

# ROOTS AND REELS

## INTERNATIONAL HISTORY COMPETITION

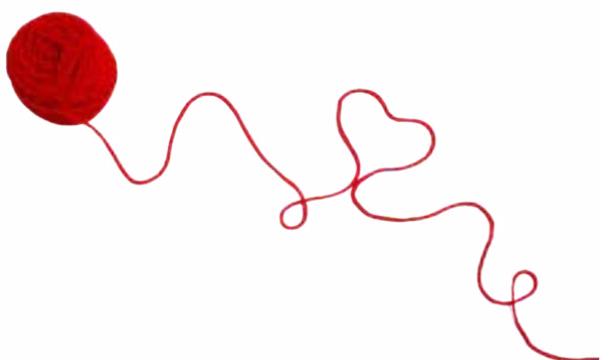
### FOR YOUNG DIGITAL STORYTELLERS (13-27)

What story from the past still speaks to you today? With a camera or smartphone in your hand, you can turn family memories, local histories and hidden voices into short films (3min), and share them with other young people across Europe.

**Organised by:** IDMC – Institute for Democracy, Media & Culture

**Initiated by:** EUSTORY

**Supported by:** Körber-Stiftung



# What is Roots & Reels?

**Roots & Reels is an international short film competition for young people that brings together history & memory, storytelling and film.**

The past is not just dates in a textbook. It lives in:

- family stories and everyday conversations,
- the streets, monuments and landscapes around us,
- the words we use, and in what is remembered or left out.

At the same time, our social media feeds are full of images and videos about history: sometimes inspiring, sometimes nostalgic, sometimes misleading or manipulative.

**Roots & Reels was created to slow this flood down for a moment and to ask:**

1

**Where do our stories about the past come from?**

2

**Whose voices are we listening to and whose are missing?**

3

**How can we work with sources and still tell creative, emotional stories?**

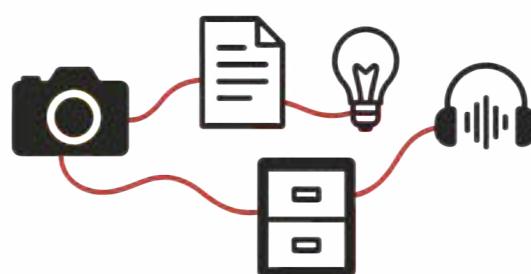
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**Why does it matter today?**

With a short film, you can **question, reframe and share** the histories that shape your life, not just consume them. Win jury and audience cash prizes.



**Submission period:** 16 January 2026 – 1 April 2026, 23:59 CET



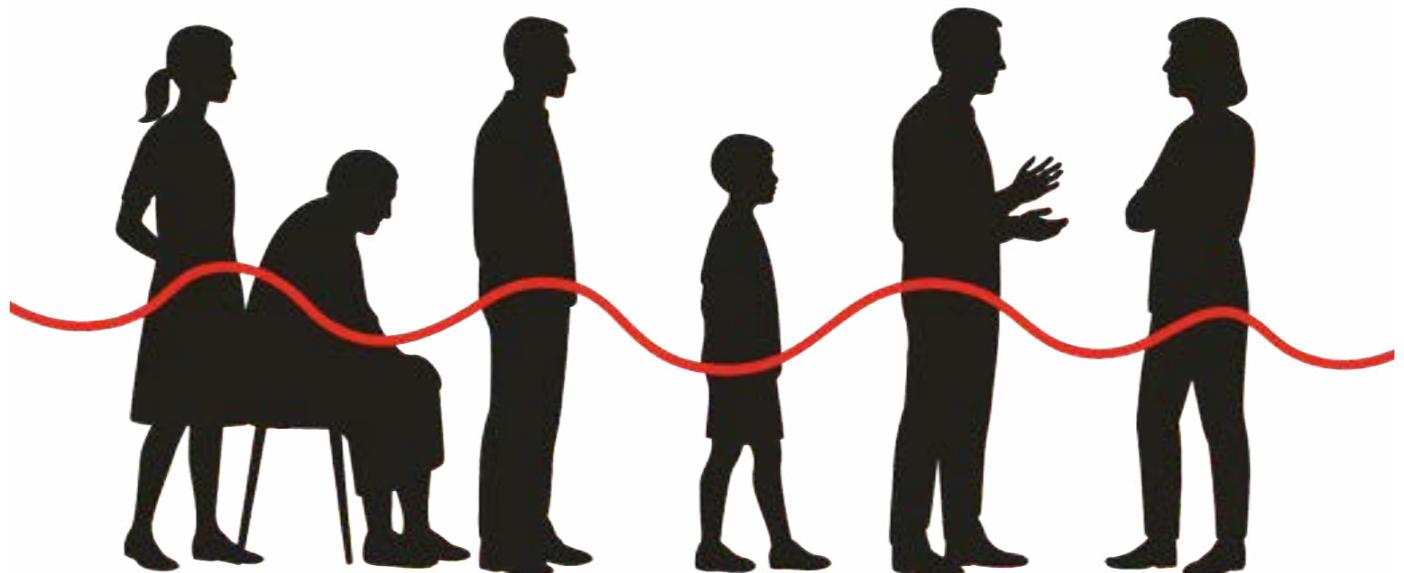
# Who can participate?

