



# Broadcasting Authority of Ireland

Written submission to the Joint Committee on  
Gender Equality on the recommendations made  
by the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality

**March 2022**

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## 1. Introduction

Established under the Broadcasting Act 2009, the BAI is the independent regulator for radio and television broadcasters in Ireland. Its functions include regulating public, commercial and community radio and television services, the making of broadcasting codes and rules, and the provision of funding for programmes and archiving relating to Irish culture, heritage, and experience. The BAI is funded through a levy on all broadcasters licensed in the State.

The BAI welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Gender Equality on foot of the recommendations made by the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality. Internationally, there is significant evidence to show the under-representation of women in the media, both in terms of employment, portrayal, and representation. While the data available for Ireland is limited, recent BAI research indicates that women are struggling "to comprise even a third of media professionals, with radio being the least inclusive of women media professionals"<sup>1</sup>.

The BAI notes that many of the recommendations made by the Citizens' Assembly are beyond the scope of the BAI's statutory remit. However, the BAI is of the view that it has made a positive contribution towards the achievement of a number of these recommendations, specifically Recommendation 22 (on public funding for sports, cultural and media organisations), Recommendation 25 (on workplace equal opportunities), Recommendation 31 (on the portrayal and representation of women and gender roles in the media) and Recommendation 43 (on data gathering for key gender roles).

The brief submission below aims to outline some of the work of the BAI in support of these recommendations.

## 2. BAI Commitment to Gender Equality

The BAI and its predecessor organisations have had a long-standing commitment to gender equality in the Irish audio- and audio-visual landscape and have used several regulatory mechanisms and policy approaches to address the imbalance noted above. It should be noted that for many years, the BAI has actively engaged with multiple stakeholders to raise awareness of gender inequality in the Irish audio- and audio-visual sectors and to actively promote gender equality therein.

### 2.1 BAI Gender Action Plan

In 2018, as part of its commitment to gender diversity, the BAI developed and launched a [Gender Action Plan](#) ("the Plan"). The Plan has four key pillars: data collection and publication, research, encouraging gender initiatives, and accountability, under which a broad range of activities are undertaken by the BAI each year.

Between 2018 and 2020, the BAI undertook significant work to implement its Gender Action Plan. An overview of this work is provided in a [review of the Plan](#) published in 2020. This work has continued in 2021 and 2022. Some key areas of activity undertaken as part of the Plan include:

- The collection of gender data, in operation since 2018, as part of the BAI's Sound & Vision funding application and contracting processes. Data collated between 2018 and 2020 suggest that the participation of women in key creative roles is increasing. In the most [recent funding round](#) announced in March 2022, women filled between 60 – 85% of the producer, writer, and editor roles for successful projects. However, it should be noted that this data reflects the

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.bai.ie/en/media/sites/2/dlm\\_uploads/2021/07/Auditing-Gender-Diversity-Change.pdf](https://www.bai.ie/en/media/sites/2/dlm_uploads/2021/07/Auditing-Gender-Diversity-Change.pdf)

gender statistics for the BAI's Sound & Vision Scheme. It may not necessarily reflect the wider Irish audio/audio-visual industry.

