



An Comhchoiste um Thurasóireacht, Cultúr, Ealaíona, Spórt agus Meáin

Pleananna samhlacha gnó don todhchaí agus fíis
fhadtéarmach d'earnáil na meán

Iúil 2024

Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media

Future business model plans and long-term vision for
the media sector

July 2024

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Related information

Publications

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Committee videos

Footage of Committee proceedings can be found on the [Committee videos page](#).

Contact details

The contact details for the Committee can be found on the [Committee page](#).

Terms of reference

Read the [terms of reference](#) for the Committee.

Committee Membership

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[Niamh Smyth TD](#), Fianna Fáil

Leas-Chathaoirleach

[Senator Malcolm Byrne](#), Fianna Fáil

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[Chris Andrews TD](#), Sinn Féin

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[Senator Fintan Warfield](#), Sinn Féin

Committee Membership History

[Alan Dillon TD](#), Fine Gael | Sep 2020 - Apr 2024

[Johnny Mythen TD](#), Sinn Féin | Sep 2020 - Apr 2023

Foreword

The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media presents its Report on Future Business Model Plans and Long-Term Vision for the Media Sector on the basis of a simple belief: a country's media are the backbone of its democracy.

The information we receive from our media outlets is vital to the choices that shape our lives. The recommendations of the Future of Media Commission represent potential for a reimagining of Ireland's media sector to the benefit of all stakeholders and to equip the sector to navigate the ever-changing landscape in how we consume news and information.

The Committee's decision to examine this topic proved prescient when the now familiar saga of governance failings on the part of RTÉ came to light last Summer. The Committee subsequently agreed to broaden this report to account for its engagements with RTÉ and other stakeholders on RTÉ's governance practices.

While it is a matter of great regret to the Committee and indeed to all stakeholders that trust in public service media has been undermined by poor governance practices, the unprecedented level of public interest in this Committee's meetings is a testament to the importance with which the Irish public holds its public service media.

If there is a positive to be found arising from this sorry episode, it is a reinforced focus on reforming our public service media and putting it onto a sustainable footing against the context of the rapid advancement of threats to democratic functioning in the form of disinformation, misinformation, interference, and corruption.

This constitutes the central theme of this report's recommendations: a generational reform to the funding model for public service media. It is important to note that this report's recommendations are aimed at not only the major public broadcasters, but to local, independent, and community media across all platforms.

The Committee's headline recommendation in this report is the abolition of the Television Licence Fee, a topic which was much debated at Committee. The Committee's agreed recommendations instead foresee exchequer funding managed by Coimisiún na Meán. The Committee recommends multiannual funding to public service media entities on the basis of corresponding multiannual strategies and performance commitments.

The Committee's recommendations in relation to funding also seek to ensure that public funding should be a catalyst for investment in the broader media eco-system: we recommend continued support to the thriving and diverse independent sector, and a proportion of public service media funding to be awarded to community and regional providers. We recommend the retention of the dual funding model subject to appropriate transparency and safeguards. We further recommend a range of supports and interventions on issues such as equipping the media workforce for digitalisation, securing local and independent media outlets, and enhancing diversity and transparency in Irish journalism.

A country's media should, furthermore, reflect its people and their interests. The possibilities of what we can do, and who we can be, are explored and reinforced through our papers, airwaves, and screens. It is for this reason that the Committee recommends the development of public service codes to support equal access to and representation in Irish media, as well as the furtherance of sectoral equality, diversity, and inclusion training, and the formation of youth and older people advisory groups.

I and my Committee colleagues also envision a symbiotic relationship between our language, culture, and media. We seek to safeguard and promote the Irish language through our recommendations to Government. We also call for significant assistance to our creatives, increased backing for arts and cultural broadcasting, and the diversification of sports broadcasting.

It is our sincerest wish that our report may serve as a catalyst for long-lasting change in Ireland's media, and that our work has made a constructive contribution towards restoring trust and transparency in public service media values.

I must take this opportunity to thank the witnesses who contributed their vast expertise and lived experience, which the Committee hopes to have accurately and faithfully conveyed in this report. I also acknowledge that several witnesses voluntarily attended at-times demanding Committee meetings. It is unfortunate however that the Committee has not had the opportunity to engage with all invited stakeholders.

I also thank my Committee colleagues, and the Committee's Secretariat, for their work and support.



Niamh Smyth T.D., Cathaoirleach
3 July 2024

Executive summary

The publication of the final report of the Future of Media Commission in July 2022 marked a significant examination of Ireland's broadcast, print, and online media, and set out considerations as to how media can remain sustainable and resilient in delivering public service aims over the next decade.

The Commission's report made a number of recommendations spanning Ireland's media sector, relating to the societal value and impact of media, the funding of public service media, supports for public service content and the wider media sector, considerations of the Irish language, culture, the creative economy, and sport, as well as principles of regulation and governance in the sector.

With a view to determining stakeholders' perspectives on the final report of the Future of Media Commission, and to consider future business model plans and overall long-term vision for Ireland's media sector, the Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media initially held five (5) public oral hearings and received one (1) written submission, consulting with 25 stakeholders in the process.

In light of reports on governance failings on the part of RTÉ, the Committee subsequently held nine (9) further public oral hearings with stakeholders. The Committee agreed to broaden the scope of this report to consider the implications of issues arising from these further public meetings on the future of public service media. The Committee informed all stakeholders of this change in scope and those whose evidence addressed themes of public service broadcasting were invited to make supplementary written submissions in light of the changed circumstances if they so wished. The Committee thus received twelve (12) supplementary submissions from stakeholder groups. This report thus draws from fourteen (14) public oral hearings and thirteen (13) written submissions in totality.

The Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media notes that the Committee of Public Accounts has also examined the appropriation of public moneys to RTÉ and its expenditure of same, and has [reported accordingly](#). As such and in order to prevent a duplication of Committee scrutiny, the Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media for the purposes of this report is considering the governance practices identified in RTÉ solely in the context of the broader policy questions regarding the future of public service media. This report does not aim to provide a forensic examination of financial and

governance practices of individual public service media entities, and the Committee welcomes the Committee of Public Accounts report which includes recommendations on these issues.

Details of public oral hearings and written submissions can be accessed in [Appendix 1](#) and [Appendix 2](#).

The Committee identified a number of issues across the areas of public service media funding, the status of community and regional content, digital development and digital transformation within the media sector, journalism, disinformation, misinformation, access and inclusion within the media sector, the Irish language, and culture, the creative economy and sport. The Committee outlines twenty-nine (29) key recommendations in support of Ireland's media sector, with a view to bolstering Irish media as a public service good and as a primary vehicle for democracy and equal representation in Ireland.

The majority view of the Joint Committee is in favour of the abolition of the Television Licence Fee in favour of exchequer funding to be managed by Coimisiún na Meán. It should be noted that this is not the unanimous view of the Committee, and division results in respect of this proposal are outlined in [Appendix 3](#).

Key recommendations

Funding for public service media and public service content providers

1. The Committee recommends the abolition of the Television Licence Fee and the funding of public service broadcasting and quality Irish content through Exchequer funding, through a fund managed by Coimisiún na Meán that will ensure independence from government and that it would be done in a transparent manner.
2. The Committee recommends that any alterations to the public funding model for public service media and public service content providers, arising from the work of the Government's Technical Working Group on Television Licence Fee Reform, must stipulate multi-annual funding arrangements maintained on an index-linked basis for public service media and public service content providers.
3. The Committee recommends that awarding of multiannual funding should be carried out on the basis of corresponding multiannual strategies and performance commitments devised by public service media entities setting out how they will achieve high-level public service objectives as set out in statute. Funding settlements should be proposed by an appropriately resourced independent regulator empowered to approve, monitor and evaluate on the adoption and implementation of public service media organisation strategies; the regulator should also be empowered to amend or add detail to the public service objects from time to time, so as to reflect changes in society and in the media and technology environment.
4. The Committee recommends that an increase in public funding be made available to broadcasters and other media for the purpose of meeting their public service remit and the creation of high-quality Irish content, and particularly regarding responsibilities in respect of content with a minority interest.
5. The Committee recommends that oversight of the propriety of expenditure by public service media organisations and their compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies should be considered separately to the assessment of multiannual public service media strategies. The Minister should engage with

cabinet colleagues to ensure the audit and oversight framework for public service media organisations is robust and will ensure trust and good governance.

6. The Committee recommends, in acknowledgement of the important role of public service media organisations in generating commercial revenue in the broader media sector and the important role of commercial funding in supplementing public investment in the broader media sector, that the dual funding model should be retained subject to the development of appropriate safeguards and protocols to ensure that public service objectives are not undermined by commercial sponsorship of and advertising on public service programming, that there is full transparency regarding the usage of all forms of funding, and that public service media funding is not inappropriately used to support commercial content thereby distorting market conditions unfavourably.
7. The Committee recommends that any new mechanism for public funding of public service media organisations should serve as a catalyst for investment in the broader media sector and creative economy, and that statutory commitments regarding investment in independently produced content be retained.
8. The Committee acknowledges and supports the enormously important contribution of the thriving and diverse independent sector to Irish content creation and recommends, where State funding applies, that measures are put in place to guarantee high standards in employment conditions, training, equality, corporate governance, and sustainability.
9. The Committee recommends that the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media furnish the Committee with an update report at the earliest opportunity detailing all changes implemented or planned on foot of the recommendations of both Expert Advisory Committees commissioned by the Minister into RTÉ.
10. The Committee recognises that the governance issues exposed at RTÉ were not caused by the size of the organisation, or by the vast majority of workers at the organisation and recommends that the pay and conditions of those workers are protected in any restructuring efforts carried out by RTÉ.

Community and regional content

11. The Committee recommends that the feasibility be examined of a mechanism whereby a small percentage of funding levied as a result of the television licence fee, or any alternative funding mechanism that may be implemented following the report of the Government's Technical Working Group on Television Licence Fee Reform, would be made available on a contestable basis to community and regional media providers in Ireland for both new and existing content.
12. The Committee recommends that State support be furnished to permit for the establishment of community media hubs such that all communities in Ireland are adequately serviced in terms of film-making, media production, and training.
13. The Committee recommends that the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media engage with relevant Cabinet colleagues with a view to examining State aid rules, particularly in the application of the Section 481 Film Tax Credit, with a view to ensuring a permanent and sustainable mechanism supporting the development of regional film and television production.

Digital development and digital transformation

14. The Committee recommends that any supports granted to Ireland's media sector in the implementation of the Future of Media Commission's recommendations concerning digital transformation or media access and training schemes would explicitly include supports to upskill and reskill new and existing employees within the sector to meet the challenges of digital transformation.

Journalism, disinformation, and misinformation

15. The Committee recommends that any content generated by any journalism scheme to be established by Coimisiún na Meán, such as the Local Democracy Scheme or Courts Reporting Scheme, be readily available to the public and free of cost to access.
16. The Committee recommends that any supports for journalism provided by State sources include measures to safeguard journalists operating in Ireland, with particular consideration given to women, members of racial and ethnic minorities,

members of LGBTQIA+ communities, people with disabilities, and people from varying socioeconomic backgrounds.

17. The Committee recommends that any entity that avails of public funding to create public service content be required to maintain accessible and online details of ownership structures, article and content corrections, policies, and staff in editorial roles.

Access and inclusion

18. The Committee recommends that Coimisiún na Meán develop codes for public service media content such that public service media safeguards, respects, and equally represents all, in alignment with the nine grounds of equality as enshrined in the Equal Status Acts 2000-2018.
19. The Committee recommends that any media access and training supports to be developed or provided within the media sector include specific training on equality, diversity, and inclusion in public service media, with the development of same to be led by as wide a consultative process as possible.
20. The Committee recommends that any work undertaken in furtherance of the Future of Media Commission's recommendations make explicit provision for the inclusion of youth and of older people, to include the formation of youth advisory groups and older people advisory groups in respect of the media sector. The Committee also recommends that Audience Council related provisions under the Broadcasting Act are utilised to maximum effect.

