

Proposal for intimacy guidelines for film, television and stage in Latvia

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Context

The Latvian Intimacy Guidelines aim to provide a clear and respectful framework for the handling of intimate scenes in the film, television, and theater industries. These guidelines support the safety and well-being of performers and crew while maintaining the creative integrity of each production.

These guidelines are based on international expertise and evolving standards, aiming to create a respectful and structured approach to intimacy in productions.

Recommendations for guidelines are drawn from SAG-AFRA Intimacy Guidelines, BECTU Intimacy Guidelines, MEAA Intimacy Guidelines, Equity NZ Guidelines, Intimacy Co-ordinator Standards & Protocols (SAG-AFTRA), Guidelines for doing intimate scenes in camera work: Finnish Film Foundation, Guidelines for intimate scenes in film and drama productions: Swedish Film and TV producers association, Guidelines and Protocols for Intimacy Coordination Written by Intimacy Coordination Italia - IC Italia and have been created in collaboration with Baltic Intimacy Professionals certified intimacy coordinators Ieva Norvele, Māra Sleja, Irma Pužauskaitė, Viginija Vareikytė, Jelena Grisina-Harold.

The Need for Intimacy Coordination

Intimate scenes involve a unique set of vulnerabilities, requiring specialized attention to ensure a safe and respectful working environment. Intimacy coordinators facilitate professionalism, efficiency, and safety by creating clear protocols for all involved.

Scope and Application

These guidelines apply to all professionals involved in the staging or filming of intimate scenes, including directors, actors, producers, and crew. The guidelines provide recommendations for best practices while maintaining flexibility to meet the specific needs of each production.

DEFINITIONS

Consent

Consent is only valid if given freely. Consent can only be freely given if the actor/actress is fully aware of the level of physical exposure of the scene they will participate in. Every individual has the right to choose and decide for their own body. Therefore, consent is revocable. Any form of coercion inherently negates consent. Consent cannot be assumed and it may be withdrawn at any time. At the point of engagement, consent should be given in writing for any performance of intimacy.

Intimacy

Intimacy means something different to each person and in each circumstance. While intimacy is generally defined as relating to physical and/or sexual exposure to or closeness with another, notions of intimacy are shaped by a person's cultural and religious background, abilities or disabilities, gender identification, age, sexuality and past experience.

Intimate Scenes

Intimate scenes include physical closeness, bodily contact, nudity, or sexual acts, whether solo or with others.

- Sexually charged scenes include simulated sex, kissing, masturbation, sexual assault depictions, and nudity.
- Non-sexual intimate scenes include a variety of different actions such as intimate touching, washing someone, medical procedures, or dancing closely.
- Scenes containing nudity.

Additionally, whenever scenes require the hyper-exposure of the body or at the performers' request.

Nudity and Levels of Nudity

- Full nudity: Entire body exposed (frontal, rear, or both).
- Partial/Semi-nudity: Exposed above or below the waist.
- Implied nudity: Appears nude on camera but covered on set.
- Additional Artist Specific Areas: These are areas of the body that the artist deems as vulnerable or sensitive. For example: scar tissue, stretch marks etc. These will be discussed directly with the artist and/or their representative. Performers should be aware of transparency in costumes and any use of body doubles or digital nudity. Explicit agreements must be made for all nudity, including body doubles.

Other definitions

- **Simulated Sex Acts:** any simulation of sexual activity performed by the artist on set (whether seen on camera or out of shot). This includes simulated sex performed by the artist to themselves, with another artist or with several artists.
- **Implied Sex:** when the story shown to the audience implies that the characters are engaged in sexual activity off camera. For example: a close-up of a hand sliding on a shower wall or hands grabbing sheets. In an implied sex action, the artists are not performing simulated sex actions on set. If they are, then the correct term to be used in contracts or scene descriptions is “simulated sex” and not “implied sex”.

Intimacy Coordinator

Intimacy coordinators ensure actors' safety and consent during scenes involving nudity, simulated sex, and intimacy, while also collaborating with directors to achieve their creative goals.

The Intimacy Coordinator is effectively the head of a department, responsible for their work, and directly reports to the director and key production figures.

They are a highly qualified specialist with extensive industry knowledge, skills, and training, as well as a creative member of the crew who actively contributes to the construction and facilitation of intimacy scenes.