## Roots & Reels is open to:

- young people aged 13–27 until 1 April 2026
- from Europe (defined as a EUSTORY or Council of Europe Member State)

## You can join:

- as an individual, or
- as a group (for example friends, classmates or a youth group – small teams recommended).



Teachers and youth workers can support you, but the creative lead and main work should stay with the young participants.

# What kind of film can I make?

We are looking for **short films up to 3 minutes** that:

01

**explore a history, memory or heritage topic;**

02

**use at least two historical sources**

03

**make clear why this story matters today.**

## Historical sources can include:

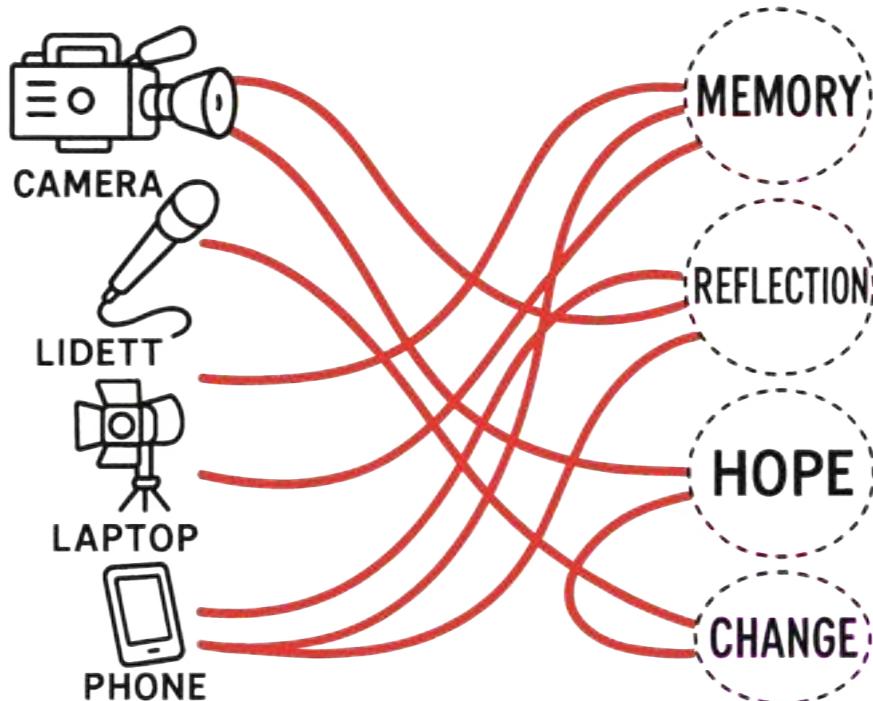
- archival documents, photos, newspapers, recordings
- oral history interviews and testimonies
- family albums, letters, diaries
- places, monuments, objects

## Any style is welcome:

- documentary or video essay
- animation, collage, stop motion
- creative re-enactment
- experimental or hybrid formats

You can work in any language, but your film must have **English subtitles** so the international jury and audience can follow.

You can film with a smartphone and use free editing tools, the focus is on your ideas and how you work with sources, not on perfect equipment.



# THEMES & INSPIRATION

## What can your film be about?

Roots & Reels is about history, memory and heritage – from big political events to very small, personal stories. You don't have to choose a formal category, but these themes can inspire you:



### 1. Family memories & everyday life

- Stories from your family history (migration, work, war, education, traditions).
- Old photos, letters, diaries and objects at home.
- How memories are told – or kept silent – between generations.



### 2. Places, borders & movement

- How borders, migration and mobility shaped people's lives.
- Cities, villages or neighbourhoods "then and now".
- Train stations, ports, border crossings and transit spaces.