An Ghaeilge

21. The Committee recommends that a review be conducted of Irish language public service media to specifically examine the proportion of public funding granted to minoritised languages in the media sectors of other comparable jurisdictions, such as Wales, with a view to setting ambitious targets for Irish language programming on RTÉ and other media that receive public funding for public service content.
22. The Committee recommends that any funding provided in respect of journalism schemes to be established by Coimisiún na Meán, such as the Local Democracy

Reporting Scheme or Courts Reporting Scheme, ringfence significant funding for Irish-language journalism.

23. The Committee recommends that any work undertaken in furtherance of the Future of Media Commission's recommendations relating to the development of sports broadcasting make explicit provision for Irish-language sports broadcasting and journalism as a strategic priority.
24. The Committee recommends that parity of salary is guaranteed for staff at Raidió na Gaeltachta, in line with that received by their English-speaking counterparts in RTÉ.
25. The Committee recommends that a licence is delivered for a national Irish language radio station for young people.

Culture, the creative economy, and sport

26. The Committee recommends that Coimisiún na Meán undertake work in relation to the development of arts broadcasting and promotion, such as it is due to undertake in respect of sports broadcasting following Recommendations 7-9, 7-10, and 7-11 of the Future of Media Commission's final report, including having regular arts bulletins as part of the news service of public service broadcasters, akin to existing regular sports bulletins, to inform the public of developments and achievements across all artforms at both local and national level, drawing attention to the launch and exhibition of new artistic, literary and musical works and upcoming performances.
27. The Committee recommends that the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media engage with relevant Cabinet colleagues with a view to eliminating barriers to employment in the cultural and creative industries, with particular regard to those barriers facing disabled people where there is interaction between employment or funding and social welfare supports, and with a view to supporting the development of artistic space across Ireland.
28. The Committee recommends that Coimisiún na Meán expedite the establishment of a content levy to support Irish content creation.

29. The Committee recommends that any work undertaken in respect of the development of sports broadcasting by Coimisiún na Meán make explicit provision for the development and promotion of disability sport broadcasting in Ireland, including, but not limited to, para sport and to include disability and para sports outside of the Paralympic Games.

Background

Overview: the future of media commission

The Future of Media Commission was established as an independent body in order to examine Ireland's broadcast, print, and online media, and in order to consider how media can remain sustainable and resilient in delivering public service aims over the next decade.

The Commission was asked to make recommendations on sustainable public funding mechanisms and other supports to ensure the media sector remains viable, independent, and capable of delivering public service aims. It was also asked to consider international best practice in terms of public funding models that are sustainable, future-proofed, ensure value for money for the public, and that protect the editorial independence of media. It was requested particularly that the Commission would make recommendations in relation to the role of RTÉ and its financing.

The Commission consulted with the general public and other stakeholders. Its formal public consultation process resulted in over 800 written submissions, and its series of six online thematic dialogues welcomed over 1,000 members of the public, as well as 50 expert panellists, as they engaged in detailed discussions and debate on matters pertinent to the Commission's deliberations.

Summary: report of the future of media commission

Societal value and impact of media

The Commission received evidence of the positive and societal impact of public service media (PSM) in Ireland, and of the important role that PSM and public service content providers (PSCPs) play in fostering an informed citizenry, promoting social cohesion, and sustaining democracy; the Commission states that, through supplying trustworthy and accurate news and information, media provides an essential public service.

In the EU policy framework, the importance of a free and trustworthy media in countering threats to the democratic system is clearly acknowledged, the economic risks that threaten media are more apparent, and the rationale and justification for interventions by the State and the EU to ensure a sustainable media are established.

The EU has mandated Member States to design a new model for media to be strengthened and supported, including on a financial basis. The Commission notes that innovative thinking is both called for and required to address challenges in sustainability, and that there is increasing scope for flexibility in the application of State Aid rules, as the EU and Member States seek new models of support.

The Commission therefore recommends that the intrinsic value of public service content (PSC) be recognised as a merit good that delivers benefits to society, and, as such, represents critical public infrastructure. It also recommends that the important and distinctive roles played by PSM and PSCPs be recognised. The Commission concludes, furthermore, that media organisations in receipt of public funding should be required to meet diversity standards, and that there should be coordinated development and implementation of equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) tools and measures.

The Commission found that structural devices, including diversity boards and Board-level responsibility for equality, diversity, and inclusion are important in the advancement of EDI objectives, and recommends that media organisations develop diversity boards that advise producers on and assist in the co-creation of content, that EDI should be mainstreamed across media organisations, and that larger PSM and PSCP organisations should have a diversity lead at senior executive level.

Views on Ireland's media

The Commission's review of media in Ireland found a diverse and highly competitive media landscape across print, radio, television, and online, and this comprises public service, commercial, and community media that operate at national, regional, and local level. The Commission notes that, in addition to indigenous media, Irish consumers have access to a wide range of internationally-based media suppliers, some of which compete in the Irish advertising sphere and in the provision of media services that are a significant part of the audiovisual landscape of Ireland.

The Commission observes that technology and the rise of on-demand media services are driving changes in consumer expectations and behaviour in relation to media, and are forcing organisations to adjust and embrace the new conditions and opportunities presented by the digital era. The Commission's report acknowledges the concerns and risks inherent in the growth of data centrality, data analysis, and artificial intelligence

technologies, not least in relation to intrusions against privacy, circulation of fake news, and competitive inequalities.

The Commission notes that the array of media organisations and services in Ireland mirrors a rich diversity in terms of interests, requirements, and expectations of media across society, and that the Irish public displays a wide range of interests and tastes across news and current affairs, entertainment, arts, culture, sport, and the Irish language.

However, it is remarked in the Commission's report that more can be done by PSM and other media to cater to individual and sectional needs; it states that there is an ever-present risk that minority groups and groups that are marginalised in society may be underserved by and under-represented within media organisations and media output in Ireland. The Commission highlights that diversity within content and across systems of media provision in Ireland is highly dependent on adequate levels of funding and resources.

An economic perspective on the future of media in Ireland

Based on its examination of the evidence and stakeholder testimonies, the Commission concludes that a number of economic trends pose a significant threat to the sustainability of media in Ireland. One underlying issue is the restructuring in patterns of advertising expenditure, with traditional media losing out to the growing popularity of digital advertising platforms as audience attention shifts to web-connected media. A compounding issue for print media is that circulation and sales of physical newspapers are in decline; for PSM in Ireland, a compounding factor is diminishing direct sales of TV licences and a lack of flexibility within existing revenue models to respond in ways that mitigate the effects of lower advertising.

A further economic challenge for both PSM and the press is that of catering to the bifurcated demands of a multiplatform or "hybrid" world, in which investment in the traditional products upon which audiences rely (e.g. newspapers and TV channels) must be sustained, but, simultaneously, resources must be channelled into the development of new digital services and associated equipment and skills. The Commission states that, at a time when revenues are stagnant or in decline, straddling the need for investment in traditional formats and also in new digital interfaces poses enormous financial strain on traditional media organisations.

The Commission concludes that there is strong justification for State intervention to ensure the sustainability of a robust system of PSM and PSC provision, in light of the socioeconomic and cultural benefits for Irish society and the Irish creative economy, as well as for the democratic system in Ireland.

Funding of public service media

The Commission recommends that the Government introduce a new public funding model for PSM, and make all necessary legislative, administrative, and budgetary arrangements accordingly; this funding model includes the phasing out of the TV licence, the derivation of Exchequer funding for PSM from non-hypothecated tax revenue and an adjusted taxation to meet the cost, and multiannual funding awards for the media sector. The Commission also sets out recommended specific public funding levels for RTÉ and TG4 in €million amounts.

The Commission proposes, furthermore, that PSM be subject to additional oversight and advisory arrangements in respect of their financial affairs, strategic financial planning, and future funding proposals; these suggested arrangements include statutory functions for the Media Commission in setting funding levels for PSM, as well as statutory functions for the National Treasury Management Agency, NewERA, and the National Development Finance Agency to provide oversight of and advisory and strategic planning capabilities for RTÉ and TG4.

Additional specific recommendations for RTÉ include interim funding measures, an increased focus on value-for-money and efficiencies, investment in innovation and digital strategy, the development of commercial revenues, the reduction of deficit financing and the stabilisation of expenditure, and increased collaboration with the independent production sector.

Support for public service content and the wider media sector

The Commission recognises that PSC creation extends far beyond the PSC produced by PSM, and that PSCPs across all media sectors in Ireland create PSC which is of clear and demonstrable value to the public and society. The Commission notes that there is inherent value to a plurality of PSCPs in the Irish media landscape; it provides for diversity of views and of creativity, and can foster competition and innovation.

The Commission envisages that the State should provide targeted support to PSCPs in the face of challenges that arise as a result of a rapidly changing information environment and

audience consumption behaviours. The Commission acknowledges that some media organisations, particularly at the local level, are more impacted by these changes than others, and that the PSC they produce is at greater risk of under-provision, or, indeed, at risk of not being produced at all.

In order to sustain plurality, a number of recommendations are made by the Commission that are underpinned by the principles of universality, EDI, independence, high quality, collaboration, digital transformation, platform neutrality, contestability, and youth engagement.

Recommendations made by the Commission concerning supports for PSM include the conversion of the broadcasting fund into a platform-neutral media fund, the establishment of a local democracy reporting scheme, the establishment of supports for digital transformation, and the establishment of funding and bursary schemes relating to news reporting, Courts reporting, media access and training, community media.

Recommendations also include the implementation of the Copyright Directive, the examination of indirect taxation measures to support PSCPs, the exploration of collaboration opportunities for PSM in terms of its reuse on other platforms, the establishment of independent oversight of all public funding streams for journalism, and the development of an all-island media economy.

Cultural and creative economy

The Commission states that the importance of the national language to Irish culture and identity needs greater recognition across the broadcasting and media sector, and that Irish-language media content must be visible across platforms, commercially relevant, inclusive, and accessible to all age groups. It points to the dual role of TG4 in supporting the core Irish-speaking audience and promoting language and culture to a wider audience; it also states that, as a publisher-broadcaster, TG4 also plays a valuable role in supporting the independent production sector.

The Commission recommends the establishment of independent editorial control for TG4 over its news services, the conducting of a comprehensive review of the provision of Irish language services across the media sector, the prioritisation of the Irish language for RTÉ, and the implementation of Irish language provisions in funding schemes.

In addition, the Commission recognises the importance of supporting the broadcasting and audiovisual sectors in the creation of cultural PSC. The Commission recommends a review of the Archiving Scheme for small independent production companies, the establishment of an audiovisual content levy and fund, the establishment of an Audiovisual Strategy to position Ireland as a key source of entertainment content for the international on-demand market, and the improvement of investment in independent production.

There are a number of recommendations made in terms of the interface between the sporting and media sectors: the development of a strategic plan for sports broadcasting and promotion, the establishment of a diversity and inclusion strategy for sports reporting and broadcasting, and the greater provision of education and training to support career pathways in media, and specifically sports media.

Regulation and governance

The Commission makes a number of recommendations in relation to the regulatory and governance landscape in respect of Ireland's media sector, including:

- A review and amendment of the statutory objects of PSM in such a way as to make them relevant to the expected future role of PSM, in light of the demands of the multiplatform era, the need for reflecting the diversity of Ireland, and the need to protect PSM editorial independence, *inter alia*;
- Establishment in legislation of a system of independently assessed, recurring, multiannual funding packages for PSM, with a stronger role for the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland / Coimisiún na Meán in determining PSM funding levels and accountability for expenditure;
- Consideration of how to effectively resource regulatory structures for the media sector;
- Changes to the regulation of the independent media sector, including changes to regulatory provisions for PSC funding, including the establishment of a platform-neutral media fund and the development of PSC schemes to boost the cultural and creative media outputs, as well as those relating to news, current affairs, international affairs, history, science, education, and media literacy;
- The swift enforcement of rules relating to prominence of PSC across video-on-demand platforms;

- The development of a National Counter-Disinformation Strategy to enhance the trust and protect the safety of Irish users of global content platforms; and
- The provision of a statutory basis for the expanded remit of Coimisiún na Meán, as envisaged by the Future of Media Commission, including a significantly strengthened role in independently assessing the funding requirements of PSM, a role in relation to the design and management of support schemes under the new Media Fund, a role in ensuring greater equality, diversity, and inclusion in the media sector, and an enhanced role in research, policy analysis, oversight, and accountability.

