

Media Release

**Broadcasting Authority of Ireland**

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# BAI publishes new Access Rules on Subtitling, Sign Language and Audio Description

The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) has today (14.05.2012) published 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 BAI Access Rules aim to make 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 existing rules, submissions received as part of a public consultation, changes in broadcasting schedules and developments in technology.

One of the central objectives of the Access Rules is to enhance the reliability and quality of subtitling.  Under the new rules, rather than seeking to simply ensure that a designated target quota of subtitled programmes is provided, broadcasters will now be encouraged to enhance the range of subtitled programmes being made available. Also included is a change in the timeframes set out for the achievement of targets.  Under the 2005 Access Rules, there was a 10-year timeframe for achieving such targets, but a five-year timeframe with a two-year review will now exist.

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

The new rules have been adopted by the BAI following an extensive consultation process (launched in December 2011) during which a range of facilities were put in place to enable people who are deaf, hard of hearing, partially sighted or blind to offer their feedback. The BAI also arranged a number of briefing meetings with stakeholders from user groups and broadcasters.

Speaking about the launch of the Access Rules, the Chairperson of the BAI, Bob Collins, said: “The BAI is pleased to launch the new Access Rules which have been reviewed and revamped to be more appropriate for these times and to reflect both the needs of viewers and the changing schedules of broadcasters”.

The new rules are available in a number of formats on www.bai.ie/?page\_id=2419.

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