



SERIESLY BERLIN

Press Release

Who Pays, Who Creates, Who Partners, Who Decides: Seriesly Berlin Reveals 2026 Conference Program

- Europe's co-production and funding reality check: how funding pressure, cross-border partnerships and new frameworks are reshaping what gets made
- Talks with actor and creator Dimitrij Schaad (JOSSI, CRAP HAPPENS), crime author and defense lawyer Jens Lapidus (BURDEN OF JUSTICE) and Olympic beach volleyball player Anouk Vergé-Dépré (BEACH SISTERS)
- Exclusive first looks: Icelandic-Polish thriller SIGNALS and the Netherlands' most ambitious period drama, GRAND HOTEL BY THE SEA
- Stories at Risk: the findings of the Europe-wide consultation are in

Berlin, 1 September 2026. The program of the **Seriesly Berlin Conference** (15–16 September 2026) is now online. Over two days at Fotografiska Berlin, panels, fireside chats, workshops and bar talks tackle the questions the European series industry is currently wrestling with: how ambitious shows still get financed, who decides which stories get told, and what happens when the creator economy stops being a side note and starts building companies of its own. The conference is part of the third edition of Seriesly Berlin (14–17 September 2026), whose publicly accessible **Seriesly Berlin Premieres** present [thirteen series](#) from eleven countries. Furthermore [18 outstanding international series projects](#) have been selected for the three **Seriesly Berlin Pitch** sessions: Co-Pro Pitches, Writers' Pitches as well as the new Vertical Drama & Short Form Series Pitch. Get your accreditation for Seriesly Berlin [here](#).

Stage and screen are closely connected this year, with the conference extending the conversation around several series premiering at the festival. Creators bringing their work to the screen will also take it to the conference stage – among them **Dimitrij Schaad** (JOSSI), **Ulla Heikkilä** (ATLANTIS PASILA), **David Semler** (FILTER), **Marina Klauser** (THE ANGEL MAKER), **Elena Lyubarskaya** and **Kim Zimmermann** (CITY OF BLOOD), **Jens Lapidus** (BURDEN OF JUSTICE) and **Wero Rodowicz** (BEACH SISTERS).

"The series industry is at a cliffhanger. We don't know exactly what the next episode will bring – commercially, creatively, technologically or politically," says Festival Director **Dennis Ruh**. "But uncertainty doesn't mean we can simply wait and see. Our European consultation makes clear that creative freedom and the space for risk are under pressure, while greater diversity and representation still require conscious effort and structural change. At the same time, new partnerships, technologies and business models are creating new possibilities for how stories are developed, financed and brought to audiences. The next episode may not be written yet – but who gets to write it, and under what conditions, is up for debate."



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Who Pays, Who Partners: Europe's Co-Production and Funding Reality Check

International Co-production runs through the entire program as it is not simply about 'where you can make series', but 'who you can develop them with'.

Co-Producing Europe – And What's Germany's Next Move?, in partnership with the Alliance of German Producers, gets down to the money. Germany's federal incentive funding for film and high-end series is fully allocated for 2026, and fewer resources are expected for 2027. How can Germany maintain its position as a reliable and competitive partner – just as the Council of Europe advances a new legal framework for series co-production and AgoraEU and MEDIA+ could reshape EU support from 2028? With **Dr. Frank Castenholz** (Head of Economic Film Funding Division, The Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media - BKM), **Alina Kemper** (SPIO), **Alessia Sonaglioni** (Council of Europe) and **Johannes Kagerer** (Produktionsallianz), moderated by **Irina Ignatiew-Lemke** (European Film Promotion, Boxworks Media).

Too Many Cooks? Turns Out, That's the Recipe! argues the other side: no single broadcaster can foot the bill for a high-end series anymore, which is precisely why today's boldest stories exist at all. Using **UNDER SALT MARSH** (ZDF/Sky) and **SUMMER OF 1985** (SVT/ZDF) as live proof, **Tobi De Graaff** (Sky Studios), **Jennifer Ebell** (Fifth Season), **Britta Meyermann** (Odeon Fiction) and **Frank Seyberth** (ZDF) get candid about the trust and the trade-offs involved.

In **The Art of the Possible: Making Period Drama Work in Europe**, Creator and producer Fleur Winters (Big Blue) gives an exclusive first look at **GRAND HOTEL BY THE SEA**, set to become the Netherlands' most ambitious period drama, ahead of its Dutch launch in December. Seven years of development, a studio built specifically to realise it – and a European co-production without which the budget would never have added up. Both this session and the **fireside chat with Matthieu Thollin**, COO of Mediawan International, are hosted by **Jesse Whittock** (Deadline).

Beyond the East-West Co-Production Myth, in partnership with the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, asks what becomes also creatively possible when Central and Eastern Europe is read not as a collection of small markets but as a network of interconnected production ecosystems. **Kateryna Vyshnevskaya** (Executive Producer and International Scripted Consultant) moderates a panel with **Jevgeni Supin** (Zolba Productions), **Tereza Polachová** (Czech Television), **Anna Rohde-Seyfried** (Beta Film) and **Kjartan Thor Thordarson** (SagaFilm), who brings exclusive clips of the Icelandic-Polish thriller **SIGNALS**. Other projects to be discussed: the Czech-Slovak-German **GERTA SCHNIRCH**, the Finnish-Estonian-German drama **LET IT SNOW** and the Croatian-German **RED WATER**.