Coimisiún na Meán work programme 2023

Coimisiún na Meán's 2023 Work Programme outlines that it will presently work to update and implement new media service codes, to ensure prominence of public service content, to implement a sectoral learning and development programme, to develop media literacy initiatives, to promote high standards of environmental practices in the sector, to publish a Gender, Equality, and Diversity Strategy for the sector, to commence a review of Irish language services across the media, and to convene a working group to develop a strategic plan for sports broadcasting. In an engagement with the Committee on its work programme, Coimisiún na Meán Executive Chairperson Jeremy Godfrey outlined to the Committee some of its activities relating to broadcasting and media development. Activities carried out under the work programme include the development of an online safety code for video sharing platforms, the commencement of a review of Irish language content across the media, the development of a gender, equality, diversity and inclusion strategy for the media sector, and implementation of new schemes to support reporting of courts and local democracy.

Stakeholder contributions

Funding model for public service media and public service content providers

The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (“BAI”)¹ stated that strong public service structures and content were key to preserving public trust in the media, and therefore to supporting healthy democratic processes; consequently, the BAI remarked that reform of the media funding model must be conducted in such a way as to ensure a sustainable service for public service media, and that this can only be achieved via the realisation of multi-annual funding arrangements, which itself would ideally be linked to a binding recommendation made by the relevant independent regulator.

The BAI’s Celene Craig clarified, in a public oral hearing of 18th January 2023, that its concept of a multi-annual funding model would entail a strong sense of security for public service content providers in terms of their funding stream over a future number of years; the BAI requested that such a funding arrangement would cover, at a minimum, three years. The BAI stated that, where plans and content concepts are being developed, there must be an ability to plan over a number of years, which is impeded by a lack of clarity for year-on-year availability of funds. The BAI also observed that multi-annual funding enables capital investment that may be required to support new development, and particularly digital development, and it also allows for an overall accountability framework for how broadcasters perform on a year-on-year basis, including from the regulatory perspective.

RTÉ highlights the insistence of the Future of Media Commission in terms of substantial reform of the public funding system for media outlets, and states that, as public funding represents over 50% of the hybrid funding model underpinning its public service model, the loss of monies as a result of the current licence fee system signifies great uncertainty as to a large proportion of RTÉ’s income, and thus uncertainty as to its ability to adequately plan its services.

Furthermore, RTÉ’s then Director of Strategy, observed, in a public oral hearing of 18th January 2023, that there are cost implications of delivering a broad public service remit to all audiences, in multiple forms of content, across multiple types of service. RTÉ noted that,

¹ Dissolved as of 15th March 2023, with the new regulator, Coimisiún na Meán, established under the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022.

as a result of these cost implications, the loss of licence fee income means that, not only is RTÉ unable to fully deliver on its public service remit, but also that there is funding lacking to support external content generation, journalism, and other public goods arising from public service media.

RTÉ highlighted, too, that some public services are not necessarily sustainable from a commercial standpoint, and that catering for minority interests does not pay for itself in terms of commercial return—thus outlining the requirement for sustainable public funding. RTÉ further stated that, in order to be able to sustainably deliver its remit, either its remit must be reduced, or its funding increased.

Virgin Media Television remarks that the future of the Irish media sector is one that will require a more appropriate and consistent level of support at policy and regulatory level in such a way as to reflect the value, contribution, and importance of delivering public service media content. In addition, Virgin Media Television’s Paul Farrell called, in a public oral hearing of 18th January 2023, for greater transparency concerning the allocation of public funding to the creation of public service media content. RTÉ’s Adrian Lynch, at the same hearing, noted that RTÉ’s status as a regulated body means that it reports to the relevant regulator and publishes its accounts on an annual basis, with a breakdown thereof publicly available online.

The Future of Media Commission Recommendation Implementation Strategy and Action Plan highlights a number of items in terms of the public funding model for the media sector, including legislative changes to provide for a platform-neutral funding mechanism, that the Technical Group on the TV Licence Fee will make proposals for its reform, that interim funding will be agreed in the context of the annual Estimates process, and that, once a final decision has been made on a future funding model, consideration will be given as to the long-term role of Coimisiún na Meán (“CnaM”) in assessing and determining the funding needs of public service media providers.

Community and regional content

The Community Television Association (“CTA”) states that the difference between community television and public service or commercial broadcasting is characterised by the ownership structure, participatory element, and the diversity of perspectives associated with community content. Community Radio Ireland, or CRAOL, outlines that the core

mission of community media is to generate social benefit for communities, where the concept of social benefit incorporates the delivery of public service media aims. The CTA notes that community groups are actively involved at all stages of production and have editorial control over the content produced, and, in addition, that community platforms can be a useful mechanism for content that may not be commercially viable.

The CTA recommends that licence fee revenue or similar be allocated to community media to bolster annual sustainable support, that access to and listing on a broader range of platforms should be facilitated for community television, that community television be granted access to a content levy and supports for the development of community media hubs, that an annual commitment should be made to a social benefit scheme for community television, and that journalism bursaries for community radio should be expanded to include community television.

CRAOL and Dublin Digital Radio also discuss the need to establish community media hubs, with Dublin Digital Radio stating that such hubs would increase the value of production training and community interaction for media organisations and members of the public. Dublin Digital Radio also notes that community media spaces can be indispensable in creating a framework for media literacy, cultural exchange, media production skills, and community-building.

Clare FM states that local stations provide a valuable service within relatively small markets, playing a key role in the democratic process at local and national levels, in counterbalancing misinformation that may be prominent on social media channels, and in supporting local charities, businesses, sports, and arts. However, Clare FM highlights that, in spite of reportedly strong listenership, pressures on station financing impact programming and staffing.

Local Ireland notes that circulation of local paid-for weekly newspapers has fallen more than 50% since 2010, and had decreased by approximately 7% within the first six months of 2022 compared to the same period in 2021. It states that newsprint costs have increased by 150% in the 18 months prior to November 2022, and that, since 2008, 17 local newspapers have ceased publication, with one ceasing publication as recently as October 2022. Local Ireland welcomes the recognition of local news publishers as public service content providers in the final report of the Future of Media Commission, as well as

its recommendation that Coimisiún na Meán should extend supports for broadcasters to print and digital publishers.

The Future of Media Commission Recommendation Implementation Strategy and Action Plan highlights, under Recommendation 6-7, that CnaM will review its Community Broadcasting Support Scheme, that it will research existing supports for community media and consider the optimal support mechanism, that the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media will set out the broad parameters of the Community Media Scheme, that CnaM will conduct a detailed design of the scheme, including appropriate stakeholder consultation, that the relevant Department will seek State aid approval, and that CnaM will implement the scheme.

The Future of Media Commission Recommendation Implementation Strategy and Action Plan also states, under Recommendation 6-11, that a proposal will be developed for collaboration and content reuse with public service media, and that CnaM will examine its social benefit framework to further collaboration between public service media, commercial broadcasters, and community broadcasters.

In relation to media content in the regions, TG4 and Screen Ireland point to the role of [Film Relief](#) (the Section 481 Film Tax Credit, or “regional uplift”), of which the policy objective was, according to Screen Ireland, to build a talent base outside of Dublin and Wicklow.

TG4’s Alan Esslemont, in a public oral hearing of 18th January 2023, highlighted the need for development of the television and film industries in Ireland’s regions, and, in this vein, noted TG4’s concern that the regional uplift would no longer be in operation by the end of 2023. Screen Ireland’s Désirée Finnegan outlined, at the same hearing, that regional development is a priority for Screen Ireland, and that Screen Ireland ringfenced significant funding for regional filming activity.

Screen Ireland noted, too, the importance of designing a policy intervention specifically for regional development in order to incentivise film development in Ireland’s regions, if such a need was not to be met by the Section 481 Film Tax Credit. TG4 outlined that an obstacle to the functioning of the regional uplift is the [current State aid map of Ireland](#), whereby regions are not necessarily clearly defined for the purposes of the regional uplift, and noted that the ability to grant aid to certain productions, regardless of location in Ireland, would also be

welcomed; James Hickey, speaking at a public oral hearing of 15th February 2023 on behalf of the Joint Creative Audiovisual Sectoral Group, called for a review of regional funding in this regard.

The Future of Media Commission Recommendation Implementation Strategy and Action Plan highlights, under Recommendation 7-7, that, while a cost-benefit analysis of Section 481 has already been completed by the Department of Finance, the Audiovisual Action Plan Steering Group will examine if there is a continued rationale for the exclusion of broadcasters from Section 481 supports, in the context of current and future funding provision, and noting the proliferation of globalised streaming content services.

Digital development and digital transformation

Numerous stakeholders across the media sector, including RTÉ, Virgin Media Television, the BAI, CRAOL, Clare FM, Local Ireland, NewsBrands Ireland, the Independent Broadcasters of Ireland (“IBI”), and the Convenience Stores and Newsagents Association (“CSNA”), note the role of digital technologies and platforms in the fragmentation of media outlets and of audiences, and the resulting pressures on public service content providers.

CRAOL’s Jack Byrne noted, in a public oral hearing of 24th November 2022, that the future for media outlets involves diverse platform-neutral analogue and digital production and dissemination. Clare FM’s Ronan McManamy stated, in the same hearing, that, although there were supports for sectoral digital transformation recommended by the Future of Media Commission, the operation of same should be closely examined in terms of their provision of adequate funding and proportionate administration.

The Future of Media Commission Recommendation Implementation Strategy and Action Plan highlights, under Recommendation 6-3, that the Government agrees that digital transformation supports will need to be designed to ensure that it provides support to sustainable media organisations in need of help to innovate and to transition to the digital information environment. Consequently, the Action Plan states that a digital transformation strategy will be developed, and that a scheme for digital transformation will be developed, having regard to funding levels.

News outlets, represented by Local Ireland and NewsBrands, welcomed the Government’s decision to reduce VAT for newspapers and e-papers for the 2023 budgetary cycle, with

Local Ireland stating that this represented a valuable measure to protect journalism and to support the transition of news publishers to digital business models. Local Ireland also noted, in a public oral hearing of 24th November 2022, that, while digital modes of delivery was central to the future media business model, the realisation of digital revenue is challenging, and particularly so for local news publishers that may lack the scale of major international and national groups in terms of investment and securing meaningful returns.

NewsBrands outlined, at the same hearing, that publishers, driven by changes in consumer behaviour, are distributing news content in non-traditional formats and via new distribution channels. NewsBrands highlighted that digital transformation must be underpinned by people—their skills and their capabilities. Furthermore, NewsBrands noted the role of gamification in the digital ecosystem, and the potential, in the longer term, for the need on the part of publishers to invest in many more forms of digital technologies, such as artificial intelligence.

Similarly to other media stakeholders, NewsBrands stated that the generation of revenue from these new business models represents a significant business challenge. Local Ireland and NewsBrands suggested that, though there is a high value of news publisher content to online platforms, such as Google and Meta, that revenue is sparsely shared with publishers, if at all. Local Ireland and NewsBrands noted the potential of the European Union Copyright Directive to aid content creators in accessing fair remuneration for their contributions.

The Future of Media Commission Recommendation Implementation Strategy and Action Plan highlights, under Recommendation 6-9, that the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (“D/ETE”) will engage with stakeholders on the operation of the Copyright Directive in practice, and seek views on potential for changes to the operation of relevant Irish legislation, that D/ETE will engage with the European Commission with a view to ensuring that the Commission’s review of the Copyright Directive considers issues from D/ETE’s own stakeholder consultation, and that D/ETE will engage with the European Commission to ensure that there is evaluation of the Digital Markets Act in respect of its impact on the digital advertising market.

