

Standards for media, for filming and for photo- and video- shooting

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 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.
- ✓ Businesses and workers must work together to adapt and promote safe work practices, consistent with advice from health authorities, to ensure that staff are wearing masks or visors and that workplaces respect social distancing and exemplary hygiene measures that are important public health measures required to address the pandemic.
- ✓ Businesses and workers must continue to respond for the eventuality of cases of COVID-19 in the workplace and respond immediately, appropriately, effectively and efficiently, and consistent with specific recommendations from health authorities.
 - ✓ TV, radio and media productions, filming, and photo- and video- shooting should also reflect public health advice with presenters, guests and actors being shown with face masks or visors and maintaining social distancing.

Exceptions may be considered in those cases where the cast have formed a 'bubble' or social cluster and have been rehearsing together for a minimum period of at least 2 weeks. Shooting intimate scenes should be avoided. For any

scenes which involve crowds, the number of people appearing together on stage at one go should be as small as possible up to a maximum of six (6) persons in accordance with national legislation and with a total cast composition for the entire production of 10 persons.

How COVID-19 spreads

The virus which causes COVID-19 disease can be spread with droplets from a sick person or on contact (by touch). COVID-19 disease presents with coughing or sneezing which release droplets of infected fluid. 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 workplaces safe and limiting the spread of COVID-19

Producers and station and production managers should be doing the following at their workplace:

- ✓ ensure physical distancing by keeping a distance of at least 2 metres between people.
- ✓ ensure that the guidance on the use of masks or visors is adhered to at all times.
- ✓ encourage all guests and staff to frequently wash their hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water or by using an alcohol-based hand sanitiser and to practise good personal hygiene.
- ✓ be aware of and educate staff about COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, headaches, tiredness, muscle pain, runny/blocked nose, loss of taste, loss of smell, vomiting and diarrhoea) and make sure they do not come to work if they are unwell.
- ✓ make sure the workplace is regularly cleaned and disinfected.

- ✓ have signs and posters around the workplace to remind staff and guests of the risks of COVID-19 and the measures necessary to stop its spread.

Specific general hygiene practices

- Staff need to pay special attention to hand hygiene and it is recommended that all staff wash or sanitize hands frequently.
- Frequent cleaning 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 and the use of masks or visors reduces the risk for healthy persons to inhale infected droplets. Where tolerated, masks (or masks together with visors) are preferred to visors alone.
- In accordance with [L.N. 402 of 2020 PUBLIC HEALTH ACT \(CAP. 465\) Mandatory Use of Medical or Cloth Masks \(Amendment No. 3\) Regulations, 2020](#), masks should be worn at all times by all persons unless the exemptions included in the legal notice apply. Further guidance can be obtained from the updated standards document which can be accessed at [https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Standards %20Use of Face Masks and%20Visors.pdf](https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Standards%20Use%20of%20Face%20Masks%20and%20Visors.pdf)
- Sufficient supplies of protective equipment (gloves and masks or visors) are the responsibility of producers and station and production managers. Information on the appropriate use of gloves and masks or visors with careful attention to hand hygiene before and after glove, mask or visor use is available on www.covid19health.gov.mt
- Presenters, guests and actors must pay particular attention to the hygienic use of microphones. Producers and station and production managers are to exercise extreme care in the proper cleaning of microphones between one user and another. Sharing of microphones and the use of roving microphones during the same production or programme is not allowed unless the microphone is sanitised after each use. Preferably one microphone / headpiece shall be allocated to one specific individual and sanitised after each use.
- 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 by a different individual.

- The makeup and hair departments are responsible for ensuring the makeup designer / hairdresser have the necessary protective wear, and that the actors, staff, 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 details of persons who are present for TV, radio and media productions, filming, and photo- and video- shooting in order to facilitate contact tracing in case of possible SARS-CoV-2 contagion.
- Staff, presenters, guests and actors are encouraged to download the COVID Alert Malta application to help facilitate the contact tracing process in case they develop COVID-19 or have been in close contact with someone known to have COVID-19. Instructions for downloading the application can be found at <https://covidalert.gov.mt>

Societal measures to reduce spread of COVID-19 in Malta

TV, radio and media productions, filming, and photo- and video- shooting must follow the public health orders and rules in force. The following is an overview of measures which are in effect:

- ✓ 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
- ✓ The obligatory use of masks or visors, social distancing measures and restrictions on gatherings are in place in view of the epidemiological situation. The latest information on such restrictions can be found on the same website.
- ✓ 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 are at a higher risk of developing complications if infected with the COVID19 virus¹ should carefully consider the risk that participation as a presenter, guest, actor, crew or staff member entails and whether it constitutes an essential activity to them. Where applicable, they could also discuss with the production team whether they can contribute in alternative

¹ As defined in the Guidance for the protection of persons who are at a higher risk of developing complications if infected with the COVID19 virus which can be accessed here: https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Guidance%20for%20Persons_at_Risk_of_Complications_Final.pdf

ways where contact with others can be reduced and risks can be mitigated better, such as in post-production. The final decision on participation should be of the individual.

