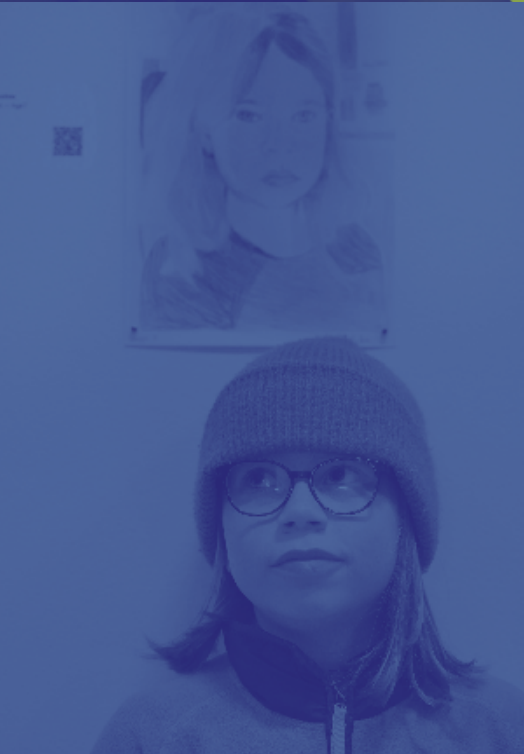


A new direction for **RTE**





Director-General's Statement

This document sets out the strategic direction and vision for a transformed RTÉ, and is the blueprint for RTÉ's forthcoming Statement of Strategy 2024-2028. RTÉ's unique public service character, and values, have guided each of the ten points in this outline plan.

As we await a decision on how public media in Ireland will be funded, we recognise the urgent need to restore trust. While RTÉ will become smaller in size across the life of this strategy, the scale of RTÉ's public service ambition, and our ambition for the role that RTÉ will play in Irish life, will not be diminished.

Kevin Bakhurst
Director-General



The destination of this new direction plan is, ultimately, a better RTÉ. RTÉ will deliver high-quality programmes and content and will be more agile so that we can meet evolving audience needs. We will provide better value for money. We will work harder with the independent production sector and diversify outside of Dublin. Over its almost 100-year history, RTÉ has served the public through the talent, integrity and commitment of its staff. Whilst acknowledging that we need to reduce our workforce, we remain committed to supporting and developing the extraordinary people that we have both in RTÉ and across the industry.

2024 will be a challenging year and one in which we will have to manage our cost base carefully. Hard choices will be made. My hope, however, is that we will enter 2025 armed with a robust strategy that makes the best use of the monies available to fund our national media service, monies we will invest as wisely and strategically as possible to improve the invaluable contribution of public service media to life in Ireland.



Preface

About 90% of adults in Ireland access RTÉ's content and services at least once a week. While RTÉ's broad remit and obligations, set out in the Broadcasting Act 2009, remain in place, total funding has now declined significantly. Longer-term decline due to systemic issues with funding of the public media system has been overtaken by a widescale breakdown in trust arising from the recent controversy. In the second half of 2023, licence fee sales declined further, by 30% (or €21m), and this trend looks set to continue over 2024, which could result in a €40m decline in revenues for that year.

Faced with these immediate and significant financial challenges, RTÉ will implement a minimum of €10m cuts in expenditure planned for 2024, to help close this public funding gap. This will be across all areas of RTÉ, and regrettably includes a range of content cuts that will have a direct impact on-screen and on-air. We will also run an initial and limited Voluntary Exit Programme, to deliver a headcount reduction of 40. This will be funded by the 2017 land sale proceeds. We are fully committed to making the difficult choices involved and delivering on these cuts. Additionally, we have already delivered about €5m in expenditure cuts since July, compared to our 2023 budget, through a freeze on recruitment and discretionary spend, as well as the postponement of a range of strategic projects.

