

Press kit

SHADOW GAME



Directors: Eefje Blankevoort & Els van Driel

Producer: Witfilm

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Logline

Shadow Game is a journey through the dark side of Europe with teenage refugees as our guides.

Synopsis

Everyday teenagers who have fled their war-torn countries try to cross Europe's borders in search of protection and a better life. They travel through a shadow world we never see: a world of minefields, bears, fast-flowing rivers, smugglers and border guards. 'The game' is the bitterly ironic term for crossing borders that has become commonplace among these young refugees. Risking their lives, the teenagers undertake a treacherous journey that often takes months or even years. Along the way, they grow up fast. Shadow Game (89 min) is a journey through the dark side of Europe with teenage refugees as our guides.

Shadow Game is an experimentally filmed account of the far-reaching consequences of European asylum policy. Now fences have gone up all over Europe, seeking asylum has become almost impossible. The teenagers cross snowy landscapes and meet aggressive border police on their way. Reaching their final destination has become more difficult than ever. Their journey takes them through the whole of Europe: from Greece to North Macedonia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, from Italy to France and The Netherlands. The film was shot over a period of three years, partly by the main characters themselves on their phones.

Durrab (16 from Pakistan) tries to cross the 152-km-long double fence on the border of Serbia and Hungary. In Greece, 15-year-old Afghan 'SK' is just at the beginning of his journey. All over Europe, we meet kids who have already tried uncountable times to do 'the game' and are now stuck, like Iranian Mo, Pakistani Yaseen, Afghan Fouad and Iraqi Mustafa.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Syrian Hammoudi, at 14 the youngest of them all, recounts his attempt to pass the 'last level'. In the same camp, brothers Jano (18) and Shiro (15) from Syria are preparing for their final move. Meanwhile in Ventimiglia, Faiz (17) from Darfur is doubting whether to try to cross into France once again.

Shadow Game is a mosaic story in which the experiences of many young refugees on the road are forged together into one universal tale: a modern Odyssey. Will they overcome the numerous obstacles they face? And will they find a new home?

General information

Title:	Shadow Game
International title:	Shadow Game
Spoken Languages:	Kurdish, Arabic, Pashto, Farsi, English
Subtitles:	English
Genre:	Documentary
Country of origin:	The Netherlands
Release date:	March 5, 2021
World premiere:	Movies that Matter, the Netherlands
European premiere:	FIFDH, Switzerland
Production company:	Witfilm, in cooperation with Prospektor
Dutch broadcaster:	KRO-NCRV
Financed by:	The Netherlands Film Fund, NPO-fonds, CoBO, UNHCR Netherlands
Contact information:	Femke de Wild Producer Witfilm +31 20 6885049 +31 6 24509975 femke@witfilm.nl

Official Pages

Website:	www.shadowgame.eu
Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/shadowgamefilm
Instagram:	https://www.instagram.com/shadowgamefilm/

Screeener Link

Film link English subs 90':	https://vimeo.com/471353512 Password: SG2020
Link trailer English subs:	https://vimeo.com/514264176

Credits

Directors:	Eefje Blankevoort Els van Driel
Director of photography:	Ton Peters nsc
Editor:	Patrick Schonewille
Sound:	Els van Driel Eefje Blankevoort
Research:	Zuhoor al Qaisi Eefje Blankevoort Els van Driel
Composer:	Rui Reis Maia
Sound Design & Mixage:	Mark Glynne Tom Bijnen
Colour Grading:	John Thorborg
Producer Witfilm:	Iris Lammertsma
Creative Producer Witfilm:	Boudewijn Koole
Executive Producer Witfilm:	Femke de Wild Nazima Mintjes
Commissioning Editor KRO-NCRV:	Jelle Peter de Ruiter
Data Handling & Postproduction:	FeverFilm
Subtitles:	inVision Ondertiteling BV
Graphics & Titles:	Studio MiNSK
Design Poster:	Susanne Keilhack
Impact Campaign:	Prospektor

This film was supported by
the Netherlands Film Fund, NPO Fund, CoBO, UNHCR Netherlands

Shadow Game is a production of Witfilm in co-production with KRO-NCRV and in collaboration
with Prospektor

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Biography Eefje Blankevoort

Eefje Blankevoort (1978) studied History at the University of Amsterdam. Between 2002 and 2006 she regularly spent time in Iran where she studied, compiled an archive for the International Institute of Social History and worked on her book *Stiekem kan hier alles* (You can do anything here in secret). Since then, Eefje has developed into an all-rounder in journalism, writing articles and books, as well as creating interactive projects, exhibitions and documentary films. She is co-founder and director of documentary production agency Prospektor.



Biography Els van Driel

Els van Driel (Alkmaar, 1976) is an independent crossmedia journalist and director. She studied art history and social-cultural theology at the University of Amsterdam. She worked for almost 13 years for the Dutch Ecumenical Broadcasting company IKON television where she learned the skills and crafts of television- and documentary making. At IKON she initiated the award-winning youth documentary series 'Just Kids' (aka 'Mensjesrechten'); a series about children's rights, which is broadcast in several countries around Europe on television and is shown at film festivals around the globe.