### 3. Democracy, conflict & human rights

- Protests, resistance and social movements.
- Everyday life under dictatorship, censorship or surveillance.
- Experiences of exclusion, discrimination, activism and solidarity.



### 4. Memory in public space & media

- Monuments, memorials, street names – who is remembered, who is missing?
- How films, series, games or social media talk about the past.
- Museums, archives, schoolbooks and the stories they tell.



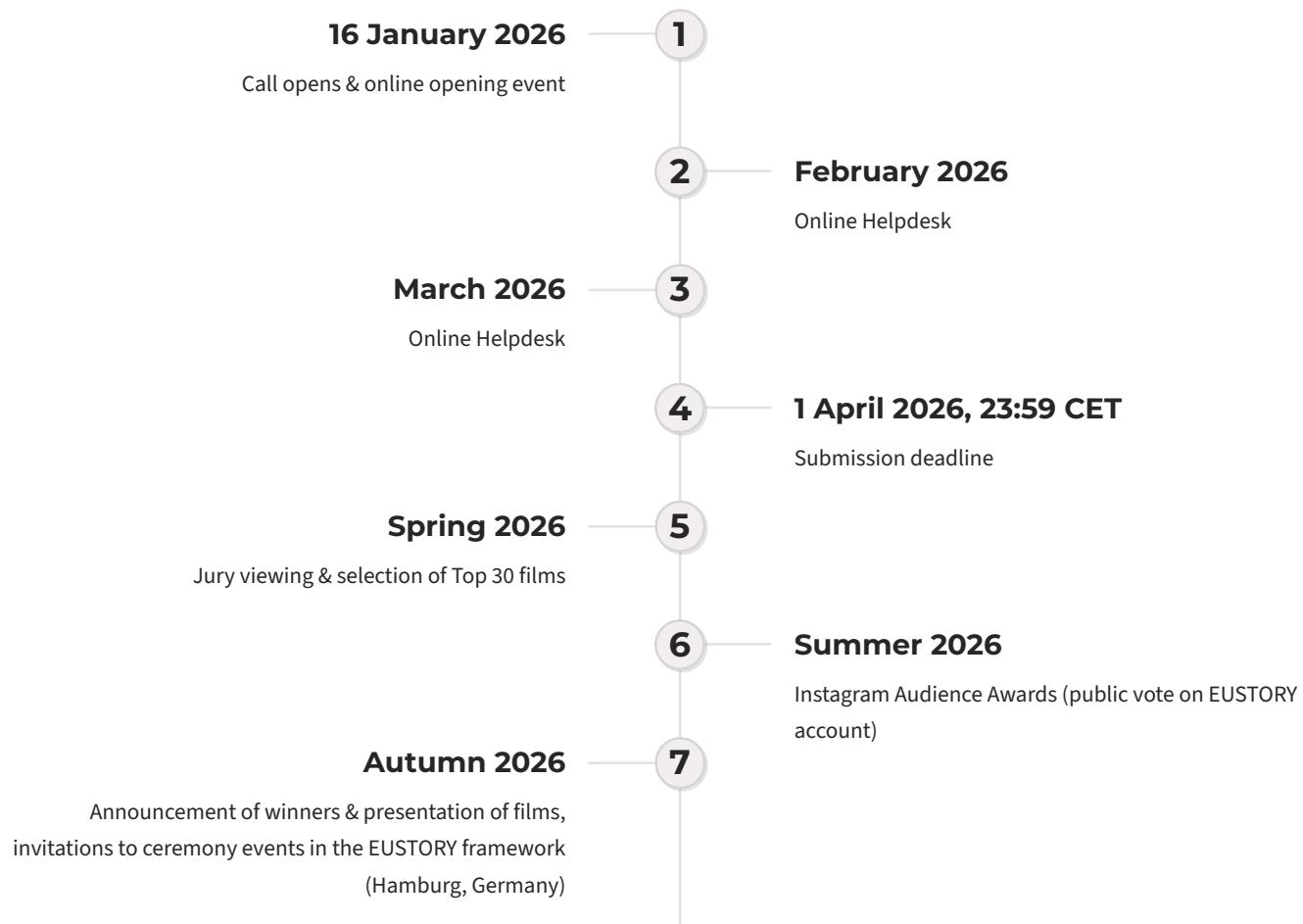
### 5. Environment, work & the future

- Factories, farms, mines and industrial sites and how they changed.
- Environmental damage and repair, loss of landscapes.
- How people in the past imagined the future – and how we see it today.

