

# FILM GRAIN FOUNDATION

Monday, 15 June 2020

Hon. Dr Beppe Fenech Adami  
Chairperson  
Public Accounts Committee  
Parliament of Malta  
Valletta

Honourable Chairperson,

We're writing to you regarding grants and sponsorships awarded by the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) in 2018.

Film Grain Foundation (FGF) is a non-governmental organisation made up of film enthusiasts and professionals. It was founded in 2014 to foster film appreciation through the organisation of film festivals and other cinema related events.

In 2015 the foundation launched Valletta Film Festival (VFF), Malta's first feature-length film festival. Five editions of the festival have been organised so far, establishing the event as one of the largest cultural gatherings held on the island. To date, the festival attracted around 50,000 patrons and showcased over 500 international feature and short films at various outdoor and indoor venues around Valletta.

Patrons at the festival include visitors coming to Malta specifically for the festival and tourists attending the event whilst on vacation here.

Every year, the FGF invites around 40 prominent guests to the islands - a mix of established and up and coming actors, directors, and producers - to present their films and share their experiences with audiences.

The list of distinguished guests that attended the festival included acclaimed and decorated film directors like Roland Joffé, Alan Parker, Agnieszka Holland, Peter Greenaway, Liliana Cavani and Béla Tarr, all of which have given great testimonials about their experience in Malta.

In late 2017, Film Grain Foundation (FGF) had approached the MTA for financial support for the 3rd, 4th and 5th editions of the Valletta Film Festival (VFF). This was the fourth time that the FGF had approached the MTA for support. The authority had not provided any backing for the editions held in 2015 and 2016, but had awarded the foundation the sum of €2,500 in 2017.

The foundation had requested a sponsorship of €10,000 per year over a three year period. The support was requested to aid the foundation promote the event abroad to attract film enthusiasts and industry professionals to visit the island for the festival.

The budget of the festival derives from a mix of revenue sources mainly private sponsors, however, public funds constitute up to 30% of the total budget.

The foundation had presented the project to Mr. Lionel Gerada in December 2017 and submitted an application a month later. Following weeks chasing for a reply, the foundation received a reply from the MTA on Friday 4th May 2018 (a month before the festival) stating that the Sponsorship Committee had considered the application and decided not to accede to the foundation's request.

MTA had invited FGF to contact the Malta Film Commission (MFC) however, at that time, the foundation had already met with the MFC to ask them for support related to the promotion of local talent at VFF. Unfortunately, Film Commissioner Johann Grech had shown zero interest in supporting the festival. In fact, to date, despite several invitations, he has never attended the event.

The foundation had asked the MTA for feedback as to why the event was rejected by the Sponsorship Committee and we were told in an email that *'the MTA's criteria for supporting initiatives and events focus, primarily on those initiatives that have a direct bearing upon bringing significant numbers of people to Malta. In this regard, the initiative in question does not satisfy these criteria to a satisfactory degree and seeing that the resources at our disposal are limited, we were unable to accede to your request.'*

Please see copy of email correspondence enclosed.

Given that there was no appeal procedure to follow, the FGF had no option but to accept the Authority's decision. We had trusted the Authority's claim that resources were limited and that it had no monies available to support the VFF.

Nevertheless, following the recent publication of the audited accounts of the MTA and the list of grants or sponsorship provided in 2018, the foundation is now of the opinion that its request that year was unjustly refuted.

It is clear from the list presented to the PAC that numerous sponsorships were provided to events that had no international dimension and were clearly intended for local consumption with little or no connection to inbound tourism.

It is remarkable to note that all applications requesting more than €5,000 had to present a three-year plan in order to qualify for sponsorship, however, many of the sponsored events were one-off activities that did not happen again in 2019. Hence, we cannot understand how these events could have qualified for funding of €5,000 or more and what assessment parameters were followed by the Sponsorship Committee to ensure a level playing field amongst all applicants.