The responsibility of the Intimacy Coordinator

- Advocating for actors;
- Liaising and negotiating between the actors and production;
- Facilitating clear communication and consent between actors;
- Ensuring adherence to proper protocols;
- Choreographing and coaching movement, if requested.

When do you use an intimacy coordinator?

TIER 1 (HIGH RISK): AN IC IS NECESSARY

- Nudity
- Simulated sex (including simulated masturbation) or simulated sexual violence

TIER 2 (MEDIUM RISK): HIGHLY RECOMMEND AN IC

- Make-out scenes/heavy kissing
- Implied nudity
- Touching of the butt or breast areas
- Intimate work with minors (e.g. a first kiss)

TIER 3 (LOWER RISK): CONSIDER AN IC

- Director, producer, or performer request an IC to be present to help facilitate the scene
- Lingerie, bikini wear, flirting, sexualized dancing (no contact)
- Childbirth, medical procedures, or breastfeeding with no nudity

PROTOCOLS FOR INTIMACY SCENES IN PRODUCTION PROCESS

To enable intimate content to be realised with the creative engagement and ongoing active consent of the Performer, best practice should follow in every production stage - auditions, pre-production, rehearsal, performance and post-production.

As part of the producer's assessment, the intimate scenes should be identified and the Producer should seek the assistance of a professional, certified Intimacy Coordinator.

Auditions

- If a role involves intimacy, nudity, or simulated sex at the time of auditions, actors must be informed in advance
- No nudity, no intimate sexual activity or simulated sex should be required during auditions.
- Only safe placeholder gestures (e.g., palm-to-palm instead of kissing) should be used for intimate scenes.
- For auditions involving intimate actions, scripts should be provided at least 48 hours in advance, with placeholders for intimate gestures
- Only essential personnel should be present during auditions, and a support person may accompany the actor.
- Any recorded material from auditions should be stored securely and destroyed after casting.
- Where particular physical features are essential for a role (such as a burlesque dancer or swimwear advertisement), a body check may be required before a role is confirmed, and only if the request has been communicated at least 48 hours before the audition. If a performer chooses to attend the audition knowing the role, scene, and level of nudity required, they have the right to use body patches, modesty garments, or any other support that makes them feel comfortable.

Special Considerations for Intimate Content involving Minors

- Intimate content with minors can take a variety of forms, and it's important to remember that intimacy is not only sexual content. Intimacy with minors might include: familial relationships (such as, siblings cuddled on the sofa, a parent snuggling with their child in bed, swimming pool or beach scenes, play-wrestling with their best friend, and more).
- The threshold for what is considered intimate may be higher than working with adults. For example, a light kiss on the lips between adult performers may not always elicit the need for an Intimacy Coordinator, while it would for a kiss between child performers. Portraying romantic relationships, flirting and attraction may be more likely to create discomfort for child performers and therefore could require a greater level of consideration.

- It is always better to engage an Intimacy Coordinator in these discussions early to avoid problems further down the line.
- A Child Psychologist should be employed to assess young performers in the case of any content that is deemed distressing or intense in any capacity.

Pre-production

The Producer will ensure that relevant departments, HODs and Essential Crew are informed of the Intimate Scenes, and familiarised with these Guidelines. There should be **adequate budget and scheduling provided** to enable the Intimate Scenes to be created, performed and recorded in a manner consistent with best practice notably:

- Provide IC with all necessary contacts (director, performers, performers agents, relevant creative team members, pay-roll) and material (script).
- Assist when necessary to set-up meetings with key positions of creative team members, and performers.
- Provide necessary information about their inner policy, laws and regulations.
- Maintain communication with the IC throughout the process
- Collaborate in creating a safe environment.
- Address reported sexual harassment, abuse and assaults.
- Follow the recommendations of an IC. In case it is not possible to do that, provide a written agreement that the production was informed about the recommendation but was not able to follow through and takes the responsibility of the possible outcome.

Protocols for IC's in pre-production process

- Assisting auditions if applicable
- Reading the full script and breakdown of the script – marking intimate scenes.
- Meeting with director and/or producer, DOP, writer to define creative vision of intimacy scenes
- One-on-one talks with performers involved in intimate scenes to define consent and boundaries
- Inform director of information from cast
- Inform costumes, make-up and related departments.
- Preparing risk assessments (if required by production).
- Preparing closet or sensitive set protocols.
- Providing information for nudity paperwork.
- Assisting rehearsals.