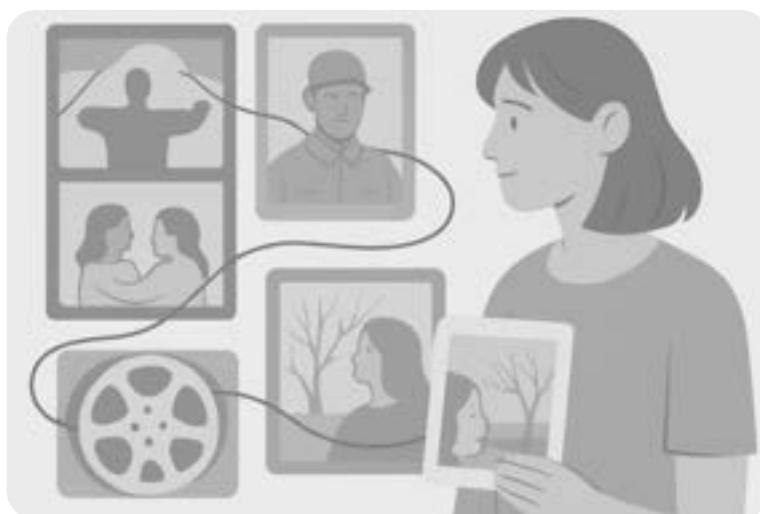
**Key message:** Show which past you chose, which sources you used, and why this story matters to you now.

# YOUR ROOTS & REELS JOURNEY (TIMELINE)

## Your Roots & Reels Journey



Create → Submit → Jury → Top 30 → Instagram Awards → Ceremony in Hamburg



# How to apply

Applying to Roots & Reels is simple.

Before you start, have ready:

- Your finished film (max. 3 minutes, with English subtitles)
- A working film link (accessible without login)
- Two short texts:
  - 1. About your film (max. 300 words)
  - 2. Sources used (at least 2) + credits
- Consent forms (only if applicable):
  - Parent/Guardian Consent (if you are under 18)
  - Interview/Appearance Consent (if your film includes interviews or identifiable people)



## Upload your film

Upload to Google Drive / WeTransfer / unlisted YouTube or Vimeo / OneDrive / Dropbox / school cloud. Make sure "anyone with the link can view" and test the link in incognito.

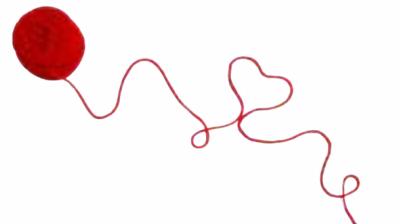


## Submit (from 16 January 2026)

Complete the online submission form with your contact details, participant names, film title, film link, "About your film", and "Sources + credits". Upload consent forms if required.

**Deadline: 1 April 2026, 23:59 CET**

**Contact: [rootsandreels@idmc.al](mailto:rootsandreels@idmc.al)**



# JURY, INSTAGRAM AWARDS & PRIZES

## How are films selected – and what can you win?

### Jury process

After the deadline, a jury of historians, educators, youth representatives and media/film practitioners watches all eligible films.

Each film is scored on:

- historical reflection
- storytelling & creativity
- media literacy & ethics
- technical execution (age-sensitive)

From all entries, the jury selects the **Top 30** as the official Roots & Reels shortlist. From this shortlist, they award:

- 1st prize
- 2nd prize
- 3rd prize

The jury may also give special mentions. The jury's decision is final.

### Instagram Audience Awards

The Top 30 films also compete in an Instagram public vote on the official EUSTORY account. For each Reel, we track:

- number of likes
- number of comments
- number of shares

At the end, three Audience Awards are given:

1. Most Liked
2. Most Commented
3. Most Shared

**Fair play:** if we see clear signs of fake likes, spam or manipulation, we may adjust results or disqualify the film to keep the competition fair.

### Prizes

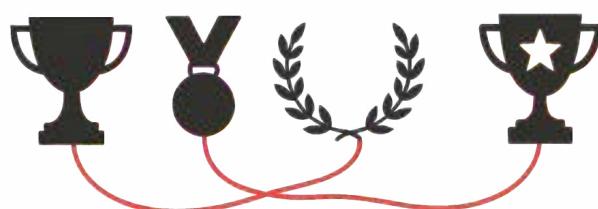
#### Jury prizes

- 1st prize – 750 €
- 2nd prize – 500 €
- 3rd prize – 250 €

#### Instagram Audience Awards

- 1st prize – 750 €
- 2nd prize – 500 €
- 3rd prize – 250 €

In the case of group entries, usually 1 or 2 people will be invited to represent the group at Roots & Reels / EUSTORY ceremony events in Hamburg, Germany.