The Government have stated they plan to decide on a reformed and sustainable public funding model for RTÉ in the next few months and that they will implement that new model from 2025. The Future of Media Commission (FOMC), commissioned by the Department of An Taoiseach, were tasked with exploring the future funding of public service media in Ireland. In its wide ranging and in depth analysis, they modelled various options to fund Ireland's public service media and content. Their evaluation was based on generating a target sum of €300m, where 10% or €30m would be allocated to a new Media Fund designed to offer a wide range of other sectoral supports. RTÉ's plans, set out in this document, have been developed on the basis of funding levels outlined by the FOMC, and subsequent inflation.

What follows in this document is a new direction for RTÉ for the future, on the basis of a sustainable public funding model from 2025 onwards: it is not our 2024 cost-cutting plan.

It is important to note however that over the longer term, when RTÉ delivers on this new direction, it will have transformed the organisation to one that is significantly streamlined, with internal overheads permanently reduced. This transformation, supported by a reformed and index-linked public funding model, can return RTÉ to a sustainable financial position.

Our 10 Point Plan

			01. A New Vision for Public Service
		02. A New Approach on Value for Money	03. A New Take on Nationwide Production
	04. A New Organisation	05. A New Strategy for Sectoral Support	06. New Digital Products
07. New Digital Experiences	08. New Protections for Free-to-Air Access	09. A New Approach on Financial Management	10. A New Framework for Better Governance

This is RTÉ's plan for the future, setting out our ambition in the form of commitments and actions. It has been developed to respond to the urgent need for a transformation of performance and a restoration of trust. It is the first step in a consultation with Government, the public, our audiences, staff, the creative sector, and other stakeholders. From this engagement RTÉ's Statement of Strategy for 2024 – 2028 can be prepared.

Implementing the strategy will require a transition during which costs will be controlled through reductions in headcount (targeting 20%) and overheads, but also through how we work. In turn, these economies will allow us to increase investment into new and improved content and services. Our intention is to increase the value for money we deliver for our audiences.

Major changes committed to by this strategy:

- We will be a more streamlined, modern and simplified organisation, with fewer employees, reduced overheads and updated technology.
- We will commission significantly more content from independent production companies across Ireland and increase support to the creative economy, aiming to increase our overall investment by 50%
- We will operate two production centres, expanding in Cork and reducing Dublin, diversifying employment and the content produced and commissioned.
- We will invest to deliver better connections with audiences on RTÉ Player, a new audio app and an expanded RTÉ News app, personalising and showcasing our high quality and impactful content.
- We will prioritise delivery of our live and on-demand content via our digital products, reducing the cost of traditional broadcast distribution. We will therefore close the 'timeshift' television channels RTÉ One +1 and RTÉ2 +1.
- We will close also RTÉ Radio 1 Extra, RTÉ 2XM, RTÉ Pulse and RTÉjr radio offering on-demand playlists and podcasts via our new app.
- We will be a better custodian of public funding with a new Corporate Governance framework to uphold the highest standards of transparency and accountability.

RTÉ is Ireland's national public service media organisation. It is a statutory body that is supported by both public and commercially generated income to provide content that has public value, and which is free to watch, listen to or read.

As we approach the 100th anniversary of public media in Ireland, we will evolve in response to changing expectations from society and audiences. We will embrace our role in countering the negative impacts of disinformation and leading on climate change coverage as we deliver on RTÉ's vision. We will continue to champion Irish culture by captivating audiences with trusted, engaging and challenging content; celebrating our country's rich diversity; and cultivating Ireland's talent.

Public service media is as important today as ever. We intend to fulfil our role through the commitments made in this strategy.

More streamlined – a 20% smaller RTÉ:

We will be a more streamlined, modern and simplified organisation, with fewer employees (with a net headcount reduction of up to 20% or 400 people), reduced overheads and updated technology.



Financial sustainability and stronger governance:

We will be financially sustainable, eliminating deficits and providing better value for money. We will be more transparent and accountable, operating to the highest standards of corporate governance, and sustainability best-practice.



More commissioning – 50% increase:

We will operate a hybrid-production model, significantly increasing investment in the independent production sector to access and support creativity across Ireland. We will begin scaling up video and audio commissions, increasing our spend by 50% by 2028.

Digitally transformed and personalised:

We will invest in improving our digital products and skills, to unlock the best of what RTÉ has to offer through personalisation and curation.



