



Media Release
Broadcasting Authority of Ireland

Release Date: Tuesday, 6th December 2011

**New Rules on Television Subtitling, Sign Language and Audio Descriptions
Proposed**

– Public invited to offer feedback –

The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) has today (6th December 2011) launched a public consultation on proposed new rules to govern the level of subtitling, sign language and audio description that Irish television broadcasters must offer to the public. The new rules will update the current Access Rules in place since 2005.

The proposals are aimed at making television more enjoyable and accessible for people who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, partially sighted or blind. The new rules have been developed taking into account a review of the existing rules and changes in broadcasting schedules and technology.

The consultation launched today will remain open for 7 weeks and the BAI is looking for responses from the general public, representative groups and the broadcasters.

Speaking at the launch of the public consultation, the Chief Executive of the BAI, Michael O’Keeffe, said: “The Access Rules have been in place since 2005 and there have been significant changes to the amount of home produced and live content available on Irish Television. Advances in technology and the switch over to Digital TV in 2012 also provide new methods by which broadcasters can provide programming to the Irish viewing audience which includes those with hearing or sight difficulties”.

“The BAI has undertaken significant research and consultation to develop a proposed new set of rules, which we expect will be more fit-for-purpose and will – ultimately – offer greater access to better quality programmes for people who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, partially sighted or blind.”

One of the central objectives of the proposed rules is to enhance the reliability and quality of subtitling. The BAI is now proposing that, rather than seeking to simply ensure a designated target quota of subtitled programmes is provided, broadcasters should be encouraged to enhance the subtitles available.

Also included in the proposed new rules is a change in the timeframe set out for the achievement of targets for the provision of subtitling. Under the 2005 Access Rules, there was a 10-year timeframe for achieving targets, but a five-year timeframe with a two-year review is now being proposed.

“This proposed approach to setting subtitling targets will – we hope – encourage broadcasters to invest more time and resources into producing better-quality results for the viewer. The proposal acknowledges that it takes more time and resources to produce live subtitling, so if a broadcaster places particular emphasis on giving access to live programmes, they may be permitted to aim for the lower end of the range. Equally, where broadcasters invest heavily in ensuring subtitles are in sync with a broadcast and are of very good quality, they may be permitted to opt for the lower target,” said Mr. O’Keeffe.

The proposed access rules also look at issues such as the inclusion of sign language in children’s programming; use of captions; audio description; the impact of Digital TV on access services; ongoing consultation between broadcasters and users on access; and the monitoring of compliance with the new rules.

For the purpose of the public consultation, a range of facilities have been developed to enable people who are deaf, hard of hearing, partially sighted or blind to offer their feedback. A consultation document that outlines the scope and context of the proposed rules has been developed and will be available in a range of formats from the BAI. Interpretation facilities will be available for people wishing to ask questions, and submissions can be made through a designated text message number; lo-call number; or by post and email.

The proposed rules and consultation document are available at www.bai.ie.

The deadline for submitting responses is **5pm on 24th January 2012**.

As part of promoting the consultation, the BAI is undertaking briefing meetings with stakeholders from user-groups and broadcasters. In addition, it will undertake a mail-out to wider stakeholders and will use social media, as well as traditional media, to promote the consultation around the proposed rules.

<http://www.facebook.com/BAIreland>

<http://twitter.com/BAItweets>

Media Queries to:

Brian Furey

BAI

01 6441200