Performer's agreement in a written form

To enable the actor to make an informed decision about participation, they need access to the complete script and should know the director's vision about the details of the intimate scenes and its rehearsal and filming process, etc.

To ensure consent we recommend having it recorded in writing, in a form that includes scene specific language and nudity descriptive language above the generic levels. Performers, producers, and agents share responsibility for ensuring that informed consent is given and that a written agreement is signed that covers all aspects of the intimate scenes.

It should also include the relevant script pages. The Intimacy Coordinator can assist by providing specific language (also called 'descriptive language') after their conversations with the artists. The producer or legal department can use the intimacy coordinator's specific language as a resource when creating an agreement in a written form for the artist.

Artists should not be asked to sign a rider/waiver during their audition or recall process before the role is offered to them.

Main key points for agreement in written form

- We recommend a draft of the agreement issued no later than 48 hours before by the production to the performer with IC in CC.
- Can be changed before signing.
- Can be signed any minute before the shoot.
- Nudity waiver defines the maximum of nudity, sim sex and other details. On the shoot the contents can be reduced, but not increased.
- In case the performer changed their consent and boundaries (towards increasing nudity and simulated sex), a new agreement must be drafted.
- Body doubles/digital alterations – cannot be more than original performers consent and boundaries.

If extras, stand-ins, body doubles or minors are performing in intimate scenes, the process should be the same.

Rehearsal

When rehearsing intimate scenes the Performer/s, Director and Intimacy Coordinator will:

- Ensure there is always a minimum of three people present to keep the work in the professional realm.
- Not require Performer/s to be nude for rehearsals, except in the case of technical and dress rehearsals for stage or final camera rehearsal for screen.

- The Director/Producer will ensure that a closed room/set will be used when rehearsing scenes involving nudity, simulated sex or sexual violence.
- Physical contact / touching is only from action to cut.
- Performers involved agree to areas of physical touch and agree on the blocking of the scene to ensure consent is given at each step.
- A Performer does not independently override agreed choreography. A new proposal should be discussed with other relevant Performers, and/or the Director, and agreed upon before incorporation.

On-Set

- The Producer should strive to provide appropriate notice before scheduling scenes involving nudity, simulated sexual activity, or sexual violence. We recommend at least 48 hours in advance or, at the earliest possible convenience, ensuring that information about intimacy is not given to the performers at the day of shooting and without intent to mislead the performer.
- There will be no substantive last minute changes made to a scene involving intimacy or nudity without Performers consent.
- Performer/s should be afforded adequate personal space.
- Pre-agreed physical contact / touching should be maintained only from action to cut.
- At the point of shooting, a Performer will not be pressured into performing an intimate scene if they are distressed. If this situation arises, a discussion between the Performer, Performer's Agent, Producer and the Intimacy Coordinator should take place at the first opportunity.

Protocols for IC's On-Set

- Ensures professional workplace environment
- Assists costume department with application of modesty garments
- On-set boundary checks, choreography (if applicable) during blocking
- Ensuring the use of closed-set and sensitive-set protocols with 1AD
- Ensuring prior agreements on intimate scenes written or verbal are respected
- Serves as a resource for directors and assistant directors (as needed) with any specialized movement or choreography to ensure consent and safety while enhancing believability and director's vision.
- Provides explicit recorded material protocols on how to handle dailies with intimate content
- Providing set reports (if requested)

Post-Production

Protocols for IC's in Post-Production

- Available to provide assistance after filming if performers have questions or concerns.
- Assisting performers on additional audio recording sessions (if requested by performers),
- May verify that a final cut is consistent with contractual obligations handwritten agreements.

CONCLUSION

The Latvian Intimacy Guidelines aim to create a safer, more ethical approach to intimate content in film, television, and theater. By promoting clear communication, informed consent, and the involvement of intimacy coordinators, these guidelines ensure that performers' safety and creative integrity are maintained in every Production stage. Through commitment to best practices, the Baltic film industry will continue to evolve as a leader in providing a safe and respectful environment for all involved.