

## MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND SPORTS, GREECE

### National measures for the support of the cultural and creative sector due to the COVID-19 crisis March 2021

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports has developed a number of initiatives in order to support the sector of contemporary culture.

On a national level, among the **horizontal measures taken to relieve employees and enterprises affected by the pandemic**, the following ones applied also to the cultural sector, its workers and businesses:

- temporary economic support to wage earners, self-employed, individual businesses and certain professions affected by the pandemic,
- payment of repayable advances to companies with decreased turnover,
- payment of social security contributions for employees whose labor contracts have been suspended,
- deferral of taxes and social security contributions including tax instalment schemes for at least three months for all companies, self-employed and wage earners affected by the COVID-19 pandemic,
- an interest subsidy on loans to small and medium-sized enterprises.

Additionally, **on a sector specific level**, the following measures were implemented:

- Around €1.2M was given to for-profit theater companies that had to cancel their shows because of the lockdown
- A bill passed to allow performing arts and music producers to issue vouchers to reimburse for tickets of canceled concerts and performances
- Call for the development of short films, documentaries and animation films in collaboration with the Greek Film Center (€2.8M). Due to the second wave of the pandemic, an additional funding program was decided to support another 100 scripts (€2,500 each) that didn't succeed within the first call, while the Ministry will finance the production for 20 of them.
- Special program supporting small and art-house cinemas that show Greek movies was developed, totaling €1.35M.
- Provision of €1.5M to regional authorities to fund music concerts across

Greece.

- Temporary reduction of movie theater ticket VAT to 13%, down from 24% of each performance.

Another **set of measures were taken in order to maintain citizens' access to culture** despite the movement restrictions. Regarding festivals those measures were implemented in the cases presented below:

- Conversion of the Thessaloniki International Film Festival and the Drama Short International Film Festival to online editions for 2020.
- Conversion of the Thessaloniki International Book Fair to a digital edition for 2020.
- In the framework of the Athens and Epidaurus Festival, the Ministry of Culture and Sports and the National Theatre of Greece co-organized the first ever live streaming of a theater play from the ancient theater of Epidaurus, with the support of Google. Over 100,000 people from around the world joined live to watch Aeschylus' "The Persians".

Last but not least, **one of the most important measures taken for cultural enterprises, with multiple benefits for a whole chain of professionals, is the vacancy subsidy program.**

It concerns cultural enterprises which have been seriously affected either by their temporary capacity restriction or by their total suspension. In fact, businesses in the industry are being financially supported, in order to significantly offset revenue loss either due to their reduced capacity for health reasons or because they have totally suspended their operations due to the pandemic.

In this context, a Joint Ministerial Decision has been issued entitled "Strengthening of theater, music and dance companies, concert and performance venues, in the context of dealing with the consequences of COVID-19", which defines the terms, procedure, specific conditions, technical issues, as well as any details necessary for the realization of the abovementioned financial support.

Beneficiaries will submit applications in order to be subsidized with the amount of ten (10) euros per seat / ticket per performance (regardless of the ticket price applied by the company), and for a total maximum number of twenty four (24) performances per month, or at a rate of 40% of the total seats / tickets.

A similar provision for cinemas is expected to follow.