



PRESS RELEASE

Rome, 12th September 2026

The UNIMED Award 2026 was granted to the film “Look Back” by Hirokazu Koreeda.

The award ceremony was held on Friday, September 11, 2026, at 5:30 PM at Giornate degli Autori Sala Laguna, Via Pietro Buratti 1, Lido di Venezia, preceded by the second edition of *Africa Chiama!*. Director Hirokazu Koreeda personally received the Award, welcomed with enthusiasm by the 29 students of the UNIMED jury.

The UNIMED Award 2026 was granted to the film “Look Back” with the following motivation:

“The UNIMED Award jury dedicates the 2026 Award to Hirokazu Koreeda's Look Back, a film that tells the story of the bond between two young artists, Fujino and Kyomoto, and the saving power of shared passion. Through the hikikomori and otaku phenomenon, the story overcomes isolation and social judgment, showing how diversity, not individualism, is the true value that unites people. The film's strength lies in its emotional restraint: it never imposes feelings on the viewer, relying instead on silence and small gestures that speak louder than grand declarations. The UNIMED jurors recognized themselves in this message, united by the same passion for cinema and for storytelling. Despite distance, cultural differences, and the uncertainty of the future, the jury chose to support one another, just as the film's protagonists do. A bond capable of transcending every linguistic and cultural barrier. The film reminds us that uncertainty, disappointment, and loss are inevitable parts of life, but should never be a reason to stop moving forward: we cannot control every chapter of our story, but we can choose what to create from it. Through its essential language, evocative animation, and dreamlike soundtrack, Look Back urges us to never stop chasing our dreams, despite the unpredictability of tomorrow.”

On the occasion of the 83rd Venice International Film Festival, an international jury composed of **25 students** from 16 UNIMED associated universities, representing 7 different countries, and of **4 students** from 2 Sub-Saharan universities, conferred the UNIMED Award 2026 to the film that best reflects the values of cultural diversity, freedom of artistic expression and promotion of intercultural dialogue.

The 2026 jury was composed as follows:

- Kyriakos Filokratous, Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus
- Mohammed Aram Khdhr, Erbil Polytechnic University, Iraq
- Zarina Ospanova, Università Ca' Foscari, Italy
- Stella Gambelli, Università Ca' Foscari, Italy
- Iris Catoggio, Università IULM, Italy
- Claudia Varca, Università IULM, Italy
- Roberta Di Carlo, Università degli studi internazionali di Roma (UNINT), Italy
- Maria Panatta, Università degli studi internazionali di Roma (UNINT), Italy
- Elena Critelli, Università degli studi internazionali di Roma (UNINT), Italy
- Ludovica Amaro, Università IUAV di Venezia, Italy
- Andrea Lo Nano, Università IUAV di Venezia, Italy
- Fatimata Lucia Coulibaly, Università di Padova, Italy
- Pietro Ranaboldo, Politecnico di Torino, Italy
- Francesca Esposito, Politecnico di Torino, Italy
- Crystel Habchi, Al-Ahliyya Amman University, Jordan
- Zahraa Salah Al-Din Malkawi, Yarmouk University, Jordan
- Talia Azar, Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, Lebanon
- Malak Salhab, Hebron University, Palestine
- Lara AbdAlqader, An-Najah National University, Palestine
- Dania Subhi Najajreh, Palestine Technical University – Kadoorie, Palestine
- Ghina Hamdan, Palestine Technical University – Kadoorie, Palestine
- Irene Roig Castellanos, University of Barcellona, Spain
- Aurèlia Torné Subirats, University of Barcellona, Spain
- Alejandro Escobar Bechadli, University of Murcia, Spain
- Andrea Conesa Nieto, University of Murcia, Spain

The jury, coordinated by Prof. Antonio Falduto (UNINT), was also joined this year by a group of students from Mozambique and South Africa, with a view to further opening up and promoting international dialogue.

- Kai Reynolds, AFDA School of Business, South Africa
- Sivuyisiwe Nxawe, AFDA School of Business, South Africa
- Sunésia Da Erica Chauque, Universidad Pedagógica, Mozambique
- Carmen Augusto, Universidad Pedagógica, Mozambique

Established in collaboration with the Venice Biennale, and now in its tenth edition, the Award was created



to recognize films that reflect a commitment to a more open and inclusive society, capable of acknowledging and respecting cultural differences. It was established in memory of Prof. Franco Rizzi, former Secretary General and Founder of UNIMED, for his lifelong commitment to improving dialogue between the two shores of the Mediterranean through cooperation among Euro-Mediterranean universities. UNIMED aims to advance research and higher education in the Euro-Mediterranean area in order to contribute to scientific, cultural, social and economic cooperation in the region.

The tenth edition of the UNIMED Award was co-funded by the Ministry of University and Research (MUR).

For more information, please contact unimed@uni-med.net or visit the website <https://www.uni-med.net/events/unimed-award-at-the-venice-international-film-festival/>

About UNIMED - Mediterranean Universities Union

UNIMED (<https://www.uni-med.net>) is a network of more than 190 higher education institutions across Europe, the Mediterranean, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and the Western Balkans. UNIMED aims to advance research and higher education in the Euro-Mediterranean area in order to contribute to scientific, cultural, social and economic cooperation in the region.

Press contact

Leonardo Menichini

Communication Officer

UNIMED - Mediterranean Universities Union

l.menichini@uni-med.net