Procedures to reduce risk of COVID-19 spread during TV, radio and media productions, filming, and photo- and video- shooting

Occupational safety and worker's rights

- ✓ Producers and station and production managers shall designate someone responsible for safety at work, whom the presenters, guests, actors and staff may contact.
- ✓ Producers and station and production managers are responsible for providing information and guidelines on occupational safety and the health and well-being of all presenters, guests, actors, staff and crew members.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Individuals displaying fever (37.2°C or more), flu-like symptoms or any symptoms suggestive of COVID-19² 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 media productions, filming, and photo- and video-shooting

- 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 (by law) if travelling alone or with a household member in a personal vehicle however it is recommended. 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

² These include: fever, cough, shortness of breath, tiredness, sore throat, runny / blocked nose, headache, muscle pain, loss of smell, loss of taste, diarrhoea or vomiting

- 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.
 - Air and sea travel between Malta and specific corridor countries has resumed as of the 1st July 2020. Quarantine on arrival to Malta will not be applicable to those travelling from corridor countries, but suspected persons will be requested to have a swab test. An 'amber' list of corridor countries is published from week to week from which arriving passengers must produce a negative PCR COVID-19 swab test result, which test must have been taken no longer than 72 hours prior to arrival in Malta. If a negative test is not presented, a swab test on arrival or a 14-day quarantine period may be required. With respect to travel from countries outside the 'safe corridor' list, legislation only allows exemption for Malta citizens and those with a residency permit (always subject to mandatory quarantine and testing). Cast, crew members and production teams travelling from these countries need to first ask for exemption from the Superintendent of Public Health for travel to Malta before any confirmation. For an updated list of corridor countries, amber list countries and conditions related to travel, please refer to <https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Pages/travel.aspx>.

Specific measures at production sites

- All the general rules in force in Malta at any time, are applicable to the cast, crew members and production teams, 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.
- 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 should return home or to their accommodation, alone, and remain there until medical assessment is carried out and necessary care instituted.

- Crew, cast members and production teams are required therefore to wear masks or visors at all times. Where tolerated, masks (or masks together with visors) are preferred to visors alone.
- Single persons or members of the same household taking part in productions, filming, and photo- and video- shooting may temporarily remove masks or visors during filming or photo-and video- shooting, maintaining a distance of 2 metres from others whenever possible.
- 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 members of different production teams and all efforts are to be made to allow at least the 2 metres distance between all individuals who need to interact.

Special conditions for groups of performers who spend more than 2 weeks rehearsing together: **'Bubble' concept with respect to cast members**

- A distinction* needs to be made between programmes (whether live or recorded) where the participants include persons who have spent a considerable number of days (>2 weeks) together rehearsing (e.g. play, tele serial, musical performance, etc.) and any other performances, shows or interventions when persons come together for the purposes of the broadcast or event only (e.g. magazine or discussion programme, guest performance etc.).
- Only in instances where persons have been rehearsing together for a minimum period of 2 weeks would it be permissible to carry out the performance, event or broadcast without a mask or visor provided that:
 - All participants are aware of the potential risks involved of potential contagion with COVID-19 brought on by close contact with others particularly during a performance when persons require to project their voices, singing and the possibility of aerosols with infectious particles is increased
 - All participants are aware that there are higher chances of them being placed in mandatory quarantine if one of the said performers are subsequently found to have COVID-19 during the period in which they were infectious and were not wearing a mask. This implies that they and their household members would be placed in mandatory quarantine for 14 days from the last exposure to the person who resulted positive.

- All participants are to be informed of these risks and can freely choose to participate or not.
- In order to minimise potential transmission the **maximum number of persons on stage from the same cluster (persons who would have rehearsed together for a minimum of 14 days) is 6 (six) persons with the total number of cast members in the same production being limited to a maximum of 10 (ten) persons.**
- It is highly recommended that for the safety of all involved a RT-PCR swab test is performed not more than 72 hours prior the first production day and at weekly intervals thereafter.
- It is critical that if any member of the cast or crew has any symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, these should not attend for the production and should seek advice from 111 to determine if a swab test is warranted.
- During rehearsals it is highly recommended that cast members wear masks and maintain an adequate physical distance from each other.
- It must be kept in mind that risk is cumulative and calculated over 48 hours prior to symptom onset or to the swab test being taken in case of asymptomatic persons; thus, risk can be mitigated by increasing the distance between persons, wearing masks ensuring adequate ventilation of the premises and also general precautions as hand hygiene, cough etiquette and all other documented in this guidance and on the Public Health authorities' website.
- In every performance where a group of persons (> 2 persons) are going to be appearing on stage in close proximity and without a mask, a disclaimer needs to be made in the beginning and after the intermission (if there is one). This could state for example: "During the live performance of this production, cast members from the same 'bubble' were permitted to remove their masks for the time they were actively performing in accordance with the relevant guideline issued by Public Health Authorities"

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 to a maximum of six (6) persons. While such

limitations are in effect, they apply to media productions, filming, and photo- and video- shooting with the exception of the cast of productions for whom the special conditions for groups who have formed a specific ‘bubble’ as detailed in the relevant section above apply*.

- ✓ 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 up to a maximum of 6 in the case of those who have formed a specific ‘bubble’. 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.
- ✓ 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.

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 staff 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.