More nationwide production, expanding in Cork:

We will rebalance our production nationwide, investing in an expanded production centre in Cork, with renewed commitment to Limerick and Galway. This means significantly more content will be created or commissioned from outside of Dublin, where we will have a smaller RTÉ in both headcount and footprint.



What is Public Service Media?

The Future of Media Commission identified the public service aims of media as:

Informing, educating and entertaining the Irish public with regard to matters of Irish culture, identity, sport, language and other matters inherent to Ireland and the Irish people.

Ensuring that the public has access to **high-quality, impartial, independent journalism**, reporting on matters of local, regional, national, European and international importance in a balanced way and which contributes to democratic discourse.

Bringing the nation, and diaspora, together at **moments of great national importance.**

Ensuring that **creative Irish talent gets the opportunity to have their work reach audiences** in Ireland and, where possible, further afield.

In framing this new direction, RTÉ has paid particular attention to meeting these aims. We have also incorporated a range of the Future of Media Commission recommendations into our plans including prioritising the Irish language and engagement in the planned comprehensive review, as well as collaboration with, and increased investment in, the independent production sector.

01.

A New Vision for Public Service



RTÉ produces a wide range of content across many genres and interests, fulfilling an essential part of our public service media role. We will prioritise quality and impactful content for our audiences – young, old, and new, and from all over Ireland – aimed at driving both live and on-demand consumption of RTÉ. As RTÉ undergoes radical change, we are also setting new ambitions across all of our core public service output – innovating across video, audio, and text.

RTÉ Sport: RTÉ will continue to provide the unique shared experiences of our national and county teams. We will continue to work with sporting bodies and our media partners to ensure the rights for national sporting events are protected and remain available to audiences free-to-air. We commit to providing breadth and depth to our sports coverage, and in particular to increase the diversity of voices and faces in sport content, and to feature more rising stars across all codes.

Drama and comedy: Drama and comedy attract on-demand viewing. We will prioritise support for Irish drama and scripted comedy through the establishment of dedicated development funds, aiming to become a significant originator of series that attract international investment and providing a platform to bring that drama to the world. We will increase original Irish drama to 60 hours per year by 2026 (around a 50% increase), with development starting immediately.

RTÉ News and Current Affairs: We will transform how we deliver news and current affairs with an enhanced news app and broader distribution across social, where we will continue to grow younger audiences. RTÉ Investigates will continue to provide important national moments. We will embrace RTÉ's role in countering the negative impacts of disinformation through a new Disinformation Correspondent role, and by introducing a new fact-checking mark and verification service for local, national, and international stories. Through these actions and others we will contribute to heightened public trust in these sources of information.

Entertainment and Music: Entertainment remains a key driver of live viewing, and successful factual entertainment formats work incredibly well in an on-demand environment. In addition to evolving new entertainment and music formats, we will support our colleagues in the independent sector in devising new and original single-camera formats to drive on-demand viewing on the Player.

Irish language: We will expand the number of hours of Cláracha Gaeilge across all of our platforms and we will embrace and normalise the Irish language across our video, audio and text content. We fully support the upcoming comprehensive FOMC review, where our contribution could include the launch of a digital Irish language radio station for listeners aged 15-34.

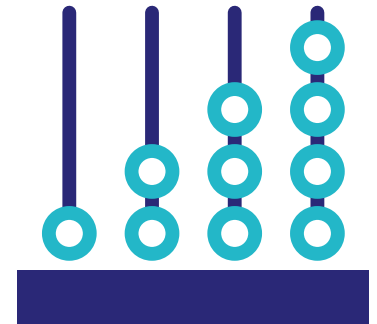
Arts and Culture: We will build on the reach of RTÉ-produced output through commissioned spend and forging new relationships across the cultural sector. We will focus our spend on national cultural events and coverage, bringing arts and cultural experiences to the widest possible audience. We will continue to harness the potential of the RTÉ Concert Orchestra, and to grow the audience for RTÉ lyric fm, Ireland's classical music and arts station, with a particular focus on younger audiences.

