



# Guidance for media, filming and for photo and video shooting in Malta during COVID-19 pandemic

## Business continuity

Success in controlling the COVID-19 pandemic depends on the full cooperation of all sectors of society – including businesses and employers – who play an essential role in curbing the spread of this disease, whilst continuing to provide their services to the community. Public Health Authorities will support business continuity while coordinating action in the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recognising that the COVID-19 pandemic is a public health emergency and that business continuity in respect of COVID-19 should be founded in expert health advice and constructive dialogue, the following principles shall apply:

- ✓ All workers, regardless of their occupation or how they are engaged, have the right to a healthy and safe working environment.
- ✓ The COVID-19 pandemic requires a uniquely focused approach to work health and safety as it applies to businesses, workers and others in the workplace.
- ✓ To keep workplaces healthy and safe, businesses must, in consultation with workers, assess the way they work to identify, understand and quantify risks and to implement and review control measures to address those risks.
- ✓ As COVID-19 restrictions are gradually relaxed, businesses and workers must work together to adapt and promote safe work practices, consistent with advice from health authorities, to ensure their workplaces are ready for the social distancing, exemplary hygiene measures and specific preventive measures that will be an important part of the transition.
- ✓ Businesses and workers must actively control against the transmission of COVID-19 while at work, consistent with the updated advice from the Public Health Authorities.
- ✓ Businesses and workers must prepare for the possibility that there will be cases of COVID-19 in the workplace and be ready to respond immediately, appropriately, effectively and efficiently, and consistent with specific recommendations from health authorities.
- ✓ Filming should also reflect the new norm with actors being shown with face masks or visors and maintaining social distancing. Shooting intimate scenes should be avoided. There should not be any scenes which involve crowds to keep the number of people allowed together to a minimum.



## How COVID-19 spreads

The virus which causes COVID-19 disease can be spread through droplets from a sick person or on contact (by touch). COVID-19 disease often presents with coughing or sneezing which release droplets of infected fluid. Cases may present with other symptoms or none at all. Most of these droplets can fall on nearby surfaces and objects - such as desks, tables, machinery, equipment, floors, walls clothes or telephones. People can catch COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces or objects – and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. Standing within a distance of less than two metres of a person with COVID-19 for a prolonged period of time, one can catch the disease by breathing in droplets coughed out or exhaled by them.

In other words, COVID-19 spreads in a similar way to flu. Most persons infected with COVID-19 experience mild symptoms and recover. However, some go on to experience more serious illness and may require hospital care. Risk of serious illness rises with age. People with weakened immune systems and people with conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease are also more vulnerable to serious illness.

## Keeping workers safe and limiting the spread of COVID-19

Employers should be doing the following at their workplace:

- ✓ ensure physical distancing by keeping a distance of at least 2 metres between people where possible
- ✓ encourage all workers to frequently wash their hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water or by using an 70% alcohol-based hand sanitiser and to practise good personal hygiene.
- ✓ be aware of COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, headaches, tiredness, muscle pain, loss of taste, loss of smell, vomiting and diarrhoea) and make sure workers do not come to work if they are unwell
- ✓ ensure that the workplace is regularly cleaned and disinfected
- ✓ have signs and posters around the workplace to remind workers and others of the risks of COVID-19 and the measures necessary to stop its spread.

## Specific general hygiene practices

- ✓ Crew members need to pay special attention to hand hygiene and it is recommended that all crew members wash or sanitize hands frequently.



- ✓ Frequent cleaning and disinfection of common surfaces further reduces risk of surface contamination spreading to healthy persons.
- ✓ Sufficient supplies of hand sanitizer and cleaning materials are the responsibility of the production company.
- ✓ Maintaining distance between individuals reduces the risk for healthy persons to inhale infected droplets.
- ✓ Sufficient supplies of protective equipment (gloves and masks) are the responsibility of the production company. Information on the appropriate use of gloves and masks with careful attention to hand hygiene before and after glove, mask or visor use is available on [www.covid19health.gov.mt](http://www.covid19health.gov.mt)
- ✓ Actors and guests must dress themselves and set up their own microphones according to the wardrobe and sound departments' instructions, respectively.
- ✓ Wardrobe hygiene must also be considered when costumes are in storage. If outfits cannot be cleaned, they must be kept in storage for 72 hours before being reused.
- ✓ The makeup and hair departments are responsible for ensuring the makeup designer / hairdresser have the necessary protective wear, and that the actors, crew, presenters and guests bring their own make up kits, brushes and hair styling products to reduce the risk of contamination. The processes should be kept as short as possible and less than 15 minutes.
- ✓ Record-keeping – it is necessary to establish a system of keeping records of persons who are present at the shoot in order to facilitate contact monitoring in case of possible SARS-CoV-2 contagion.

