

PRESS RELEASE**16 April 2026****Zlín Film Festival Presents the Main Competitions of its 66th Edition**

Zlín – The programmers of the Zlín Film Festival once again come up with inspiring films that open up new perspectives for children and young audiences and allow them to explore diverse worlds and life experiences. The upcoming 66th edition of the festival will take place from May 28 to June 3, 2026.

At a time when it is becoming increasingly difficult for children and adolescents to navigate a rapidly changing world full of uncertainty and pressure, films that provide them with support, understanding and hope are all the more important. The programme presents films from various parts of the world – from Europe to Brazil and as far as Iraq or South Korea – and connects themes of friendship, courage, faith and identity, often with an emphasis on hope and the strength of human relationships.

It is interesting that this year female protagonists prevail over male ones, especially in the youth section, which is not the result of a deliberate programming intention, but rather a natural reflection of contemporary global production.

„Our festival offers a unique opportunity to see these films on the big screen – as a counterpoint to today’s individual and often fragmented viewing of content on mobile phones or online platforms – and to rediscover the power of a shared film experience as it was originally intended: in the cinema, where stories come alive with much greater intensity,” emphasized Markéta Pášmová, Artistic Director of the Zlín Film Festival. She added that the three main competition sections this year consist of 24 films, of which the festival programmers are now highlighting selected representatives.

International Competition of Feature Films in Children Category

The festival will open with the world premiere of the Czech family fantasy film **When Parents Turn Divine**, the directorial debut of the creative duo Adam Hobzík and Jan Chramosta. The film, also shot in the Zlín Region, connects the contemporary world with the mythology of Slavic gods and thus naturally resonates with this year’s festival theme.

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Another world premiere with Czech participation is the animated film **Crystal Planet** (Czech Republic, Croatia, Slovakia). This ambitious European project by director Arsen Anton Ostojić invites young viewers into a visually captivating world of an unknown planet. The screenplay was co-written by Eva Papoušková, an author of books for children and young people, and the project is produced by the Czech studio Alkay Animation Prague.

Bernd Sahling, a respected author of films for children and youth, returns to Zlín with his new film **Koschka** (Germany), which the festival will present in its world premiere. The film, intended for the youngest viewers, works with the motif of caring for animals, through which it naturally opens up themes of friendship and responsibility.

The competition aimed at audiences up to the age of 10 is significantly enriched by **Happy Birthday** (Egypt), directed by Sarah Goher. *"The film offers a sensitive insight into friendship as well as deep social differences, while also representing a rare example of Egyptian cinema for children, which appears at international festivals only rarely,"* noted Markéta Pášmová, adding that Romania is also not typically among the countries with a strong production of films for children. This year's selection, however, includes **Atlas of the Universe** (Romania, Bulgaria), directed by the successful Paul Negoescu. This poetic road movie about courage, perseverance, and friendship brings a fresh perspective and expands the geographical as well as thematic diversity of the competition.

International Competition of Feature Films in Junior Category

The enchanting, visually captivating, and promising Brazilian film **Gugu's World** (Brazil), directed by Allan Deberton, offers an authentic view of growing up in an environment of strong cultural and social contrasts.

A strong auteur title is **The Altar Boys** (Poland) by director Piotr Domalewski, which opens up themes of faith, identity, and the relationship of the younger generation to authority. This original film about friendship is also a moving portrait of the naïveté of "childlike" faith – a kind of mirror image of the adult world – set in a church environment.

An exceptional title with Iraqi participation is **The President's Cake** (Iraq, Qatar, USA), directed by Hasan Hadi. *"The story of a poor girl, set in 1990s Iraq, offers a unique view of growing up in a different cultural and historical context and brings young audiences closer to a reality that is only rarely represented on screen,"* explained Markéta Pášmová.

International Competition of Feature Films in Youth Category

The film **TRAD** (Ireland) connects a coming-of-age story with the energy of Irish traditional music, which becomes a language of emotions, identity, and generational conflict. Director Lance Daly returns to Zlín after 14 years with a film in which music plays a key role in the search for one's own voice.

The Slovak co-production **The Flood** (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, Belgium), directed by Martin Gonda, is an impressive debut set in 1980 in the area of the Starina Valley in north-eastern Slovakia. Against the backdrop of forced displacement due to the construction of a reservoir, it offers a powerful and unusual view of growing up and the loss of home.

The film **The World of Love** (South Korea), directed by Yoon Ga-eun, concludes the selection of strong auteur titles. The director, whose work has long been associated with the Zlín Film Festival, offers a sensitive view of relationships, growing up, and social pressure in the context of contemporary South Korean society.

The complete film and supporting programme of the 66th Zlín Film Festival will be published on May 10.

A full overview of all films in the main competitions can be found in the attachment.

More information: www.zlifest.cz

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International Competition of Feature Films in Children Category

Atlas of the Universe (Atlasul Universului, Paul Negoescu, Romania, Bulgaria, 2026)

Crystal Planet (Křišťálová planeta, Arsen Anton Ostojić, Czech Republic, Croatia, Slovakia, 2026)

Grow (John McPhail, United Kingdom, 2025)

Happy Birthday (Hābī Bīrth Dāy, Sarah Goher, Egypt, 2025)

King of Wanderers (Koning van de zwervers, Janne Schmidt, The Netherlands, 2025)

Koschka (Bernd Sahling, Germany, 2026)

Mira (Marie Limkilde, Denmark, 2025)

My Life in Versailles (La vie de château – Mon enfance à Versailles, Nathaniel Hlimi, Clémence Madeleine-Perdrillat, France, 2025)

Not a Hero (Rima Das, India, Singapour, 2026)

Rally – from Paris to the Pyramids (Flaklypa – Fra Paris til pyramidene, Rasmus A. Sivertsen, Norway, 2025, 82 min)

Splish Splash Forever! (Plitsch Platsch Forever!, Natascha Beller, Switzerland, 2026)

When Parents Turn Divine (Máma a táta jsou boží, Adam Hobzík, Jan Chramosta, Czech Republic, 2026)

Mezinárodní soutěž celovečerních filmů pro dospívající

Bert: Mezi láskou a přátelstvím (Bert sabbar allt, Manuel Concha, Švédsko, 2025)

Dort pro prezidenta (Mamlaket al-qasab, Hasan Hadi, Irák, Katar, Spojené státy americké, 2025)

Gugúv svēt (Feito Pipa, Allan Deberton, Brazílie, 2026)

Ish (Imran Perretta, Velká Británie, 2025)

Ministranti (Ministranci, Piotr Domalewski, Polsko, 2025)

Rap z periferie (Malavia, Nunzia De Stefano, Itálie, 2025)

International Competition of Feature Films in Youth Category

Patty Is Such a Girly Name (Poly koritsistiko onoma to Patty, Giorgos Georgopoulos, Greece, 2025)

The Flood (Potopa, Martin Gonda, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, Belgium, 2025)

The Gymnast (Charlotte Glynn, USA, 2025)

The World of Love (Segyeui Ju-in, Yoon Ga-eun, South Korea, 2025)

TRAD (Lance Daly, Ireland, 2026)

Weightless (Vægtløs, Emilie Thalund, Denmark, 2025)

TRAD (Lance Daly, Irsko, 2026)