



## Aighneacht ó Raidió na Life chuig an gCoimisiún um Thodhchaí na Meán

08 Eanáir 2021

### Réamhrá:

Stáisiún raidió lán-Ghaeilge neamhspleách is ea Raidió na Life, a fheidhmíonn go deonach don chuid is mó, mar stáisiún pobail comhleasa (*community of interest*). Táimid ag craoladh go buan le beagnach tríocha bliain anuas i mórcheantar Bhaile Átha Cliath agus ar líne ar [www.raidionalife.ie](http://www.raidionalife.ie).

Tá dhá phríomh-éileamh leagtha amach againn san aighneacht seo chuig an gCoimisiún:

1. **go ndéanfaidh an Stát infheistíocht de c. €1m in aghaidh na bliana i Raidió na Life sna blianta beaga atá amach romhainn, chun an stáisiún a fhorbairt mar**
  - a. Dhara stáisiún raidió náisiúnta Gaeilge, agus
  - b. Mol Léiriúcháin agus Digiteach Gaeilge

agus
2. **go ndéanfaidh an Stát infheistíocht shubstaintiúil dhíreach i Raidió Pobail in Éirinn i gcoitinne, agus go dtacódh an Stát go láidir leis an tríú earnáil seo, go háirithe i dtaca lena ról sa chraoltóireacht seirbhíse poiblí sa thír.**

### Nóta / Note:

Táimid sásta leagan Béarla den aighneacht seo a chur ar fáil más fearr leis an gCoimisiún go soláthróimis leagan Béarla inár bhfocail féin seachas dul i muinín aistritheora nach mbeadh ag scríobh ar ár son. Más mian libh go ndéanfaimis seo, ní gá ach ríomhphost a chur chuig [REDACTED] chun é a éileamh agus déanfaimid é agus míle fáilte.

*We are happy to provide an English version of this submission if the Commission would prefer that we supply an English version in our own words rather than depending upon a translator who would not be writing directly on our behalf. If this is desired, just e-mail [REDACTED] to request it and it will be provided without hesitation.*

### Cúlra Raidió na Life:

Tá Raidió na Life, mar stáisiún raidió pobail comhleasa (fo-chatagóir den raidió pobail), ag craoladh go lánameartha ar 106.4FM (agus roimhe sin ar 102.2FM) ó fuair sé a chéad cheadúnas craolacháin buan ón IRTC i 1993, i ndiaidh roinnt craoltaí sealadacha i 1991 agus 1992. Tá sé ar cheann de na céad stáisiúin raidió pobail in Éirinn (i gceachtar dlínsé) a fuair ceadúnas iomlán craolacháin ón rialathóir, agus tá sé ar cheann de na céad stáisiúin raidió neamhspleácha in Éirinn atá fós ag craoladh, nach mó tríocha bliain níos déanaí. Is ceann de scéalta ratha na craoltóireachta Gaeilge é an stáisiún (é ag teacht ar an aer trí bliana roimh theacht ar an aer TG4/TnaG) agus an pobal bríomhar atá tarraingthe le chéile aige in imeacht na mblianta, agus go speisialta an fhéiniúlacht chomhaimseartha, fhuinniúil, uirbeach, atá tugtha aige don nGaeilge ar na haerthonnta raidió i mBaile Átha Cliath.

Tháinig Raidió na Life ar an bhfód, agus chaith sé cuid mhór dá shaol, i ré nuair a bhí an raidió le cloisteáil go hanalógach amháin; nuair nach bhféadfadh duine ar mhian leo teacht ar sheirbhís a bhí ag craoladh i mBaile Átha Cliath amháin teacht ar an tseirbhís sin aon bhealach ach amháin a bheith, go fisiciúil, i mBaile Átha Cliath iad féin chun an comhartha FM a thiúnáil isteach ar ghléas raidió. Sa tírdhreach inar gineadh é agus inar saolaíodh é, samhláodh Raidió na Life mar stáisiún a d'fhreastalódh ar phobal na Gaeilge i mBaile Átha Cliath agus sa cheantar máguaird, agus chlúdaigh an comhartha cuid mhór de Chúige Laighean i luathbhlianta an stáisiún. Ar ndóigh, sa ré inar tháinig sé ar an saol, ba rud radacach ab ea a bhunú - an chéad uair gur dhúirt sciar suntasach de phobal chainteoirí líofa na Gaeilge sa Stát os ard narbh leor an tseirbhís raidió a bhí ar fáil ó RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta le freastail ar a mianta; nár fhreastail an stáisiún sin (Raidió na Gaeltachta) i bhfírinne ó lá go lá ach ar mhuintir na Gaeltachta (rud a bhí agus atá bailí, agus é ar an bpriomhchúis gur bunaíodh RnaG), agus **go raibh gá le rogha eile de chainéal raidió trí Ghaeilge** - seirbhís ina mbeadh meascán leathan de ghuthanna le cloisteáil, ag áireamh cainteoirí nár chainteoirí dúchais iad mar láithreoirí ar chláir an stáisiún; seirbhís ar a seinfí pop-cheol, rac, ceol domhanda, ceol leictreonach agus eile, agus gan aon chosc ar liricí Béarla mar a bhí ag RnaG, agus stáisiún ina mbeadh guthanna óga le cloisteáil. I mbeagán focal, seirbhís raidió chomhaimseartha i nGaeilge a sheasfadh taobh le taobh leis na stáisiún chomhaimseartha Bhéarla is fearr.