### **Societal measures to reduce spread of COVID-19 in Malta**

Any production in Malta must follow the public health orders and rules in force in Malta. The following is an overview of measures which are in effect in Malta:

- ✓ The COVID-19 epidemic has been contained in Malta. Therefore, the risk of additional cases in Malta is primarily related to community spread from symptomatic or asymptomatic persons rather than new importation by travellers. The restrictions and quarantine obligations related to travel to Malta are accessible from the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate website on [www.covid19health.gov.mt](http://www.covid19health.gov.mt)
- ✓ During the COVID-19 epidemic in Malta strict social distancing measures and bans on gatherings were put in place. Malta is now in the transition phase and taking steps to gradually reduce these restrictions. The latest



information on such restrictions can be found on the same website. Please keep in mind that continued easing of restrictions is only possible if the epidemic does not swell again in Malta. If Malta experiences a resurgence of the epidemic, stricter rules may be re-introduced or enforced.

- ✓ Due to the lack of vaccine or effective antiviral therapy against SARS-CoV-2 which causes COVID-19, the key containment measure available is isolation of individuals with COVID-19 and quarantine for individuals who are known or possible contacts of those with the disease, with fines for violations of these rules.
- ✓ Individuals who qualify as vulnerable persons as defined by the Protection of Vulnerable Persons Order, 2020 should not be cast and crew members at production sites. Their skills can be used in post-production where contact with others can be reduced and risks can be mitigated better.

## Procedures to reduce risk of COVID-19 spread in media and during filming and photo- and video- shooting

### Occupational safety and worker's rights

- ✓ The production company shall designate someone responsible for safety at work, whom the cast and crew members may contact.
- ✓ The production company is responsible for providing information and guidelines on occupational safety and the health and well-being of all members of the production.
- ✓ At a minimum, the occupational health and safety measures in accordance with these recommendations that relate to general occupational safety must be communicated to all those involved in the production.
- ✓ Specific occupational safety measures for each given day of filming must be communicated in advance to all cast and crew members involved. Cast and crew must also have the opportunity to contact the occupational health and safety person ahead of filming.
- ✓ The entire cast and crew shall be informed of the rules on sick leave. Individuals displaying fever (37.2°C or more) or flu-like symptoms must remain at home until they have been cleared by a medical professional before they can return to work. COVID-19 infections or contacts must be cleared by the public health authorities.

### Travel within Malta for production

- ✓ Hand hygiene is of paramount importance to avoid infection. It is recommended to carry hand-sanitizer to use frequently, especially after



touching common surfaces in cars, on the production site, before and after meals and before and after going to the restroom.

- ✓ If travel is by means of public transport, taxi, private rental vehicle or shared means provided by the production company, a mask or visor must be worn. This is not required if travelling alone or with a household member in a personal vehicle. Shared vehicles should be thoroughly ventilated, and driver should make sure that all contact surfaces are wiped/disinfected between trips and/or groups. All non-private vehicles used must be compliant with the Transport Malta regulations in place regarding separation of driver and passengers and limitations of occupancy below the maximum capacity.
- ✓ Company vehicles must additionally be equipped with hand hygiene and disinfection products, paper towels and waste bags. For necessary work-related trips, wherever possible, the same vehicles should not be used by multiple employees. The group of employees who share a vehicle – simultaneously or consecutively – must also be kept as small as possible, for example by assigning a vehicle to three (3) persons as a fixed team. The interiors of company vehicles must be regularly cleaned, especially if they are used by multiple employees.
- ✓ At present, legislation only allows exemption from the travel ban for essential workers and for repatriation (always subject to mandatory quarantine and testing). Cast and crew members from abroad need to first ask for exemption from the Superintendent of Public Health for travel to Malta. On arrival, cast or crew members arriving from abroad, are to go straight to obligatory quarantine. No exceptions are allowed during quarantine. Violations may result in fines and enforcement of full quarantine as long as it is indicated. They may only go to the production site at the end of the quarantine period.

