

RTÉ

OUR
PROMISE
TO



RTÉ's Public Service Statement 2022

The Broadcasting Act 2009 (the Act)¹ sets out three related reporting requirements for RTÉ, which are:

1. A Public Service Statement – following a public consultation, RTÉ must prepare a Public Service Statement setting out the principles to be observed and activities to be undertaken by RTÉ to fulfil its public service objects.

2. A Statement of Strategy – RTÉ must prepare and present to the Minister a Statement of Strategy. This sets out the strategy of the RTÉ Board for achieving its objects under the Act, having regard to resources available to RTÉ.

3. Annual Statements of Performance Commitments (commitments) – RTÉ must, by end January every year, prepare its commitments. The commitments must be aligned with RTÉ's objects, its Statement of Strategy and its Public Service Statement. RTÉ's commitments comprise the activities RTÉ will undertake in that year and the associated performance indicators. RTÉ publishes its fulfilment or otherwise of its commitment each year in its Annual Report.

¹ <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2009/act/18/section/101/enacted/en/html#sec101>

RTÉ ran a five-week public consultation to inform RTÉ's Public Service Statement 2022 in February and March 2021. The consultation was designed to be robust and inclusive, as well as open and transparent. It attracted almost 10,000 respondents, one of the highest engagement levels of any media or other public consultation undertaken in Ireland. The respondent sample was diverse in both demographic profile and media habits. The findings of that consultation are published on RTÉ.ie² and have directly informed this Public Service Statement ("statement").

This statement will form the backdrop to RTÉ's next strategy, reaffirming the need to continue providing much of what we do today, while also reinforcing areas where we need to do better – all within a highly dynamic media and technology sector.

2 <https://about.rte.ie/2021/07/08/the-public-has-its-say-about-rte/>

Introduction

RTÉ is Ireland's national public service media (PSM) organisation -the leading provider of television, radio, on-demand, mobile and web services for audiences in Ireland. It is a not-for-profit statutory organisation, producing, commissioning, and acquiring a broad range of relevant high-quality programming and content to meet the needs of multiple audiences. RTÉ provides comprehensive, cost-effective, free-to-air multi-media services to the public in Ireland and audiences internationally.

The public have strongly endorsed these PSM goals, which we are determined to deliver on, while reaching the widest possible audiences. To do this we must continue to strengthen our digital offering, especially to connect with hard-to-reach younger audiences, who have shown a strength of conviction towards RTÉ and expressed high expectations from their PSM. The public are clear they want an independent RTÉ that facilitates a progressive and inclusive society, and so we must also press forward with our aim to be a leader in diversity and inclusion.

RTÉ's Role in Irish life

RTÉ will provide content and services for audiences to watch, listen to, and read, as well as orchestral music to enjoy, catering for general audiences and niche tastes. Over the period of this statement however, we must change in response to audience needs, many of whom are increasingly consuming media online. This change is vital for RTÉ to remain a vibrant and relevant modern public service media organisation for many years to come. Our offerings will evolve to enhance the experience for audiences across linear and on-demand, including increased personalisation to enable you to discover more of what you like and what RTÉ has to offer.

Change is a constant for RTÉ, and our content and service offering has evolved significantly since our last Public Service Statement. Over those years, the National Symphony Orchestra has transferred from RTÉ to the National Concert Hall, we have ceased broadcasting on the DAB network, have re-branded the RTÉ News channel, revitalised RTÉ player and RTÉ.ie, extended the hours RTÉ One+1, launched RTÉ2+1, and have closed the obsolete teletext service RTÉ Aertel, following legislative change. We will continue to refresh what we do and how we deliver it over the years ahead.

Research by the European Broadcasting Union³ shows that a strong public service media strengthens democracy and fosters citizenship, and RTÉ takes seriously its role in upholding the democratic values enshrined in Ireland's constitution. The importance of this PSM role is heightened today, where democracy is coming under real pressure within parts of Europe and beyond. RTÉ is the most trusted media source in Ireland. This public trust is the lifeblood of public service media and RTÉ works every day to ensure that trust is retained. RTÉ will continue to play its part in informing, educating and entertaining audiences in Ireland. Within this we will help to ensure Irish audiences are media literate, in a wider media environment rife with both mis- and disinformation, and where regulation is required.

Public policy that supports a sustainable Irish media sector

In the next decade, media production, distribution, and consumption will change substantially as we migrate to internet-based distribution systems. RTÉ must adapt to these dynamics and audience trends. In this context, RTÉ welcomes that Ireland is embarking on much needed media policy reform, and legislative, and regulatory changes, including the introduction of the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act and the establishment of the new regulatory authority, the Media Commission. Beyond this, the provisions of the Broadcasting Act 2009 must be overhauled for the digital age, where the reality of PSM and its connection with audiences stretches far beyond broadcasting.

These factors, our public consultation findings, and audience shifts towards online media consumption raise some public policy questions, which will require national focus and action. For example, how can Ireland best protect, sustain, and re-imagine the concept of universal ‘free-to-air’ access to PSM, as media distribution and consumption increasingly relies on paid mobile and fixed broadband connections?