Tríocha bliain níos déanaí, tá tírdhreach teicneolaíochta na craoltóireachta, agus na cumarsáide i gcoitinne, athraithe ó bhonn. Ní gá ach ceangal idirlín a bheith ag duine le teacht ar a rogha cainéal raidió, a rogha cainéal teilihise, a rogha podchraoladh, nuachtán, iris, nó eile - bíodh siad ina bhfeirmeoir i gCorca Dhuibhne a theastaíonn uaidh féachaint ar CNN le súil ghéar a choinneáil ar eachtraí sna Stáit Aontaithe, nó an t-iascaire i gConamara a theastaíonn uaidh The New York Times a léamh, nó an t-oibrí óstáin i nGaoth Dobhair a theastaíonn uaithe éisteacht le Raidió na Life mar go dtainníonn na guthanna óga agus na topaíci cainte agus ceol comhaimseartha léi.

Ach is beag atá athraithe le tríocha bliain ó thaobh múnlacha oibríochtúil agus múnlacha maoinithe an t-aon dá stáisiún raidió Gaeilge atá ar fáil ar FM – an dá phríomhrogha d'éisteoirí atá ar thóir cláir raidió trí Ghaeilge ar an raidió (seachas ar líne) sa Stát, is iad sin RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta, stáisiún lángairmiúil a bhfuil tuairim is 80 duine fostaithe aige, le buiséad tuairim is €12-13 milliún in aghaidh na bliana agus ar cuid den chraoltóir seirbhise poiblí náisiúnta é, agus Raidió na Life, stáisiún pobail neamhbhrabús a bhraitheann ar dheontas €240,000 in aghaidh na bliana ó Fhoras na Gaeilge, agus ar 3 fhostaí lánaimseartha, leis an dara rogha a chur ar fáil. Ar ndóigh, glacann meitheal mó de bhrefis is 100 saorálaí páirt i Raidió na Life mar láithreoirí ar chláir an stáisiún. Gan iad, ní bheadh ar chumas an stáisiún níos mó ná uair an chloig nó dhó in aghaidh an lae de chláir a sholáthar leis an bhfoireann de thriúr lánaimseartha (Bainisteoir Stáisiúin; Teicneoir agus Clár Reachtaire) atá fostaithe aige. Is iontach an rud é an deonachas sa stáisiún agus mórán buntáistí sóisialta agus eile ag baint leis, ach ar ndóigh ní féidir an caighdeán céanna craolachán a bhaint amach le 100 oibrí deonach a chuireann cláir i láthair mar chaitheamh aimsire agus is féidir a bhaint amach le foireann ghairmiúil íoctha. Ní haon chaitheamh anuas ar ár gcraoltóirí deonacha é seo, ach an fhírinne maidir le caighdeán an aschuir ar an stáisiún ina ionláine. Tá láithreoirí an-mhaithe againn, tá láithreoirí atá réasúnta againn, agus tá láithreoirí laga againn, mar is dual do stáisiún pobail.

#### **Moladh 1: Ba chóir don Stát infheistíocht shubstaintiúil a dhéanamh i Raidió na Life mar an príomhrogha eile d'ábhair fuáime (audio content) do Ghaeilgeoirí**

I bhfianaise a laghad roghanna atá ar fáil dóibh siúd a labhraíonn an chéad teanga oifigiúil sa Stát, **creidimidne go bhfuil an t-am tagtha don Stát chun infheistíocht shubstaintiúil, chuí, a dhéanamh sa dara chainéal a chur ar fáil, stáisiún a sholáthródh rogha eile d'éisteoirí**, éisteoirí nach bhfreastalaíonn RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta orthu, nó nach bhfreastalaíonn an stáisiún sin orthu go ró-mhinic.

Tá éilimh ann ó ghrúpaí eile go n-íocfadh an Stát as stáisiún pop-cheoil do dhéagóirí agus daoine fásta óga, a bheadh bunaithe ar mhúnla craolachán (ní múnlacha maoinithe ná múnlacha gnó) na stáisiún pop-cheoil tráchtála Béarla arb ann dóibh ar mhaithle le brabús a thuilleadh, a bhfuil a bhfigíúirí éisteachta ag titim, ag am a bhfuil daoine óga ag tréigint an raidió analógach agus gléasanna analógacha agus ag teacht ar a gcuid ceoil agus a gcuid siamsaíochta ar ardáin dhigiteacha (Spotify, YouTube, Netflix, TikTok srl) agus ar ghléasanna digiteacha - fón phóca, ríomhairí glúine, taibléid, teilihís dhigiteach srl. Ní dóigh linn go bhfuil ciall ag baint leis an éileamh seo ná an múnlacha cúng seo, atá bunaithe ar chineál stáisiún raidió nach mbeidh rath air sa ré atá amach os ár gcomhair. Creidimid, ámh, go bhfuil riachtanas láidir ann do níos mó ná aon stáisiún raidió “náisiúnta” Gaeilge /

