

## **Open Call for Producers: Berlinale Co-Production Market - Visitors Programme 2027 Guidelines**

### **Overview**

The Domestic Film Unit within Arts Council Malta is offering support for a maximum of three (3) Maltese producers to participate in the Berlinale Co-Production Market - Visitors Programme 2027, taking place virtually on **5 February 2027** and physically in Berlin, Germany, from **12 to 15 February 2027** alongside the European Film Market (EFM).

The Visitors Programme is tailored specifically for producers with no previous international co-production experience seeking to enter the international market and build their international network whilst gaining insights into co-production structures. Following Malta's accession to Eurimages, this opportunity aims to equip the selected Maltese producers with the tools, market knowledge, and industry contacts required to navigate future international co-productions.

### **Definitions**

- Applicant:

An Independent Audiovisual Entity, as defined in these guidelines, represented by a designated Producer. Applicants cannot be employees of Arts Council Malta or involved in the management of this delegation call.

The applicant's NACE code must be one of the following at the time of application:

- o J59.11 Motion picture, video, and TV programme production activities
- o J59.12 Motion picture, video, and TV programme post-production activities

- Application:

A submission sent via the below specified email, consisting solely of the mandatory documentation detailed in the "How to Apply" section of these guidelines, made by an eligible applicant.

- **Audiovisual Project:**

For the purposes of this call, an audiovisual project is an original, feature-length fiction film project in development, intended for international co-production and eventual theatrical, festival, or platform release. For the avoidance of doubt, documentaries, short films, TV series, animated shorts, and non-fiction works are strictly excluded under this call.

- **Eligibility:**

Applications will first be screened in terms of administrative and eligibility criteria by Arts Council Malta. Proposals which are not considered eligible in terms of the set criteria will not be processed further and will not undergo evaluation.

- **Evaluation:**

Applications deemed compliant and eligible are evaluated against the criteria established in these guidelines by the appointed evaluators.

- **Evaluators:**

Arts Council Malta appoints an independent evaluation panel for this call. Evaluators are selected on the basis of their professional experience in the film industry.

- **Independent Audiovisual Entity:**

A juridical person duly registered in Malta as a limited liability company, a partnership en Commandite, or that establishes a branch or place of business in Malta under Part XI Chapter 1 of the Companies Act (CAP 386 of the Laws of Malta), and whose principal activity consists in developing and producing audiovisual works and is a tax resident in Malta. It is considered independent if its origins, stocks, or shares are independent of the state, public and/or parastatal entities, public or private broadcasting organisations, streaming platforms, or telecom companies.

- **Mandatory documentation:**

Any document(s) needed to support your proposal and aid the evaluation of your project.

- Producer:

The individual representing the Independent Audiovisual Entity who holds primary creative, financial, and managerial responsibility for the development, production, and delivery of the submitted audiovisual project, and who will physically represent the entity at the Visitor Programme as part of the Berlinale Co-Production Market.

### Timeframes and Key Dates

Applications must be submitted in full by **Friday 6 November 2026 at 12:00 (noon) CET**, as late submissions will not be processed under any circumstances. Following the assessment phase, the selected applicants will be officially notified of the results by **Tuesday 17 November 2026**.

Selected applicants will be required to sign an acceptance document, commit to purchasing the EFM Market Badge and flights, secure accommodation and submit proof of these arrangements to Arts Council Malta within the timeframe stipulated below.

Selected applicants are strictly bound to attend the mandatory online kick-off session, which will be held on **5 February 2027**. Furthermore, the eligible timeframe to implement and execute this initiative is bound strictly to the physical industry calendar of the Visitors Programme as part of the Berlinale Co-Production Market 2027, meaning that the period of eligibility for activities and associated travel costs is strictly confined to **12-15 February 2027**.

**Important Notice:** The evaluation and implementation timeline for this programme is strictly bound by a definitive schedule. Full availability for all the aforementioned physical and online dates is a strict prerequisite for support. Failure to meet the submission deadline, or to provide complete confirmation of availability across these timelines, will result in immediate administrative disqualification. In such cases, the place will be automatically allocated to the next highest-scoring applicant on the reserve list.

## Eligibility

Applications will first be screened in terms of eligibility. Ineligible proposals in terms of the points below will not be processed further and will not undergo evaluation.

Who can apply?

To be eligible, applicants must qualify as an Independent Audiovisual Entity as defined in these guidelines.

