



ÚDARÁS
CRAOLACHÁIN
NA hÉIREANN

BROADCASTING
AUTHORITY
OF IRELAND

BAI Irish Language Action Plan

January 2019

Introduction

The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) has a central role to play in promoting and stimulating the development of Irish language programme and broadcasting services in the Irish audio-visual industry. This role is articulated in the mission, vision, values and strategic goals of the BAI, as set out in the Authority's Strategy Statement 2017-2019 ("BAI Strategy"). The legislative framework which gives effect to this role includes the Broadcasting Act 2009, the Official Languages Act 2003 and the State's 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030.

It is a key statutory objective of the BAI to endeavour to ensure that the number and categories of broadcasting services in the State best serve the needs of the people of the island of Ireland, bearing in mind their languages and traditions and their religious, ethnic and cultural diversity. The BAI Strategy also supports the provision of open and pluralistic broadcasting services in Ireland.

The **Broadcasting Act 2009** sets out the BAI's statutory obligations with regard to programming and broadcasting services. The following activities, which are guided by sections of the Act, have a direct focus on Irish language programming and content:

Licensing:

- i. Part 6 of the Act facilitates the licensing of commercial and community sound broadcasting contracts and content provision contracts, including services broadcasting in the Irish language.
- ii. The BAI Contract Awards Committee, when assessing applications for sound broadcasting contracts, is required to consider the quality, quantity, range and type of Irish-language programmes being proposed by an applicant, and to have particular regard to Irish language content when awarding sound broadcasting contracts in Gaeltacht areas.

Funding Schemes:

- i. Sound and Vision: The Act allows for the granting of funds under the Sound & Vision Scheme to support the development of high-quality programmes based on Irish culture, heritage and experience, including the development of these programmes in the Irish language.
- ii. Archiving: The Act also allows for the granting of funds under the Archiving Scheme to encourage and promote the development of an archiving culture in the Irish broadcasting sector as a whole, contributing to the safeguarding of Irish heritage.

Review of Public Service Broadcasters:

Under Part 7 of the Broadcasting Act, each year, the BAI reviews the annual statements of performance commitments prepared by RTÉ and TG4, including their Irish language performance commitments. The BAI subsequently reviews the performance of the broadcasters against such commitments in the following year.

As a specified public body under the **Official Languages Act 2003**, the BAI is obligated to provide certain services in Irish to the public. One of the BAI's main duties under the Act is to prepare and implement an Irish Language Scheme on a three-year basis, detailing the services to be provided through the medium of Irish. The BAI is currently in the third year of its second Irish Language Scheme (Scéim Teanga 2016-2019) and has made significant progress in Irish language service provision since the introduction of the first Scheme in 2013. The BAI has a strong commitment to Irish language service provision and is very open to suggestions on how to further enhance and strengthen this commitment to the Irish language in the years ahead.

BAI Irish Language Objectives

A key strategic objective in the BAI Strategy under the theme of Promoting Diversity and Plurality is to *'foster a landscape that is representative of, and accessible to, the diversity of Irish society'*. A stated outcome in this regard is that *'Irish audio-visual media is more diverse in terms of its content and those involved in its production'* by the end of 2019.

The BAI Strategy sets out a range of objectives to foster and promote quality programming in the Irish language, and the BAI already integrates Irish language interests across internal work areas and supports the Irish Language through a number of mechanisms. These include programming and archiving initiatives under the Broadcasting Fund, partnerships, events, sectoral learning and development activities, media research and sponsorship initiatives designed to develop Irish language provision across the broadcasting sector.

The BAI is also cognisant of the **Language Planning Process**, the governmental **20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030** and associated **Action Plan 2018-2022**¹ and the aims therein to increase the use and knowledge of the Irish language nationwide. Of specific relevance to the BAI is the strategic objective to increase the number of people who use State services through Irish and who can access television, radio and print media through the language.

To support the delivery of the Promoting Diversity and Plurality strategic objective and recognising the need to foster the development of quality Irish language programming in the Irish audio-visual sector, the BAI Irish Language Action Plan will address five key areas as follows:

- Supporting, developing and promoting Irish Language programming and stations through Licensing and Broadcasting Fund initiatives;
- Fostering Irish language partnerships;
- Supporting Research;
- Collecting data;
- Enhancing accountability processes, including compliance monitoring and reporting.

The BAI's planned objectives under these five areas are detailed below:

1. Supporting, developing and promoting Irish Language programming and stations through Licensing and Broadcasting Fund initiatives

The BAI will support the exploration of new initiatives in the area of Licensing and the Broadcasting Fund in order to build on the amount of Irish language programming that is currently available.

Licensing:

- As outlined in its Broadcasting Services Strategy, when signs of improving revenues and profitability are evident in the broadcasting sector, the BAI commits to exploring the licensing of at least one new sound broadcasting service on the FM band, and will facilitate and encourage applications from new and existing groups, including Irish language groups.