aon fhoinse amháin d'ábhar fuaime (*audio content*) d'ardchaighdeán i nGaeilge, bíodh sé ar FM nó eile. Creidimid ag an bpóinte seo nach gá go mbeadh fócas ró-láidir ar cheist an ardáin ar a sholáthrófaí an rogha - nó na roghanna – eile. Tá féidearthacht láidir ann, dár linn, go mbeadh éileamh ar sheirbhís náisiúnta ar FM i measc na n-aoisghrápaí a bhfuil a nósanna éisteachta fite fuaite le beith ag éisteacht le raidió FM – is é sin, daoine fásta os cionn aois áirithe [25/30/35/40 bliain d'aois?]. Ach ní fiú a bheith ag caint ar an infheistíocht a dhéanfaí san infreastruchtúr teicniúil a bhaínfeadh leis an ardán, mura bhfuil an infheistíocht chuí ann chun ábhar d'ardchaighdeán a léiriú agus a sholáthar go laethúil, idir chláir chainte is chláir cheoil; cláir a bheidh mealtach do réimse leathan cainteoirí Gaeilge agus a bhféadfadh daoine gan cleachtadh acu ar éisteacht le cláir raidió trí Ghaeilge a mhealladh.

**Creidimid gurb é Raidió na Life an stáisiún ar féidir leis an dara rogha sin a chur ar fáil.** Leis an infheistíocht cheart.

Cad atá i gceist againn le hinfeistíocht cheart?

Infheistíocht a chumasódh Raidió na Life chun a phoitéinseal iomlán a bhaint amach, trí foireann shubstaintiúil a hhostú (seachas triúr lánaimseartha chun stáisiún raidio a reáchtáil!). Bhainfeadh an infheistíocht seo sa chéad dul síos le daoine agus cruthú poist mhaithe do:

- foireann lánaimseartha d'iriseoirí le Gaeilge
- an chéad ghlúin eile de léiritheoirí cruthaitheacha le Gaeilge
- láithreoirí le talann agus bua ar leith ("réalta raidió") agus Gaeilge líofa acu srl.
- foireann theicniúil

Is cuma más FM nó ar líne / digiteach atá i gceist - is iad na daoine a sholáthraíonn an t-ábhar ar gá iad a ioc le go gcruthófaí seirbhís d'ardchaighdeán agus ábhar lán-ghairmiúil d'ardchaighdeán. Is cuma cá háit a dtagann daoine ar an ábhar ina dhiaidh sin.

Bheimis lán-sásta moladh níos mionsonraithe a chur ar fáil don Choimisiún maidir leis an infheistíocht a bheadh á lorg againn chun Raidió na Life a iompú ina dara rogha náisiúnta gairmiúil dóibh siúd ar thóir ábhar fuaime d'ardchaighdeán i nGaeilge, ach bunaithe ar 80 fostai lánaimseartha a bheith á bhfostú ag RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta agus buiséad c. €12/13 milliún acu, creidimid go bhféadfadh RnaL ar a laghad jab réasúnta maith a dhéanamh le 20 fostai agus buiséad oibríochtaí i bhfad níos lú. Gan dul go mion isteach sa bhriseadh síos a bheadh ar an 20 duine sin idir léiritheoirí, láithreoirí, taighdeoirí, teicneoirí, foireann riarracháin, foireann mhargaíochta, srl. agus na tuarastail a mbeifí ag súil leo chun daoine maithe a fháil, mar léiriú garbh, tóg an meántuarastail tionsclaíoch in Éirinn de thart ar €40,000, méadaigh é faoi 20 = €800,000. Dár ndóigh bheadh costais oibriúcháin, infreastruchtúr srl. nach bhfuil á gclúdú ag an mbuiséad beag a thugann Foras na Gaeilge do Raidió na Life faoi láthair, agus bheadh siad seo le hoibriú amach go cúramach, ach **creidimid go bhféadfaimis tionchar dearfach ollmhór a imirt ar shaol craoltóireachta na hÉireann agus an rogha d'ábhar Gaeilge a bheadh ar fáil don phobal, le maoiniú poiblí de istigh agus amuigh ar €1 milliún in aghaidh na bliana.** Is suim réasúnta beag é seo i bhfianaise an tionchair a d'fhéadfadh sé a imirt.

Dár ndóigh, le foireann de 20 duine fostaithe, ní hé go mbeadh deireadh le deiseanna ná le róil d'oibrithe deonacha – rud atá an-dearfach, ach bheadh caighdeán i bhfad níos airde á bhaint amach i ngach aon slí trasna na seirbhíse, agus an rogha gairmiúil ábhar sin ar fáil do phobal na Gaeilge.