In parallel, the Future of Media Commission, set up by the Government in September 2020, has examined the challenges faced by Ireland’s public service broadcasters, commercial broadcasters, print and online media platforms. The Commission’s remit focused on sustainable funding sources, changes in audience behaviour, and changes in technology.

It is imperative that the Commission’s recommendations lead to decisive action by Government to implement public policy measures that will sustain and strengthen Ireland’s domestic media sector. From RTÉ’s perspective, it is critical that a fit-for-purpose public funding model is introduced to correct the legacy of our structural under-funding. This is necessary to ensure we have sufficient resources to meet our statutory public service objectives, and to fulfil our vision: *To champion Irish culture by, captivating audiences with trusted, engaging, and challenging content, celebrating our country’s rich diversity, and cultivating Ireland’s talent.*

RTÉ's guiding principles

RTÉ's 2022 guiding principles (and activities) have been strongly endorsed by the Irish public via an extensive public consultation. These updated principles therefore fully align with what the public want from RTÉ, while also reflecting best-practice for public service media⁴, as well as the organisation's remit set out in legislation.

Our guiding principles are:

Independence

we are independent from political, commercial, and other influences

Public interest

we act in the best interest of society

Creativity

we foster and support creative ambition

Accountability

we are accountable to the public and stakeholders

Universality

we are for everyone and available to everyone

Diversity

we aim to promote Ireland's diversity and culture

Excellence

we strive for excellence in everything we do

Innovation

we support innovation and creativity in Irish media

⁴ https://www.ebu.ch/files/live/sites/ebu/files/Publications/EBU-Empowering-Society_EN.pdf and https://www.ebu.ch/files/live/sites/ebu/files/Publications/EBU-Legal-Focus-Gov-Prin_EN.pdf

We will follow our guiding principles in everything we do. This statement sets out the broad categories of RTÉ's activities and the impact we hope these will have on Irish life. RTÉ's primary activities under each of the principles are set out below.



Independence

We are independent from political, commercial, and other influences

- Provide high quality national and international news and current affairs that is accurate, fair, impartial, and objective;
- Provide comprehensive coverage and analysis of Irish and international politics and public affairs;
- Undertake investigative reporting into matters of public interest to hold power to account;
- Exercise autonomy in all areas of programming, editorial decision-making.

Public Interest

We act in the best interest of society

- Facilitate debate on views and ideas that contribute to a democratic society;
- Contribute to an informed society through helping us to understand both Ireland and the wider world;
- Digitally preserve RTÉ's archives that document the heritage and everyday life of Ireland, making it more accessible to all;
- Provide a range of educational content that supports both formal and informal learning;
- Deliver on our Climate Content Pledge⁵, helping audiences better understand climate change, and to inspire and inform sustainable choices.

⁵ <https://wearealbert.org/2021/11/03/broadcasters-and-streamers-sign-up-to-the-climate-content-pledge/>



Creativity

We foster and support creative ambition

- Tell our stories through quality original drama;
- Provide a platform for Ireland's artists, musicians, and culture;
- Produce quality documentaries that get the nation talking;
- Provide a mix of programmes and content to entertain us or make us laugh;
- Provide a mix of original programmes and content for children;
- Be a driver of Ireland's creative industries, supporting domestic content production.





Accountability

We are accountable to the public and stakeholders

- Provide the opportunity for the public to provide feedback and/ or make complaints;
- Follow best practice in areas such as governance sustainability, and financial management and reporting;
- Engage openly and transparently with regulators and supervisory oversight;
- Clearly communicate the organisation's strategy, objectives and evolving public purpose;
- Be responsible in how we use and protect data, to improve audiences experience of RTÉ.



Universality

We are for everyone and available to everyone

- Create shared experiences through content and services, and events that help bring the community together;
- Provide sub-titling, Irish Sign Language, and Audio Description for our programmes;
- Provide a mix of programmes and content in both English and Irish;
- Provide programmes and content for all Irish communities on the island of Ireland;
- Be a key connection point to Ireland for the Irish Diaspora.

Diversity

We aim to promote Ireland's diversity and culture

- Provide programmes and content that cover a wide range of interests – both mainstream and niche;
- Provide coverage of events of national interest across culture, politics, sport, and other areas;
- Create content that reflects the diversity that exists across the island of Ireland;
- Reflect the diversity of religious life in Ireland;
- Provide live coverage of both mainstream and minority sports.



Excellence

We strive for excellence in everything we do

- Create and commission high quality, relevant and original content, and programmes;
- Hold our programme makers to the highest editorial standards across all RTÉ's content;
- Provide the highest quality audio, video live and on-demand services for RTÉ audiences to enjoy;
- Attract and developing the most talented people to create content for Irish audiences.





Innovation

We support innovation and creativity in Irish media

- Collaborate with the independent production sector and other external partners;
- Continue to adapt and evolve how we distribute RTÉ content, so it remains easily accessible and findable;
- Encourage innovation, experimentation, and originality in programming;
- Diversify and innovate in how we generate commercial revenue to fund RTÉ's public services;
- Find new ways to engage with our audiences, enabling them to discover more of what they like and what RTÉ has to offer.

RTÉ

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