzams</i>)	Ignas Jonynas	Studija Lokomotīve	LT	UA, LV
In the making	feature		1	1	Songs for a Fox (<i>Dziesmas lapsai</i>)	Kristijonas Vildžiūnas	Studija Lokomotīve	LT	LV, EE
In the making	feature		1	1	Tsoy (<i>Cojs</i>)	Aleksejs Učiteļš	Mistrus Media	RU	LV, LT
In the making	feature		1	1	Eric Stoneheart (<i>Eriks Akmenssirds</i>)	Ilmar Raag	Studija Lokomotīve	EE	LV, LT, EE, FI
In the making	feature		1	1	Dawn of War (<i>Suflieris/O-2</i>)	Margus Paju	Film Angels Productions	EE	LV, FI
In the making	feature	1		1	Lovable (<i>Milulis</i>)	Staņislavs Tokalovs	Tasse Film	LV	CZ, EE
In the making	feature	1		1	January (<i>Janvāris</i>)	Viesturs Kairiņš	Mistrus Media	LV	LT, PL
In the making	feature	1		1	The Year Before the War (<i>Gads pirms kara</i>)	Dāvis Šimanis	Studija Lokomotīve	LV	LT
		23	24	47					

Latvijas un Baltijas valstu kino kopražojumi: pieredze un tendences

Dita Rietuma

Atslēgvārdi: Baltijas valstu kino kopražojumi, Latvijas kino nozare, Baltijas valstu kino kopražojumi, *Eurimages*

Pēdējo trīsdesmit gadu laikā kopražojumi ir kļuvuši par būtisku Eiropas kino daļu un dažādu valstu kinematogrāfistu sadarbības jomu. Mūsdienu Eiropas kino industrija nav iedomājama bez pārrobežu sadarbības, kas ir būtisks faktors gan filmu producēšanā un finansējuma piesaistē, gan to starptautiskajā izplatīšanā. Kā liecina Eiropas Audiovizuālās observatorijas dati – 20% no Eiropā 2019. gadā saražotajām filmām ir veidotas kā starpvalstu kopražojumi (European Audiovisual Observatory 2020).

Kopražojumu praksē būtiska nozīme ir sadarbībai Baltijas valstu vidū, veidojot filmas – kopražojumus un tādējādi apvienojot gan vairāku valstu radošos, gan arī finansiālos resursus. Šī raksta mērķis ir analizēt kopražojumu praksi, akcentējot Latvijas studiju veidotās filmas, kurās ieguldīts Latvijas publiskais finansējums un kuras ir tapušas kā vairākuma vai mazākuma kopražojumi ar Baltijas valstīm – Lietuvu un Igauniju. Sadarbība kino jomā starp Baltijas valstīm ir bijusi gan neatkarīgās Latvijas laikā, gan arī padomju okupācijas laikā. Tomēr pēc neatkarības atgūšanas aizsākās jauns posms Latvijas kino starptautiskajā sadarbībā un arī kopražojumu veidošanā ar Eiropas, to skaitā – arī Baltijas valstīm. Aktīva sadarbības prakse Latvijā, kā arī Baltijas valstu, kino iezīmējas jau kopš 90. gadu beigām. Intensīvāka šī prakse kļūst kopš 21. gs. sākuma – 2002. gada, kad Latvija kļūst par Eiropas Padomes fonda *Eurimages* dalībnieci, pilntiesīgi iekļaujoties Eiropas kino starptautiskās sadarbības struktūrās.

Analizējot kvantitatīvos datus (skat. Appendix No 1. Table 1), rakstā izvērtēta Latvijas kopražojumu pieredze ar Baltijas valstīm, novērtēta kopražojumu attīstības dinamika, faktori, kas ietekmē filmu kopražojumu veidošanu, kā arī dominējošās tendences, veidojot kopražojumus – dažāda veida filmas (spēlfilmās, dokumentālās filmas, animācijas filmas). Akcentētas filmas, kas tapušas kopš 2002. gada un kuru veidotājas studijas un filmu producenti pārstāv gan Latviju, gan vismaz vienu no Baltijas valstīm – Lietuvu

vai Igauniju, neizslēdzot arī filmas, kuru veidošanā piedalījušies partneri no citām Eiropas valstīm. Rakstā izmantoti kvantitatīvie dati, kurus ir apkopojis Nacionālais kino centrs, kā arī Eiropas Padomes dokumenti, kas ir saistoši starptautisko kopražojumu veidošanā. Rakstā tiek ieskicēta arī problemātika, kas ir saistīta ar kopražojumu starptautisko rezonansi, to izplatīšanu un skatītāju auditorijas piesaisti.