

SPAIN-USA'S AUDIOVISUAL

Universal Studios Hollywood, Los Angeles

22 / 07 / 2021

Thank you, Charlie, Donna and Pearlina. And thank you all for being here. It's a pleasure to join you today, on this wonderful afternoon, at Universal, one of the most iconic Hollywood Studios.

For decades, Spain has been one of the most attractive destinations for global audio-visual productions, enticing creators and producers from across the world.

We've enjoyed countless metres of film roll ever since Samuel Bronston first set up those legendary studios in the 1950s in Spain.

Then along came the European westerns, better known as the *spaguetti westerns*, which took great advantage of the magnificent backdrops that the provinces of Huesca, Granada and Almeria have to offer, later becoming the stage for Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade, the third instalment of Steven Spielberg's famous saga.

And I would like to take this opportunity, if I may, to make a special mention of one of our most beloved actors, equally popular here in Hollywood, Antonio Banderas, who, as we have recently found out, is to join Harrison Ford in the cast of the fifth Indiana Jones instalment.

So Spain has a great wealth and history of successful cinematic experiences and productions, which continue to grow and generate elite auxiliary industries across the world.

For example, I think of the tsunami wave recreated in the movie '*The Impossible*', by Juan Antonio Bayona, achieved through the work of a Spanish special effects company. Or how, only a few years ago, the team of the blockbuster production '*Game of Thrones*' filmed a season across our country, where they found magical shooting locations such as San Juan de Gaztelugatxe, on the coast of the Basque Country, or magnificent palaces such as the Real Alcázar de Sevilla.

A little over a month ago, we discovered that Chinchón, a charming village of hardly 5.000 inhabitants in the south of Madrid, would be the backdrop to the latest Wes Anderson movie, being filmed this summer, with a star-studded cast.

I came here today to tell you **why Spain has become the perfect film set, and how things can only get better.**

Only 3 hours separate the volcanic deserts in the Canary Islands from the humid chestnut woods in Galicia.

Our country is rich in its diversity of locations and heritage, and offers, an excellent climate and cuisine, one of the best health care systems, high security, affordable living costs, great living standards, high technical competitiveness and world-class service companies and infrastructure. And our language, Spanish, with almost 500 million native speakers worldwide.

Spain also enjoys a rich audio-visual ecosystem. Our talented professionals and creative industries are proving to be highly successful in developing internationally acclaimed TV series, videogames, and other productions.

The Spanish brand in audio-visual narratives is in fashion and is already a sign of excellence.

TV shows such as *Money Heist*, *Elite* or *Las chicas del cable*, on Netflix; or *Patria*, based on the novel by Fernando Aramburu about terrorist violence and produced by HBO Spain, are examples of successful productions of the highest quality.

To these almost natural qualities of our country, we have added other incentives that aim to encourage new projects. In 2020, in the middle of the pandemic, the Government approved the reform of the tax framework that regulates the audio-visual sector, enhancing tax benefits for film productions in line with those offered by the most competitive countries.

Moreover, a new procedure has just been put in place to streamline and facilitate all of the procedures, permits and visas that professionals may need within our borders. We are also working to create a special fast-track visa for workers in this sector that is tailored to their specific needs. And, among other measures, from the 24th of June, literally the day after tomorrow, all Americans will be able to travel to Spain without needing to abide by the mobility restrictions caused by COVID-19, although with all the health guarantees.

But we want to go the extra mile: we want to make things even better for you. This is why the Spanish Government last March approved a Plan named '*Spain, Audio-visual Hub of Europe*'.

Our aim is to increase audio-visual production in Spain by 30% by the end of 2025, and this is why we are allocating roughly 1.9 billion dollars of public funds directly to the audio-visual sector.

The measures in our plan pursue three goals: first, to turn Spain into a major centre for audio-visual production, by reducing administrative and regulatory burdens; second, to improve the competitiveness of companies through the application of new technologies that allow them to compete in a digitized market; and third, to build and attract talent while reducing the gender gap.

