

IBI SUBMISSION TO EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON STATE AID

January 2026 - We in the Independent Radio sector are strongly supportive of competitive markets and fully understand the need for fair State Aid regulations. But we believe it is vital that the current interpretation of State Aid rules does not unintentionally distort the market.

Changing the 2009 Broadcasting Communication and its interpretation would be in the interest of audiences.

In Ireland, independent radio stations are obliged by their licence conditions to provide extensive public service content – news and current affairs - as part of their core service.

State Aid implementation since 2009 has introduced arbitrary restrictions for support for content by private operators. Restrictions in Ireland citing State Aid mean funding to private operators can only be used for what is described as “additional” content, and not for core public service content radio stations are obliged to provide. This needs to change, in our view.

The problem is a fundamental and outdated taxonomy issue as a result of the 2009 Broadcasting Communication and its interpretation, classifying Public Service Media as only meaning media in state ownership.

There have been major developments in the media market in Europe and in Ireland, but the Broadcasting Communication has not addressed those. It is clear that media sectors like radio which subscribe to high standards of content and democratic norms, have been disadvantaged by the rapid development of online and social platforms which do not have the same obligation as licenced radio.

If this unlevel playing field is not addressed, the results for fair and balanced media and for audiences will be very negative.

The main market development to have taken place since 2009 has been the advent of the large social media and web platforms who have been able to increase their share of overall advertising revenues in Ireland to approximately 60%. (Source: Radiocentre Ireland).

Since the private operators in the independent commercial broadcasting sector in Ireland and throughout Europe are dependent on advertising, this has impacted that sector significantly. The private radio operators are tightly regulated in Ireland and across Europe and operate in compliance with regulatory and legal restrictions. This needs to be recognised.

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