Factual Documentaries and Series: We will commission and produce high-impact television and audio documentary series that create and facilitate national conversations. This will be underpinned by our journalistic, editorial and storytelling skills, in partnership with the independent production sector and third-party funders.

Young People's Programmes: We will continue to provide outreach events and multi-genre content, bringing a varied mix of live action and animated video and audio in both English and Irish, created primarily by Ireland's independent production sector. We will ensure that content for this diverse and growing group is available where children and parents wish to access it, while providing a safe and ad-free destination for younger children, parents and teachers on the Kids section of RTÉ Player. We will dedicate resources to a new podcast unit and produce more content for children aged 14 and older, including exploring commissioning a teen drama.

In providing this wide range of content, we will also ensure that in every genre RTÉ is more reflective of the lives of the people and communities of Ireland: promoting acceptance, respect and inclusion. We will ensure that there is fair and authentic representation in our content and on our services.

A New Approach on Value for Money



As the recipient of public funds, we have to be a careful custodian of those monies. We will ensure that the Irish public and our audiences get better value from the support they provide to us as their national public service media organisation. A simplified RTÉ will have fewer staff, reduced overhead and support costs, redirecting focus into the content and products our audiences want. A streamlined RTÉ includes operating on a smaller footprint within the Donnybrook site and with more modern facilities that require less maintenance.

In order to increase funds available for production and services, we will reduce the total size of our workforce by up to 20% by 2028. This means a net reduction of approximately 400 posts. This will be achieved through a combination of normal attrition and retirements and a voluntary exit scheme open to all, and which will aim to particularly reduce the number of staff paid over €100,000. This change will be made possible by the full implementation of the strategy, including significant changes to where and how the organisation works.

This streamlined workforce will build on the existing skills, talent and creativity to be better equipped to deliver on our commitments. Targeted recruitment will continue to ensure we have the additional skills required for a digitally transformed RTÉ. Reform and technological investments will enable more efficient production models and working practices, including process automation and the cessation of certain activities within RTÉ.

We will continue to strictly control costs such as overtime and backfill, and actively assess engagement of contractors to ensure value for money. We will review the system of allowances and expenses introducing changes and reform from 2024. By reducing our overheads, more of our funding can be redirected into making high-quality content, whether it's made by RTÉ or our partners in the independent production sector.

Our spending will increase in targeted areas where it is required to deliver a modern, accessible service. In particular, we will significantly increase investment in the development of high-quality digital products and content, and in ensuring a high-quality individual experience of those products.

03.

A New Take on Nationwide Production



RTÉ's remit includes being responsive to the interests and concerns of the whole community on the island of Ireland. Migrating production and commissioning to outside of Dublin will diversify the creative content that audiences can enjoy, with improved alignment with those national and local interests. It will also provide increased direct investment into the communities that are home to RTÉ production centres and independent production companies.

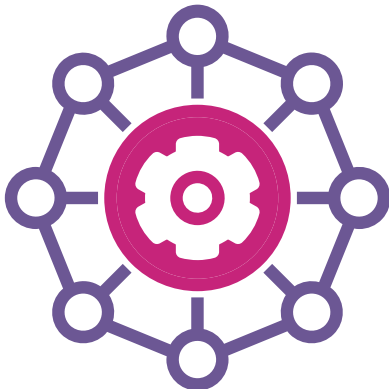
From 2025 we will start to rebalance our production from Dublin to an expanded production centre in Cork. We then aim to increase production in Limerick and Galway. The Cork centre will bring greater balance to our output and offer diversity across our schedules, creating more long-running content strands on television, radio and digital. It will do so through a combination of both in-house production and scaling-up commissions from Cork.

Commissioning also provides opportunities to support the creative economy. We will support nationwide employment in the creative sector through commissioning audio, video, and digital content from a wide range of large and small production companies every year. This support will assist the industry to scale up activities and operations. Overall, we plan to increase the total value of current commissioning by up to 50% in 2028. Before that, we will meet the FOMC recommendation of investing 25% of public funding in commissioned programmes by 2027.