Television industry stakeholders highlight the need to keep pace with business models evolving toward streaming and digital publishing. RTÉ’s Rory Coveney noted, at a public hearing of 18th January 2023, that its operations in relation to current and future audience

trends and market undermines the licence fee, since the current constitution of the fee does not include services such as the RTÉ Player; RTÉ also noted that, in recent years, the proportion of homes without television devices has risen from around 3% to 16.5%, with significant impact for fees collected from television licences. RTÉ stated its requirement to build a robust digital product portfolio, including RTÉ player, audio streaming, and text-based products, and the associated need for stability of funding in order to establish this digital infrastructure.

Virgin Media Television proposed, at a public oral hearing of 18th January 2023, the creation of a single digital platform to deliver Irish public service media and content, whereby there would be one source and one location to access content, so as to ensure prominence, discovery, and fair and reasonable value. Virgin Media Television's Paul Farrell indicated the operation of the now-defunct SVLTO platform in France, a joint venture between the French national public broadcaster, France Télévisions, and two media holding companies, with a library of programming drawn from each of the three groups.

Journalism, disinformation, and misinformation

The National Union of Journalists (“NUJ”) notes that issues of low pay, precarious employment, and the concentration of ownership, notably in the regional press sector, are factors which shape the media landscape in Ireland. The NUJ observes that the COVID-19 crisis demonstrated the necessity of news media providing accurate information, the audience base for trustworthy content, and the necessity of accountability for government and authorities. The NUJ states that the crisis also exposed the consequences of underinvestment by media organisations in editorial resources and the paucity of action by successive governments to protect public interest journalism.

In setting out its vision for media in Ireland, NUJ iterates its belief that there must be recognition that public interest journalism is a public good which must be protected in a healthy democracy. It calls for targeted measures aimed at supporting jobs and quality journalism, and at bolstering independent, diverse, ethically produced content are needed; it also calls for specific intervention to protect and invest in hyperlocal and community enterprises.

Dr Dawn Wheatley from the Dublin City University Institute for Future Media, Society, and Democracy (“FUJO”) notes that there are several challenges to the success of print media

and journalism, including the shift to the digital world, a decline in demand and in interest for subscription- or membership-based models of accessing news material online, in addition to factors such as news avoidance, whereby there is mistrust or negativity attached to news sources.

FUJO indicates that the role of public service media providers is, in this context, vital, and calls for broader State support to these outlets. It particularly recommends that the funding schemes, as contained in the Future of Media Commission report, and particularly those relating to the Local Democracy Reporting Scheme, News Reporting Scheme, and Court Reporting Scheme, be implemented as soon as is possible. As part of this recommendation, FUJO proposes that free access should be maintained to information and content produced via these schemes. Dr Wheatley added, in a public oral hearing of 24th November 2022, that any journalism funded through State supports should not be paywalled, as per the Future of Media Commission's recommendation that content funded under schemes should be available at the point of consumption and archived.

Furthermore, FUJO proposes that a public service transparency obligation should be imposed on newsrooms that avail of any new public funding schemes; this would require news organisation websites to include details on ownership structures, corrections, policies, an archive of substantial changes to stories and names, and details of staff in editorial roles.

A number of stakeholders, at a public oral hearing of 24th November 2022, discussed threats to journalism. Local Ireland's Bob Hughes highlighted the impact of existing defamation law on journalists, and the NUJ's Séamus Dooley highlighted incidences of physical threat to journalists and photographers, as well as online attacks against journalists, and particularly female journalists. Local Ireland's Frank Mulrennan remarked that the business model in journalism is not successful, that there are challenges in relation to upskilling, and that it is difficult to attract young people to a career in journalism.

In terms of journalism skills, stakeholders outlined that journalists are now required to invest in videography, in website, and become multi-platform providers of news and current affairs content. In addition, the resourcing of journalists is complicated by the fact that covering public interest stories can involve major human and financial resources, the cost of which, as Local Ireland's Linda O'Reilly remarked, must be covered by some entity.

NewsBrands' Sammi Bourke stated that journalists now have to adapt stories for online distribution, to determine potential for contests, to produce videos and interviews, and manage social media channels; Bourke noted, in this regard, that particular businesses could be unsustainable without a paywall and the expectation that content would be paid for by those accessing it.

Local Ireland welcomed training funds for public service journalism and for subsidised internships in this regard, particularly in light of discussions on digital transformation. O'Reilly further observed that there is ongoing investment on the part of news publishers in training journalists, and that a significant number of journalists are leaving the industry, which contributes to a significant skills shortage, with minimal resourcing to fill gaps.

At a public oral hearing of 25th January 2023, Free Media Ireland's Will Ryan stated that journalism does not produce a return as a business model, and that the return produced from advertising or from buying a newspaper is minimal. Ryan also noted that, since supporting journalism is not perceived as a good business decision, it is necessary to ringfence funding or employment for journalism so that it is not a burden for public service content providers.

NYCI raises the issue of young people's employment in the media sector; a 2016 study in Dublin City University, [The Irish Journalist Today](#), found that the age profile of Irish journalists has become younger, with 68% aged between 25 and 44 years, up from 55% in 1997. NYCI notes that changes in the workplace, and blended working, may impact the development of practical skills, and recommends that media outlets, where it is not possible to ensure onsite collaboration, put in place mentorship programmes to support the development of young journalists.

In addition, NYCI challenges the use of unpaid internships in the media sector, citing a [2023 paper](#) by the European Youth Forum, which found that young people from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds were between four (4) and eight (8) times less likely to report being able to take on unpaid internships than other cohorts. NYCI emphasises that the media sector must take steps to ensure careers are accessible and sustainable, and recommends:

- An end to unpaid internships in the sector;

- That the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Higher Education Authority work with public service media and public service content providers to establish platform-neutral paid apprenticeship programmes in the sector;
- That Coimisiún na Meán identify funding opportunities to support media outlets in providing paid graduate trainee roles for young people from minoritised and disadvantaged backgrounds.

The NUJ's Ian McGuinness stated, in a public oral hearing of 24th November 2022, that issues relating to journalism were not limited to recruitment, but also to safeguarding journalists, and particularly young journalists, ethnic minorities, women, and LGBTQIA+ communities, as well as ensuring that there is appropriate pay that allows for the employment of journalists from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, and safeguarding employment for those who work in journalism on a freelance basis.

The Future of Media Commission Recommendation Implementation Strategy and Action Plan highlights a number of actions under Recommendations 6-2 to 6-6, covering a variety of journalism funding schemes, as well as the establishment of a media access and training scheme, as part of work in developing career pathways in the media sector.

Access and inclusion

Age Action encourages media organisations to recognise their role in influencing ageist attitudes and their responsibility in reframing how consumers think, feel, and act toward ageing and older people.

Age Action cites the World Health Organisation's [Global Report on Ageism](#) to outline that there is strong evidence of ageism in media; audiences can learn and internalise ageist values and stereotypes through the media, and the media can serve to continuously reinforce ageism. Age Action states that the media could instead be utilised to counteract ageism by providing evidence and developing narratives that reflect the diversity of older persons, including unequal experiences of older age; Age Action remarks that this should be characteristic of public service media.

Age Action recommends the inclusion of measures to prohibit ageism in editorial guidelines, which was also a recommendation it made in its [2022 State of Ageing report](#), in order to help media outlets avoid stereotypical and prejudicial portrayals of ageing and older people.

Age Action names digital exclusion and cost as two barriers that older people may face in accessing public service content. According to Age Action, digitalisation is significant as an exclusionary force against older people, as many over 65 do not or cannot use the Internet (safely); Age Action estimates that this could be as many as 65% or more of persons aged 65 or over. Age Action recommends the maintenance of high-quality content on non-digital platforms.

Age Action notes its concern that public service content could be beyond the reach of those who rely on social welfare, such as many older persons, if there is not explicit action to ensure that content is accessible to them; consequently, Age Action recommends the maintenance of the free TV licence to those over 70.

Age Action outlines the importance of community and regional media, and the importance of this type of media being available, accessible, and affordable; it highlights that, during the pandemic, the reduction of output or closure of local media meant that many older people no longer had access to favoured sources of information. Age Action therefore recommends the provision of adequate funding to community and regional media.

Age Action also discusses media literacy, including the ability to identify misinformation and accurately interpret facts. Age Action states that, as older persons tend to have significantly lower levels of formal education than other age cohorts, and, in combination with a lack of basic digital skills, older persons may be more susceptible to dis- and misinformation, particularly on online platforms. Age Action recommends the tailoring of media literacy initiatives to the needs of older people.

Age Action states that older persons should be involved in media production if media content is to accurately reflect the nation's population. Age Action also notes that, as people are now remaining in work for longer, it is increasingly necessary for workplaces to be cognisant of the needs of older persons. Consequently, Age Action recommends that age should be strengthened as a pillar of equality, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace, and that mandatory retirement clauses should be removed from employment contracts.

In February 2022, the Independent Living Movement of Ireland (“ILMI”) launched its policy position on the representation of disabled people’s lives in the media, entitled [Our Lives, Our Voices: Reclaiming the Narrative](#). From its consultation with disabled people, ILMI identified a significant theme of narrativisation of disabled people in Irish media as having “tragic” impairments, or stories of disabled people “overcoming their impairments”. The policy position appealed for commitment from media companies, policymakers, and trade unions to co-create pathways to inclusion with disabled people and to harness the talents and skills of disabled people within the media sector.

ILMI reiterates the statement of the global Disability Rights Movement of “nothing about us without us”; media in Ireland should, according to ILMI, reflect the diversity of the island in how media is created, presented, and written. ILMI notes that the discussion on shaping how disability is represented in the Irish media should be led by disabled people.

ILMI highlights the importance of shifting representation away from the “medical”, “care”, or “charity” narrative of disabled people, away from offensive language or patronising stories, and focus on ensuring disabled people are active in creating and in participating in media as journalists, artists, actors, presenters, and producers.

ILMI notes that there is intersection between disability and other issues, that this intersectionality is important as it is relatively unexplored in Irish media due to the regular framing of disability as a medical or care issue. ILMI calls for relevant parties to ensure that the full and active participation of Travellers, minority ethnic groups, LGBTQIA+ people, asylum seekers, lone parents, and people who experience marginalisation due to socioeconomic status.

The Irish Traveller Movement (“ITM”) states that Travellers have almost no control or decision-making power over what is articulated about Traveller life and culture in the media, with some few exceptions; ITM also notes that Traveller identity as creators and participants in media organisations is largely invisible, and, as media consumers, Travellers are statistically insignificant. The lack of representation in content or in decision-making roles is said by ITM to further reinforce the “othering” of Travellers.

ITM highlights that there is particular negative reinforcement of harmful stereotyping and discourse against Traveller communities due to a lack of editorial and production oversight,

and that there can be disproportionate content that unduly associates Travellers with certain negative behaviours. ITM observes that this issue is compounded by a lack of safeguarding for vulnerable groups in broadcasting content, and that transparency of production processes, governance procedures, and research/editorial standards relating to the selection of interviewees for news and current affairs programmes. ITM also points to a lack of explicit protections for Travellers in national online safety measures.

ITM notes that better diversity targets should be planned and monitored in respect of Travellers, and that diversity targets and principles should be grounded within programme standards, including a requirement for outsourced services and commissions to comply with such standards, with implications for funding if there is non-compliance.

ITM outlines the importance of internship programmes to develop the pipeline of talent from underrepresented groups, and calls for dedicated and consistent engagement with respect to staffing in public service media that is resourced beyond a singular “diversity officer”-type post. ITM also calls for the establishment of apprenticeship programmes with entry points that do not set barriers against underrepresented groups—it remarks that ensuring employment opportunities are broad for all is key, and should include management, production, and journalistic levels within the media sector.

