

LEIDEN SHORTS 2026 OPEN CALL

Open Doors to Your Shorts – 2026 Call for Entries

As the world continues to fluctuate, transform, and grow ever more turbulent, short films open doors to new and exciting directions - surprising, urgent, bold, funny, and playful, constantly reinventing and reintroducing what cinema can and should be.

Now, as we gear up for our 18th edition in spring 2026, we're on the lookout for works that spark conversation, surprise audiences, and push cinema forward. Have you made a short film in the past year that matches that vision?

Fiction. Documentary. Experimental. Animation. Or anything else.

No matter the form, if your short film was completed after **1 January 2025**, runs **30 minutes or less**, and dares to captivate, we want to see it light up the screen in Leiden in our global celebration of cinema.

Films can be submitted to the following competitions:

- **International Competition** – A showcase of some of the finest short films from across the globe, this programme brings together distinctive voices and daring visions, highlighting the richness and diversity of contemporary short cinema.
- **National Competition** – Dedicated to short films produced in the Netherlands, this competition spotlights local talent and offers a platform for both emerging and established Dutch filmmakers to share their work with a wider audience.
- **Brand New Eyes Competition** – A stage for fresh perspectives, this competition celebrates debut films - from student filmmakers around the world to first-time directors working outside of academic contexts. Here, new voices find their way to the screen.

Awards

The films in these programmes will compete for a financial award, which will be decided by a professional jury. Additionally, all selected films will compete for the Audience Award.

Submission Deadlines & Fees

International Competition & National Competition

- **Early Bird Deadline:** 3 October 2025 – €12.00 submission fee (€10.50 via Leiden Shorts website)
Regular Deadline: 6 December 2025 – €15.00 submission fee (€13.50 via Leiden Shorts website)

- **Last Chance Deadline:** 16 January 2026 – €21.00 submission fee (€18.50 via Leiden Shorts website)

Brand New Eyes Competition

We are pleased to offer **discounted submission fees** for the Brand New Eyes Competition:

- **Early Bird Deadline:** 3 October 2025 – €9.00 submission fee (€7.00 via Leiden Shorts website)
- **Regular Deadline:** 6 December 2025 – €11.00 submission fee (€9.00 via Leiden Shorts website)
- **Last Chance Deadline:** 16 January 2026 – €17.00 submission fee (€15.50 via Leiden Shorts website)

For any questions, do not hesitate to contact us via submissions@leidenshorts.nl

Click below for full regulation and to submit your film

Rules & Terms

- ELIGIBILITY

Films are eligible for submission provided that they fulfil the following conditions:

Completed after January 1, 2025

Maximum duration of 30 minutes

Any genre is accepted (fiction, animation, documentary, experimental, etc)

Films that are freely available to the public online are not eligible.

Films that have had a limited online festival screening are still eligible. Leiden Shorts may make an exception in specific cases.

Films that have previously been submitted and rejected are not eligible to be considered for the festival again.

Works in progress are accepted, as long as they are submitted before the deadline and will be completed before March 2026.

- SUBMISSIONS

You can submit your film via one of the following platforms:

<https://leidenshorts.filmchief.com>

<https://www.filmfreeway.com/LeidenShorts>.

The complete entry form must be filled out.

Please provide us with complete credits and promotional materials (stills, trailer, press kits) via submission.

- COMPETITIONS & PRIZES

The submitted films will be reviewed by Leiden Shorts Programming Team who will select the films for the following competitions:

International Competition, "Best International Film Award": all films that fulfill the above conditions ("Eligibility") and are not Dutch productions are eligible.

National Competition, "Best National Film Award": only Dutch productions are eligible for this competition.

Brand New Eyes Competition, "Brand New Eyes Award": only student works and debut films outside of an academic context films can be selected for this competition.

The winning films are selected by a professional jury.

All selected films are automatically also eligible for the "Audience Award" in addition to any other competition for which they might be selected. The "Audience Award" is voted for by the audience.

All awards include a financial award given to the filmmaker(s).

- SCREENING FILES & PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL

Requirements:

Digital file (ProRes or H264) or DCP, with embedded English subtitles or with subtitles in a separate .srt file. The festival may create a DCP of the films on location.

All films need to be available for an English-speaking audience (either spoken language or subtitles need to be in English). Films with strong dialects may require English subtitles, even though the film is English-spoken.

3 High-Resolution Film Stills

Film Poster (digitally)

Trailer

Synopsis & Credits

The data and pictures provided through the submission will be used for diverse publications (programme, trailers, website, and social media). By submitting your data you agree to their usage by Leiden Shorts for promotional purposes only. In case no promotional material is provided, we can use excerpts from the film for promotional purposes.

The selected films will be stored in the archive of the festival but will not be screened again unless agreed upon with the rightsholder of the film.

- SCREENING DELIVERY

The films' screening copies must be sent to the festival no later than April 17th 2026.

- PLEDGE OF SOLIDARITY

Leiden Short will consider granting waivers or discounts to filmmakers who cannot afford the submission fee due to lack of funding opportunities. In such cases, please email us at submissions@leidenshorts.nl, and explain your situation in detail.

- AGREEMENT TERMS & CONDITIONS

By submitting a film to Leiden Shorts the submitter accepts the terms and conditions. Leiden Shorts has the right to cancel the submission if the film does not conform to the rules. Once the film is submitted, there will be no refund of the submission fee.

A selected film cannot be withdrawn from the programme after accepting the selection invitation.

By submitting a film, the submitter guarantees they have cleared all intellectual property rights needed for screening during Leiden Shorts and shall indemnify the festival against all third-party liabilities.

Leiden Shorts is entitled to consider films for another competition than the one originally submitted to.

The festival has the right to invite films to be submitted or considered.

The festival reserves the right, in consultation with the rights holders, to screen the selected films for promotional purposes during preview events held up to one month prior to the festival edition.

The management of the festival can decide on exceptions to the regulations.

For any questions regarding submissions, please email: submissions@leidenshorts.nl.

About the Festival

Leiden Shorts was established in 2009 as a new platform for short films and has since grown into one of the most significant short film events in the Netherlands. We envision Leiden Shorts as an alternative creative space for national and international filmmakers to showcase their distinct voices by exploring the power of short film as a medium. We view cinema as a tool for social change and aim to spotlight underrepresented voices, providing space for daring narratives and unconventional forms to take shape.

Each year, Leiden Shorts receives over 1,200 submissions from more than 70 countries. Over the course of four days, the festival presents more than 100 short films in a variety of genres from around the world. Our core programme includes three competitions—for national, international, and debut films—along with thematic and focus programmes, industry and networking events, and opportunities for in-depth discussion through panels, Q&As, and workshops. This year, the festival will host the European Short Pitch Coproduction forum for the second time. Leiden Shorts is a vibrant and ever-evolving film festival that fosters talent, broadens perspectives, and creates new opportunities for connection.