- An additional assessment criterion for 'Women's Stories' in [round 33](#) of the BAI Sound & Vision Scheme, operated in 2019. 70% of radio projects and all television projects recommended for funding under that round had a women's narrative. Stakeholders welcomed this initiative as a method to rebalance the narrative on-screen and on-air, offer different perspectives, and ultimately, allow for stories told from a woman's perspective through various genres and formats. Most notably, projects offered funding included the critically acclaimed film '*An Cáilín Ciúin*', a coming-of-age story about a nine-year-old girl, the television documentary '*After a Women's Heart*' tracing the changes in women's lives in Ireland 30 years after the release of the iconic music album, '*Moya*' a television portrait of musician Moya Brennan and '*Women's Bits*', a radio series which featured women sharing experiences, memories and songs.
- A demonstrable commitment to research. This was evidenced by the BAI's recent support and publication of two research reports on gender diversity in the media under the BAI Media Research Funding Scheme. The first report entitled '[Auditing gender and diversity change in Irish media sectors](#)' was published in July 2021 and examines how gender and diversity policies are promoted and implemented by broadcasters, training bodies and production companies. The second report published in August 2021, '[RTÉ and Covid-19 – Diversity and Inclusion and meeting public needs](#)', examines the role of public service media in Ireland during Covid-19 and looks at diversity issues, including gender in broadcast content during coverage of Covid-19.
- A significant stakeholder engagement programme with the specific objective of supporting gender initiatives. High-profile initiatives for the broadcasting industry such as [X-Pollinator](#), a cross-disciplinary professional development and networking initiative, the 'Women on Air' [database](#) of women professionals, network funding for core advocacy organisations such as '[Women and Film in Television](#)' who deliver a wide range of training and development programmes for women in the industry and CRAOL's Women's Network were all supported and funded by the BAI. The BAI continues to support these projects in 2022 and several other gender-related initiatives, such as the commercial radio training body Learning Waves' Diversity project (which focuses on gender), examining a sector-wide approach to best practice in this area.
- Active participation in a wide variety of stakeholder events, both at a national and European level, such as Film Festivals, European regulatory events and industry training sessions, to promote the BAI's Gender Action Plan. Participation in these events reinforces the BAI's commitment to the objectives of the Plan and offers a unique opportunity to raise further awareness of the work of the BAI on these matters.

## 2.2 BAI Stakeholder Consultation on the Gender Action Plan

Currently, the BAI is undertaking a review of its Gender Action Plan. An extensive stakeholder consultation exercise on the impact of the BAI Gender Action Plan has been completed and published on the BAI website [here](#). Broadly, the findings of this report include the following:

- The BAI has made a very positive and tangible contribution to encouraging the development of gender initiatives in the sector.

- Particularly, the collection and publication of gender data relating to the BAI's Broadcasting Funding Scheme, Sound&Vision, are viewed as having a positive impact on the industry.
- BAI funding for gender initiatives has, in turn, enabled organisations to better support women in the sector.
- BAI research in matters of gender equality and diversity has made a significant contribution to the evidence base on these matters.
- More work is needed, and further improvements in the sector are required, to achieve gender parity.

As mentioned above, the BAI is conducting a full review of the current BAI Gender Action Plan. The BAI would be very happy to discuss the findings of the review and next steps with the Committee when published.

### 2.3 *Internal BAI approach to gender equality*

As a public body, the BAI has a number of obligations under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act (2014) which introduces a positive duty on public bodies to have due regard to human rights and equality issues. An [Assessment Report](#) covering the period 2017-2020 has been completed and published on the BAI website. The report identified a range of human rights and equality measures in place in the BAI, resulting from statute and from the BAI's own policies and work activities.

Furthermore, a comprehensive [BAI Public Sector Duty Action Plan 2021-2022](#) was developed on foot of the outcomes of the Assessment Report. Areas of focus for the current Action Plan include staff training and wellness, as well as sustainability, disability and accessibility, equality, diversity and inclusion. The Action Plan is overseen by the BAI's Senior Management Team and a report on its implementation will be set out in the BAI's Annual Report.

Per government policy and the Broadcasting Act 2009, the membership of the Authority is gender balanced. Currently, the Authority comprises 60% of women and Ms Mary Curtis was the first woman appointed as Chairperson of the broadcasting regulator in Ireland in late 2021. With regard to the BAI's two Statutory Committees, the Contract Awards Committee currently comprises eight members including four women, while the Compliance Committee currently has seven members including four women.

Ms Celene Craig was recently appointed as the BAI's first female Chief Executive Officer. Internally, the BAI Senior Management Team has a gender split of 50% male and 50% female, while at overall management level, the gender split is 60% female and 40% male.