Tá deiseanna ann freisin tógáil ar an "stáisiún raidió" traidisiúnta agus tosú ag smaoineamh ar na deiseanna a bhainfeadh le stáisiúin raidió pobail cosúil le Raidió na Life a fhorbairt mar mhoil léiriúcháin dhígiteacha (*digital production hubs*), ina mbeadh níos mó ná obair raidió amháin ar bun (obair léiriúcháin theilifíse, m.sh.; iriseoireacht scríofa; soláthair ábhair ilmheáin ar líne, ranganna agus cúrsaí i scileanna léiriúcháin, ranganna Gaeilge, srl.) Tá tuilleadh faoi seo scríofa againn thíos i gcomhthéacs stáisiúin raidió pobail i gcoitinne, cé, dár ndóigh, gur ainmhí ar leith a bheadh i mol digitach Gaeilge cosúil le Raidió na Life agus gnéithe breise ag baint leis.

## Moladh 2: Tábhacht tríú earnáil an chraolacháin - Raidió Pobail - a aithint agus a mhaoliniú:

Ba mhaith linn aird a tharraingt ar an tábhacht a bhaineann le raidió pobail i gcoitinne agus stáisiúin raidió pobail ar fud na hÉireann i dtaobh an ról a imríonn siad in ábhar craolacháin seirbhíse poiblí a chur ar fáil do phobail éagsúla fud fad na tíre, bíodh siad ina bpobail áitiúla nó ina bpobail comhleasa cosúil le pobal na Gaeilge (pobal atá, go náisiúnta, níos líonnmhaire ná aon phobal áitiúil a fhreastalaíonn aon "gnáth"-stáisiún pobail orthu). Cé gurb iad RTÉ agus TG4 na príomh-soláthairí craoltóireachta seirbhíse poiblí (agus creidimid gur cheart dóibh fanacht mar sin – agus go deimhin níos mó béisme a chur ar an bpriomhghné sin dá misin), **is é raidió pobail an dara "baile" nádúrtha don chraoltóireacht seirbhíse poiblí in Éirinn**. Tá sé fior-thábhachtach go n-aithneofaí é seo.

Ní ar mhaithe le leas an phobail ná le leas poiblí a reáchtáiltear stáisiúin tráchtála atá ar an bhfód chun brabús a thuilleadh (agus an ceart sin acu), agus níor cheart a bheith ag brath orthu ná dul ina muinín chun bearnaí sa soláthar de chraoltóireacht seirbhíse poiblí a líonadh. Tá siad ar thóir an bhrabús agus dá réir ar thóir an líon is mó éisteoirí ar féidir leo a mhealladh, agus bíonn tionchar soiléir aige seo ar ábhar na gclár agus stíl láithreoireachta na gclár. Ní rud maith don saoránach ná don tsochaí a bhíonn anseo i gcónaí.

I gcodarsnacht leis an earnáil bhrabús raidió tráchtála, ba chóir aird agus aitheantas ar leith a thabhairt don obair tábhachtach eile go léir a dhéanann stáisiúin raidió pobail freisin:

- *citizen journalism* a éascú
- litearthacht ar na meáin (*media literacy*) a chur chun cinn
- oiliúint agus deiseanna craolacháin a thabhairt don ghnáth-saoránach
- spás a thabhairt do mhionlaigh chun iad féin a chur in iúl
- ábhair a chlúdach ar bhealach nach bhfuil bunaithe ar an gcur chuige sáraíochta (*adversarial approach*) a chloistear chomh minic sin ar stáisiúin thráchtála
- ábhair thábhachtacha nach gclúdófaí ar na stáisiúin thráchtála ná ar RTÉ toisc nach meallfadh siad a dhóthain éisteoirí, ach a bhfuil tábhacht ar leith ag baint leo don tsochaí a chlúdach
- deiseanna chainte agus féin-chur-in-iúl a thabhairt do dhaoine nach gcloisfí ar stáisiúin thráchtála ná ar RTÉ

Ba chóir don Stát croí-mhaoliniú a chur ar fáil do stáisiúin raidió pobail (ar féidir leo a chruthú go bhfuil siad ag feidhmiú mar stáisiúin phobail agus de réir Chairt Raidió Pobail AMARC agus a bhfuil ceadúnas craolacháin cuí acu ón BAI nó pé rialathóir a thiocfaidh i gcomharbacht air) chun cabhrú leo a ról craolacháin seirbhíse poiblí (mar aon lena ról mar ghrúpaí forbartha pobail) a chomhlíonadh agus a fhás agus a fhorbairt don todhchaí.

Tá poitéinseal ollmhór ag baint le múnla an mhoil léiriúcháin dhigitigh atá luaite againn i gcomhthéacs Raidió na Life cheana féin. Leis an infheistíocht chuí, bheadh stáisiúin raidió pobail ar fud na tíre ábalta iad féin a fhorbairt mar mhoil dhigiteacha / moil léiriúcháin, agus iad seo a bheith in úinéireacht a bpobal áitiúil agus ag feidhmiú chun leasa an phobail áitiúil. Bheadh tionchar dochreidte dearfach aige seo ar phobail áitiúla fud fad na tíre ar mhórán slite (soláthar áiseanna; traenáil; tógáil phobail; cruthú fostálochta; cur le féinmhuinín na ndaoine agus na bpobal trí chéile, srl.)