# WORKING WITH SOURCES & ETHICS

## Working with sources – and with care

**Roots & Reels is not just about beautiful images. It is about how we work with the past.**

### Look closely at sources

Don't just repeat what you see online. Check where your information comes from – archives, family stories, newspapers, social media posts – and ask who created it and why.

### Respect people's stories

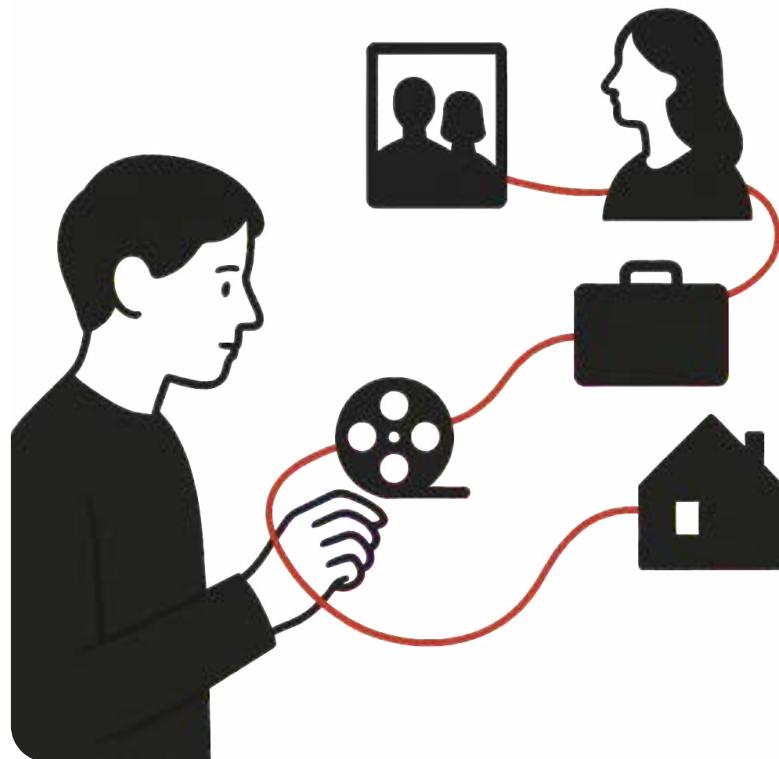
When you use interviews, testimonies or family memories, think about consent, privacy and how your film might affect the people involved – now and in the future.

### Be honest about what is real and what is staged

Creative re-enactments and mixed formats are welcome – but make sure viewers can understand what is documentary and what is fiction.

### Credits & licences

- Use music and images that you created yourself or that are clearly allowed (public domain, Creative Commons, or with explicit permission).
- Always credit your sources in the submission form.



# FOR TEACHERS & YOUTH WORKERS

## How educators can support Roots & Reels

Roots & Reels can easily be integrated into school or non-formal education as a project about history, media literacy and creativity.

### How you can help



#### Introduce the competition

Present the idea in class or your group, using this magazine and the website.



#### Support research & source work

Help young people access archives, local institutions, libraries or community resources.



#### Provide a safe discussion space

Some topics (war, discrimination, migration, family trauma) can be sensitive. Offer space for reflection and debriefing.



#### Guide, don't direct

Encourage, give feedback and help with logistics, but leave creative decisions and authorship to the young participants.

You can also use selected films (after the competition) as a starting point for discussing:

- different perspectives on history
- how media shapes our view of the past
- the role of young people in public debates about memory and heritage



# PRACTICAL INFO, LINKS & CONTACT

## Practical information

- **Who:** Young people aged 13–27 from Europe (defined as a EUSTORY or Council of Europe Member State)
- **What:** Short film competition (max. 3 minutes) on history, memory or heritage
- **When:** Submission period – 16 January 2026 to 1 April 2026, 23:59 CET
- **How:** Upload your film online and submit the link via the Roots & Reels form
- **Language:** Any language, with English subtitles

