

Recommendations from the IAEA regarding management of the Covid-19 crisis

The speed with which the covid-19 pandemic has spread across the world has led many governments to place exceptional constraints on their populations, to try and limit its propagation.

The initial measures aimed primarily at limiting large gatherings, including concerts, shows and other cultural events. Shortly after, venues receiving the general public were closed. These measures caused an immediate collapse of income in the Arts and Entertainment sector. Having been profoundly impacted from the outset of this historic crisis, the whole of the sector is now at a standstill. A considerable number of workers are without income and the survival of many companies is uncertain.

Loss of revenue does not only affect freelance workers, whose work is inherently precarious. We have been shocked to learn of certain internationally renowned cultural institutions, such as the MET or the Kennedy Centre, that have moved to immediately dismiss all of their 'permanently employed' artists, in some cases despite having received significant government aid, intended to help them to weather this unprecedented crisis.

Certain governments have already put support measures in place in the Arts and Entertainment sector, to support those professionals who are most vulnerable. We call on all states to do likewise and to deploy ambitious rescue plans with resources that are sufficient to the sector's needs.

The initiatives put in place should aim, in particular, to:

1. Guarantee all workers in the sector, whether performers, technicians or others, a sufficient income for the total period during which they are unable to carry out their professional activities due to the covid-19 crisis.
2. Protect employed workers from dismissal due to the temporary suspension of activities of companies arising from the covid-19 crisis.
3. Ensure that companies currently obliged to totally suspend activities are not confronted with the risk of bankruptcy due to the covid-19 crisis.
4. In the wake of the crisis, provide the sector with the support needed for a slow and progressive return to activity.

Different mechanisms may be combined to achieve these objectives. These may include the following:

1. As a first priority, the rapid putting in place of public support funding, with sufficient resources to meet the needs of all workers during the period where they are forced to be inactive and beyond that to support their progressive return to work after the crisis. These funds must in particular allow self-employed freelancers to cover their loss of revenue from the lack of professional activity. They must be made available immediately, as any delay will impact on the families dependant on such aid.
2. A temporary loosening of access criteria for unemployment benefit, with the suspension in particular of any mechanisms such as the progressive lowering of revenues provided or limitations in time, for the duration of the crisis
3. Free access to care for all workers affected by covid-19 with no time limitation.
4. Measures aiming to lighten or spread out the fiscal obligations of workers and companies until the end of the crisis and beyond, depending on the time needed for activities to recommence. The payment of social security contributions, which are vital for the protection of workers, must be safe-guarded.
5. A straightforward and accelerated access for companies to partial unemployment mechanisms, with public support at a level geared towards protecting, to the greatest extent possible, the buying power of workers during the crisis.
6. Payment by the state of the social security contributions of self-employed freelancers, who are temporarily unable to meet their contribution payments.
7. Credit mechanisms such as easy access to zero-percentage lending, payment postponements without incurring financial penalties etc.

8. Clear and adapted rules concerning the reimbursement of tickets for shows cancelled due to the crisis, whether these be within the immediate crisis period or following it.

These proposals are not exhaustive. Regular consultation of the social partners is crucial and will remain so in the wake of the current crisis in order to adjust the measures put in place and ensure they remain adapted to the severe shock that the Arts and Entertainment sector is enduring.