D'fhéadfadh an maoiniú seo teacht go díreach ó cháin lárnach (an rogha is fearr, dár linn), neamhspeách ar mhianta gearr-théarmacha Ranna Stáit ná ar áiséineachtaí cosúil le Foras na Gaeilge, a bhfuil téarmaí tagartha i bhfad níos leithne acu agus nach gá go mbeadh siad i gcónaí ina saineolaithe ar an gcraoltóireacht. Chumasódh maoiniú díreach ó cháin lárnach na stáisiúin chun pleáiní fad-théarmach a dhéanamh freisin, rud atá dodhóanta in earnáil atá ag brath ar chur isteach go leanúnach ar dheontais gach bliain, rud a chuireann an-chuid ama agus fuinneamh amú, nuair a bhféadfaí an t-am agus an fuinneamh sin a chaitheamh ar an obair craolacháin agus an obair fhobartha phobail a tharlaíonn mar thoradh ar an gcraoltóireacht phobail. Rogha eile ar ndóigh ná sciar den táille ceadúnais teilihíse, nó pé comharba a thagann air seo má leantar leis an múnla, a chur go díreach isteach i gciste neamhspleách a dháilí ar stáisiúin phobail ar fud na tíre. Ach tá deacrachtaí go leor ag baint le múnla an táille cheadúnais (teilihíse/eile?), agus ní gá gurb é an múnla is fearr é don todhchaí.

## Conclúid:

Is leasanna poiblí tábhachtacha iad na leasanna a bhfuil cur síos déanta againn orthu thuas, idir theanga imeallaithe agus mionlaithe dúchais na tíre - an Ghaeilge, céad teanga oifigiúil an Stáit - a chur chun cinn is a spreagadh ar bhealach samhláoch, comhaimseartha, bríomhar; agus an chraoltóireacht seirbhíse poiblí neamhbhrabús agus an obair ghaolmhar a dhéanann stáisiún raidió pobail. Chuige sin is cóir iad a mhaoiniú ón gciste poiblí agus maoiniú dóthaineach a chur ar fáil dóibh. Níor cheart a bheith ag cur iachall ná brú ar sheirbhísí neamhbhrabús a bheith ag iaraidh iad féin a iompú isteach ina seirbhísí tráchtála nó múnlá maoinithe tráchtála a leanúint, nuair nach ar mhaithe le brabús ná le gníomhaíochtaí tráchtála atá siad ann sa chéad dul síos. Má tá an obair á dhéanamh ar mhaithe leis an saoránach agus leis an Stát, is é an saoránach agus an Stát ar chóir dóibh íoc aisti, go díreach mar a dhéantar le haon seirbhís phoiblí eile, agus go háirithe seirbhísí nach féidir iad a reáchtáil ar bhonn tráchtála.

Ag aithint an ghéar-ghanntanais de sheirbhísí craolacháin trí Ghaeilge, agus polasaí sainiúil an Stáit chun normalú a dhéanamh ar úsáid na Gaeilge, agus úsáid laethúil na teanga taobh amuigh den chóras oideachais a mhéadú as cuimse (tá spriocanna thar a bheith uaillmhianacha leagtha síos ag an Stát i dtaca leis seo), ní mór gníomhú dá réir le haon infheistíocht a dhéanfaí i Raidió na Life.

Is gó a aithint nach hionann Raidió na Life agus an stáisiún raidió pobail atá ag freastail ar phobal beag áitiúil i mbaile tuaithe ina bhfuil dhá nó trí mhíle duine ag cur fúthú, nó an stáisiún sa cheantar uirbeach de chúpla ciliméadar cearnaithe atá dírithe go smior ar fhorbairt an cheantair theoranta sin. Ní haon cháineadh ar ár gcomrádaithe i stáisiún raidió pobail eile é seo. Táimid éagsúil. Tá Raidió na Life ag freastail ar phobal i bhfad níos mó, mar a léiríonn na figiúirí atá foilsithe ag an Stát, agus ar phobal atá ar an ngannchuid ó thaobh rogha seirbhísí.

De réir an taighde is déanaí ag an dá Stát in Éirinn, labhraíonn:

- **370,116 duine i mBaile Átha Cliath agus a bruachbhailte Gaeilge.** Ag fágaint forbairtí teicneolaíochta as an áireamh agus ag cloí leis an sainmhíniú a bhí ann go dtí seo ar Raidió na Life mar sheirbhís analógach FM do mhórcheantar Bhaile Átha Cliath, is iad na daoine sin ár bpriomh-spriochphobal. Níl aon stáisiún raidió pobail eile sa tír atá i ngaireacht scread asail do bheith mar sprioc aige freastail ar phobal chomh líonmhar.
- 1.7 milliún duine i bPoblacht na hÉireann Gaeilge (1,761,420 de réir CSO) agus breis agus 100,000 duine (104,943) i dTuaisceart Éireann Gaeilge, de réir fhigiúirí ansin ó 2018. Is ionann sin agus **1,866,363 cainteoir Gaeilge in Éirinn** ina iomláine, de réir na bhfigiúirí is déanaí atá ar fáil. Is féidir le gach duine den nach mór dhá mhilliún duine seo teacht ar Raidió na Life ar líne. Is sa líebhean digiteach a thiocfaidh na forbairtí is mó ar éisteoirí, dár linn, amach anseo, agus mar sin is fiú a bheith ag smaoineamh anois ar Raidió na Life mar stáisiún ar féidir leis, leis an infheistíocht atá de dhíth, freastail ar an dá mhilliún duine sin.