Given the shortages outlined above, we think it would be appropriate if an investigation is launched to establish whether the grants and/or sponsorships provided by the MTA in 2018 were given in line with the established parameters stated in the sponsorship application, the general public procurement regulations and state aid regulations.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'O Mallia', written in a cursive style.

Oliver Mallia  
Co-Founder & Secretary  
Film Grain Foundation

cc. Hon. Minister Julia Farrugia, Minister for Tourism and Consumer Protection  
Mr Charles Deguara, Auditor General

**From:** Hopkins Jean at MTA [jean.hopkins@visitmalta.com](mailto:jean.hopkins@visitmalta.com)   
**Subject:** Re: SP18015 - Valletta Film Festival  
**Date:** 07 May 2018 at 16:20  
**To:** Rebecca Anastasi [rebecca@filmgrainfoundation.org](mailto:rebecca@filmgrainfoundation.org)  
**Cc:** Gerada Lionel at MTA [lionel.gerada@visitmalta.com](mailto:lionel.gerada@visitmalta.com), Bojana Dimitrovska [bojana@filmgrainfoundation.org](mailto:bojana@filmgrainfoundation.org), Valletta Film Festival [slavko@filmgrainfoundation.org](mailto:slavko@filmgrainfoundation.org), Oliver Mallia [oliver@filmgrainfoundation.org](mailto:oliver@filmgrainfoundation.org), Cutajar Alexander at MOT [alexander.a.cutajar@gov.mt](mailto:alexander.a.cutajar@gov.mt)



Dear Rebecca,

Further to your email below, full details and criteria relating to the MTA's Tourism Sponsorship scheme can be found on our corporate website as per below link.

<http://mta.com.mt/tourism-events-sponsorship-scheme>

Kindly note the MTA's criteria for supporting initiatives and events focus, primarily on those initiatives that have a direct bearing upon bringing significant numbers of people to Malta. In this regard, the initiative in question does not satisfy these criteria to a satisfactory degree and seeing that the resources at our disposal are limited, we were unable to accede to your request.

Thanks and regards,  
Jean



### Jean Hopkins

Executive

Events Department

**MALTA TOURISM AUTHORITY**

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Kindly consider your environmental responsibility before printing this e-mail

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**From:** Rebecca Anastasi [<mailto:rebecca@filmgrainfoundation.org>]  
**Sent:** Friday, 04 May 2018 18:30  
**To:** Hopkins Jean at MTA  
**Cc:** Gerada Lionel at MTA; Bojana Dimitrovska; Valletta Film Festival; Oliver Mallia; Cutajar Alexander at MOT  
**Subject:** [SPAM] - Re: SP18015 - Valletta Film Festival Sponsorship Application - Message was found to be spam: (100%) URL is in DNSBL,

Good afternoon Jean

Thank you so much for your email. Could you please give us some feedback as to why the event was rejected so we can remedy the issues and put in a stronger application next time?

Thank you once again

Rebecca

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On Fri, May 4, 2018 at 4:20 PM, Hopkins Jean at MTA <[jean.hopkins@visitmalta.com](mailto:jean.hopkins@visitmalta.com)> wrote:

Dear Rebecca,

Further to your sponsorship request, kindly note the MTA's Sponsorship Committee has considered your proposal and regret to advise that we are unable to accede to your request.

If you have not already done so, we suggest that you contact the head of the Malta Film Commission, Mr Johann Grech, on his email address [johann.grech@mfc.com.mt](mailto:johann.grech@mfc.com.mt) as he may be able to assist you better with regards to your proposed event.

Wishing you a successful and productive event and hope we can be of assistance in other future initiatives.

