

A close-up photograph of a woman with dark hair and visible tattoos on her arms, embracing a young child with dark hair. The woman's eyes are closed, and she has a gentle expression. The child's head is resting against her. The background is blurred, suggesting an indoor setting.

WORLD PREMIERE · 11 NOVEMBER 2026

DOC@PÖFF INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

TALLINN BLACK NIGHTS FILM FESTIVAL

LOST AND FOUND

THIRTY YEARS, NOT TOGETHER

A DOCUMENTARY BY LAURENTIU GAROFEANU

PRESS KIT

FEATURE DOCUMENTARY · 98 MINUTES · ROMANIA · 2026

A MEKANISM MEDIA PRODUCTION · LAURENTIU@MEKANISM.MEDIA

FILM INFORMATION

THE FILM AT A GLANCE

LOGLINE

Sold as a baby in 1990 and raised in Canada as a child who had been abandoned, Jessi Froud goes back to Romania to find the family she was taken from.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Jessi Froud spent the first two months of her life in the hospital in Călărași. Then a Canadian man she had never met carried her out of Romania wrapped in a sweater. Her adoptive parents paid, flew home, and were told she had been abandoned at birth. She had not been abandoned. In the same town she had a mother, a father, a brother, and an address. Thirty years later she comes back to find them, and builds something that holds, until her birth father arrives from Spain and says the thing the family had agreed never to say.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

TITLE	Lost and Found: Thirty Years, Not Together
COUNTRY	Romania
YEAR	2026
RUNNING TIME	98 minutes
GENRE	Feature documentary
LANGUAGES	Romanian, English, Spanish
SUBTITLES	English
SCREENING FORMAT	DCP, colour
SOUND	5.1
DIRECTOR	Laurentiu Garofeanu
PRODUCTION	Mekanism Media, Bucharest
WORLD PREMIERE	11 November 2026, Doc@PÖFF International Competition, Tallinn Black Nights

“Our entire Programme Committee was captivated by this profoundly heartfelt film. Its uniqueness lies first of all in the almost unimaginable reality it reveals: in Romania in the 1990s, children were sold by their parents, and sisters were separated.”

MARIANNA KAAT, CURATOR, DOC@PÖFF INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

SYNOPSIS

TWO FAMILIES, ONE DAUGHTER

A thousand dollars. Cigarettes. A bottle of whisky. Office supplies for the clerk who moved the file along.

That is what Jessi Froud cost in 1990. She spent the first two months of her life in the hospital in Călărași. Then a Canadian man she had never met carried her out of Romania wrapped in a sweater. Her adoptive parents paid, flew home to British Columbia, and were told she had been abandoned at birth.

She had not been abandoned. In the same town she had a mother, a father, a brother, and an address: one room, an earth floor, one bed. She had a name. Ghiulsecen Adim.

Thirty years later she comes back. Over the following years she builds something with the family she was taken from. A mother she calls every day. A brother. A room full of relatives with her face. She decides to move to Romania, to work with the community she came from and with the children in it.

Then her birth father travels from Spain to meet her. They meet in a park, because her mother does not want him near her. And he says the thing the family had agreed never to say.

What the film asks after that is not who is to blame. It is a smaller and harder question. What happens to a person who exists in flesh and not in the record. Somewhere there is a woman who was born in Romania, sold as an infant, and never registered. No certificate. No file. No line in any book that says she was here.



Romania. Jessi with Afize, Emurah and the children, on the ground where the house stands.



Canada. Jessi with her adoptive parents. They paid, flew home, and were told it was a rescue.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

YOU CANNOT PHOTOGRAPH A DOCUMENT THAT WAS NEVER WRITTEN

I did not set out to make a film about adoption. I wanted to make a film about identity, and I could think of no better way into the subject than through young adults who were adopted at or near birth. They have no memories of Romania. No parents, no landscape, no school, no friends. And still they feel they have to go and find out where they came from.

I interviewed close to fifty people across the world before I settled on Jessi. She was the most driven of all of them. She had made contact with her birth family a year earlier, and she was not looking for a visit. She wanted to move to Romania, to the community she came from, and to work with the children there.

The images from Romania in 1990 are fixed in the world's memory. Cots in rows. Shaved heads. Cameras in corridors. Those images were true, and they were also a frame that everything else had to fit through. Western families arrived by the planeload to save children from institutions. Some of the children they took home had never seen one.

