

## **Open Call for Producers: Thessaloniki AGORA Delegation 2026 – Information & Guidelines**

### **Overview**

The Domestic Film Unit within Arts Council Malta is leading a delegation of a maximum of 4 Maltese producers to travel to Thessaloniki, as part of the 67th Thessaloniki International Film Festival, specifically the AGORA Industry Events taking place from 8-12 November 2026.

Following Malta's successful accession to Eurimages earlier this year, the core objective of this delegation is to foster meaningful relationships, cultivate B2B partnerships, and facilitate official 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 eligible project may be a feature-length work of fiction or an episodic series (docu-series and documentaries are excluded from this specific call).

- Chain of Title:

All of the agreements and documentation that evidence the sequence of transfers of title to a work, proving the applicant entity holds the development and co-production rights to the submitted project.

- 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 as the designated delegate at the AGORA events.

- **Advanced Stage of Development:**

For the purposes of this call, an advanced stage of development is strictly defined as possessing a complete script (or a comprehensive series bible and pilot script for episodic projects), accompanied by a financing plan. To demonstrate market readiness in line with European co-production standards, the project must have already secured demonstrable financing (such as local public funding, script development grants, or documented third-party private investment) at the time of application.

### **Timeframes and Key Dates**

Applications must be submitted in full by **24 August 2026 at 12:00 (noon) CET**, as late submissions will not be processed under any circumstances. Following the assessment phase, the selected delegates will be officially notified of the results by **11 September 2026**.

Selected delegates will then be asked to sign an acceptance document, after which they will also commit to purchasing the flights and informing ACM of their arrangements within 5 working days of the issuing of the acceptance document.

Selected applicants are strictly bound to attend the mandatory online orientation session, which will be held between **12 and 14 October 2026**. Furthermore, the eligible timeframe to implement and execute this initiative is strictly bound to the physical industry calendar of the 67th Thessaloniki International Film Festival, meaning that the period of eligibility for activities and associated travel costs is strictly confined between **8 November 2026 and 12 November 2026**.

**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?

Applicants must qualify as the following:

Independent Audiovisual Entities 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.
- Be the originator of the project, script, or treatment, or have majority rights relating to the feature-length fiction or series project in an advanced stage of development.
- Submit a complete application under this programme ahead of the official closing deadline.
- The entity must present at least one feature film or series project that has reached an advanced stage of development and is explicitly intended for international co-production.

To ensure competitive market readiness, the applicant representing the entity must possess a professional track record including at least **one completed previous work** (such as a short film, feature, documentary or series) that has achieved either a commercial release, platform distribution, or an official selection at a recognised international film festival within the past five years, that is after 1 January 2021.

In alignment with the target programming of the November AGORA market, all feature-length documentary and documentary series projects are excluded from this initiative, as they fall under the distinct remit of the Thessaloniki Documentary Festival; please note that the issuance of this current call does not guarantee or imply that a separate delegation will be organised for the documentary festival in the future.

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

### **What costs will be covered?**

Arts Council Malta will directly provide the following specific provisions for each of the four selected delegates:

- **Market Accreditation:** Full AGORA Industry Accreditation, granting comprehensive access to all official industry areas, market screenings, and digital platforms.
- **AGORA Networking and Events:** Full access to the official AGORA networking lunches, happy hours, and curated industry networking events.
- **Accommodation:** Up to four (4) nights of hotel accommodation in Thessaloniki, booked and managed directly by Arts Council Malta.

**Please Note:** Any additional expenses - including but not limited to flights, local airport transfers, travel insurance, daily subsistence (meals outside official AGORA events), and personal incidentals - are not covered under this call and must be borne entirely by the selected delegate or their associated production company.

### How to Apply

Applications must be submitted in full via email to [filmunit.acm@artscouncil.mt](mailto:filmunit.acm@artscouncil.mt) by the official deadline of 24 August 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 as part of their submission:

1. **Finished Script:** A complete script written in or translated into English. For episodic series projects, this must consist of the complete pilot script.
2. **Financial Plan and Budget:** A detailed financing plan and top-sheet production budget in Euros, specifying the total estimated production costs and the sources and amounts of demonstrable financing already secured at the time of application.
3. **Pitch Deck:** A professional project pitch deck containing the logline, synopsis, director's artistic note, target audience overview, and visual references.
4. **Biography and CV:** A comprehensive curriculum vitae and professional biography of the individual producer representing the entity, detailing past credits and industry track record.
5. **Producer's Statement of Motivation and Co-production Strategy:** A video pitching statement of a maximum of 5 minutes, outlining the producer's creative attachment to the project, combined with a clear professional rationale explaining why physical attendance at the AGORA industry events is vital for the applicant's company growth. This video must also detail the project's specific co-production requirements, outlining why the project requires international partners and identifying targeted

sales agents, distributors, or co-producers within the Mediterranean, Balkan, or broader European territories.

6. **Declaration of Eligibility:** To upload the provided declaration of eligibility, which can be found [here](#), whereby the producer confirms availability to attend the abovementioned physical and online dates.

## **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 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 submitted screenplay or pilot script. Evaluators will focus on the artistic quality of the voice and writing, 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, 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 project aligns with the co-production and industry focus of the Thessaloniki AGORA market. The following points will be assessed:

- **Territorial Strategy and Research (15 marks):** A well-researched strategy identifying why the project requires international partners, and showing a clear interest in exploring co-production, sales, or distribution opportunities within Mediterranean, Balkan, or broader European territories;
- **Market Objectives and Relevance (15 marks):** The clarity and feasibility of the producer's objectives for attending the AGORA market. Marks are awarded for identifying specific types of partners (e.g. co-producers, sales agents, or distributors) that match the project's scale and genre, demonstrating that the applicant has researched the market's profile.

### **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:

- **Secured and Confirmed Financing (10 marks):** The proportion, credibility, and overall viability of the financing plan, measuring the level of confirmed or demonstrable financing already secured at the time of application (weighted proportionately to ensure lower-budget or debut projects are evaluated equitably against larger, established-tier projects);
- **Budgetary Feasibility (10 marks):** The feasibility of the production budget. The figures must be proportionate to the proposed format, genre, and scale of the project as detailed in the top-sheet budget.

#### **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. The following points will be assessed:

- **Professional Motivation and Business Rationale (10 marks):** The clarity and relevance of the motivation statement, explaining how physical attendance at the AGORA industry events will benefit the applicant's company slate, growth, and professional development at this specific stage;
- **Professional Potential and Capacity (10 marks):** The producer's readiness to pitch and network on an international market floor, assessed contextually against their career stage and track record (including successful local projects and short films for emerging producers, or capacity to scale up a slate for established producers).

#### **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 across both emerging and established producer profiles.

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.

Eligible applications scoring 60 marks or higher will be ranked in descending order. The top four (4) 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 Potential category 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.