Furthermore, applicants must meet all the following criteria:

- At least one directorship or the majority shareholding of the juridical entity must be ultimately held by Maltese citizens or persons who hold a permanent residence status in Malta.
- Be registered with the applicable regulating body at the time of submission of their applications.
- Be in possession of a valid VAT registration certificate.
- Present at least one feature-length fiction film project in development that is intended for international co-production.
- Be the originator of the project, script, or treatment, or have majority rights relating to the feature-length fiction film project(s) submitted.
- The Producer representing the entity must have no prior completed international co-production experience.
- Submit a complete application under this programme ahead of the official closing deadline.

To ensure competitive market readiness, the applicant representing the entity must possess a professional track record including at least **one completed previous work in a producing capacity** (such as a short film, feature, documentary or series) within the past five years, that is after 1 January 2021.

In alignment with the target programming of the Berlinale Co-Production Market, all feature-length documentary, docu-series, short film, and non-fiction projects are excluded from submission under this initiative.

To ensure broad and fair representation across the Maltese screen sector, a maximum of one application may be submitted per independent audiovisual company. The selected applicants will strictly comprise three unique producers representing three distinct companies, ensuring no single entity receives duplicate representation.

### **What support will be provided?**

Arts Council Malta will provide a fixed financial grant of **€1,500** to each of the selected applicants (up to a maximum of three beneficiaries).

This grant is allocated to cover the following expenses:

- **EFM Market Badge:** The registration fee for the European Film Market badge, which must be purchased directly by the selected applicant from their platform [here](#);
- **Travel Costs:** Return flights to Berlin, Germany;
- **Accommodation:** Accommodation in Berlin for the duration of the physical programme (12–15 February 2027).

To accommodate airline schedules between Malta and Berlin, flight and accommodation bookings may extend up to one day before or after the core festival dates (i.e., within the window of 11–16 February 2027), provided the core programme dates are fully covered and all expenditure remains within the total €1,500 grant allocation.

Arts Council Malta will not cover any extra costs incurred above the fixed €1,500 grant allocation under any circumstances. Any expenditure exceeding this amount must be borne entirely by the beneficiary.

Upon receipt of the fully executed Acceptance Agreement, Arts Council Malta will disburse the fixed grant of €1,500 in full (100%) to the beneficiary.

To ensure administrative compliance and the proper use of public funds, selected applicants are strictly required to submit definitive proof of purchase for the above mentioned EFM Market Badge, return flights and accommodation to Arts Council Malta as per below timeline:

- **Acceptance Letter:** Upon receipt of the selection notification, selected applicants must return a fully signed copy of the Acceptance Agreement within **five (5) working days**.
- **Submission of Proof of Purchase:** Following the signing the Acceptance Agreement, selected applicants must submit proof of the EFM Market Badge accreditation/payment confirmation, flight acquisition and accommodation booking.

The grant is awarded strictly on the condition of full attendance and compliance. Arts Council Malta reserves the right to demand a full refund (100%) of the €1,500 grant if the beneficiary fails to submit valid proof of purchase within ten (10) working days, fails to attend either the mandatory online session (5 February 2027) or the physical programme in Berlin (12–15 February 2027) without prior written authorisation due to documented *force majeure*, or otherwise breaches these guidelines or the signed Acceptance Agreement. In any such event, the beneficiary shall be legally bound to reimburse the full €1,500 grant to Arts Council Malta within fourteen (14) calendar days of receiving formal written notification.

## How to Apply

Applications must be submitted in full via email to [filmunit.acm@artscouncil.mt](mailto:filmunit.acm@artscouncil.mt) with the subject line **EFM Visitors Programme 2027 Application**, by the official deadline of **Friday 6 November 2026 at 12:00 (noon) CET**. Applications that do not contain all the required documentation and mandatory information by this deadline will be deemed incomplete, will not be processed further, and will not undergo evaluation.

To apply, the applicant representing the entity must provide the following mandatory documentation in PDF format as part of their submission:

1. **Producer's Motivation Letter** (maximum 2 pages): A motivation letter outlining the producer's creative attachment to the project, combined with a clear rationale explaining why participation in the Visitors Programme is vital for the applicant's company growth. The motivation letter must also detail the project's specific co-production requirements, outlining why the project requires international partners, and target markets, if any.

2. **Biography and CV:** A comprehensive curriculum vitae and professional biography of the individual producer representing the entity, detailing past credits and industry track record.
3. **Pitch Deck:** A professional project pitch deck for a current or upcoming feature film with identifiable international co-production potential, containing but not limited to:
  - Project title, logline and detailed synopsis;
  - Director's and producer's artistic statement;
  - Stage of development and progress achieved to date;
  - Target audience and visual reference moodboard.
4. **Financial Plan and Budget:** A top-sheet production budget in Euros outlining the total estimated production costs, accompanied by a detailed financing plan specifying prospective funding sources (such as national public funds, tax incentives, sales advances, or co-producers) and any demonstrable financing already secured to date (where applicable).
5. **Declaration of Eligibility:** A completed and signed copy of the provided declaration of eligibility which can be found [here](#), whereby the producer confirms availability to attend the abovementioned physical and online dates.