Additionally, the BAI has a wide suite of internal practices which support women in the workplace. A few selected examples include:

- Equal opportunities recruitment strategies which include gender-balanced interview panels
- A comprehensive set of staff policies catering for work/life balance including maternity and carer's leave policies
- The provision of induction for employees returning to the workplace after maternity or paternity leave, career break or other extended leave
- Pursuit of accreditation from the Irish Centre for Diversity under the 'Investors in Diversity' programme

## 2.4 Selected additional initiatives supporting gender equality

*Broadcasting Funding Scheme strategic assessment* - As part of the BAI's strategic assessment process for the BAI's Broadcasting Funding Scheme (Sound&Vision), the extent to which the creative team includes women in a leadership role and/or the extent to which the proposed programme content takes account of gender equality forms part of the assessment criteria.

*Additional Research, gender and news consumption* – In early 2022, the BAI published [research](#) examining the role of gender and diversity in news media consumption in Ireland and internationally. The research supports the existing analysis in the Reuters Digital News Reports for Ireland 2021 and provides additional insights on how gender impacts engagement with news and news systems in Ireland.

*Broadcaster Sustainability Network, gender equality* – In November 2020, the BAI launched the Broadcasting Sustainability Network, a voluntary sector-wide sustainability group of Irish broadcasters and representatives of their supply chains. The network aims to foster best practices and provide support to make the Irish broadcasting sector a sustainability leader that uses its collective voice to create a greener, more inclusive, more resilient future for all. The Network's Roadmap is framed by the ten most relevant United Nations Sustainability Development Goals, including Gender Equality.

*Learning Waves Diversity Training* – with BAI funding and support, Learning Waves have conducted Diversity training and established a sub-committee of its Board to drive the engagement of its members. In partnership with the Independent Broadcasters of Ireland (IBI), Learning Waves also completed a sector-wide survey of stations to gain an overview of the policies, procedures, and practices already in place and to ascertain what additional support the sector needs in this area. Data from the survey has informed the development of a 2021/2022 action plan and a road map for the industry.

*Code of Programme Standards and gender* – The BAI's Code of Programme Standards is a principle-based broadcasting regulatory code. Broadcasters are required to comply with the principles within the Code, and viewers or listeners who believe programme material has not adhered to this Code are entitled to make a complaint to the Broadcaster. Principle five of the Code requires that broadcasters, amongst other things, only emphasise gender when such reference is justified and also requires broadcasters not to broadcast material with the intent to stir up hatred against persons or groups in society, including on the grounds of gender.

*Community broadcasters and gender balance on boards* - all Community Broadcasters and Pilot Community Broadcasters licensed by the BAI must confirm that their Board structure adheres to a 60/40 gender balance requirement.

## 3. Conclusion

As mentioned above, the BAI is currently in the process of reviewing its Gender Action Plan, which we intend to publish later this year. We would be happy to provide the Committee with further information on the review when it becomes available, as well as providing additional detail on any of the initiatives listed above, should it be of interest to the Committee.

At present, the BAI is of the view that the Gender Action Plan has made a positive contribution to the achievements of Recommendations 22, 31 and 43 of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality. While much work still needs to be done, the foundations laid by the collection of gender data, the promotion and support of gender initiatives, and the design and implementation of appropriate regulatory mechanisms will enable the BAI and its successor organisation (the Media Commission) to continue

building a more equal and representative Irish audiovisual sector. The BAI will continue to work with key stakeholders in the pursuit of this objective.

With regard to Recommendation 25 of the Citizens' Assembly, the BAI continues to maintain a workplace environment which places respect and equal opportunities at the centre of its staff policies. The BAI's 2021-2022 Public Sector Duty Action Plan referenced above provides a holistic framework for equality and diversity in the workplace.

The BAI wishes to thank the Committee for its invitation to provide a brief overview of its work on gender equality and would be happy to elaborate on any aspect of this submission, should the Committee consider it helpful to do so.