Foinsí:

<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp10esil/p10esil/ilq/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish\\_language\\_in\\_Northern\\_Ireland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_language_in_Northern_Ireland)

Más muid a bheidh mar an príomhrogha náisiúnta eile do phobal na Gaeilge seachas an t-aon tseirbhís amháin atá ar fáil don phobal iomlán faoi láthair i bhfoirm RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta, tá sé riachtanach go dtabharfadh an leibhéal maoinithe a thabharfaidh an Stát do Raidió na Life, mar an dara stáisiún, aitheantas ceart dó sin, agus aitheantas dá chuntas teiste de nach mór tríocha bliain de sheirbhís chomhaimseartha den scoth trí Ghaeilge a sholáthar dóibh siúd a bhí agus atá ar thóir an dara rogha.

Gabhaimid buíochas libh as ucht ár n-aighneacht a léamh agus a mheas, agus tá síul againn go ndéanfaidh sibh machnamh cui ar a bhfuil inti. Táimid ar fáil chun ár gcuid moltaí a phlé libh ar bhonn níos leithne nó níos mionsonraithe, ar bhur gcaioithiúlacht.

Thar ceann Raidió na Life,

Is mise le meas,

*Muiris Ó Fiannachta*

Muiris Ó Fiannachta, Bainisteoir Stáisiúin

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



## Submission from Raidió na Life to the Future of Media Commission

08 January 2021

### Introduction:

Raidió na Life is an independent all-Irish radio station, operating mainly on a voluntary basis as a community station of common interest (*community of interest*). We have been broadcasting permanently for almost thirty years in the greater Dublin area and online at [www.raidionalife.ie](http://www.raidionalife.ie).

We have set out two main demands in this submission to the Commission:

1. **the State will invest c. €1m per annum in Raidió na Life** in the next few years, to develop the station as
  - a. The second national Irish language radio station, and
  - b. an Irish Language Production and Digital Hub

and
2. **the State will make a substantial direct investment in Community Radio** in Ireland in general, and that the State would strongly support this third sector, particularly in relation to its role in public service broadcasting in the country.

### Note:

We are happy to provide an English version of this submission if the Commission would prefer that we supply an English version in our own words rather than depending upon a translator who would not be writing directly on our behalf. If you would like us to do this, just send an email to [REDACTED] to request it and we will do it without hesitation.

*We are happy to provide an English version of this submission if the Commission would prefer that we supply an English version in our own words rather than depending upon a translator who would not be writing directly on our behalf. If this is desired, just e-mail [REDACTED] to request it and it will be provided without hesitation.*

### Raidió na Life Background:

Raidió na Life, as a community radio station of common interest (a sub-category of community radio), has been broadcasting full-time on 106.4FM (and previously on 102.2FM) since receiving its first permanent broadcasting license from the IRTC in 1993, after several temporary broadcasts in 1991 and 1992. It is one of the first community radio stations in Ireland (in either jurisdiction) to receive a full broadcasting license from the regulator and is one of the first independent radio stations in Ireland to continue broadcasting, almost thirty years later. The station is one of the success stories of Irish language broadcasting (coming on air three years before TG4/TnaG came on air) with the vibrant community it has brought together over the years, and especially the contemporary, energetic, urban identity which it has given to the Irish language on the radio airwaves in Dublin.

Raidió na Life came about, and spent much of its life, in an era when radio could only be heard in analogue; when a person wishing to access a service that was broadcast in Dublin only, had no means to access that service other than by being, physically, in Dublin to tune the FM signal onto a radio device. In the landscape into which it was created and born, Raidió na Life was envisioned as a station that would serve the Irish language community in Dublin and the surrounding area and covered much of Leinster in the station's early years. Of course, in its heyday, its establishment was radical - for the first time a significant proportion of the fluent Irish-speaking community in the State declared that the radio service available from RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta was not enough to meet their needs; that station (Raidió na Gaeltachta) in fact only served the people of the Gaeltacht on a day-to-day basis (which was and is valid, and the main reason for the establishment of RnaG), and **that there was a need for an alternative Irish language radio channel** - a service with a wide mix of voices, including non-native speakers as presenters on the station's programs; a service featuring pop, rock, world, electronic and other music, with no restrictions on English lyrics as was the case on RnaG, and a station where young voices could be heard. In short, a contemporary Irish language radio service that would stand side by side with the best contemporary English language stations.

Thirty years later, the technological landscape of broadcasting, and communications in general, has changed radically. All you need is an internet connection to access your favourite radio channel, TV channel, your choice of podcast, newspaper, magazine, or other – whether it's a Corca Dhuibhne farmer who wants to watch CNN to keep up with the adventures in the United States, or the fisherman in Connemara who wants to read The New York Times, or the hotel worker in Gaoth Dobhair who wants to listen to Raidió na Life because she likes the young voices and the discussion topics and contemporary music.