Filmography Eefje Blankevoort

Film

In production

- 2021** Shadow Game: Feature length documentary, a 'coming of age story', a 'coming of age story' about child migrants who are trying to find their way through Europe.

2022 The Dress: A four-part documentary series about a mystical find in the Wadden Sea. Two beautiful, glamorous 17th century gowns are found in an old shipwreck. Who did these dresses belong to? Why did the ship sink? Structured as a detective series, The Dress tells the story of a dozen of scientists who approach the archaeological treasure as a crime scene and try to find out whodunnit.

Film

Realized

2018 The Deal: The EU Turkey deal: human act or devil's pact? 55 min documentary about the EU's Asylum Policy. (2Doc, IKON/EO) Premiere March 2018.

Homo Ludens: What drives the playing human? Visual essay about playing adults. (25 min documentary) Premiere Spring 2018. Co-production broadcaster NTR. Producer. Winner Audience award GoShort Film Festival.

2017 The Art of Travel: documentary about artist Rolf Weijburg, slow travel and slow art. (40 min) RTV Utrecht.

2016 Bring the Jews home: 55-minute documentary about a Christian zealot aiming to 'bring home all the Jews' to hasten the second coming of Christ. Research, script and co-direction with Arnold van Bruggen. (IKON, JvdWfilm / Prospektor, Breng de Joden thuis (55 min, IKON/EO) Gouden Kalf competitie 2016, DocLeipzig, Hotdocs etc.

2014 New: youth documentary about 8 years old Tanans, a resettled refugee from Congo. For NCRV Dokument Junior.

Awards DOXS! , 2014 – Honorable Mention
Children's Film Festival Seattle, 2015 – Best Short Documentary
Mo & Friese Children's Short Film Festival, 2015 – Mo-Award (Best Short Documentary – 9-12-year-olds)
Prix Jeunesse UNESCO Special Prize

Nominations Nederlands Film Festival, 2014 – Debuut Competitie
DocumentART, 2104 – European Competition
IDFA, 2014 – Kids & Docs Award
Prix Jeunesse International
Prix Jeunesse UNESCO Special Prize

2013 Joella, Best Friends Forever: youth documentary for IKON. (Prospektor /IKON).

Interactive documentaries

In production

2020 Shadow Game: Interactive web documentary series, a 'coming of age story' about child migrants who are trying to find their way through Europe.

Realised

2018 The Migrant: based on a true bird story. Interactive documentary about the Javan Mynah is a story about a bird's remarkable life course, a story about how we deal with animals, the city's makeability and our attempt to shape an ideal society. At the same time, the story is a metaphor for our relationship with 'The Migrant'. Together with newspaper Trouw. Launch Spring 2018. <https://migrant.nu>

2017 The Holy Road: Together with newspaper NRC Handelsblad. The Holy Road is an interactive web documentary about the people who live – with and alongside each other – along the 'holiest' but also most contested road through Israel and Palestine: Route 60. www.theholyyroad.org

Propaganda by the people: Propaganda by the People is a crowdsourced animation project, that challenges people to think about their European identity. www.propagandabythepeople.eu

2015-2016 The Asylum Search Engine: a cross-media project that investigates the complex world of Dutch asylum policy and offers citizens an opportunity to think along. It consisted of a series of events and meetings, exhibitions, an online documentary, a TV documentary and two radio documentaries. Nomination Gouden Kalf 2016 Netherlands Film Festival, nomination Silver Camera. Winner Dutch Director's Guild. www.asielzoekemachine.nl

2015 Webdocumentary "Imperial Courts" with photographer Dana Lixenberg. Official selection IDFA Doclab 2015. Winner Dutch Director's Guild 2015. www.imperialcourtsproject.com

- 2014** Love Radio, – Episodes of Love and Hate: Tv and web documentary, exhibition in FOAM and diverse publication about the complex process of reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda. With photographer Anoek Steketee. Winner Popcap '14. Nominated for Visa d'Or and Prix Italia. Selection 'On the Move', Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.
www.loveradio-rwanda.org
- 2013** Hidden Wounds” interactive videoclip and radio documentary about veterans suffering from PTSS. (Official selection IDFA Doclab 2013, winner Best Short Documentary Award, Chicago International Movies and Music Festival (CIMMFest). Winner Corti Da Sogni Videoclip Award, filmfestival Ravenna - International shortfilm. festival Corti da Sogni - 15th Edition.

Filmography Els van Driel

Longer documentaries

Research, script and co-direction

- 2020** Shadow game, 90” (co-direction) (KRO-NCRV)
- 2017** The Deal, 55 ”(co-direction) (2Doc IKONdocs / EO)
- 2016** 2Doc - The Asylum Search Machine Europe, 55”(co-direction) (IKONdocs / EO)
- 2015-2016** De Asielzoekmachine (co-direction): cross-media project; web documentary, exhibitions, debates and publications on Dutch asylum policy.
www.asielzoekmachine.nl Winner Directors Award NL 2017, Nomination Golden Calf 2016, 2nd prize Silver Camera.