Kind regards,

Jean



**Jean Hopkins**

Executive  
Events Department  
**MALTA TOURISM AUTHORITY**

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**From:** Rebecca Anastasi [mailto:[rebecca@filmgrainfoundation.org](mailto:rebecca@filmgrainfoundation.org)]  
**Sent:** Monday, 26 March 2018 15:52  
**To:** Hopkins Jean at MTA  
**Cc:** Gerada Lionel at MTA; Bojana Dimitrovska; Valletta Film Festival; Oliver Mallia  
**Subject:** Re: Valletta Film Festival Sponsorship Application

Thank you so much Jean

Rebecca

On Mon, Mar 26, 2018 at 3:21 PM, Hopkins Jean at MTA <[jean.hopkins@visitmalta.com](mailto:jean.hopkins@visitmalta.com)> wrote:  
Hi Rebecca,

Regrettably, we are going through a change in management which has delayed the whole sponsorship procedure.

As soon as I have further feedback, I will revert immediately.

Apologies for any inconvenience this may have caused.

Kind regards,

Jean



**Jean Hopkins**

Executive  
Events Department  
**MALTA TOURISM AUTHORITY**

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**From:** Rebecca Anastasi [mailto:[rebecca@filmgrainfoundation.org](mailto:rebecca@filmgrainfoundation.org)]  
**Sent:** Friday, 23 March 2018 16:42  
**To:** Hopkins Jean at MTA  
**Cc:** Gerada Lionel at MTA; Bojana Dimitrovska; Valletta Film Festival; Oliver Mallia  
**Subject:** Re: Valletta Film Festival Sponsorship Application

Good afternoon Jean

I hope you are well. Would you have any news please?

Thank you so much

Rebecca

On Wed, Feb 28, 2018 at 11:10 AM, Rebecca Anastasi <[rebecca@filmgrainfoundation.org](mailto:rebecca@filmgrainfoundation.org)> wrote:  
Good morning

Thank you so much for your reply and completely understood!

Have a great day

Rebecca

On 28 Feb 2018 11:00, "Hopkins Jean at MTA" <[jean.hopkins@visitmalta.com](mailto:jean.hopkins@visitmalta.com)> wrote:  
Good morning Rebecca,

Yes I confirm receipt of the Sponsor's report and links.

Due to some internal restructuring, the committee analyzing these initiatives is currently being set up.

Once established, your proposal will be discussed and will revert immediately once further feedback is at hand.

Please understand that we are not in a position to give you an immediate answer, hence your patience would be appreciated.

Thank you ☺

Kind regards,  
Jean



**Jean Hopkins**

Executive  
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**From:** Rebecca Anastasi [mailto:[rebecca@filmgrainfoundation.org](mailto:rebecca@filmgrainfoundation.org)]

**Sent:** Monday, 26 February 2018 07:33

**To:** Hopkins Jean at MTA

**Cc:** Gerada Lionel at MTA; Bojana Dimitrovska; Valletta Film Festival; Oliver Mallia

**Subject:** Re: Valletta Film Festival Sponsorship Application

Good morning

I hope you are well. I was wondering if there was any news on the below and whether you had received all the documents I sent.

Thank you so much

Rebecca

On 9 Feb 2018 13:07, "Rebecca Anastasi" <[rebecca@filmgrainfoundation.org](mailto:rebecca@filmgrainfoundation.org)> wrote:  
Thank you so much Jean:)

Please find the following attached, in support of our application:

1. A sponsor's report giving an overview of the festival and some key numbers. Please note we already have 14% of festival goers who come from abroad and our aim is to increase this.
2. Our guests are all international and we've also had Cineuropa (an international site focusing on film) in Malta at the festival, reporting on it. Here are some of the articles:

<http://cineuropa.org/nw.aspx?t=newsdetail&l=en&did=287026>

<http://cineuropa.org/nw.aspx?t=newsdetail&l=en&did=329654>

<http://www.cineuropa.org/nw.aspx?t=newsdetail&l=en&did=330585>

We would like to continue building on this to increase the number of tourists specifically coming for the festival.