### Specific measures on the production site

- ✓ All the general rules in force in Malta at any time, are applicable to the cast and crew, however, the production company can set stricter rules for the duration of the production.
- ✓ Each morning all crew and cast members must have their body temperature checked before entering the workplace. Individuals displaying fever (37.2°C or more) will not be allowed to enter.
- ✓ If symptoms arise at workplace, temperature should be checked. Regardless of the presence or absence of fever, no cast or crew member may be on site with symptoms. If symptoms arise, the individual return home or to their accommodation, alone, and remain there until medical assessment is carried out and necessary care instituted.



- ✓ Restrooms must be sanitized frequently. Special attention must be given to common surfaces such as light-switches, doorknobs and locking mechanisms, taps, flushing mechanisms, toilet seats etc.
- ✓ It is recommended to reduce mixing of production crew and cast members and all efforts be made to allow at least the 2 metres distance between all individuals who need to interact.

### Distancing measures and limitations of group sizes to reduce risk of spread of COVID-19

- ✓ The Public Health Authorities have implemented limitations on size of gatherings due to COVID-19. While such limitations are in effect, they apply to film production crews.
- ✓ Crew size should be kept to a minimum and organized into groups in such a way that a safe distance of 2 metres among crew members and cast in the same group and with other groups can generally be maintained.
- ✓ The number of people on set for each scene or task should be limited as much as possible. Visitors are not allowed on set. Cast and crew should only be present for scenes and tasks they are directly involved in.
- ✓ Preparation rooms, breakrooms and dining areas are to be spacious enough to allow the safety distance of 2 metres between all cast and crew members. It may be necessary to make schedules for such facilities to be used by more people than can be accommodated at one time. If multiple groups must use the same facilities in sequence they should be sanitized between groups.
- ✓ Hygiene of changing rooms, workspaces, break rooms and other shared spaces as well as equipment is to be maintained throughout the day.
- ✓ It may be necessary to divide the cast and crew into groups for meals to allow 2 metres distance between individuals and/or to arrange for those who can to have meals in on-site accommodation. Eating meals outdoors is preferred.
- ✓ On-set catering should be in individual containers. There should not be self-service using shared utensils. Catering staff may serve each person from multi-portion containers using appropriate precautions and distancing measures. There shall be no congestion when distributing food.
- ✓ Cast members must dress themselves and set up their own microphones according to wardrobe staff and sound technician instructions, respectively.
- ✓ The same makeup and hair staff should tend to the same cast members throughout the period of production as much as possible to reduce the number of persons each staff and cast member is in close contact with during the production. Since make-up and hair styling is an essential part of filming,



cast or guests who require hair styling and make up are to bring their own make-up, brushes and hair styling products

- ✓ Shooting intimate scenes should be avoided if possible. The cast member has the right to refuse close contact with other cast members, e.g. hugging and kissing.

## Special Considerations

### Work equipment and tools

If possible, tools and work equipment must be individually assigned. Where this is not possible, regular cleaning must be provided for, especially before handing over to another employee

### Organisation of working times and breaks

When creating shift schedules, care must be taken to assign the same employees to shared shifts where possible in order to reduce the number of different contacts at work. Suitable organisational measures must be taken to prevent gatherings of employees at the beginning and end of working hours (such as at entrance/exit into the site and in preparation rooms, restrooms and showers).

### Getting ready to operate with community spread of COVID-19

- ✓ Develop a contingency and continuity plan for an outbreak. The plan will help prepare for the possibility of an outbreak of COVID- 19.
- ✓ The plan should address how to keep the production site running if a significant number of employees, contractors and suppliers cannot come to your place of business - either because they are on obligatory quarantine or because they are ill.
- ✓ Communicate with your employees and contractors about the business continuity plan. Make sure they are aware of what they need to do – or not do – under the plan. Emphasize key points such as the importance of staying away from work even if they have only mild symptoms.
- ✓ Be sure your plan addresses the mental health and social consequences of a case of COVID-19 and offer information and support.