

45 million shekels toward foreign TV, movie productions in Israel in next two years

Several ministries have teamed up to launch an initiative that could bring more film production, tourism and economic wealth to the Start-Up Nation.

By ZACHY HENNESSEY **Published:** JULY 28, 2022 13:55



THE EDUCATION Ministry is acquiring a system that will connect every camera in every daycare to a single network.

(photo credit: Matteo Bernardis/Unsplash)

In an effort of Herculean bureaucratic coordination, the ministries of Finance, Culture and Sports, Economy and Industry, Foreign Affairs, and Tourism have announced that they will allocate 45 million shekels toward foreign TV and movie productions in Israel in the next two years.

The initiative, dubbed the “Fund for the Promotion of Foreign Productions,” will reimburse production expenses of up to 30% for foreign productions of films and series in Israel, in an attempt to positively brand the country as a global center for feature filming – thanks in part to its unique natural resources and historical sites.

“People from all over the world travel to destinations following movies they've seen, following favorite series and following admired stars,” said Tourism Ministry Director-General Dani Shahar. “Apart from the fact that we live in a country that is an ideal setting for filming productions internationally,... the charm of Israel - which will certainly appear in the series and films produced here - will raise the status of our country among the countries of the world.”

An international content advisor who wished not to be named echoed this point, reinforcing the idea that this program could create real positive buzz for the country.

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“The film doesn't even have to be about Israel; the minute you get a big producer, a big director or a big actor, and you take him on a one-day trip in Old Jerusalem, they're elated – they love this country,” he said. “If they get a professional treatment here, when they go back they'll say: ‘This place is not what you see on the news – I mean, it is what you see on the news, but people are living together. They don't like each other, but it's still good. Nice nightclubs.’”



A view of the iconic Hollywood sign (credit: KEVORK DJANSEZIAN/REUTERS)

The program will likely strengthen Israeli production companies cooperating with foreign ones in Israel, as it will enable the cross-pollination of workflow methods. Israeli workers on foreign productions also stand to make more money than Israeli ones typically offer, which is another added benefit.

The plan

Increasing on-site filming is clearly the main goal of the government's plan, but the flock of ministries is also offering up to 10% reimbursement each on both post-production and animation.

Reimbursement for production expenses runs as high as NIS 16.6 million (\$4.8 m.). The aid, which will be provided over two years, will be granted by the Investments and Development Authority for Industry and the Economy.

Submission of applications for grants for the foreign productions that will be made in Israel in 2022 is open for submission until August 22, 2022 - so productions that are interested will need to act quickly if they intend to take advantage of the offer.

The ministries are working in cooperation with the organizations that represent leading international production companies, in order to encourage the submission of applications for grants and to expand the circle of companies operating and filming in Israel.

The Culture and Sports Ministry estimates that the investment will bring larger returns, thanks to the domino effect of commercial activity: The productions that come to Israel will invest money in hotels, transportation, catering, professional staff members, sets and editing rooms, thereby holistically benefiting the local economy.

As a complementary move, the State of Israel is promoting visits of public opinion leaders and international content creators on social networks. These influencers engage with audiences of millions, and the government hopes that winning them over may increase the nation's global street creds.

"Israel has joined a prestigious club of countries that provide incentives to international productions to encourage them to come and film on their territory," said Foreign Affairs Ministry Director-General Alon Oshfiz. "In recent years, Israel's status as a television and film content power has risen and the Israeli story has generated global interest and curiosity."