



Connect Trade Union Submission to the Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sports and Media

Connect Representatives:

Mr Brian Nolan, Assistant General Secretary

Mr Jonn Reynolds, Electrician/Camera Technician and Shop Steward

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Chair and members of the committee,

As you will already be aware, the two larger unions in RTE, the NUJ and SIPTU will have submitted their reports on the events of the past (for which no workers are responsible) and how they see the future for workers as per the “New Direction for RTE” strategic plan.

However, one the major issues of the past has been the deliberate use by RTE of precarious employment strategies in particular “Bogus Self Employment” and it is the position of all unions that this cannot form any part of the future employment strategies in RTE.

Connect in the past produced a number of publications on Bogus Self Employment and therefore have been requested to outline the negative effects this has had on workers in RTE, based on their experience in other sectors, particularly in construction.

As a result of representation made by workers and some individual cases taken by employees, RTE commissioned the “Eversheds Report”. Perhaps the most glaring finding was that of 433 outsourced contracts reviewed, 157 were deemed not to be contracts for service but contracts of service i.e. basically these people were really fulfilling the role of direct employees. It was clear that in the case of these 157 “employees” that RTE had misclassified these workers as per the Code of Practice for determining employment status commissioned by the government and issued by the Workplace Relations Commission. This has resulted in further investigations by “SCOPE” into other employment contracts in RTE which is ongoing.

It is worth noting that the figure of 36% is almost as high as the 39% reached by Connect Trade Union in their investigations of the practice in the construction sector.

So what does the practice of Bogus Self Employment mean for workers and what kind of workers does it effect most?

- Bogus Self Employment disproportionately effects **younger workers** and **female workers**.
- It circumvents workers' rights such as
 - Sick Leave
 - Maternity Leave
 - Paternity Leave
 - Annual Leave
- It shifts risks onto workers.
- It erodes training and opportunities to acquire new skills.
- It undermines pay and conditions.
- It undermines health and safety and workers wellbeing as Bogus Self-Employed workers are less likely to report workplace issues.
- Bogus Self-Employed workers are much less likely to secure loans and mortgages thus affecting their ability to purchase a home (thus contributing to the housing crisis)

All of the above issues have been reported to trade unions at RTE, in particular by younger and female workers.

The future of RTE?

The Future Direction document states that:

1. Commissioning outsourced work will increase by 50%. This will ensure more work for the gig economy and more BSE and is contrary to the Government principles signed up to in the Public Service Agreements which commit to public services being provided through direct labour. RTE is a public service broadcaster and while not party to the public services agreements are broadly aligned to them.
2. The document also states that RTE will cut the number of direct employees by 20% while outsourcing as explained above which is unacceptable and of questionable value for taxpayers' money.
3. Regarding taxpayers money, evidence has in the past been presented to Oireachtas committees that BSE cost the state over €1 billion annually, adding to this will not help RTE or the state.
4. The document puts a lot of emphasis on new technology but it should be put on the public record that workers in RTE have always co-operated with the use of new technology

Conclusion:

The future of public broadcasting lies in a properly funded and resourced sector with good secure jobs for workers who know they are safe to raise and investigate issues of public concern without the threat of insecure precarious employment that could hinder their work contrary to the public good.

As billionaire moguls buy both traditional and new social media outlets to promote their agenda, an independent public service that can report without fear or favour in a necessary counterbalance.

The workers in RTE, while willing to play their part, cannot be held responsible for the extravagant and lavish wrongdoings of those at the top, all of which has been well documented. All this while workers engaged in genuine efforts on pay, cost reduction etc to secure the future of RTE and public sector broadcasting.

Please see attached Connect Trade Union's booklet on Bogus Self Employment.