Let me illustrate this with a couple of concrete examples. First, part of the 4.2 billion dollars that we will invest in enhancing the digital skills of our population will also allow you to source professionals with the skills that you demand.

Even if Spain already has an extraordinary pool of workers in this sector, our intention is to retain, attract and build even more talent in the different professions linked to audio-visual productions to meet the growing needs of an expanding industry.

Second, by the end of 2021 we will launch the “Spain Audio-visual Hub” portal, which will compile all the information that producers and studios need in order to aid

them in deciding whether to film in Spain or establish their headquarters here.

This portal will soon be complemented with the “Spain Audio-visual Hub Bureau”, a one-stop-shop which will inform and accompany investors and producers in overcoming any possible obstacles to shooting in Spain.

Needless to say, we are making sure that you enjoy all the legal certainty that you need. Spain offers and will continue to provide world-class protections for intellectual property and intangible assets in general, including a consolidated framework of copyright legislation and anti-piracy measures. So that you do not have to worry about anything else beyond your production.

On top of that, Spain offers a great business opportunity when it comes to developing the tourism industry around iconic filming locations, as we have seen recently with 'Money Heist'. Netflix and our public agency Tourespaña have just signed a collaboration agreement to promote tourism in Spain through TV series. This is another win-win area where we are ready to help.

We want to support the industry across the entire value chain and in all of its creative formats: cinema, series, shorts, advertising, publicity, video games and animation.

For this, we need close public-private cooperation and dialogue, which will allow the Government to understand where your needs lie in order to strengthen the capacities of Spanish audio-visual production and post-production, and increase the attractiveness of our country as a destination for foreign investment. In this respect, we will also promote co-productions between private producers and our public television network.

Spain is in a strong starting position to become a leading audio-visual hub in Europe and the world. It already ranks

second in the EU, behind Germany in the number of total hours of fiction produced.

In 2018, three years after Netflix first launched in Spain, the platform announced the creation of its first production centre in Europe and chose the town of Tres Cantos, in the north of Madrid, as its location. This centre will soon be expanded, going from 5 to 10 filming sets, and feature new post-production facilities for creators and producers.

A few months ago, ViacomCBS also moved its production hub from London to Madrid. Numerous providers of cross-border TV channels established in the UK before Brexit have now moved their operations to Spain, among them our hosts

today, NBCUniversal, Sony and Disney, just to name a few.

Beyond the natural qualities that make Spain unique, this is in part thanks to the deployment of the most extensive fibre optic network in Europe, which will soon be boosted by an extensive 5G coverage. It is also due to the preparation and disposition of companies to incorporate digital technological improvements to audio-visual production activity. And, as you can see, my Government is ready to actively play its part.

Dear friends,

It is still too early to fully gauge the impact that the pandemic has had on our lives, as well as on economic dynamics. However, some changes in habits that took place during the lockdowns that we lived through, on an almost planetary scale, are now firmly wedded to our daily lives. It is inevitable that we analyse how the need to connect with the world accentuated a new way of understanding our access to the audio-visual content that we use to inform and enjoy ourselves.

The entertainment and information platforms have become the window through which millions of people peer into a new reality. They have revolutionised entertainment.

Spain has all the necessary administrative and tax incentives, as well as all the possible landscapes and backdrops, to receive new projects and create new narratives. We aim to become, as we have been named in some media, and if you allow the comparison, the Hollywood of Europe.

In these most difficult times, this sector can find in our country an ally that strives to help it succeed and that builds bridges to match ideas with audiences, which, after all, is the most important success factor in art and the professions around it.

The spark which gives birth to a narrative is the discovery of a story worth telling. Its end occurs when that story awakens, through space and time, the emotions of another person. Let us do everything possible to make that match happen.

We await you in Spain.

Thank you.