For two years Jessi built something with the family she came from. A mother she called every day. A brother. A room full of relatives with her face. I filmed it, and for most of that time I thought I was making a film about a woman who had found her way back.

Then her father came from Spain and said the thing the family had agreed never to say.

Amdy, Jessi's birth father, travelled from Spain to meet her. They had to meet in the local park, because Afize, Jessi's mother, did not want him to have a relationship with her. Neither Jessi nor I knew how much that meeting would matter. Her life changed in that hour, and the film changed with it.

What the film asks after that is not who is to blame. It is a smaller and harder question. What happens to a person who exists in flesh and not in the record.

I came to film through photography, and I still think in single frames. The hardest thing about this story is that its central fact is an absence. You cannot photograph a document that was never written.

There were at least three moments during the production when I wanted to give up. Documentary financing in Romania is thin, and it shapes every production here. Applying again and again, and being funded at a fraction of what the work costs, wears a small team down. In the end the strength to finish came from Jessi, and from the number of people who began to believe that this film had to exist, and that the conversation it opens about this part of Romania's recent history is overdue.

I am Romanian. The system that moved these children was ours. The families that received them were not villains, and most of them were not told anything. Between those two facts there is a space where nobody has had to answer for what happened, and thirty-five years later the people it happened to are still doing the work of finding out.

LAURENTIU GAROFEANU



Călărași, Romania. Jessi with the family she was taken from, outside the house she would have grown up in. Photograph by Laurentiu Garofeanu.



The earliest picture. A few weeks old, held in someone's arms. The print is cracked across the corner. Family archive, courtesy of the Froud family.

PRODUCTION NOTES

SEVEN YEARS, 150 HOURS

The film began in 2018, at the Civil Society Pitch in Bucharest, as a project about a woman looking for her birth family. It was developed with Ex Oriente Film in 2019, pitched at East Doc Forum in Prague in March 2020, the week the city closed, and pitched again that year at the Documentary Campus Masterschool in Halle.

Shooting ran across Romania, Canada and Spain over seven years. Laurentiu Garofeanu shot most of the film himself and worked alone with the family for long stretches, which is the only way the material in the film could have been obtained. The production gathered close to 150 hours of footage.

THE EDIT

Cutting 150 hours to 98 minutes took two years. The first edit was built by Iulian Ghervas, a director rather than a career editor, whom Garofeanu trusted with the material for his sense of dramaturgy. The final assembly was completed with Olivia Ianculescu as finishing editor.

THE TURN

The turn came in 2019, when Jessi's birth father travelled from Spain and told her she had been sold, and that a second daughter had gone the same way. There was no birth certificate for that child.

What followed was an investigation rather than a family story. Adrian Mogos, an investigative journalist, worked on the case with the production for close to two years. Romanian adoption records from the period are held across several archives, incomplete where they exist, and in some cases were never created at all. The search turned up two birth certificates issued for one child. A DNA test later returned a match at 99.9 per cent.

Where that search ends is the subject of the film's final act, and is left for the screening.

CONTEXT

A FILE THAT WAS NEVER WRITTEN

Around 30,000 Romanian children were adopted by families abroad between 1989 and 2001. Close to 7,000 of them in the first two years alone. The images the world remembers are cots in rows and cameras in corridors. Those images were true, and they were also a frame everything else had to fit through. Some of the children taken home had never seen an institution.

Romania placed a temporary moratorium on intercountry adoption in 2001, then enacted a permanent ban under Law 273/2004, which took effect on 1 January 2005. Around a thousand adoptions were completed in between, most of them begun before the moratorium.

The practice is under scrutiny elsewhere. A study commissioned by the Swiss government examined irregular adoptions from ten countries of origin between the 1970s and the 1990s. Romania is one of the ten. In January 2025 the Swiss Federal Council announced that it wanted to end intercountry adoption altogether. The Swiss Parliament has so far refused: the House of Representatives voted 130 to 35 to keep it, and in March 2026 rejected a compromise put forward by the Senate. The question remains open.

On 29 September 2022, six United Nations human rights mechanisms issued a joint statement on illegal intercountry adoptions. They called on states to criminalise them, to set up independent investigative commissions, and to make sure that everyone adopted in the past can find out where they came from.