The rebalancing nationwide will reduce the volume of production in Dublin, however most of our production and broadcast facilities for radio and television will remain located on a smaller Donnybrook campus. These facilities are housed in a number of buildings, the newest of which is about 25-years old. We plan to invest in a consolidated Donnybrook campus to enable modern working and production practices and to meet regulations, compliance requirements and sustainability targets.

04.

A New Organisation



Our ambitions and performance have to be underpinned by a strong and modern organisation. A smaller workforce needs to be responsive and efficient, and equipped to achieve the levels of performance committed to in this document. That support will be provided through training, technology, and attention to our organisational culture. We will also modernise the technical infrastructure of the organisation and improve its sustainability.

We will simplify the organisational structure through a role and grades review, which is already in progress, and we are targeting a reduction in the layers of management within the organisation. We will commence this reduction with a first voluntary exit scheme in 2024 and will then phase the remaining reductions over the course of this strategy.

By 2028 we will have doubled our budget for staff development and training, particularly in the areas needed for our digital ambitions, including in software development and engineering. We have many talented, creative and motivated people working in RTÉ, who have specialist skills who we want to retain and develop. We will offer open access learning and development opportunities, alongside simplifying our job structures. We will continue to provide flexible working options including hybrid working and part-time work.

We will ensure that our staff have the technology they need to expand the organisation's capabilities and to work efficiently. Further investment in technology will enable us to continue a transformation in how we work. We will build on hybrid and cloud working already in place, introduce more process automation, digital workflows and the use of trustworthy AI tools. We will also advance our production capabilities by completing the upgrade to HD, expanding visual radio facilities, developing virtual production capabilities, and extending adoption of cloud-based content management and editing tools. All of this will allow us to explore and pursue more efficient production models.

We will pursue positive changes in internal organisational culture and in particular improve the transparent exchange of information, communication and consultation. These initiatives, some of which are already underway, include: the establishment of a broader leadership forum for dialogue; building on the progress that has been achieved by working in collaboration with the TUG over many years; the creation of a staff engagement forum, to be representative of the range of roles and disciplines within the organisation; and more updates from the Leadership Team, along with more divisional briefings. These will contribute to greater collaboration, idea sharing, and engagement across the divisions, both formally and informally. We will extend the Internship Programme to provide opportunities for individuals at the start of their career from every background. We will strive to ensure that we are a progressive, welcoming organisation where there are no barriers to access.

We will set ambitious targets to become an even more sustainable organisation, implementing our climate action roadmap, RTÉ on Climate 2023 to 2025, and any updates from the Government's latest Climate Action Plan. We will continue to decommission energy-inefficient equipment, virtualise systems to reduce power and cooling requirements and include measurable sustainability requirements in procurement. We will also continue to work towards our target of a 25% reduction in overall waste and set new targets once this is attained. We will continue leading sustainability performance within the production sector through the membership of various networks and the promotion of the highest standards in sustainability in our production methods and content.

Each €1m investment of public funds from RTÉ into co-produced scripted drama is part of a multiplier that generates €5m investment in Ireland's creative sector, as well as creating dramas of scale and impact that have potential for international sale.

Our early investment in the development phase means public funding from RTÉ plays a role in instigating and enabling the production of premium scripted drama in Ireland, and for Irish audiences.

Finance plans for each drama will vary. In RTÉ's experience over recent years, a premium scripted drama co-production in Ireland received funding from four main sources:



- **20%** from RTÉ
- **25%** from S481
- **10%** from Screen Ireland
- **45%** from international partners e.g. distributors / broadcasters

A **€1m commitment from RTÉ** during the development phase is key to securing the **additional €4m funding required.**

This investment model showcases Ireland's talent, develops writers and producers who create and retain Irish-owned intellectual property. Audiences in Ireland can then watch quality Irish drama on TV, as appointments to view, and on-demand when they choose.

05.

A New Strategy for Sectoral Support



Independent production companies are our partners in accessing and supporting creativity across Ireland. We will direct more of our spending in support of independent production, creating new opportunities for creative enterprises and individuals, and strengthening the national creative economy.