¹The **Action Plan 2018-2022** sets out nine key areas for action, one of these relating to Media & Technology. <https://www.chq.gov.ie/app/uploads/2018/07/action-plan-2018-2022.pdf>

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- The BAI will support temporary licence applications including proposals for Irish Language programming from groups who wish to establish Irish language broadcasting services. In the assessment of such temporary services, Irish language programming and performance will be taken into account.
 - The BAI will provide technical assistance to interested parties seeking transmission advice for sound broadcasting services through Irish.
 - The BAI will facilitate and encourage applications from parties wishing to establish television services on cable, satellite and digital terrestrial television platforms, particularly from community television groups and Irish language groups.
 - In the provision of national, regional, local and community radio services, the BAI will explore the potential for youth and other service types, including niche and Irish language radio services, and the provision of additional Irish language programming.

Broadcasting Fund:

- The BAI will continue its commitment to award a minimum 25% of Sound & Vision Round funding to programming in the Irish language, including bilingual programming.
- The BAI will explore how to deliver increased amounts of Sound & Vision-funded Irish language radio programming.
- The BAI will examine the genres and types of Irish Language programming being funded under the Sound & Vision Scheme to evaluate and report on funding trends and to inform potential development initiatives.

2. Fostering Irish language partnerships

The BAI has supported Irish language initiatives within the broadcasting sector for many years. In seeking to encourage the development of the Irish language with its stakeholders, the BAI will continue to enhance sectoral development activities and will also harness creative opportunities offered by the funding programmes it runs. Examples may include:

- A commitment to continue to support the delivery of networking events and training and development initiatives which enable broadcasters to develop more Irish language programming content, e.g. working with broadcasters to increase capacity to produce more Irish language programmes through Training & Development initiatives.
- Improving on the creative opportunities from Sound & Vision in developing quality Irish language programming.
- Supporting and promoting opportunities for broadcasters to jointly create, share, broadcast or syndicate Irish language content.
- Exploring opportunities for sponsorship of Irish language programming awards, in order to give public recognition to broadcasters who include Irish in their schedules.
- Exploring partnership opportunities with key Irish language organisations and/or broadcasters with a view to developing joint initiatives to support Irish language development. This will include the establishment of an Advisory Committee with representatives from BAI, Foras na Gaeilge and other Irish language stakeholders.

3. Supporting Research

The BAI is committed to supporting and undertaking research on the provision of Irish language in the audio and audio-visual sector.

- The promotion of active research on Irish language in the audio-visual sector, including, where appropriate, regularly publicising the outcomes of such research.

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- The organisation of, and participation in debates on Irish language policy and legislative issues.
 - The development of partnerships with organisations carrying out research on the Irish language media landscape (including programming, listenership, etc.) with a view to strengthening the value of the research and the links between research institutions and broadcast content providers.

4. Collecting data

The BAI recognises the need for up-to-date and accurate data on the quality and quantity of Irish language programming within the audio and audio-visual industry. To address this issue, the BAI has already undertaken internal mapping of current Irish language provision across the different areas of the organisation.

With regard to external stakeholders, the BAI will also carry out focused Irish language monitoring of broadcasters in order to get a comprehensive picture of Irish language programme provision within the broadcasting sector.

The Sound & Vision Scheme is due for review in the first half of 2019. As part of this review, the BAI will undertake the following activities:

- Explore opportunities to examine the levels of Irish and bilingual programming which have been supported on TV and radio services by the Scheme, and whether these levels could be enhanced under any new scheme.
- Compile data that relates to Irish and bilingual programming to build up a picture of the range of radio and TV programmes being funded under the Scheme.
- Analyze Irish language applications to assess whether there are common areas for improvement that could be addressed through training and development initiatives, for the purpose of improving the quality and quantity of applications across genres and platforms.

5. Enhancing accountability processes, including compliance monitoring and reporting

The BAI supports the view that it is through accountability that diversity can be enhanced, in terms of Irish language programming content and those involved in its production. Therefore, the BAI will be accountable through the following:

- The implementation of a BAI Irish Language Action Plan will enable regular reporting, publication and monitoring of initiatives and actions undertaken to promote the Irish language in the broadcasting sector.
- The BAI will continue to assess the performance of public service broadcasters against their strategic and annual commitments in respect of Irish language programme content and make recommendations in relation to public funding.
- Initiatives such as those outlined in 2 above will be promoted, published and evaluated for success.
- The BAI will seek partnership opportunities with key players such as other public bodies, other funders, broadcasters and other representative bodies in order to further enhance accountability across the industry.
- The BAI will include an assessment of the implementation and effectiveness of its Irish Language Plan within its Annual Report.

Commitment to Review

The BAI undertakes to review the Irish Language Action Plan, following best practice, on an annual basis and will consult with stakeholders in order to assess the impact of the plan and evaluate its success, or otherwise, under each of the five key areas, and amend its planned activities in response.

