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**Six Participants Pitch Projects at “eVilnius” –
SOFA’s 2020 Financing Workshop Will Be Held Online**

For the third time, SOFA – School of Film Advancement will provide participants with the chance to pitch their projects in front of experienced private investors and representatives of European public film funds. Originally planned to be hosted again in Vilnius, Lithuania, the workshop will exceptionally be realized online from June 15-20, 2020 due to the measures to control the spread of the Coronavirus. Also in this new constellation, the reshaped “eVilnius” workshop will present its participants and their cultural projects direct access to potential financing partners from the public and private sector.

“eVilnius” marks the final step for the SOFA Class 2019/2020. Six selected cinema professionals and cultural entrepreneurs have started one year ago developing their innovative projects for national and international audiences under the SOFA umbrella. After a developing workshop in Warsaw, an intense online “eTbilisi” marketing workshop and several periodical e-learning units, “eVilnius” will round up the package offering real financing opportunities. “The SOFA workshop was born as a great idea for film industry people to think out of the box. Current times made this SOFA way of thinking a real necessity”, comments **Rolandas Kvietkauskas**, director of the Lithuanian Film Centre.

The six participants **Viki Antonopoulou** (Greece), **Pavel Bráila** (Moldova), **Irena Gruca-Rozbicka** (Poland/Germany), **Drita Llolla** (Montenegro), **Přemysl Martinek** (Czech Republic) and **Medea Sharikadze** (Georgia) will be trained by two highly experienced cinema industry professionals, **Juliane Schulze** and **Thierry Baujard** from Media Deals (Germany). Media Deals organises European Investment Forums in a range of European countries, providing opportunities for entrepreneurs and investors to meet up and discuss investment and partnership opportunities. Part of the workshop programme will also be an investment success story with SOFA alumnus **Dániel Deák** (Hungary), open talk with **Algirdas Ramaška** (Head of Vilnius International Film Festival), one-on-one meetings, group discussions and an online speed matching with Lithuanian industry representatives.

After four days of intensive training, the participants will present their project ideas to the investors **Helena Deane** (Ireland), **Simay Dinç** (Turkey), **Veikko Maripuu** (Estonia), **Patrick Zucchetta** (France), **Fabio La Franca** (UK) and **Riccardo Aimerito** (Italy) as well as **Rolandas Kvietkauskas** (director of the Lithuanian Film Centre, Lithuania), **Birgit Oberkofler** (Head Film Fund & Commission IDM Südtirol - Alto Adige) and representatives from German Federal Foreign Office and Creative Europe MEDIA Programme.

SOFA founder **Nikolaj Nikitin**: “We are very grateful about the continuing support of our partners. Their flexibility and dedication made all spontaneous adjustments possible that became necessary in pandemic times to secure SOFA’s highly concentrated character.”

The SOFA Vilnius workshop is funded by the Lithuanian Film Centre, the German Federal Foreign Office and Creative Europe – MEDIA Programme of the European Union and is co-organized by Filmplus UG (Germany) together with the Vilnius Film Cluster.

About SOFA:

The SOFA initiative is unique in the international context because it is aimed not at directors and producers, but cultural managers, entrepreneurs, agents and ambassadors within the cinema industry, from Central and Eastern Europe, Germany, Greece, Israel, Central Asia, the Caucasus and MENA region. Through collaboration with highly qualified experts and experienced professionals within the cinema industry, SOFA helps participants since 2013 to fully develop their project ideas, prepare them for financing, and realise them effectively. This, in turn, boosts the regional development of cinema culture and the local film industry.

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For further information, press materials and interview requests please contact:

Justė Michailinaitė

juste@joinsofa.org