

25 March 2021

Sent by email to: pac@oireachtas.ie

Ref: Ref: S0777 PAC33

Brian Stanley, TD
Chair of Public Accounts Committee
Committee of Public Accounts
Leinster House
Kildare St
Dublin 2 - D02 XR20

Dear Deputy Stanley

Further to your letter of 11 March, please find below information with relation to the queries raised:

1.Details of amounts earned by the top ten earners in the years from 2019 to date.

The earnings for the top talent earners in 2019 is available in the table below.

Top 10 Highest Paid Presenters on an Earnings Basis for 2017, 2018 and 2019					
Individual		NEW RELEASE		NEW RELEASE	
		2017		2018	
Status		Rank	Earnings in Euro	Rank	Earnings in Euro
Tuttle Productions Ltd (For the services of Ryan Tubridy)	Contractor	1	491,667	1	495,000
What Next Productions Ltd (For the services of Ray Darcy)	Contractor	2	450,000	2	450,000
Cladaghgreen Ltd (For the services of Joe Duffy)	Contractor	3	398,738	3	404,988
Sean O'Rourke	Employee	4	321,071	5	325,263
Montrose Services Ltd (For the services of Marian Finucane)	Contractor	5	314,809	4	333,013
Baby Blue Productions Ltd (For the services of Miriam O'Callaghan)	Contractor	6	299,000	6	322,667
Derrough Media Ltd (For the services of Claire Byrne)	Contractor	7	240,000	7	250,000
Bergauf Ltd (For the services of George Hamilton)	Contractor	8	191,496	10	192,796
Darragh Maloney	Employee	9	183,743	Not in Top 10 2018	
Studz Entertainment Ltd (For the services of Nicky Byrne)	Contractor	10	182,400	Not in Top 10 2018	
Brendan O'Connor	Contractor	Not in Top 10 2017		8	240,000
Bryan Dobson	Employee	Not in Top 10 2017		9	209,282
Mary Wilson	Employee	Not in Top 10 2017		Not in Top 10 2018	
				10	196,961

Basis of preparation:

The Directors of RTÉ are responsible for the proper preparation and fair presentation of the Earnings Statement for the relevant periods.

The RTÉ Top On –Air Talent Earnings for the year ended 31 December 2017, 2018 and 2019 are prepared on an accruals basis for employees or independent contractors who have a direct relationship with RTÉ. Employee earnings include salaries and employer pension contribution. Earnings for contractors represent fees payable excluding VAT. Contractors do not earn salaries and RTÉ does not make any pension contribution on their behalf.

As part of a range of cost-cutting measures announced in 2019, the total fees paid to its highest-paid presenters were reduced by 15% in 2020. In line with public commitments made on this issue, information on top earning fees are made available two years retrospectively. The information for 2020 will be published later this year.

Total fees paid to RTÉ's highest earning presenters represent less than 1% of RTÉ's total operating costs, and they remain under constant review.

2. the number of people who are earning in excess of €150,000 annually from 2019 to date;

The salary bands at different levels are published annually (post audit and publication of the Annual Report) on the RTÉ website. In 2019 there were 24 employees earning over €150,000. In 2020, there were 22 employees earning between €150,000 and €250,000.

As financial information for 2021 is still being audited, we are not in a position to confirm the figures for that year, at this point.

3. clarification whether the RTÉ Player is developed or maintained internally, and expenditure on purchasing, development and maintenance per year since its inception, as well as information regarding viewership figures; and

RTÉ Player has been developed by expert external vendors (appointed following a public tender process), and most elements of its ongoing maintenance, development and support are provided by the vendors, under the direction and management of a small team in RTÉ.

Some support costs would therefore be absorbed within overall RTÉ staff and personnel related costs. Third party contracts are commercially sensitive. However, to give an indicative level of spend, as reported within our Annual Report, RTÉ spent approximately €22.3 million in 2020, and €20.4 million in 2019 on its online services (which include RTÉ Player, RTÉ Radio Player, RTÉ.ie, the RTÉ News app and other smaller apps). As audiences increasingly migrate online in the years ahead, it is likely that this investment in RTÉ's digital services will increase significantly.

Performance of RTÉ Player

RTÉ Player is Ireland's leading broadcaster video-on-demand service and has seen considerable growth in streaming and time-spent on the service since 2019:

- Growth from 49.6 million streams in 2019, to 67 million streams in 2021.
- Average streaming time per visit has grown from 24.3 minutes in 2019, to 34.4 minutes in 2021.
- Hours streamed per month has grown from 776 thousand to 1.6 million.
- There were nearly 2.5 million streams of drama KIN in 2021.
- 56% of RTÉ Player audience is under 45 making it, along with 2fm, among RTÉ's most popular service with younger audiences.
- In 2021, there were over 6.3 million streams of RTÉ Sport content. The clash between Tyrone and Mayo in the All-Ireland Senior Football Final in September had almost 150,000 streams.
- RTÉ News and RTÉ Weather live streams totalled over 3.3 million streams in 2021
- There has been 153% growth in streaming on Smart and Connected TVs since 2019.

4. An information note regarding geo-blocking technology which results in certain content not being available through the RTÉ Player in Northern Ireland, and any steps being taken to address this.

RTÉ endeavours to make as much of its programming available to viewers in Northern Ireland as possible. However, in circumstances where the rights to an event are owned by another entity, any decisions on the 'territory' where broadcast rights are made available is retained by the owner/seller of those rights. Therefore in the context of some programmes which have particular jurisdictional rights (e.g sports rights), it can mean that viewers who have an internet protocol address outside of the Republic of Ireland, may have that content restricted.

We trust you will understand that in the context of such global commercial arrangements' individual national broadcasters, such as RTÉ, have limited options in terms of coverage arrangements.

RTÉ's television channels are available on pay TV platforms in Northern Ireland e.g. SKY, Virgin. They are also available on Freeview, on free-to-air basis. As outlined above, on occasion some rights are restricted. However there is also considerable overspill of SAORVIEW (Ireland's free-to-air TV service) which allows unrestricted access to all Irish terrestrial channels to many viewers in Northern Ireland. Similarly many border regions in the Republic of Ireland have access to overspill of the Freeview service. RTÉ's Radio services are available to a global audience through the RTÉ Radio Player and again there is significant overspill of RTÉ's FM services into Northern Ireland.

I hope that this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely

Vivienne Flood

Vivienne Flood

Head of Public Affairs