Adult adoptees searching for their Romanian families today work largely without institutional help. Records are incomplete, held across several archives, and in some cases were never created.

Sources. Adoption figures and the Romanian legislative timeline: public record and secondary literature on Romanian intercountry adoption. Swiss proceedings: Swiss Federal Council communications and SWI swissinfo.ch reporting, January 2025 to March 2026. United Nations joint statement: OHCHR, 29 September 2022.

DIRECTOR

LAURENTIU GAROFEANU



Laurentiu Garofeanu. Director, producer and cinematographer. A black and white version of this portrait is supplied with the kit.

Laurentiu Garofeanu is a Romanian-British filmmaker with more than twenty years in documentary and factual television. He began in the broadcast hubs of London and New York, making factual content for Discovery, Animal Planet, Channel 4, National Geographic and Amazon Prime, and working as a self-shooting producer and director.

He came to film through fine art and photography, and still thinks in single frames. He returned to Romania in 2015 and founded Mekanism Media in Bucharest in 2016, moving from commissioned factual work towards author-driven documentary. His projects since then have centred on identity, memory and social justice, and combine the intimacy of observational filming with the structure of an investigation.

Lost and Found: Thirty Years, Not Together is his debut feature documentary. He directed, produced and shot it.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Mekanism Media is a documentary and social-impact production company based in Bucharest, founded in 2016. It works across investigative documentary, non-fiction series and public-interest storytelling for Romanian and international partners.



POSTER AND ARTWORK

The festival poster is available as a print file at 2592 × 3840 px, sRGB, and in web and social formats. Stills are supplied at 1920 × 1080 px.

All production photographs by Laurentiu Garofeanu. Archive photographs courtesy of the Froud family. Please credit as marked on each image.

CREDITS

KEY CREDITS

DIRECTED BY Laurentiu Garofeanu

PRODUCED BY Mekanism Media

CINEMATOGRAPHY Laurentiu Garofeanu

EDITING Iulian Ghervas

FINISHING EDITOR Olivia Ianculescu

SOUND MIX COORDINATOR Vadim Staver

SOUND Iustin Bauer · Paul Bernic

INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST Adrian Mogos

Full end credits are available on request.

SELECTIONS, AWARDS AND SUPPORT

2019 Civil Society Pitch Award
One World Romania, Bucharest

2019 Ex Oriente Film
Institute of Documentary Film, development

2020 East Doc Forum
Institute of Documentary Film, Prague

2020 Documentary Campus Masterschool
Pitch, Halle

2024 Balkan Watchers Award
Balkan Documentary Center, development

2025 Docu Rough Cut Boutique
Sarajevo Film Festival and Balkan Documentary Center

2025 Think-Film Impact Production Award
CineLink Industry Days, Sarajevo Film Festival

2026 World premiere, Doc@PÖFF International Competition
Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival

PARTNERS AND SUPPORT

Supported by Romanian National Film Centre · MDM Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung · MMS Communications Romania · TVR

Developed with Ex Oriente Film · Documentary Campus · Balkan Documentary Center, with development

STILLS

SELECTED IMAGES

High-resolution files at 1920 × 1080 px are supplied with this kit. Production photographs by Laurentiu Garofeanu. Archive photographs courtesy of the Froud family.



01. Arrivals hall. Jessi and her birth mother.



02. Călărași. The family outside the house.



03. Jessi with Afize, Emurah and the children.



04. British Columbia. Jessi and her adoptive parents.



05. The earliest picture. Family archive.



06. The first months in Canada. Family archive.

CONTACT

PRESS, SCREENINGS AND SALES

PRESS AND INTERVIEWS

The director and Jessi Froud are available for interview, together or separately, throughout the festival.

Laurentiu Garofeanu
laurentiu@mekanism.media
+40 734 184 800

SCREENERS

A password-protected link is available to accredited press and programmers on request.

SALES AND DISTRIBUTION

Worldwide rights available.

Mekanism Media, Bucharest
laurentiu@mekanism.media

HOST A SCREENING

Community, campus and festival screenings, with the director or a guest speaker.

ONLINE

mekanism.media
instagram.com/lostandfound.documentary
facebook.com/lostandfound.documentary

This press kit may be reproduced in whole or in part for editorial coverage of the film. Photographs may be used in connection with coverage of the film only, with the credit shown. © 2026 Mekanism Media SRL, Bucharest.