## Organisers

- **Organised by:** IDMC – Institute for Democracy, Media & Culture (Tirana, Albania)
- **Initiated by:** EUSTORY
- **Supported by:** Körber-Stiftung

## Contact & support

**General & submission questions**

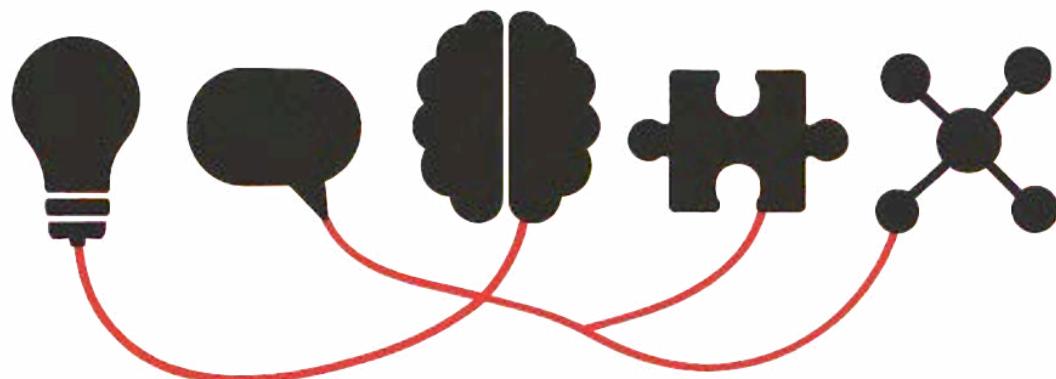
[rootsandreels@idmc.al](mailto:rootsandreels@idmc.al)

**Online Q&A sessions (Zoom)**

two "Ask us anything" events  
(February & March 2026)

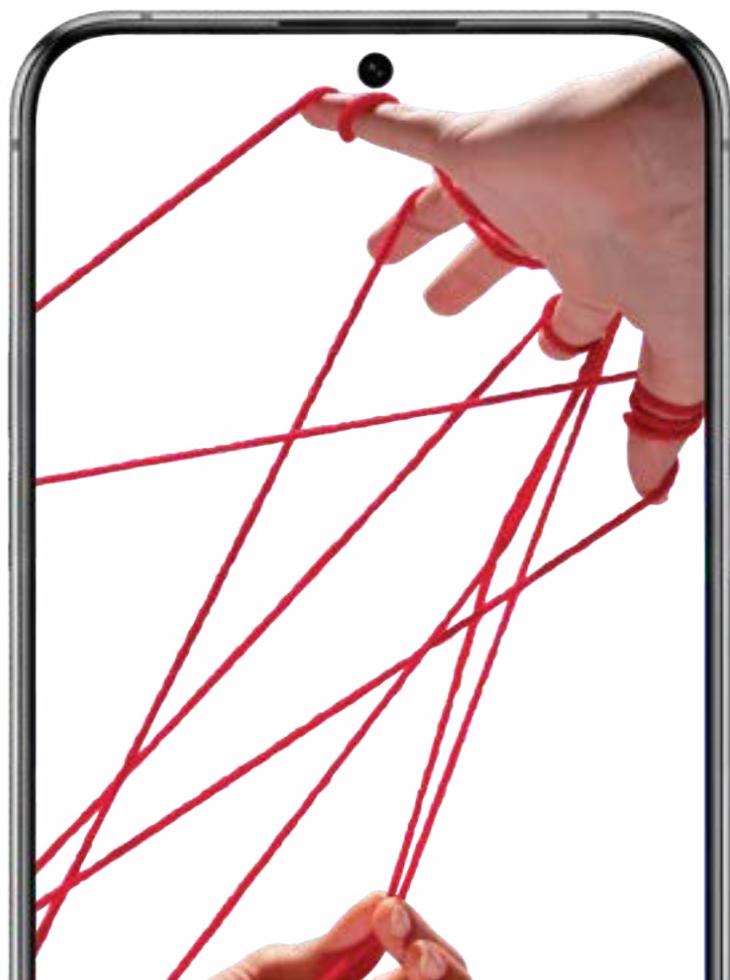
**WhatsApp help desk**

link available from 16 January 2026



# Find out more

Full guidelines, Terms & Conditions, Data Protection & Privacy Notice and Rights of Use are available on the Roots & Reels competition page on the IDMC website and via EUSTORY channels.



**Roots & Reels invites you to bring history and memory to life on screen – and to share your perspective on the past with others across borders.**

Organised by:



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