ITM recommends the following:

- That all policy developed in the media sector explicitly name and include safeguards for Travellers;
- That accountability processes are enhanced, including monitoring and reporting of EDI goals in public service media that are underpinned by data collection, including data on ethnicity;
- That a review of programme standards be conducted;
- That diversity-proofing of outputs is ensured;
- That media funding applications be amended to embed identity and ethnicity data collection, including data on the roles of director, producers, and writers;
- That Travellers be consulted and engaged in relation to the development of media policies;
- That expanded diversity targets be made obligatory to the public service media sector; and

- That intercultural and anti-racism training be made compulsory for all relevant parties in public service media.

The National Youth Council of Ireland (“NYCI”) notes that women are underrepresented in media in Ireland, and are also lower-paid and less represented among senior positions within the sector. It states that there is limited data currently available across the sector that makes it challenging to monitor and evaluate progress toward greater representation in the industry. It recommends:

- That Coimisiún na Meán develop best practice guidelines on ensuring increased female participation and representation in the media;
- That public service media and public service content providers develop adequate career pathways and practical supports to ensure that women progress into editorial and senior management roles;
- As part of broader EDI commitments, that public service media and public service content providers introduce gender sensitivity training; and
- That Government examine gender quotas for senior editorial, management, and Board roles within the sector.

NYCI also recommends, in relation to the inclusion of young people from minoritised and disadvantaged groups in the media:

- That the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, the Higher Education Authority, and higher and further education institutions review diversity among media/journalism faculties and make recommendations to improve EDI;
- That the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media work with public service media and public service content providers to support the establishment of access programmes for a wide array of people;
- That Coimisiún na Meán progress Future of Media Commission recommendations that boards of larger public service media and public service content provider organisations have a diversity lead at senior management and at least one representative from a minoritised community on their board;
- That public service media and public service content providers provide EDI training for all staff; and

- That Coimisiún na Meán collaborate with public service media and public service content providers to establish a national database to understand gender and diversity in the media and media sector.

NYCI makes a number of other recommendations in relation to youth representation in the media:

- That the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and Coimisiún na Meán fund a study of representation of young people in Irish media, to identify themes and examine negative portrayals;
- That Coimisiún na Meán work to ensure that young people are included on diversity boards and youth panels established by media outlets;
- The extension of the Future of Media Commission recommendation that public service media should ensure that writers and producers have received adequate training in how to engage with diversity content and youth content;
- That Coimisiún na Meán engage with youth representative organisations and young people in the development of guidelines in relation to reporting on or developing storylines relating to young people; and
- That public service media and public service content providers collect data on representation of young people across their content and make recommendations to ensure more young voices are heard.

The Future of Media Commission Recommendation Implementation Strategy and Action Plan highlights a number of actions across Recommendations 2-3 to 2-7, including the establishment of a strategic research unit for equality, diversity, and inclusion data, the development of EDI standards, an examination of the feasibility of establishing diversity boards across the sector, the development of guidelines in relation to reporting on or developing storylines with minorities, the development of career pathways in the media sector, and the consideration of establishing an advisory committee within Coimisiún na Meán composed of persons with disabilities and disability representative groups.

An Ghaeilge

Conradh na Gaeilge (“CnaG”) states its belief that the Irish language should feature prominently and meaningfully in Irish public service media. CnaG outlines that there are in the region of 300 television stations that are available in Ireland for those who wish to

engage with English-language programming, in addition to the availability of on-demand services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime. It notes, however, that, for Irish-speaking audiences, there is recourse only to TG4 and some content on RTÉ.

Furthermore, CnaG highlights that, out of over 70 radio stations operating in the State, there are only 3 stations broadcasting in the Irish language, of which one is primarily aimed at the Gaeltacht community. CnaG notes that, while there is some Irish-language programming on other stations, this often is scheduled for airing at “unsocial hours”. CnaG also notes that there are two Irish-only newspaper outlets, which themselves are available only on digital platforms, and only four Irish-only magazines.

CnaG states that, if the aims of the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language and the Official Languages Act are to be realised, the State will need to develop a long-term media strategy to ensure that media outlets will be central to the normalisation of the Irish language.

CnaG makes several recommendations as to the resourcing of the Irish language in media outlets:

- That TG4’s funding should be increased in line with the Welsh channel S4C;
- That RTÉ should double its current proportion of funding allocated for Irish language services;
- An increase in funding for Irish-language radio stations;
- An increase in funding to Foras na Gaeilge to better support the news and current affairs outlets it currently funds, including tuairisc.ie, nos.ie, and Raidió na Life;
- That a better focus should be brought to Irish-language journalism in future current affairs funding schemes introduced by Coimisiún na Meán;
- That contracts with Coimisiún na Meán should include an obligation for media outlets to carry Irish language programming during “social hours”;
- The rapid completion of the Irish-language review in Irish public service media, as falls under Recommendation 7-2 of the Future of Media Commission’s final report;
- That major events of public interest such as the Olympic Games be broadcast on a free-to-air basis across platforms, including commentary in the Irish language;
- A certain level of mandatory inclusion of Irish-language participants in entertainment programmes on channels, such as RTÉ’s First Dates or Dancing With The Stars.

CnaG's Julian de Spáinn, in a public oral hearing of 15th February 2023, outlined that, in terms of funding, a lack of same prevents the potential for normalisation of the Irish language that media can achieve for young people, in the Gaeltacht or externally to it. CnaG remarked that, when discussions around broadcasting of major events are held, such as those around the World Cup or the Olympic Games, this will inevitably be conducted through English on channels such as RTÉ or Virgin Media Television, as TG4 lacks the necessary budget; CnaG also stated that, if RTÉ broadcasts such events, it will not occur in Irish as well as English.

TG4 notes that Irish, as a minoritised language, is subject to “language shift”, whereby a linguistic community may abandon their original vernacular language in favour of another—which, in the case of Ireland, would most likely be English. TG4 thus calls for a supportive framework and opportunities for Irish to be passed on in a natural way within households and communities. TG4 outlines that Irish-language media is a core element in the combat against language shift and the maintenance of linguistic diversity; in addition, it observes that digital corpus-building, language-based arts, Irish-language education and Irish-medium education are important in this domain.

TG4 states that a major impact of audiovisual media on minority languages around the world is a positive change in that language's status, as well as the mainstreaming of bilingualism with those people that speak the majority language. TG4 therefore calls for the swift realisation of the Commission's recommendation 7-2, that “the BAI/CnaM should undertake a comprehensive review of the provision of Irish language services and content across the media system, with a focus on institutional structures and opportunities for innovation and collaboration. This review, to be concluded within 18 months, should include recommendations for improving the provision of Irish language services”.

The Future of Media Commission Recommendation Implementation Strategy and Action Plan highlights a number of actions under Recommendations 7-1 to 7-4, including the consideration of financial and operational implications of editorial control for TG4 over its news services, the conducting of a comprehensive review of the provision of Irish-language services by Q3 2024, the clarification of responsibilities and other matters for the senior executive with responsibility for the Irish language within RTÉ, and an assessment of the

feasibility of increasing the 25% of Sound and Vision funding currently allocated to Irish-language content.

Culture, the creative economy, and sport

The National Campaign for the Arts (“NCFA”) emphasises three key areas in order to develop and strengthen the relationship between public service media and the arts in Ireland:

- Increased coverage of the arts and culture across all media;
- Increased commissioning and presentation of Irish arts and culture by media;
- Increased collaboration between the arts and cultural sector and the media sector.

In addition, the NCFA recommends that the arts should be given parity with sport in terms of coverage across all media outlets. The NCFA also outlines relevant areas of its 10-point pre-budget campaign that are relevant to future business model plans and long-term vision in the media sector:

- Investment in the arts: The NCFA states that independent producers should be supported to realise their creative and commercial ambitions. The NCFA also outlines that further investment in the independent audiovisual sector would be welcome, alongside fairer terms on usage contracts for existing work with broadcasting outlets and a wider focus on newer forms of media.
- Opportunities for access to global audiences: The NCFA calls for opportunities for further showcasing of Irish creative talent abroad, similarly to the supports offered by the Culture Ireland programme.
- Removal of barriers for disabled arts workers: The NCFA recommends that any future policy for Irish media ensures fair and equitable access to artistic careers and work for all.
- Funding for research in the arts.

The NCFA’s Maria Fleming, in a public oral hearing of 15th February 2023, also outlined the lack of artist space across Ireland, as well as the imposition on many artists to work on a regional basis due to the unaffordability of urban centres such as Cork, Galway, and Dublin; Fleming called for Government to consider the issue of studio space and production space for artists, visual artists, designers, and set-makers, to consider temporary use and

meanwhile use of spaces for the arts, and to consider the incorporation of artist space in new developments or area reassessments.

The Irish Music Rights Organisation (“IMRO”) outlines that the indigenous media sector is vital to its membership base, with broadcasting as one of the leading outlets for songwriters, musicians, performers, and other creatives. Its recommendations insofar as Ireland’s media sector is concerned, interfacing with culture and the creative economy, relate primarily to:

- Increased use of Irish music in broadcasting and online media outlets: IMRO supports the introduction of a content levy payable by large online platforms, from which part of the funding generated would be ringfenced for Irish television, film, and music production to allow these indigenous sectors to compete fairly on a global scale;
- “Ireland Media Player”: IMRO suggests that a coordinated and collective response to audience media consumption via non-linear and digital channels is required, such as a “Global Irish Media Player”, whereby Irish creatives can collaborate with the Government to deliver a digital portal of Irish audio and audiovisual productions; and
- Introduction of a National Music Strategy: IMRO states that a National Music Strategy could serve to maximise exports of Irish music, and could feature an extension of the Section 481 film tax to include new Irish music creation.

As the Joint Creative Audiovisual Sectoral Group (“JCAVSG”) was formed to advocate specifically on the topic of the European Union’s Audiovisual Media Services Directive content levy, it primarily discusses the content levy that will be introduced as part of the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022, as well as the commitment within the Future of Media Commission Recommendation Implementation Strategy and Action Plan, under Recommendation 7-6, to progress the introduction of such a levy.

The JCAVSG’s James Hickey stated, in a public oral hearing of 15th February 2023, that the content levy would support indigenous production, particularly in the area of high-end value, such as TV drama and animation, while also supporting Irish creative talent. Mr Hickey further remarked that, if a levy is paid to a funding agency, that agency should ensure that its funded projects are those that support Irish creative talent, and that it is only with additional funding arising from such an initiative as the content levy that television

drama and animation can be created, given increasing costs of production and increasing inflation rates.

Mr Hickey also observed that a significant factor in the discussion of the future of media is Irish policy regarding the cultural and creative industries, and that there was a need to examine the creative economy in terms of its representation for Irish GDP; for its scale of economic impact, Mr Hickey noted that policies should be developed to encourage cultural- and creative-based economic activity.

Sport Ireland notes that, as a statutory agency, it is a natural partner to national broadcasters, and shares public service values. It states that live sporting events consistently rank among the most-watched events in Ireland, and it therefore recognises the relationship between sporting bodies and media organisations in generating revenue, developing local talent, and promoting the cultural significance of sport in Ireland.

Sport Ireland highlights its submission to the Future of Media Commission, in which it recommended:

- The exploration of innovative solutions between media outlets and rightsholders (sporting bodies);
- The protection of events of cultural significance through the free-to-air broadcast list; and
- The diversification of sporting event coverage, and an increase in visibility for women's sports.

The Future of Media Commission Recommendation Implementation Strategy and Action Plan highlights, under Recommendations 7-9, 7-10, and 7-11, plans to develop a strategic plan for sports broadcasting and promotion, a diversity and inclusion strategy for sports reporting and broadcasting, and consultation with relevant sporting stakeholders in relation to a proposed media access and training scheme. These plans, according to the Strategy and Action Plan, will build on work previously initiated by Sport Ireland in respect of sport punditry specifically for women, *inter alia*.

