

Introduction to Documentary Filmmaking

Preparatory Programme for the Training Course *Designing and Writing a Documentary Film Project*, intended for emerging Ukrainian filmmakers

Objectives

This introductory programme aims to familiarize participants with the main approaches to contemporary documentary filmmaking and provide them with the artistic and methodological tools necessary for developing their feature-length documentary film projects.

Through workshops, case studies, film screenings and meetings with filmmakers, participants will explore the fundamental questions of documentary writing: how to choose a subject, develop a point of view, film reality, work with sound and image, and transform lived experience into a cinematic narrative.

This introductory programme will be conducted entirely **in English**, in person, at La Fémis (Paris, 18th arrondissement).

Target Participants

This programme is intended for emerging Ukrainian filmmakers who have graduated from a film school or have professional experience in filmmaking, and who wish to develop a documentary film project.

Application Process

The introductory programme will welcome **ten participants**, selected through an open call for applications.

Applications must be submitted **in English** and include the following documents:

- a motivation letter (maximum 1 page);
- an up-to-date curriculum vitae (CV);
- a summary of the documentary film project that will be the subject of the training workshop (maximum 2 pages);
- where applicable, information about one or two previously completed films by the applicant, available free of charge online (Vimeo, YouTube or Dailymotion): title, running time, viewing links and passwords (if required), **on a maximum of one page**;
- a synopsis for each film submitted to the selection committee;
- a digital passport-style photograph;
- good level of English sufficient to follow the training programme.

Please note: if the submitted films contain dialogue, English or French subtitles must be provided together with the viewing links.

Participants must be able to temporarily leave Ukrainian territory (men must be in compliance with their military obligations). A letter of invitation to participate in the training will be issued by the Embassy of France to each selected participant for the purpose of any necessary administrative procedures.

The complete application must be compiled into a **single PDF file** and sent to:
r.assenova@femis.fr

Applicants must be **40 years old or younger** on the application deadline.

Timeline

- **Application deadline:** 27 September 2026
- **Announcement of the selected participants:** 15 October 2026

Training Dates

23–27 November 2026

This introductory programme constitutes the first stage of a broader training pathway. Following this initial phase, and according to arrangements to be specified at a later stage, a number of participants may be selected to continue their project development through a second training session scheduled for 2027.

Financial Support

This programme is jointly designed by the Cooperation and Cultural Action Department of the Embassy of France in Ukraine, International Technical Expert Manon Duverger, and the French film school La Fémis.

The training is funded by the Embassy of France in Ukraine. **All participation costs are fully covered**, including transportation, accommodation and training fees. Each participant will also receive a living allowance.

Programme
Introduction to Documentary Filmmaking
Proposed dates: 23–27 November 2026

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Monday 23/11	Introduction to Contemporary Documentary Filmmaking: Telling Reality • Welcome and introduction of participants • Presentation of the programme • Presentation of participants' projects	Why This Film? Finding Your Subject and Point of View • Workshop based on participants' projects • Overview of contemporary documentary practices and storytelling approaches	Screening of a documentary film followed by a discussion with the filmmaker
Tuesday 24/11	Documentary Writing: From an Idea to a Film Project • The fundamentals of documentary writing • Research methods and documentary investigation	• Writing workshop based on participants' projects • Developing the intentions and key issues of each film	Screening of a documentary film followed by a discussion with the filmmaker
Wednesday 25/11	Sound and Image: Building a Cinematic Approach to Reality • The role of image in documentary filmmaking • Framing, point of view and the presence of the camera	• Documentary sound: listening, sound recording and sound design • Case studies based on film excerpts	Screening at the Cinémathèque du documentaire (BPI) Discussion with the filmmaker and/or invited guests following the screening (subject to availability)
Thursday 26/11	Meeting Key Players in Documentary Broadcasting and Distribution • Visit to the Documentary Department of France Télévisions	Visit to ARTE • Presentation of ARTE's documentary editorial policy • Meeting with Fabrice Puchaut (ARTE France) • Discussion on project development, co-production and international documentary distribution • Q&A session with participants	Free evening or participation in an external documentary-related event (depending on the cultural programme)
Friday 27/11	Developing and Presenting a Documentary Film Project • Methodology for developing and presenting a documentary project	• Collective feedback and development sessions on each participant's project	Closing Session • Summary of the week • Presentation of the next stages of the training programme