Direction of youth documentaries/ shorts

- 2020** Jano & Shiro: a brother’s journey (co-direction)
Durrab’s labyrinth: (co-direction)

Youth documentaries in the series "Mensjesrechten/Just Kids"

- 2020** This is Me: premiere at Movies That Matter, Beholders documentary filmfestival.

- 2017** Outside Inside, Kids & Docs workshop - premiere Cinekid, IDFA. Nomination Golden Lion 2018.
- My body, my life: winner a.o. Unicef Japanprize 2017
- 2016** Safia's Summer: Cinekid 2016 Premiere, Winner of Best Documentary KUKI Berlin Film Festival
- 2015** A year without my parents: premiere IDFA 2015, winner Cinekid Kinderkast 2016, best documentary Chicago int. Children's film festival
- SOS friendship: premiere IDFA 2015 Guillaume's wonderful world, premiere Cinekid 2015, nominee ECFA documentary award
- 2014** The lion and the brave mouse: winner of the Kinodiseea Bukarest Kids Award 2015
- Gabriel reports on the World Cup: premiere IDFA 2014, winner Kuki Berlin audience award, best documentary Singapore int. Children's film festival.
- How Ky became Niels, premiere Cinekid 2014, winner BANFF Rockie award 2015, winner Unicef Prize, Uppsala short film festival award 2015, winner Prix Jeunesse prize and Prix Jeunesse gender equity prize 2016
- 2013** Feifei, hide and seek: Third prize European interreligious television festival

Director's statement

Shadow Game is a film by directors Eefje Blankevoort and Els van Driel, made in close cooperation with colleague-journalist, researcher and translator Zuhoor al Qaisi. For the last four years they have been all over Europe together, meeting teenagers who are trying to cross borders in order to find safety and documenting their stories. They didn't know the subjects before they met them on location. They were, however, in close contact with grassroots organizations on the ground, often self-help migrant/refugee groups. To explain their intentions and ask for permission they would contact the parent(s) or an adult relative in the countries of origin or in a third country. They stayed in touch with the subjects and their relatives through messenger and WhatsApp from the moment they met until now, which in some cases has been for over three years.

Eefje and Els have been working with refugees and refugee-communities for many years.

Inclusivity, ownership over one's own story and co-creation is very important for them. Therefore, they always work together with the subjects their films are about and the communities they come from. For example, for their transmedia project *The Asylum Search Machine* (www.asielzoekmachine.nl), about the Dutch asylum system, they cooperated closely with artists, photographers, moderators, panelists and others, all with a refugee background. The same goes for *Shadow Game*, in which they involve advisors with a refugee background who become part of the team. They wanted to tell the story from the perspective of the boys. Some of the subjects - Kurdish Jano and Afghan SK - had already started vlogging and making videos of their journey with their own mobile phones. They shared their material with the directors. After meeting with the filmmakers, they would often send updates on their situations. This material is included in the film.

The filmmakers also have a longstanding connection with the countries of origin and cultures these youngsters come from. Eefje has worked and lived in Iran, understands Iranian culture and speaks Farsi. She knows many Iranians who have been forced to flee their country over the last decades and could therefore easily interact with the many Iranians they met on the road. Because Dari and Farsi are quite similar languages, she could also connect with the Afghan people they met. Being the daughter of an asylum-lawyer, Els has always been in close contact with refugees and appreciates the sensitivity of their stories and identities. As a documentary maker she specializes in making films about children's rights from a child's perspective and therefore has worked a lot with children and youngsters around the globe in dire circumstances. Researcher and translator Zuhoor al Qaisi worked as a journalist in Iraq. In 2015 she was forced to flee to the Netherlands. Zuhoor connected with Els and Eefje through a colleague-journalist and they have worked together since, first on their film *The Deal* about the EU-Turkey deal and now on *Shadow Game*. Zuhoor's experience, both as a refugee and as a journalist, her empathy and commitment were essential in connecting and maintaining contact with the Arabic speaking subjects in the film.

Biography Witfilm

Witfilm is the production company of director Boudewijn Koole and producer Iris Lammertsma. On the one hand, Witfilm focuses on creative, social and youth documentaries, its key assets being concept development and intensive coaching of filmmakers, resulting in innovative, visually powerful films of artistic nature dealing with subjects that are thought-provoking at all times. Documentary directors Witfilm works with are a.o. Oeke Hoogendijk, Coco Schrijber and Frank Scheffer. On the other hand, Witfilm focuses on developing and

producing art house films by directors who have a strong personal signature, as Boudewijn Koole, Marjoleine Boonstra, Saskia Boddeke and Peter Greenaway. Witfilm (co-) produces both nationally and internationally. Many of Witfilm's films have been nominated for awards like Rose d'Or, Tiger Award and IDFA (several competitions) or have won awards like the International Emmy Award, FIPRESCI, Prix Europa, Golden Calf and Prix Italia. Awarded productions include the feature length documentaries Dance or Die, My Father's Choice, Zaatari Djinn, Transit Havana, Bring the Jews Home, Inside the Chinese Closet, Battles and Happily Ever After, the youth documentary New and the dance film Off Ground. By making high quality and visually exciting films, Witfilm aims at contributing to a thriving film sector (inter)nationally.

Stills