Further stakeholder contributions on the future of public service media arising from reports of RTÉ governance failings

Background

On 22nd June 2023 the RTÉ Board issued a [statement](#) disclosing the results of an independent fact-finding review commissioned by its Audit and Risk Committee, on foot of an issue relating to the transparency of certain payments identified in a routine audit of RTÉ's 2022 accounts. The Board's statement outlined that two unreported payments of €75,000, totalling €150,000 were made to presenter Ryan Tubridy via a barter account. The background to these payments was that RTÉ agreed to guarantee and underwrite additional payments to Mr Tubridy linked to personal appearances for a commercial partner. The fact-finding review identified that Mr Tubridy's remuneration was understated by a figure of €120,000 over the contract period 2017-2019.

Upon publication of the Board's statement, the Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media issued a [statement](#) expressing its concern into the matters disclosed and its solidarity with the staff of RTÉ. The Committee called on the Director General and Executive Board of RTÉ to publicly outline the extent and severity of the issues involved, and the remedial actions it has taken and will take in order to restore transparency and accountability. Subsequently, the Committee held a number of meetings with stakeholders including management and board members of RTÉ, Ryan Tubridy and his agent Noel Kelly, the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Catherine Martin, T.D. and trade unions representing RTÉ staff. There were a number of individuals who were invited to meet with the Committee but who were unable or declined to attend. Former RTÉ Director General, Dee Forbes, and RTÉ Director of Content, Jim Jennings, were invited to attend before the Joint Committee but regrettably were unable to attend any meeting. The Committee remains open to engagement with both individuals.

The Committee also engaged on this issue with Coimisiún na Meán in the context of the Coimisiún's 2023 Work Programme. These meetings, in addition to probing the the governance practices of RTÉ, examined the RTÉ's five-year strategy presented in November 2023, [A New Direction for RTÉ](#), and the impacts of the revelations on the broader debate on the future of public-service media.

The Committee's examination of RTÉ took place in tandem to other examinations into RTÉ, notably on the part of:

- the Committee on Public Accounts,
- Grant Thornton and McCann Fitzgerald as commissioned by RTÉ,
- NewERA review into RTÉ interim funding needs, and
- [Two Expert Advisory Group led reviews and Mazars review](#) commissioned by the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.

The Expert Advisory Committee reviews examined governance and culture, and Contractor Fees, Human Resources and Other Matters, while the Mazars review examined barter account transactions. They collectively make 116 recommendations. In a [statement](#) accompanying the publication of the reviews, Minister Martin outlined that the Government has accepted in principle all 116 recommendations. RTÉ will be required to prepare an implementation plan within six weeks setting out the actions and associated timelines that RTÉ will take. The implementation plan will be overseen by a monitoring group composed of the Minister's Department and representatives of NewERA.

The Minister further outlined that on foot of commitment on the part of the RTÉ Director General to accept the recommendations, the Minister will release the first tranche of €40 million in additional exchequer resources allocated to RTÉ. The Minister also indicated that, pending RTÉ's implementation plan, a Government decision on the funding model for public service media will be made before the Summer recess.

Expert Advisory Committee Review on Governance and Culture

The Review of Governance and Culture was prepared by an Expert Advisory Committee comprised of Professor Niamh Brennan (Chair), Mr Margaret Cullen and Stephen Smith. Under its terms of reference, it was required to examine whether RTÉ's corporate governance framework complied with the Code of Practice for the Governance State Bodies and relevant legislation, and included a robust system of internal governance. It was also required to assess RTÉ's cultural characteristics and ways of doing business, and make recommendations on all of the above matters.

Headline findings

The review outlines that the proximate causes of the issues that have arisen in RTÉ has been the failure of members of the former Executive Board to inform RTÉ's Board and to provide information to colleagues and to each other. While the review outlines that the Board responded promptly and appropriately upon external auditors raising concerns, that weaknesses in RTÉ's governance framework directly contributed to the failure to detect and prevent the issues that have emerged.

The review outlines a number of principal deficiencies in the oversight arrangements for RTÉ, namely complex external oversight arrangements, skills gaps not addressed in the Board member recruitment process, the Board's ability to scrutinise being impeded by inappropriate and informal management practices, limited scrutiny of remuneration, and decisions being made outside of the Executive Board forum. The review further outlines several ineffective elements of RTÉ's risk management and assurance, labelling RTÉ's risk management as "immature, under-resourced, hardly considered at all by the Board and former Executive Board." Cultural characteristics identified in the review as having contributed to the issues included information siloes, a lack of trust and perceived threat of leaks, informal processes, a lack of accountability, lack of speaking up and good-faith reporting, a limited appetite to learn, and an immature risk culture.

Headline recommendations

The review makes 90 recommendations, addressing themes such as RTÉ's external governance architecture, the conduct of the RTÉ Board, Board Skills, the conduct of the interim leadership team, governance of executive and presenter remuneration, the audit and risk committee, risk management, assurance and three-lines-of-defence, and culture.

A number of recommendations are relevant to the topic of future business model plans and long-term vision for the media sector. Such recommendations include those outlining that:

- The Minister and the Department should address RTÉ's funding model, so that RTÉ has a more sustainable funding model;
- The Minister and the Department should review the legislation and external governance architecture by which RTÉ is supervised to determine whether it is appropriate in effectively overseeing RTÉ's activities;
- The Minister and the Department should amend the Broadcasting Act to appoint the Comptroller and Auditor General to examine and report on RTÉ's group annual

financial statements. This will help to ensure that RTÉ meets the legitimate public, and by extension their elected representatives in the Oireachtas, expectation on regularity, propriety, value for money, commitment to transparency and the external auditor's independence; and

- RTÉ's status as either a commercial or a non-commercial body needs clarification.

Commentary and recommendations on role of Joint Committee

The review offers commentary on the role of the Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media, particularly in relation to Board appointments. The review questions the efficacy of the Joint Committee's role in RTÉ Board appointments, noting that the Board carried four vacancies for a period of almost a year in 2020 while the Committee was lapsed during the period of dissolution and Government formation, and that requests for corporate governance and financial expertise on RTÉ's Board were not adequately considered. The review states that:

“the process of nominating RTÉ Board members on the advice of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media made RTÉ's Board vulnerable by depriving it of the expertise and Board member complement necessary for it to do its work.”

The review recommends that the Chair of RTÉ should inform the Minister and the Joint Committee on identified Board skills gaps. The review further recommends that the Joint Committee should in turn consider the skills mix required of RTÉ's Board when appointing or nominating Board members, should highlight these specific skills sought in its recruitment advertisements, and should seek to appoint a critical mass of Board members with Board-level experience in organisations of an equivalent size and complexity as RTÉ.

The Committee notes, having been formally informed by Minister Catherine Martin T.D. of the RTÉ Board vacancies, on 6th November 2020, that it proceeded to advertise the vacancies to be considered by the Committee² on stateboards.ie on 26th November 2020, listing as a priority for the role, experience in business and commercial affairs and legal or regulatory affairs, and noting the following criteria were also deemed desirable;

- Knowledge of the new digital audio-visual environment.

² Pursuant to Section 81 (1)(b) of the Broadcasting Act 2009

- An appreciation of the increased diversity in the Irish Social and Cultural landscape.
- Corporate finance/restructuring skills.
- HR expertise and/or change management experience (ideally semi-state or within a media outlet).
- Experience of digital innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Finance expertise.
- High level board experience – both executive and non-executive – in the commercial space.

Review of Contractor Fees, Human Resources and Other Matters

The review of Contractor Fees, Human Resources and Other Matters was prepared by an Expert Advisory Committee consisting of Brendan McGinty (Chair), Patricia King and Liam Kelly. Under its terms of reference, it was required to examine the oversight and mechanisms by which RTÉ engages contractors and presenters, the use of short-term employment contracts and employment terms and conditions in RTÉ and make recommendations on any reforms required.

The review consists of three modules:

- Module A: Oversight and Mechanisms by Which RTÉ Engages Presenters and Contractors, Including Fees, the Use of Agents, the Impact on Costs Borne by RTÉ and the Governance of Same;
- Module B: Use of Short-term Employment Contracts in RTÉ; and
- Module C: Employment Terms and Conditions with Particular Emphasis on Gender Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion; and Whether Any of the Existing Recruitment and HR Practices Have an Impact on Equality and Opportunity.

Headline recommendations

The review makes 26 recommendations across its three modules. Some of the key themes of the recommendations include:

- Reform of the process of remunerating and appointing presenters and addressing the role of agents;
- Ensuring severance schemes and exit schemes are fair and equitable;
- Clarifying the RTÉ salary cap and improving higher pay transparency;

- Addressing the role of contractors and employees on short-term contracts, and employment classification of workers;
- A renewal of RTÉ's industrial relations and the quality of working relationships;
- Ensuring the ongoing reviews of roles, grades and allowances are effective and transparent and include consultation with employees;
- Encouraging new HR practices to improve learning and development, gender, equality, diversity and inclusion, employee voice, management accountability, and the role of the HR function; and
- Addressing the legacy of organisational silos.

Commentary on independent commissioning

The review offers commentary on the issue of independent commissioning which is of relevance to the topic of future business model plans and long-term vision for the media sector. The review notes that, at present, outside of its Independent Production Unit (IPU), commissioning and internal procedures within which contracting of on-air presenters takes place, RTÉ does not have in place formal arrangements for the ongoing governance of independent contractors, including independent production companies in respect of employment standards. It recommends that RTÉ should require that all counterparties with which it does business, including independent production companies, to comply with all relevant employment laws.

Restoring trust in RTÉ

Retrospective engagement

While this report is not a forensic examination of RTÉ's historic governance practices, the full and frank cooperation of RTÉ with Oireachtas examination into these matters is an essential prerequisite to the restoring of public trust, and the Committee has engaged extensively with RTÉ and related stakeholders in relation to governance practices at the organisation (see [appendix 1](#) for full details). The Committee also notes the detailed engagement between RTÉ and the Committee on Public Accounts, and subsequent report by that Committee. The Committee further notes other examinations into RTÉ's governance practices including those on the part of Grant Thornton and McCann Fitzgerald as commissioned by RTÉ, the Department of Social Protection Scope investigation, and the NewERA and the Expert Advisory Group led reviews commissioned by the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.

During its engagements with RTÉ and related stakeholders, the Committee probed RTÉ's practices and its response to the findings. On foot of the Committee's examinations, RTÉ provided further information on issues such as usage of the barter account, wider practices regarding remuneration and employment, internal changes put in place by RTÉ on foot of the disclosures, interim funding needs including those associated with non-payment of licence fees, and RTÉ's plans for cost reductions.

On 14th February 2024 the Committee engaged with RTÉ following the publication of the McCann Fitzgerald report into RTÉ voluntary exit packages and the Grant Thornton report into *Toy Show the Musical*. The Committee heard that RTÉ Board approval was not sought for *Toy Show, the Musical* and the commercial risks associated with the project were grossly underestimated. The Committee further heard that a voluntary exit package worth €450,000 was inappropriately awarded to a former Chief Financial Officer. RTÉ Director General Kevin Bakhurst outlined to the Committee that these incidents were “completely unacceptable” and that new processes are now in place. The Committee further engaged on 27th February with the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media following the resignation of Chairperson Siún Ní Raghallaigh, where Minister Martin emphasised the importance of the line Minister being able to rely on accurate information from a State Board Chairperson in the midst of a crisis.

In evidence to the Committee, then-RTÉ Chairperson Siún Ní Raghallaigh outlined that engagement with these examinations are “key elements in rigorously addressing the issues of the past and rebuilding our bond of trust with this committee, with the staff in RTÉ and the public.” Coimisiún na Meán Executive Chairperson Jeremy Godfrey further outlined to the Committee in an engagement on the Coimisiún's 2023 work programme outlined that “trusted public service broadcasting requires a trusted public service broadcaster”, and welcomed the efforts of the Committee, the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, and the RTÉ Board and Director General in restoring trust.

Forward looking engagement

More relevant for the recommendations of this report is the engagement this Committee has had with RTÉ and other stakeholders regarding the implications of the reported governance failings on the broader question of the future of public service media. As outlined by Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media Catherine Martin,

“although trust has been undermined, in many people's minds here the value of public service broadcasting has only been strengthened.”

