



Screen Producers Ireland opening statement to Committee on Media, Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sport and the Gaeltacht

Thank you to the Committee for the invitation to appear here today and discuss the importance of the Online Media Regulation and Online Safety Bill to the Irish independent production sector, and wider creative sector.

With over 130 company members, SPI is recognized as the voice of independent audio-visual (AV) production in Ireland.

SPI members are creative entrepreneurs who produce globally celebrated film, animation and TV, creating high-value all-island and regionally spread employment, fostering Ireland's media education eco-system along with preserving Ireland's artistic heritage.

The Olsberg Report (2018) estimated the Gross Value Added (GVA) of film, television and animation production in Ireland in 2016 at €692m with full time equivalent employment at 11,960 jobs. It is without doubt that these numbers have grown since then.

In this statement we want to focus on the AVMSD content levy provisions.

The AVMS Directive now allows EU Member States to place financial obligations on audiovisual media service providers such as PayTV services like Sky and SVOD services like Netflix. These financial obligations include levies and investment obligations. We welcome Head 76 of the Bill which introduces a levy and Head 77 of the Bill which provides for the setting up of schemes to administer the proceeds of the levy to fund film and television projects.

The Chair of the BAI said in October 2019: "The existing regulatory structure and funding model require an overhaul. As part of that overhaul, ways need to be found to ensure that providers who take revenue from the Irish market give something back in return, in terms of appropriate content or otherwise."

Last week in this Committee, the major Irish broadcasters – RTÉ, VMT and TG4 all spoke in favour of bringing in the levy which we feel is important to recognise here today.

As we set out in our pre legislative scrutiny submission we believe these issues can be dealt with by:

- The AVMSD should be fully implemented in Ireland without delay. Levies at a minimum of 3% to 4% should be applied to PayTV and VOD services turnover and to television advertising (including opt-out advertising) on services targeting Irish audiences.

- o A commencement date for the levy's collection is set in the legislation – this date should be 1st January 2023. This should mean that the revenue from the levy could be shared with Irish content makers from 2023.
- o The BAI should hire a specialist staff member without delay to begin work on the levy as part of its transitional work from the BAI to the Media Commission, to work on the collection system for the levy and on the administration of the production fund.

Crucially – all applications to the Fund should be done through an independent Irish production company to ensure that the investment is spent on original Irish content and supports original content creation by Irish creatives. IP ownership should be retained with the Irish producer as a condition of the fund.

We would ask that the Committee members strongly consider including these recommendations in their report to the Minister Media on the legislation.

In conclusion, introducing the content levy without delay create new funding possibilities for Irish producers to create original Irish content for Irish audiences and increase the amount of Irish stories online without any additional cost to the exchequer.

Go raibh maith agaibh.