[IE] Revised Television Access Rules Launched

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On 14 May 2012 the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) launched revised Access Rules for Irish television broadcasters. The Rules have immediate effect and replace the previous Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (BCI) Access Rules, which had been in place since 1 March 2005. The Rules determine the levels of subtitling (including captioning), sign language and audio description that broadcasters will be required to provide. The Rules apply to certain broadcasters within the State and do not apply to broadcast services commonly received in Ireland but licensed in other jurisdictions.

Section 41(3)(c) of the Broadcasting Act 2009 provides that the BAI shall prepare and revise rules that require broadcasters to take steps to promote the understanding and enjoyment of programmes for persons who are deaf, have a hearing impairment or are blind or partially sighted or a combination of these. Section 43(3) of the Act further provides for the rules to specify a percentage of programmes broadcast that must be accessible.

The BAI began a review of the Access Rules in 2011 and used research commissioned by its predecessor the BCI as the basis for a consultation document. The consultation process also included briefing sessions and workshops with broadcasters, representatives of the deaf, hard of hearing and vision-impaired communities and the general public.

The revised Rules set a range of percentage targets for each broadcast service (television station) for the five-year period from 2012-2016. The target range is increased annually for each applicable broadcast service on an incremental basis over the five-year term. Targets for subtitling (on-screen text that represents what is said on the screen) are based on an 18-hour broadcast day from 7am to 1am. No programme genres, types or time-blocks are prioritised.

Targets for Irish Sign Language and Audio Description (commentary that provides a verbal description of what is happening on screen) are applicable to the national public service broadcaster’s services on RTÉ One and RTÉ Two only. In line with section 43(3) of the Broadcasting Act 2009, broadcasters are also required to indicate and promote through standard symbols, both on-screen and in programme listings, those programmes for which an access provision is available. In order to assist broadcasters and users, a set of Guidance Notes outlining the

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general and technical standards required in relation to the various modes of access provision was also published by the BAI.

During the consultation process the BAI had agreed to adopt and include in the Rules a proposal that a User Consultative Panel be established to assist with its assessment of compliance and future reviews of the Rules. However, no reference to such a panel has been included. The revised Rules do confirm that they will be reviewed in 2014 and 2016. This is in line with the requirements under section 43(6) of the Broadcasting Act 2009.

Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI), Access Rules, (May 2012)

http://www.bai.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/201205_BAI-Access-Rules2012.pdf

Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI), BAI Access Rules: Statement of Outcomes, (May 2012)

http://www.bai.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/201205BAIAccessStatementOutcomesMay12_RWPDF.pdf

Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI), BAI Guidelines - Audio Description, (May 2012)

http://www.bai.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/20120501_BAIGlinesAD_RW.doc

Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI), BAI Guidelines - Irish Sign Language, (May 2012)

http://www.bai.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/20120501_BAIGlinesISL_RW.doc

Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI), BAI Guidelines - Subtitling, (May 2012):

http://www.bai.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/20120501_BAIGlinesSubs_RW.doc

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