Thank you so much and we're looking forward to hearing back from you

Rebecca

On Thu, Feb 8, 2018 at 9:59 AM, Hopkins Jean at MTA <[jean.hopkins@visitmalta.com](mailto:jean.hopkins@visitmalta.com)> wrote:

Yes, feel free to forward any relevant information which can be attached to your application ☺

Kind regards,

Jean



**Jean Hopkins**

Executive  
Events Department  
**MALTA TOURISM AUTHORITY**

Email: [jean.hopkins@visitmalta.com](mailto:jean.hopkins@visitmalta.com)

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**From:** Rebecca Anastasi [mailto:[rebecca@filmgrainfoundation.org](mailto:rebecca@filmgrainfoundation.org)]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 08 February 2018 09:58

**To:** Hopkins Jean at MTA  
**Cc:** Gerada Lionel at MTA  
**Subject:** Re: Valletta Film Festival Sponsorship Application

Good morning Jean

Thank you so much for your email. Would additional information be helpful for the committee, such as a catalogue of previous editions and a breakdown of audiences, including tourist numbers?

Thank you so much once again

Rebecca

On Thu, Feb 8, 2018 at 9:53 AM, Hopkins Jean at MTA <[jean.hopkins@visitmalta.com](mailto:jean.hopkins@visitmalta.com)> wrote:  
Good morning Ms Anastasi,

Thank you for following up.

Unfortunately the committee hasn't discussed your proposal, as it is going through some restructuring.

As soon as we have further feedback, we will immediately get back to you.

Your patience is appreciated.

Thank you.

Kind regards,  
Jean



**Jean Hopkins**

Executive  
Events Department  
**MALTA TOURISM AUTHORITY**

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**From:** Rebecca Anastasi [mailto:[rebecca@filmgrainfoundation.org](mailto:rebecca@filmgrainfoundation.org)]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 06 February 2018 18:14  
**To:** Hopkins Jean at MTA  
**Cc:** Gerada Lionel at MTA  
**Subject:** Re: Valletta Film Festival Sponsorship Application

Good evening Jean

I hope you are well. I was wondering if you had any news on the sponsorship application and if you would require any additional information.

Thank you so much

Rebecca

On Fri, Jan 19, 2018 at 3:59 PM, Hopkins Jean at MTA <[jean.hopkins@visitmalta.com](mailto:jean.hopkins@visitmalta.com)> wrote:  
Good afternoon Ms Anastasi,

Thank you for your email.

Kindly note that your request will be considered by the Sponsorship Committee during the next meeting.

A reply will be sent once we have the necessary feedback in hand, and will indicate whether it would be necessary to hold another meeting to further discuss your proposal.

Thank you.

.. . . .

kina regaras,  
Jean



**Jean Hopkins**

Executive  
Events Department  
**MALTA TOURISM AUTHORITY**

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----- Original message -----

From: Rebecca Anastasi <[rebecca@filmgrainfoundation.org](mailto:rebecca@filmgrainfoundation.org)>  
Date: 12/01/2018 17:11 (GMT+01:00)  
To: Gerada Lionel at MTA <[lionel.gerada@visitmalta.com](mailto:lionel.gerada@visitmalta.com)>, Bellia Sharon at MTA <[sharon.bellia@visitmalta.com](mailto:sharon.bellia@visitmalta.com)>  
Subject: Valletta Film Festival Sponsorship Application

Good afternoon Lionel

Happy new year. I hope you are well and I hope you had the chance for some rest.

Further to our meeting at the end of 2017, please find attached the sponsorship application filled in on behalf of Valletta Film Festival for this year.

Please let me know should you require any additional materials. Would it be possible to set up another meeting to go through the application?

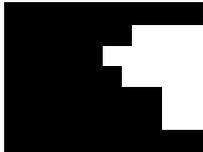
Thank you so much

Rebecca

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**Rebecca Anastasi**  
**VFF Programme Coordinator**

**FILMGRAINFUNDATION**



[www.filmgrainfoundation.org](http://www.filmgrainfoundation.org)

**Proud organisers of the [Valletta Film Festival](#). See you in Valletta in June 2017!**

Film Grain Foundation is listed with the Commission of Voluntary Organisation, registration number VO/0949. Please quote the foundation's VAT Number MT2185-3213 on any invoice or receipt issued to the foundation.

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