

**CINEEUROPE 2020
KEYNOTE ADDRESS
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[CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY]**

On behalf of UNIC, the International Union of Cinemas, a very warm welcome to CineEurope 2020 – the digital cut!

Of course, I would prefer to be welcoming you all from the big stage in sun-kissed Barcelona, rather than broadcasting from Belgium via a small screen on my laptop.

So what's in store for you at this unprecedented CineEurope Online? I'm pleased to say that, together with our friends at Film Expo Group, we have put together a packed programme that will hopefully inform, entertain and lift everyone's spirits. Above all, it's an opportunity to showcase what makes our industry so special and resilient. Because, make no mistake, we'll be back.

We have some great seminars lined up, starting with an executive roundtable on "The Future of the Global Cinema Sector: Preparing for the New Normal" and a session on "Cinema's Strength...And the Way Back". Comscore will talk about opportunities for the sector and we will also have a very timely session on post-pandemic technologies.

We are very grateful to all who have made these sessions possible, through their participation and support, and especially our headline sponsor, the Coca-Cola Company. The Coca-Cola session will take place tomorrow afternoon and focus on how we emerge stronger from the crisis.

You can also visit our virtual Trade Show floor and engage with the companies there. Thank you to all of you, UNIC members, colleagues and partners, for your support – we couldn't do this without you.

A special thank you must also go to our Studio partners. Every year, they back CineEurope by bringing us the best content. The format is different this year – but we're thrilled that Lionsgate Films, Paramount Pictures, SF Studio, Sony Pictures, StudioCanal, Unifrance, Universal Pictures, Walt Disney Studios and Warner Bros have answered our call and will join us with special messages. The Event Cinema Association will also unveil a special slate.

Every CineEurope provides us with an opportunity to look back at the previous year's achievements and to what's in store. 2020 is clearly going to be a challenge like no other.

Especially as 2019 was a record-breaker with 1.34 billion admissions across Europe and 8.5 billion euros at the box office. Even if 2020 turns out to be a record-breaker for other reasons, the fundamentals are right for us to bounce back.

One of the keys to the success of our industry is the unique Big Screen experience: we offer our audiences access to amazing diverse and inclusive content, via the highest-quality means possible. And this is now more important than ever.

We pride ourselves on this diversity – something that stands out in the clips that the European Commission has put together for us and that you'll discover during the show.

Cinemas contribute significantly to the economy, create jobs and pay their taxes. They are meeting places that bring people together. And our sector's willingness to constantly embrace new technologies – and the significant investment this brings – means that cinemas lead the way in innovation.

This will be all the more important as we recover from Covid. Most cinemas have been shut for months but we're thankfully seeing a gradual reopening around the world. We'll hear later from Norway, the first country in Europe to re-open last month.

Our number one priority is to welcome our staff – the lifeblood of our industry – and our audiences in the best possible conditions. Our cinemas will implement required new health and safety measures to ensure everyone feels safe and can once again enjoy the great experience of watching films together on the Big Screen. We need great content and we are grateful to the studios, directors and everyone involved in the film industry who have shown their faith in cinema exhibition.

Cinemas – from the biggest chains to smaller exhibitors – will need long-term support to help get back on their feet. It is crucial that each territory uses all the means at its disposal to deliver the most effective response.

That said, this is a resilient and adaptable industry. Cinemas have faced big challenges in the past and will rise to this one too.

Cinemas have been busy preparing to re-open from day one, engaging with their local authorities and with their partners. They have encouraged audiences to support them during the crisis by acquiring gift vouchers or subscriptions. Many, if not all, have actively engaged with their audiences via social media. And that's but a few initiatives.

National back-to-the-cinema campaigns are already underway such as France's #oniratousaucinéma – you'll see a brilliant clip of that later. Individual operators have also launched their own campaigns and we'll show you a fantastic example from Poland.

Looking at cinema technology, manufacturers, integrators and service providers have produced technical guidelines and tests to ensure that equipment runs smoothly when cinemas return, with free online training courses or digital marketing tips available for cinema operators when they need them most. Thanks again for your faith in our sector.

Through all of this, the response of film fans has been amazing – it's clear that they've missed cinemas and are eager to return to the Big Screen.

At UNIC, in addition to our regular advocacy work, we've been keeping everyone up-to-date about the range of support cinemas may be eligible for at national and European level. We're also providing information about the re-opening process and related health and safety guidelines, as well as practical and technical recommendations for operators.

We have been in virtually constant dialogue with national and European law-makers, stressing the key role of cinemas from an economic, cultural and social standpoint. We've been getting the message across in the media and working closely with allies in the audiovisual sector. I'd like to thank my UNIC colleagues for all their hard work. Rest assured, we will continue to play a frontline role to ensure that the interests of our industry are heard, recognised and celebrated. UNIC will also continue to support long-term projects such as our popular mentoring scheme for female executives – we will welcome a new cohort of mentors and mentees next month.

We have worked closely with the Global Cinema Federation, which has also been active in calling for support for the industry. You'll hear more from GCF Chairman Alejandro Ramirez in a while.

And this brings me to my conclusion.

People love the Big Screen and now, more than ever, they need cinemas to make them dream as they immerse themselves in a collective, shared experience like no other. We all need to come together in the weeks and months to come to ensure that cinemas survive this testing time and once again become the vibrant home of culture and community that they have always been. I'd like to wish everyone a wonderful CineEurope.