Arts Council Malta will verify company eligibility, NACE code classification, and tax residency using internal records and public registries. Arts Council Malta reserves the right to request additional supporting documentation (such as an MBR Company Registration Certificate or NACE classification extract) during the administrative screening phase, if required.

## Evaluation Criteria

The Evaluation Board will base its decision upon the following criteria:

### Criterion 1: Concept and Creative Merit (30 Marks)

This criterion considers the quality, artistic strength, and originality of the feature film project, as well as its creative potential. The following points will be assessed:

- **Originality and Narrative Strength (15 marks):** The quality, originality of theme, perspective, and narrative structure of the project as presented in the detailed

synopsis and artistic statement. Evaluators will focus on the artistic quality of the voice and narrative concept relative to the project's intended genre and scope;

- **Visual Treatment and Market Positioning (15 marks):** The strength of the pitch deck, clarity of the visual and thematic identity (moodboard), and a well-defined target audience relative to the scale of the project.

## **Criterion 2: Strategic Co-production and Territorial Alignment (30 marks)**

This criterion considers the strategic logic of the proposal and how well the producer's goals align with the framework of the EFM Visitors Programme. The following points will be assessed:

- **Territorial Strategy and Research (15 marks):** A well-researched strategy identifying why the project requires international partners, and demonstrating a clear interest in exploring co-production, opportunities within European or broader international territories;
- **Market Objectives and Relevance (15 marks):** The clarity, feasibility, and self-awareness of the producer's objectives for participating in the EFM Visitors Programme. Marks are awarded for clearly explaining why the project requires international support beyond the domestic market, identifying specific areas where the producer seeks industry orientation or co-production guidance, and presenting a practical, realistic plan for engaging with the programme's sessions and networking activities.

## **Criterion 3: Budget and Financing Plan (20 marks)**

This criterion considers the quality, structural feasibility, and viability of the project's financial planning relative to its scale and budget tier. The following points will be assessed:

- **Financing Strategy and Structure (10 marks):** The clarity, logic, and overall viability of the proposed financing plan. Evaluators will assess whether prospective funding sources (such as national public funds, tax incentives, sales advances, or co-producers) are well-founded and suitable for the project's budget tier and stage of development. While secured financing is not mandatory, any demonstrable funding already secured will be evaluated positively;

- **Budgetary Feasibility (10 marks):** The structural coherence and proportion of the top-sheet production budget. Figures must be well-justified, credible, and proportionate to the proposed format, genre, and creative scale of the project.

#### **Criterion 4: Professional Readiness and Motivation (20 marks)**

This criterion considers the level of commitment, preparation, and professional potential of the individual producer representing the entity to actively engage with international industry partners through the EFM Visitors Programme. The following points will be assessed:

- **Professional Motivation and Business Rationale (10 marks):** The clarity and relevance of the producer's motivation statement, explaining how participation in all components of the EFM Visitors Programme will
- Support the applicant company's growth, professional development, and project slate at this specific development stage;
- **Domestic Track Record and International Readiness (10 marks):** The producer's professional capacity and readiness to step into the international market, assessed against their established track record in Malta. Evaluators will assess the strength of the producer's foundation (including past completed short films, feature films, TV/documentary productions, or recognised festival selections) as an indicator of their capacity to represent their entity and scale up to international co-production.

#### **Evaluation Process**

This is a competitive call which will be evaluated by a panel of sectoral experts according to established criteria.

To ensure a fair and competitive selection process, the evaluation panel will assess all applications contextually, taking into account the project's specific scale, budget tier, and the producer's career stage. Criteria relating to track record and financial readiness will be evaluated proportionately, ensuring that the strategic potential, quality of research, and structural viability of proposals are weighted equitably.

As specified above, each criterion is allocated a number of specific marks. To be considered for selection, an application must score a minimum of 60 marks.



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Eligible applications scoring 60 marks or higher will be ranked in descending order. The top three (3) highest-scoring unique applicants will be selected for the delegation. Remaining qualifying applicants will be placed on a reserve list. In the event of a tie for the final delegation participant, the applicant with the higher score in the Strategic Co-production and Territorial Alignment criterion will be selected.

Eligible applications will be assessed by evaluators selected by the Council on the basis of their professional experience in the film industry. The evaluators will present an assessment on each of the proposed eligible projects, indicating the relevant ratings awarded.