

[IE] Broadcasting Authority announces COVID-19 funding initiatives to support the broadcasting sector

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On 8 April 2020, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) announced details of a special funding round to support the independent commercial radio sector in its “provision of public awareness and understanding of COVID-19, including the risks and public health measures being implemented to reduce the spread of the disease.”

The special funding round will operate under the BAI’s existing Sound & Vision Scheme, which is financed by the TV licence fee from the “Broadcasting Fund” established under the Broadcasting (Funding) Act 2003. The special round was developed and approved by the BAI following a request by the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Richard Bruton, under section 154 (7) (a) of the Broadcasting Act 2009. In total, EUR 2.5 million has been made available to support this funding round. From 8 April 2020, “independent commercial radio stations can apply for amounts ranging from EUR 45 000 up to EUR 95 000 to assist them in communicating to their listeners on COVID-19.” The closing date for applications is Wednesday, 29 April 2020.

The BAI’s chief executive Michael O’Keeffe stated that this funding round achieved two key objectives: “the first is to enable independent radio to continue to enhance social awareness and understanding of COVID-19 and the public health measures that are being put in place to protect our population”, and the second is to assist in sustaining the sector, as “independent radio has experienced a sharp and sudden decline in revenues.”

In addition to these COVID-19-specific measures announced under the Sound & Vision Scheme, the BAI, at the request of the minister, has also agreed to waive the Broadcasting Levy payable by the independent radio sector for the first six months of 2020, saving local radio and independent stations approximately EUR 1 million. Upon completion of the process, the BAI will also provide the minister with an assessment of the financial impact of the measures on independent radio stations.

In response to additional requests from Minister Richard Bruton, the BAI announced that it would also operate additional rounds of its Sound and & Vision 4 Scheme in 2020, including “a funding round exclusively for the community radio

sector" and "an open funding round through the Sound & Vision 4 Scheme later in 2020, as soon as sufficient funding becomes available for commercial and community television broadcasters and public service broadcasters, including RTÉ radio services."

Michael O'Keeffe stated that "in addition to supporting all of the measures requested by the minister" and in recognition of the "important contribution" that all broadcasters are making during this public health emergency, "the BAI is providing advice and assistance to broadcasters at an individual level across the independent commercial and community radio and television sectors, and to the public service broadcasting sector." Mr O'Keefe added that the BAI "will continue to monitor impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on the broadcasting sector and will work closely with the sector and the minister to ensure the public are kept informed of essential information by their local and national broadcasters during this pandemic."

BAI, "BAI announces supports for broadcast media sector during COVID-19 crisis"

<https://www.bai.ie/en/bai-announces-supports-for-broadcast-media-sector-during-covid-19-crisis/>

