

October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017

## **Hellenic Film Commission: Visibility of Greece – developing and expanding the Greek audiovisual infrastructure**

It is my pleasure to be here in this panel as the Director of the Hellenic Film Commission. Such panels are immensely effective in Greece, the country with the world's most film-friendly light in its DNA.

I would like to express my special thanks to Mrs. Irene Giannakopoulos, President of the Women's Cultural Association of Amorgos and Mr. Andonis Kioukas, President of the Organizing Committee of YPERIA Convention and Film Festival, for this valuable initiative and great organization. I understand that hosting this convention here, on this location, bears a lot of interesting connotations and I truly believe that the island of Amorgos can and will be related again to big audiovisual productions of the scale of *The Big Blue* by Luc Besson.

Hearing today, Margarita Peric from the Croatian Film Commission and Bas van der Ree from the Netherlands Film Commission is a great opportunity for all of us to see how two very well-established Film Commissions operate in two countries with distinct differences, one up in the North and one in the South.

Taking over the Hellenic Film Commission in March 2017 meant that we had to act fast in search of the lost time. It was the first time that the Hellenic Film Commission would start operating according to its declaration by Law 3905/2010, as a directorate of the Greek Film Centre, responsible for promoting Greece as *a film friendly* country and attracting foreign audio-visual productions. We quickly understood that we had to set up a list of immediate priorities.

Mainly because, Greece did not have any film friendly structures in different areas, particularly regarding the filming permits. Even though Greece has indeed dozens of advantages for hosting foreign productions, like the perfect climate, the versatile landscape with breathtaking locations and excellent crews, at the same time it has a lot of complexities in the process of filmmaking. For example, a huge issue for us is the archaeological sites and monuments scattered all over around the country ready to host potential filming. But, requesting a permit for filming in these sites, particularly for fiction films, and waiting for this request to pass from the Central Archaeological Council, can be a nerve breaking procedure.

In April we welcomed for filming in Greece a Dutch documentary titled *Change your mind* which would broadcast on Dutch national TV. The production company wanted to film 5 entire episodes in one ancient Greek theatre. When they requested their filming permit from the relevant Archaeological Ephorate, they realized that they had to pay more than three times the total budget of their production on the so-called "users' fee". So, we intervened and, on behalf of the Dutch production company, we succeeded in excepting the production from these fees by presenting concrete arguments to the Central Archaeological Council.

It was the time when we started a lot of discussions with the Ministry of Culture in order to re-examine the relevant law for issuing filming permits for archaeological site. We produced a coherent list of proposals, which was the outcome of a number of meetings with the producers' associations in Greece which

we coordinated. The Ministry of Culture is currently working thoroughly on a new legislation regarding filming permits.

Another big priority for us was to prepare the website of the Hellenic Film Commission, in order to market and promote locations, crews and facilities. For this, we opened a dialogue with the Greek industry collecting data on their companies' profiles. At the same time, we made an online campaign via the website [www.locateyourphoto.gr](http://www.locateyourphoto.gr) asking professionals and amateur photographers to grant us with pictures of locations in Greece for our Locations Photo Gallery. Through this initiative we had clear evidence that foreigners recognize Greece as an amazing filming location since almost half of the photos we received were offered to us by foreigners. Establishing a Photo Gallery of filming Locations with a searchable location archive is done for the first time in Greece. So, now our website [www.filmcommission.gr](http://www.filmcommission.gr) is live and it will constantly be updated.

Acknowledging the significance of the locations photos in promoting a country, we participated with great enthusiasm in the Best European Film Locations Award contest organized by our network, Filming Europe – the European Film Commissions Network (EUFCN) in collaboration with Cineuropa. We proposed Antiparos, a beautiful small island where the Greek film *Suntan* was filmed. Antiparos managed not only to be in the shortlist with the 11 best European Locations. It also nearly won reaching the second place in the voters' preferences next to huge productions like the *Game of Thrones* and *The Grand Budapest Hotel*.

During these last six, seven months we had good allies. The Greek National Tourism Organization quickly became one. Knowing that the synergy between tourism and film production can develop new marketing strategies and audience engagement, we are delighted to establish a long-term collaboration with the **Greek National Tourism Organization** aiming to make Greece one of the most film friendly countries in Europe. Apart from events which we will co-organize, we will collaborate each month by deciding together with the team of **Visit Greece** of the **Greek National Tourism Organization** the Location of the Month on the Locations Photo Gallery on our website ([www.filmcommission.gr](http://www.filmcommission.gr)).

Film Commissions, in cooperation with tourism and public entities, play a significant role in building Cultural Identity and promoting European Cultural Heritage. Thriving film and TV sectors deliver real benefits to national, regional and local economies. The growth of these sectors positively influences the employment, the development of new skills and provides infrastructure for innovation. For all these reasons, we are delighted to collaborate with the newly established Film Office of the Region of Central Greece. A very important initiative which, Stathis Kalogeropoulos as the person in charge, will present it very soon to you.

The establishment of the Hellenic Film Commission coincided with the preliminary discussions on the Law 4487/2017, which was finally voted by the Greek Parliament in August 2017. It will implement a 25% cash rebate in the audiovisual sector. to cover part of the eligible costs of national and international audio-visual productions (films, documentaries, television series, animations, video games). A minimum of €100,000 has been set for eligible expenses incurred in Greece. The

maximum amount of funding via cash rebate has been set at €5,000,000. We expect the cash rebate to be in effect within 2018.

#### Trailers

*The Two Faces of January* by Hossein Amini (2014)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TrRHmhIDfig>

*The Durrels* Filming in Corfu island during May - July 2018, 52 total days of filming

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHFpOTkLpTM>

*Tsatsiki and the Olive War* by Lisa James Larsson (Sweden, 2015) Filming Location Crete

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eY4yULVQqIA>