However, the only two Irish language radio stations available on FM have changed little in the last thirty years in terms of operational and funding model - the two main options for listeners seeking radio programs through Irish on radio (rather than online) in the State, are RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta, a fully professional station employing approximately 80 people, with a budget of approximately €12-13 million per annum and forming part of the national public service broadcaster, and Raidió na Life, a non-profit community station that relies on a grant of €240,000 per annum from Foras na Gaeilge, and 3 full-time employees, to provide a second choice. Of course, a large team of over 100 volunteers take part in Raidió na Life as presenters on the station's programs. Without them, the station would not be able to provide more than one or two hours a day of programming with a team of three full-time employees (Station Manager; Technician and Program Comptroller). Volunteering at the station is great with many social and other benefits, but of course the same standard of broadcasting cannot be achieved with 100 volunteers presenting programs as a hobby that could be achieved with paid professional staff. This is not a criticism of our volunteer broadcasters, it is a fact about the quality of output from the station as a whole. We have very good presenters, we have acceptable presenters, and we have weak presenters, as is typical of a community station.

### **Recommendation 1: The State should make a substantial investment in Raidió na Life as the main alternative to audio content for Irish speakers**

Given the limited options available to those who speak the first official language of the State, **we believe that the time has come for the State to make a substantial, appropriate investment in the second channel, a station that would provide an alternative for listeners**, listeners whose needs are not served by RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta, or not very often by that station.

There are demands from other groups for the State to pay for a teen and young adult pop music station, which would be based on the broadcasting model (not a funding model or a business model) of the existing English language commercial pop stations created for increased profit, whose listening figures are falling, at a time when young people are abandoning analogue radio and analogue devices and accessing their music and entertainment on digital platforms (Spotify, YouTube, Netflix, TikTok etc.) and on digital devices - mobile phones, laptops, tablets, digital TV etc. We do not think that this demand makes sense nor does this restricted model, which is based on a kind of radio station that will not succeed in the era that lies ahead. We believe, however, that there is a strong need for more than one "national" Irish language radio station/

one source of audio content of a high standard in Irish, whether it's on FM or otherwise. We believe at this point that there does not need to be an overly strong focus on the platform on which the alternative - or alternatives - would be provided. There is a strong possibility there, in our view, that there would be a demand for national service on FM among the age groups whose listening habits are intertwined with listening to FM radio - that is, adults over a certain age [25/30/35/40 years?]. But it is not worth talking about the investment that would be made in the technical infrastructure of the platform, if the appropriate investment is not made to produce high quality content and provide it on a daily basis, ranging from talk shows to music programs; programs that will appeal to a wide range of Irish speakers and may attract those who are not used to listening to radio programs through Irish.

**We believe that Raidió na Life is the station that can provide that second choice.** With proper investment.

What do we mean by proper investment?

An investment that would enable Raidió na Life to reach its full potential, by employing a substantial staff (rather than three full-time staff to run a radio station!). This investment would primarily involve people and job creation for:

- a full-time staff of Irish-speaking journalists
- the next generation of creative producers with Irish
- presenters with particular talents and strengths ("radio star") and fluent Irish etc.
- technical staff

It doesn't matter if it's FM or online/digital - it is the people who provide the material that need to be paid to create a high-quality service and high quality fully professional content. It does not matter where people come across the topic afterwards.

We would be happy to provide the Commission with a more detailed recommendation on the investment we would be seeking to turn Raidió na Life into a second national professional choice for those seeking high quality audio content in Irish but based on 80 employees in full-time employment by RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta and their budget c. €12/13 million, we believe that at least RnL could do a relatively good job with 20 employees and a much smaller operational budget. Not to go into too much detail on the breakdown of those 20 people which would include producers, presenters, researchers, technicians, administrative staff, marketing staff, etc. and the salaries that would be expected in order to get good people, as a rough indication, take the average industrial salary in Ireland of around €40,000, multiply it by 20 = €800,000. Of course there would be operating costs, infrastructure etc. which are not covered by the small budget that Foras na Gaeilge currently gives to Raidió na Life, and these would have to be worked out carefully, but **we believe we could have a huge positive impact on the Irish broadcasting world and on the choice of Irish language content available to the public, with public funding both internal and external of €1 million per annum**. This is a relatively small sum given the potential impact it could have.

Of course, with a staff of 20 people, it would not mean the end of opportunities or roles for volunteers - which is very positive thing, but a much higher standard would be achieved in every way across the service, and a professional selection of material would be available to the Irish language community.

There are also opportunities to build on the traditional "radio station" and begin to consider the opportunities of developing community radio stations such as Raidió na Life as digital production hubs, which would involve more than just radio work (television production work, eg; written journalism; online multimedia content provision, production skills, classes and courses, Irish language classes, etc.) We have written more about this below in the context of community radio stations in general, although, of course, an Irish language digital hub like Raidió na Life would be unique in itself with additional features.

## **Recommendation 2: Recognise and fund the importance of the third sector of broadcasting - Community Radio:**

We would like to highlight the importance of community radio in general and community radio stations throughout Ireland in the role they play in providing public service broadcasting content to diverse communities throughout the country, whether in their local communities or communities of common interest such as the Irish language community (a community which, nationally, is more numerous than any local community served by any "normal" community station). While RTÉ and TG4 are the main providers of public service broadcasting (and we believe they should remain so - and indeed place more emphasis on that key element of their missions), **Community radio is Ireland's second natural "home" for public service broadcasting**. It is very important to recognise this.