Stories at Risk – and the Freedom to Tell Them

After months of Europe-wide consultation and online think tanks, the findings of **Stories at Risk: Cultural Diversity, Democracy and Debate on Screen** come into the room for the first time. Initiated by Seriesly Berlin with the support of the Council of Europe's Culture on Screen Programme, the findings of the initiative point to growing pressure on creative decisions, limited space for risk-taking and structural barriers that take effect long before a camera starts rolling – but also to where change could begin. The results will be presented by Research Lead **Dennis Ohm-Fickler**. **Thomas Gammeltoft** (European Writers Club) moderates the response with selected participants of the consultation and think tank sessions.



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Where the consultation looks at structure, two sessions look at individual practice: **If You Know, You Know – Queerness Beyond the Plot**, in partnership with Queer Media Society, asks when queer representation stops being representation and simply becomes life on screen – and where in Europe that freedom is still anything but a given. With **Ulla Heikkilä** (director, ATLANTIS PASILA), **David Semler** (creator, writer, director, FILTER) and **Sophya Frohberg** (Letterbox Filmproduktion), moderated by **Paolo Ciccarelli**. In **“Entschuldigung, mein Deutsch ist nicht so gut”** (“Excuse Me, My German Is Not So Good”), **Samuel Jefferson** (Head Writer and Co-Creator, KRANK BERLIN) reports from the reality of developing German series in English first – and on using the friction between languages as a creative tool.

Real Lives as Raw Material

Three sessions circle the same question from different angles: how much reality can a series carry, and what responsibility comes with it? **Docuseries on the Rise: What Comes After True Crime?**, in partnership with Dokumentale, examines how documentary series became a mainstream streaming format – and what comes after the genre that built it. With **Rahul Patel** (Ampere Analysis), **Christian Beetz** (Beetz Brothers), **Marina Klauser** (creator and director, THE ANGEL MAKER) and director **Finbarr Wilbrink**, moderated by **Anna Ramskogler-Witt** (Dokumentale). In a bar talk, Swedish author **Jens Lapidus** – for fifteen years a criminal defence lawyer, and the writer behind EASY MONEY, TOP DOG and this year’s premiere BURDEN OF JUSTICE – talks about what changes when the reality you know becomes material for fiction, and where the boundaries lie. And in **The New Playbook for Sports Storytelling**, Olympic beach volleyball player **Anouk Vergé-Dépré** and creator-director **Wero Rodowicz** discuss what it takes to turn athletes’ lives into a series – trust, access and vulnerability on camera in a world already managed by sponsors and social media.

Seriesly Creators: Who Owns the Audience?

The new **Seriesly Creators** track examines a power shift. **Own the Pipeline: Inside the Creator Ecosystems of German Giants** looks at how established production houses are building dedicated creator units from within – with **Henrik Wittmann** and **Laura Caciauna** (LEONINE C_), **Kai Fischer** (Constantin Creators) and audience data from **Rahul Patel** (Ampere Analysis), using SPLASH HOUSE, Germany’s leading TikTok creator event with more than 225 million views, as a case in point. **From Creator to Company** turns the perspective around: creator-led companies now bring development, production, distribution and audience under one roof, which changes not only how serialized content is made, but who owns it. With **Peter Hoffmann** (Head of YouTube Social Sales DACH) and **André Schubert** (Calivision, 7VS.WILD), moderated by **Johannes Schmidbauer** (Home of Talents). Further sessions will spotlight female creators and the increasingly popular genre of journalistic video podcasts.

Hands-On: AI, Budgets and Writers’ Rooms

The workshop program stays practical: **AI below the Line** walks experienced producers through hybrid production – live acting combined with AI sets, stunts and VFX – including the current tools and the legal and rights landscape, led by **Elena Lyubarskaya** (co-creator, CITY OF BLOOD) and Generative AI artist **Milad Mesof** (HOUSE OF DAVID). **Production-Aware Writing** with **Bianca Gavin** (Head of Production, VICE Studios; GANGS OF LONDON) and **Kateryna Vyshnevskaya** examines how writing decisions shape budget, feasibility and co-production potential without compromising the creative vision.



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In **Talk to Serial Eyes**, Head of Studies **Katrin Merkel** speaks with alumnae **Elena Lyubarskaya** and **Kim Zimmermann** about worldbuilding, writers' room techniques and international teamwork on **CITY OF BLOOD**, while the **Erich Pommer Institut** offers a behind-the-scenes look at the Series' Women and Winterclass programmes with their alumnae. Finally, **Dimitrij Schaad** – actor, writer and director, and the creator of opening series **JOSSI** as well as the Netflix series **CRAP HAPPENS** – talks about where his stories come from and what happens when an actor starts calling more of the shots. No retrospective, no masterclass: **Create Your Own Damn Story** is about the ideas, risks and ambitions driving his work right now.

The Seriesly Berlin Conference program and schedule are available at www.serieslyberlin.com.

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