RTÉ representatives, including then Board Chairperson Siún Ní Raghallaigh and Director General Kevin Bakhurst, provided evidence to the Committee regarding the need for RTÉ to restructure and achieve cost savings that are likely to be unpopular, noting interim measures such as a recruitment freeze, continuing use of out-of-date radio studios, and a freeze in investment into the RTÉ player. Mr Bakhurst outlined the difficult choices RTÉ may have to make in order to achieve cost savings, citing coverage of outside events including party conferences, selling parts of the RTÉ campus in Montrose, presenters' salaries, and staff redundancies. Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media Catherine Martin outlined to the Committee that RTÉ's interim funding requirements have been interrogated by NewERA. The Minister further outlined that funding will be dependent on RTÉ adopting a strategy with evidence of “a serious commitment to reducing costs and achieving value for money” and on “a vision for RTÉ's future in light of all that has happened and in the context of the competitive and changing media landscape in which it operates.” NUJ, in contrast, noted that “none of the governance failings or disgraceful excesses at RTÉ exposed since the Summer had anything to do with the size of RTÉ.”

RTÉ representatives outlined that the drop-off in licence fee payments was projected to reach €21 million by the end of 2023. This, as outlined by representatives of RTÉ, only accelerated the need for longer-term reform of the licence fee system, described by then-Board Chairperson Siún Ní Raghallaigh as “a legacy of a different era; obsolete, redundant and antiquated.” Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media Catherine Martin outlined to the Committee that the Technical Working Group had completed its work regarding examination of reform options, but that consideration of the matter was paused. The Minister further outlined that the Technical Working Group was established “with a different backdrop and at a different time” and that “all options should be on the table now”. Coimisiún na Meán Executive Chairperson Jeremy Godfrey outlined that while the Coimisiún would need additional resources to act as an administrative body for funding of public service broadcasting, that it “would be up for whatever job we are given”. Trade unions representing RTÉ staff called for an appropriately resourced public service broadcaster, such as Connect which outlined that “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.” Other trade union representatives cited understaffing and underinvestment in studio facilities, buildings, cars and office equipment as hindering the work of journalists in RTÉ.

In addition to the drop-off in licence fee payments, further pressures on RTÉ’s funding position arise from its potential liabilities associated with the Department of Social Protection scope investigation into the misclassification of workers as self employed. RTÉ Director of Human Resources Eimear Cusack outlined to the Committee that RTÉ has adopted the principle of employment first and that it is engaging and cooperating fully with DSP in relation to PRSI classifications. RTÉ Director General Kevin Bakhurst stated that RTÉ is holding a contingency of €15 million in relation to PRSI misclassification. Brian Nolan of Connect Trade Union outlined to the Committee that PRSI misclassification costs the state €1 billion annually, and therefore that the proliferation of self employment in the media sector does not deliver value for money to the taxpayer.

The Committee heard evidence regarding the future of RTÉ’s relationship with the wider media ecosystem and creative economy. Director General Kevin Bakhurst outlined his ambition that RTÉ increase its investment into the independent production sector and that a part of RTÉ’s core role is to be part of a successful creative economy, while Minister Martin outlined that RTÉ’s commitment to independent production is protected in legislation and that the types of reform the Minister wishes to see includes a focus on independent productions. Trade unions representing RTÉ staff, in contrast, raised concerns with proposals to reduce RTÉ’s size in favour of greater independent commissions, stating that full-time jobs may be replaced by precarious short-term contracts.

In relation to other forms of public service media supported by the Licence Fee, Minister Martin outlined to the Committee that the €30 million media fund recommend by the Future of Media Commission to replace the Sound and Vision Scheme will be retained “whatever the funding model is” for public service media. Further supports to the independent production sector include a content production levy on streaming services, and Media Development Commissioner Rónán Ó Domhnaill outlined to the Committee that work is commencing on research to identify how such a levy may work in practice. SIPTU noted the

importance of the RTÉ Concert Orchestra to the arts, music and education ecosystem in Ireland, and cited concerns of SIPTU members regarding its future.

The Committee's discussions included the future of RTÉ's dual income model. Minister Martin outlined to the Committee that any changes to this model may be informed by the findings of the Department's Expert Advisory Group and should account for the changing advertising landscape particularly with regard to the impact of online platforms on advertising revenue available to RTÉ.

Other stakeholder contributions

In light of the Committee's extensive further engagement with RTÉ, it determined that stakeholders who had previously engaged with the Committee regarding themes of public service broadcasting be afforded an opportunity to make a supplementary submission to this report. These supplementary submissions addressed a broad range of themes as outlined below.

Public service objects

Coimisiún na Meán supports the Future of Media Commission recommendations that the public service objectives of RTÉ and TG4 should be made platform-neutral and detailed prescriptions should be delegated to the regulator with flexibility to allow for updates in light of emerging technologies and changes to the media landscape. Coimisiún na Meán also cites certain public service provisions that are outdated or unrealistic, such as requirements to maintain a teletext service and for a TG4 choir. Coimisiún na Meán also outlines a lack of cohesion between the public service requirements of different media organisations, noting an unfulfilled potential for cooperation between RTÉ and TG4, and the potential for negative impacts on local media organisations caused by the requirement for RTÉ and TG4 to establish community, local or regional services.

A number of stakeholders note that the public service broadcast space should be defined on a broad basis with acknowledgement of the role of broadcasters other than RTÉ. Virgin Media calls for a level playing field between for producers of public service content, and for an open and contestable model of funding so that all indigenous media can understand the key criteria. TG4 calls for a better funding balance in Ireland's public service media ecosystem, noting that it receives less than half the funding of S4C in Wales. It further calls for stronger autonomy for TG4 in news provision, arguing that core TG4 news editorial and

journalistic staff must report to the TG4 Director General as TG4 Editor-in-Chief. Independent Broadcasters Ireland note that 27% of its content can be described as public service content, while the Community Television Association and CRAOL note the importance of community media in the broader media landscape.

Content Levy and Broadcasting Levy

The Joint Creative Audiovisual Sector Group expresses support for the introduction and application of a content levy on media service providers in order to fund European and national works under the Audiovisual Media Services Directive 2018. Its submission notes that such a levy would exist in the same ecosystem as funding for public service media and expressed its support for long term and sustainable funding for public service media in Ireland.

The Independent Broadcasters of Ireland outlines its view that the current broadcasting levy is unfair, noting that large online platforms do not pay towards their regulation in the same way as radio and that print media has seen a zero VAT rate, and calls for the levy to be suspended.

An Ghaeilge

Conradh na Gaeilge's submission outlines that recent events at RTÉ should not lead to a reduction on the quantity or quality of Irish language broadcasting, and instead argues for an expansion in Irish language broadcasting on the part of RTÉ, and specifically notes concerns regarding the impact of the current recruitment freeze on Irish language programming and calls for a fair salary for RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta staff as part of any new model.

It calls for a number of specific means for additional public service Irish language broadcast content, such as Irish speaking participants to be featured on entertainment programmes such as First Dates or Dancing with the Stars, an FM licence to be granted to Raidió Rí-Rá, for Coimisiún na Meán awarded contracts to stipulate no less than 5% of programming through Irish at social hours, for important sporting events to be broadcast in both official languages and for training programmes for Irish speaking broadcasters.

TG4 calls for the Committee to use their oversight of Coimisiún na Meán to ensure that the comprehensive review of Irish language services called for by the Future of Media Commission to be undertaken in an ambitious manner and underpin a transformation rather

than modification of Irish language media in the State. Conradh na Gaeilge calls for the comprehensive review to be initiated without delay, and notes that other initiatives to develop Irish language media should proceed rather than be deferred pending the outcomes of the comprehensive review.

Long-term funding model of public service broadcasting

A number of submissions comment on the fall-off in licence fee payments and call for a new model based on taxation rather than licence fees, in order to ensure sustainable long-term funding for public service broadcasters. CRAOL notes the experience of the Finnish model, which raises €500 million annual revenue for its national broadcaster which consequently has no need for commercial revenue. Independent Broadcasters Ireland outlines that any new charge should take account of ability to pay, while IMRO sets out that the exchequer contribution should be index linked and underpinned by robust legislation. NUJ outlines its support for exchequer funding at arm's length from the Government and notes that the provisions of the European Media Freedom Act will protect editorial independence.

Coimisiún na Meán expresses significant concern about the sustainability of public service media and urges reform of the current funding model and statutory framework, in such a way to ensure alignment between public service media organisations' public service objectives, medium-term strategies, medium-term funding settlements, performance commitments, and accountability for delivery of performance commitments and financial stewardship. Coimisiún na Meán further expresses its support for the Future of Media Commission recommendations for a stronger role for the media regulator in determining the funding level for public service media and in holding their financial management to account. It considers that multiannual funding reviews are crucial to ensuring viable and sustainable public service media and calls for Coimisiún na Meán to have a mandate to propose 3-4 year (or longer) funding settlements for public service media organisations.

There are divergent views on the issue of the dual funding model whereby RTÉ receives both public and commercial funding. While CRAOL calls for advertising on public service broadcasters to be confined to public service announcements, other stakeholders such as IMRO and Independent Broadcasters Ireland caution against the removal of advertising from RTÉ. Other stakeholders caution against the over commercialisation of RTÉ and call for a more thorough delineation between commercially and publicly funded content: Virgin

Media Television calls for the total separation of public funding and commercial funding and calls for an end to the use of state funding for commercial content such as international sports rights, suggesting that RTÉ One and RTÉ Radio One should air ad-free while RTÉ 2 and 2FM carry commercial content; TG4 cautions against RTÉ becoming more commercial, noting the potential for a negative knock-on effect for smaller public service broadcasters due to RTÉ's market power; and NUJ calls for careful examination of the appropriateness of sponsorship arrangements around news and current affairs, including business.

Conradh na Gaeilge sets out a range of funding supports that could be put in place to support Irish-language broadcasting, including an increase in budget to TG4 to match that awarded to S4C in Wales, for 15% of RTÉ's funding to be put towards Irish language programming, for an Irish language journalism support fund to be administered by Coimisiún na Meán, and for an increase in media funding available via Foras na Gaeilge.

A number of stakeholders call for a broader range of media to be supported by public funding. The Community Television Association outlined its need for a guaranteed source of annual income for sustainable development and called for a 1% allocation of licence fee funding to be awarded to community media. It further calls for community television to have access to content levy funding, an annual social benefit round under the Sound and Vision Scheme, and funding via the Pobal Community Services Programme. CRAOL also supports a percentage of public service broadcasting funding to be set aside for the development of community media. The IBI also calls for further investment in the Sound and Vision Scheme to develop predictable and multiannual funding for independent radio and calls for a new scheme for news and current affairs on independent radio. Virgin Media Television also supports the expansion of the Sound and Vision Scheme.

Governance and accountability

Coimisiún na Meán outlines that multiannual funding settlements for public service organisations should be based on corresponding multiannual strategies, which contain deliverables and performance indicators so that performance can be measured. It puts forward five core pillars for reviewing performance: audience, content, promotion and development of Irish language and culture, transparency and efficiency, and trust and good governance. Independent Broadcasters Ireland outlines its view that money awarded to RTÉ should be subject to similar standards as applicants to the Sound and Vision Scheme,

with requirements to submit detailed information on budgets and programme objectives before funding is awarded.

Coimisiún na Meán considers that in light of recent scrutiny into the governance practices of RTÉ, oversight of propriety of expenditure and compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies should be considered separately to the consideration of whether a public service media organisation is delivering on its strategy. It proposes that Coimisiún na Meán's role in relation to financial stewardship should instead focus on efficiency and effectiveness of expenditure, issues relating to state aid, and considering whether public service media organisations meet their obligations to maximise commercial opportunities. TG4 also argues that the focus of debate regarding RTÉ's performance should be grounded on public service values rather than commercial performance. Virgin Media Television calls for a tighter system of controls as a condition for the reappointment of NewERA to an RTÉ oversight function, and calls for RTÉ's annual accounts to be audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

NewsBrands Ireland sets out its support for proposed reforms to the defamation regime, noting in particular its support for a removal of jury trials from defamation cases and the introduction of a serious harms test.