Existing commercial stations are not operated in the interest of the community or in the public interest, only to create profit (and that is their right) and should not be relied upon or trusted to fill gaps in the provision of public service broadcasting. They are in pursuit of profit and therefore in search of as many listeners as they can get, and this has a clear impact on the content of the programs and the presentation style of the programs. This is not always a good thing for the citizen or for society.

In contrast to the for-profit commercial radio sector, special attention and recognition should also be given to all the other important work done by community radio stations:

- to facilitate *citizen journalism*
- to promote media literacy
- Provide training and broadcasting opportunities for the average citizen
- giving space to minorities to express themselves
- cover topics in a way that is not based on the adversarial approach heard so often on commercial stations
- cover important topics that would not be covered on commercial stations or RTÉ because they would not attract enough listeners, but are of particular importance to society
- provide opportunities for speech and self-expression for those who would not be heard on commercial stations or on RTÉ

The State should provide core funding for community radio stations (that can prove they operate as community stations and in accordance with the AMARC Community Radio Charter and who have an appropriate broadcasting license from the BAI or whichever regulator comes to succeed it) to help them fulfil and grow and develop their public service broadcasting role (as well as their roles as community development groups) for the future.

The digital production hub model we have already mentioned has huge potential in the context of Raidió na Life. With the right investment, community radio stations across the country would be able to develop themselves as digital hubs/production hubs, owned by their local communities and operating for the benefit of the local community. This would have an incredibly positive impact on local communities across the country in many ways (provision of facilities; training; community building; job creation; boosting the self-confidence of individuals and communities as a whole, etc.)

This funding could come directly from a central tax (in our view the best option), independent of the short-term aspirations of State Departments or agencies such as Foras na Gaeilge, which have much broader terms of reference and who do not always need to be experts in broadcasting. Direct funding from the central tax would also enable the stations to carry out long-term planning, which is impossible in a sector that relies on the constant application for grants each year, which wastes a lot of time and energy, when that time and energy could be spent on the broadcasting and community development work that takes place as a result of community broadcasting. Another option, of course, is to put a share of the TV license fee, or the successor to this if the model continues, directly into an independent fund that would be distributed to community stations around the country. But the license fee model (TV/other?) has many difficulties, and it is not necessarily the best model for the future.

## **Conclusion:**

The interests we have described above, the country's marginalised indigenous minority - the Irish language, the first official language of the State, and the non-profit public service broadcasting and related work of community radio stations, they are important public interests to promote and encourage in an imaginative, contemporary, vibrant way. To that end, they should be publicly funded and adequately funded. Non-profit services should not be forced or pressured to turn themselves into commercial services or follow commercial financing models when they are not primarily for profit or commercial activities. If the work is being done for the benefit of the citizen and the State, it is the citizen and the State who should pay for it, just as they do for any other public service, and in particular services that cannot be run on a commercial basis.

Recognising the acute shortage of Irish language broadcasting services, and the State's specific policy to normalise the use of Irish, and to increase substantially the day-to-day use of the language outside the education system (ambitious targets have been set by the State in this regard), any investment in Raidió na Life must be acted upon.

It must be recognised that Raidió na Life is not a community radio station serving a small local community in a rural town of two or three thousand people, or a station in the urban area of a few square kilometres which is centred on the development of that limited area. This is not a criticism of our comrades in other community radio stations. We are different. Raidió na Life is serving a much larger community, as the figures published by the State show, a community that falls short in its choice of services.

According to the latest research by both Irish States:

- **370,116 people in Dublin and its suburbs speak the Irish language.** Excluding technological developments and adhering to the previous definition of Raidió na Life as an analogue FM service for the greater Dublin area, these people are our key target community. No other community radio station in the country is anywhere near that goal of serving such a large community.
- 1.7 million people in the Republic of Ireland speak Irish (1,761,420 according to the CSO) and over 100,000 people (104,943) in Northern Ireland speak Irish, according to figures there from 2018. That equates to **1,866,363 Irish speakers in Ireland** as a whole, according to the latest available figures. All of those nearly two million people can access Raidió na Life online. In our view, the biggest developments for listeners in the future will be in the digital realm, so it is worth considering Raidió na Life now as a station that can, with the required investment, cater for those two million people.

Sources:

<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp10esil/p10esil/ilg/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish\\_language\\_in\\_Northern\\_Ireland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_language_in_Northern_Ireland)

If we are to be the primary national alternative for the Irish language community besides the only service currently available to the whole community in the form of RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta, it is essential that the level of funding provided by the State to Raidió na Life, as the second station, is a proper recognition of that, and a recognition of its track record of providing almost thirty years of excellent contemporary service through Irish to those who have been and are seeking a second choice.

We thank you for reading and considering our submission and hope that you will give due consideration to its contents. We are available to discuss our proposals with you more widely or in more detail, at your convenience.

On behalf of Raidió na Life,

Yours sincerely,

*Muiris Ó Fiannachta*

Muiris Ó Fiannachta,

Raidió na Life Station Manager

63-66 Amiens Street Dublin 1 D01 H275

[REDACTED]