Emerging technologies

Independent Broadcasters Ireland notes that since its last appearance before the Committee, the launch of ChatGPT is likely to have a far-reaching effect on broadcasting, news, information and the spread of disinformation and misinformation. IBI calls for Government and regulators to act without delay in response to artificial intelligence. NewsBrands Ireland outlines the lack of transparency in AI and the lack of payments to publishers whose content is being used to train AI systems. It points to Canada who is running a public consultation on issues around AI and copyright-protected works.

NewsBrands Ireland outlines the difficulties publishers have in obtaining a fair proportion of the advertising revenue their content generates on online platforms, and note that Ireland's transposition of the relevant provisions of the EU Copyright Directive does not provide publishers with the same mediation and arbitration mechanisms as other member states.

Screen Ireland notes the impacts on Irish production on the increasing prominence of US streaming platforms, and the increasing importance of public service broadcasters as an investor in content meeting the needs of local audiences. Screen Ireland also notes the opportunities presented by digital channels to reach young and other hard-to-reach audiences. Virgin Media Television encourages the establishment of a working group to explore the feasibility of a shared national Video-on-Demand (VOD) distribution platform to support the delivery of all Irish public service content on a single national platform to meet the changing needs of Irish consumers.

Appendix 1

List of public oral hearings

Date	Transcript
24 November 2022	Meeting transcript
18 January 2023	Meeting transcript
25 January 2023	Meeting transcript
1 February 2023	Meeting transcript
15 February 2023	Meeting transcript
28 June 2023	Meeting transcript
5 July 2023	Meeting transcript
11 July 2023	Meeting transcript
13 September 2023	Meeting transcript
27 September 2023	Meeting transcript
4 October 2023	Meeting transcript
14 February 2024	Meeting transcript
27 February 2024	Meeting transcript
24 April 2024	Meeting transcript

List of witnesses

Date	Witness – Titles as at date of meeting	Opening statements
24 November 2022	Independent Broadcasters of Ireland <ul style="list-style-type: none">• John Purcell, Chairperson• Simon Myciunka, CEO of Bauer Media Ireland• Kieran McGearey, Station Director of Cork 96 and C103• Gerry O'Sullivan, Radio Kerry• Gabrielle Cummins, Beat 102-103• Fionnuala Rabbitt, Highland Radio• Teresa Hanratty, Learning Waves	Opening statement
24 November 2022	CRAOL (Community Radio Ireland) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jack Byrne, Honorary President• Jeff Murphy, Vice-Chairperson• Patrick Quinn, Treasurer• Brian Green, Technical Advisor• Mairéad Cullen, Coordination Committee Member	Opening statement
24 November 2022	Dublin Digital Radio <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seán Finnan, Co-Founder• Robbie Kitt, Steering Committee member	Opening statement
24 November 2022	Clare FM <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ronan McManamy, Chief Executive Officer	Opening statement
24 November 2022	National Union of Journalists <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Séamus Dooley, Irish Secretary• Ian McGuinness, Irish Organiser	Opening statement
24 November 2022	DCU Institute for Future Media, Democracy and Society <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr Dawn Wheatley, Assistant Professor School of Communications	Opening statement

24 November 2022	Local Ireland	Opening statement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bob Hughes, Executive Director• Linda O'Reilly, Editor of the Anglo-Celt• Frank Mulrennan, Chief Executive Officer of Celtic Media Group• Declan McGuire, President	

24 November 2022	NewsBrands	Opening statement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Colm O'Reilly, Chairperson• Sammi Bourke, Chief Operations Officer Irish Farmers Journal• Conor Goodman, Deputy Editor Irish Times• Mark Deering, Head of Corporate Affairs DMH Media	

18 January 2023	RTÉ	Opening statement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adrian Lynch, Director of Audience, Channels and Marketing• Rory Coveney, Director of Strategy	

18 January 2023	TG4	Opening statement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alan Esslemont, Ard-Stiúrthóir	

18 January 2023	Broadcasting Authority of Ireland	Opening statement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Celene Craig, Chief Executive Officer• Stephanie Comey, Assistant Chief Executive• Liam Boyle, Senior Manager	

18 January 2023	Screen Ireland	Opening statement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Désirée Finnegan, Chief Executive Officer• Andrew Byrne, Head of Television	

18 January 2023	Virgin Media Television	Opening statement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paul Farrell, Managing Director• Aine Ní Chaoindealbháin, Deputy Managing Director	

18 January 2023	Community Television Association <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ciarán Murray, Chairperson• Emma Bowell, Treasurer	Opening statement
25 January 2023	Free Media Ireland <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jarlath Feeney, Cork Independent• Peter Timmins, Galway Advertiser• Will Ryan, Limerick Post	Opening statement
1 February 2023	Age Action <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Celine Clarke, Head of Advocacy and Public Affairs• Mary Murphy, Research Officer	Opening statement
1 February 2023	Independent Living Movement Ireland <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr James Casey, Policy Officer• Claire Kenny, Policy Assistant	Opening statement
1 February 2023	Irish Traveller Movement <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jacinta Brack, Coordinator of Political Advocacy, Communications and Campaigns	Opening statement
1 February 2023	National Youth Council of Ireland <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paul Gordon, Director of Policy and Advocacy• Ashley Chadamoyo Makombe, National Youth Council of Ireland Youth Voices Participant	Opening statement
15 February 2023	Conradh na Gaeilge <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Julian de Spáinn, Ard-Rúnaí• Róisín Ní Chinnéide, Bainisteoir Abhcóideachta	Opening statement
15 February 2023	Irish Music Rights Organisation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Victor Finn, Chief Executive Officer• Lisa Ní Choisdealbha, Director of Licensing and Public Affairs	Opening statement
15 February 2023	Joint Creative Audiovisual Sectoral Group	Opening statement

- James Hickey, Screen Producers Ireland Representative
- Sarah Glennane, Chief Executive Officer Screen Composers Guild of Ireland

15 February 2023 National Campaign for the Arts [Opening statement](#)

- Maria Fleming, Chairperson

15 February 2023 Sport Ireland [Opening statement](#)

- Dr Una May, Chief Executive Officer
- Fergus Hannigan, Marketing and Branding Manager

28 June 2023 RTÉ [Opening statement](#)

- Adrian Lynch, Interim Director General
- Anne O’Leary, Chair of Audit and Risk Committee
- Geraldine O’Leary, Director of Commercial
- Richard Collins, Chief Financial Officer
- Robert Shortt, Member of Audit and Risk Committee staff representative
- Rory Coveney, Director of Strategy
- Siún Ní Raghallaigh, Chair

5 July 2023 RTÉ [Opening statement - Moya Doherty](#)

- Moya Doherty, Former Chair
- Adrian Lynch, Interim Director General
- Breda O’Keeffe, Former Chief Financial Officer
- Siún Ní Raghallaigh, Chair
- Anne O’Leary, Chair of Audit and Risk Committee
- Geraldine O’Leary, Director of Commercial
- Richard Collins, Chief Financial Officer
- Robert Shortt, Member of Audit and Risk Committee staff representative
- Rory Coveney, Director of Strategy

[Opening statement - Adrian Lynch](#)

[Opening statement - Breda O'Keeffe](#)

[Opening statement - Siún Ní Raghallaigh](#)

11 July 2023	Ryan Tubridy	Opening statement
11 July 2023	Noel Kelly	Opening statement
13 September 2023	RTÉ <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Siún Ní Raghallaigh, Chair• Kevin Bakhurst, Director General• Adrian Lynch, Deputy Director General• Aideen Howard, Board Member• Anne O’Leary, Board Member and Chair of Audit and Risk Committee• Connor Murphy, Board Member• Daire Hickey, Board Member• David Harvey, Board Member• Eimear Cusack, Director of Human Resources• Ian Kehoe, Board Member• Jonathan Ruane, Board Member• Mike Fives, Group Financial Controller• Paula Mullooly, Director of Legal Affairs• Dr PJ Matthews, Board Member• Robert Shortt, Member of Audit and Risk Committee staff representative	Opening statement - Siún Ní Raghallaigh Opening statement - Kevin Bakhurst
27 September 2023	Coimisiún na Meán <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jeremy Godfrey, Executive Chairperson• Niamh Hodnett, Online Safety Commissioner• Rónán Ó Domhnaill, Media Development Commissioner• Celene Craig, Broadcasting Commissioner• John Evans, Digital Services Commissioner	Opening statement
4 October 2023	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Catherine Martin TD, Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media	Opening statement

14 February 2024	RTÉ <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Siún Ní Raghallaigh, Chair• Kevin Bakhurst, Director General• Eimear Cusack, Director of Human Resources• Adrian Lynch, Director of Audiences, Channels and Marketing• Susan Ahern, Board Member• Aideen Howard, Board Member• Anne O’Leary, Board Member and Chair of Audit and Risk Committee• Daire Hickey, Board Member• Dr David Harvey, Board Member• Jonathan Ruane, Board Member• Dr PJ Matthews, Board Member	Opening statement - Siún Ní Raghallaigh Opening statement - Kevin Bakhurst Opening statement - Eimear Cusack
27 February 2024	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Catherine Martin TD, Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media	Opening statement
24 April 2024	National Union of Journalists <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Séamus Dooley, Irish Secretary• Emma O’Kelly, Chair Dublin Broadcasting Branch	Opening statement
24 April 2024	SIPTU <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teresa Hannick, Divisional Organiser Services Division• Zac Sloper, Shop Steward and Chair of the SIPTU Committee in RTÉ	Opening statement
24 April 2024	Unite the Union <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brendan Byrne, Regional Officer	Opening statement
24 April 2024	Connect <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brian Nolan, Assistant General Secretary	Opening statement

- John Reynolds, Electrician/Camera Technician
and Shop Steward
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Appendix 2

List of written submissions

	
Convenience Stores and Newsagents Association	Irish Music Rights Organisation
Coimisiún na Meán	Joint Creative Audiovisual Sector Group* *RTÉ recused itself from inputting to the response of the Joint Creative Audiovisual Sector Group
Community Television Association	NewsBrands Ireland
Conradh na Gaeilge	National Union of Journalists
CRAOL (Community Radio Forum of Ireland)	TG4
Fís Éireann / Screen Ireland	Virgin Media Television
Independent Broadcasters of Ireland	

Appendix 3

Division record

JOINT COMMITTEE ON TOURISM, CULTURE, ARTS, SPORT AND MEDIA			
MEETING SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF REVISED DRAFT REPORT ON FUTURE BUSINESS MODEL PLANS AND LONG-TERM VISION FOR THE MEDIA SECTOR			
MEETING DATE & NO: J120, 29/05/2024	DIVISION NO: 1		
AMENDMENT 1:			
<p>The Committee recommends the abolition of the Television Licence Fee and the funding of public service broadcasting and quality Irish content through Exchequer funding, through a fund managed by Coimisiún na Meán that will ensure independence from government and that it would be done in a transparent manner.</p>			
QUESTION: That Amendment 1 be made.			
MEMBERS:	TÁ	NÍL	STAON
Chris Andrews TD (SF)	X		
Ciaran Cannon TD (FG)			
Peter Fitzpatrick TD (Ind)			
Brendan Griffin TD (FG)		X	
Mattie McGrath TD (Ind)			
Imelda Munster TD (SF)	X		
Christopher O'Sullivan TD (FF)	X		
Michael Ring TD (FG)			
Niamh Smyth TD (FF) [Cathaoirleach]		X	
Senator Malcolm Byrne (FF) {Leaschathaoirleach}	X		
Senator Michael Carrigy (FG)			
Senator Shane Cassells (FF)		X	
Senator Annie Hoey (Lab)			
Senator Fintan Warfield (SF)	X		
TOTAL	5	3	0
QUESTION CARRIED			