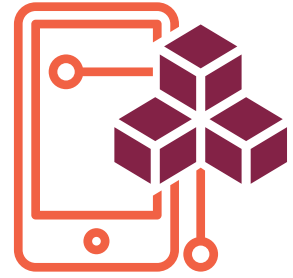
In line with the recommendations of the Future of Media Commission, we will substantially increase our spending on independent production. We will increase our spend with independent producers to 25% of public funding by 2027 as part of increasing our total spend on independent production. Overall however, we plan to increase the total value of current commissioning by up to 50% in 2028. This means growing our spend in each year of this strategy and playing our part in being a catalyst for industry growth, supporting the development of creative talents. A reformed and index-linked public funding model will make this substantial increase possible.

We will work with independent producers to commission across all genres, drawing on the rich talent available in programme making, technology, animation and screen and audio production. Our commissioning plans will ensure that there is a steady pipeline of national moments in our live schedules across each year, while building video and audio content libraries for our players so that we have a compelling on-demand offering. The increased support provided will yield many benefits in employment and bolster Ireland's attractiveness as a destination for media production. In particular, we will develop more of the drama series that have demonstrated their ability to showcase Ireland's talent to international audiences.

While the majority of this spend will continue to be on video content, we will increase commissioning in digital, and in radio across both peak and off-peak listening times where the independent production sector can bring fresh creativity to our schedules.

Our increased spending on independent production will enrich opportunities for the individuals who work in the creative sector to develop and advance their careers. We will also provide more opportunities for new and upcoming creative talent both on-screen and off-screen. We will ensure that teams in RTÉ are resourced with the best possible talent available, and that individuals acquire skills and capabilities while with RTÉ that are transferable to other areas in the creative economy. We will also explore how to expand and strengthen supports to individuals working in the creative sector in closer partnership with Screen Ireland, Animation Ireland, Screen Producers Ireland and the other professional bodies.

New Digital Products



Our digital products are essential to connecting with audiences, especially new and young audiences. We will successfully compete for and retain audiences by developing high quality and innovative products and content. The investment into digital products and content is key to providing a transformed, personalised and curated experience for our audiences.

RTÉ Player will transform to become one of the main ways people watch live programming, along with an extensive on-demand catalogue. This catalogue will be a point of differentiation, providing a unique collection in both Irish and English language. We will ensure a quality, consistent RTÉ Player service across all major connected devices. We will improve the user interface as well as the resilience and reliability of the service in order to achieve this. Our roadmap sets out continuous improvements over each year from 2024.

A new RTÉ audio app will be developed and launched in 2025. This will provide easy access to our live radio stations, which are important connection points for listeners across diverse interest and age groups, as well as on-demand audio content for both adults and children. This includes music and original podcasts from a new dedicated production unit as well as third-party podcasts. This will provide audiences with a single place to listen to all RTÉ audio, with quick access to favourite stations, easy browsing through RTÉ's unrivalled audio on-demand catalogue, and recommendations on content of interest. The audio

app will be accessible on all digital listening devices including on smart speakers and in-car. It will provide a platform for the launch of new services such as the potential new digital Irish language radio station targeting 15-34 years old listeners.

We will launch a new RTÉ News app in 2025 with enhanced features and a broader range of stories and trusted journalism. The new platform will allow more sophisticated use of text, video, images and other digital story telling devices. Ireland's most popular and trusted news app will continue to be the number one destination for breaking news. We will cut through the jargon, our correspondents will provide comprehensive analysis and explain complex stories and what they mean for you. The new app will showcase the best of bespoke content created for RTÉ's social platforms. RTÉ News will continue to successfully grow our younger audiences and to encourage shareability and deliver on our key objectives of factchecking stories and challenging disinformation and leading on climate change coverage.

The RTÉ website will be improved with recommendations and personalisation features to provide a more relevant service for all users accessing the website both domestically and overseas.

New Digital Experiences



In addition to the quality of the digital products and content, we will enhance the individual experience of using RTÉ products and accessing RTÉ content across digital platforms.

Adding individual sign-in to video and audio products will allow us to personalise the experience, transforming how the breadth of our quality content can be unlocked for audiences. During 2024 we will begin balancing personalisation with curation to ensure that important public service content remains prominent. Increasing the number of users who sign-in will provide insights into how we can improve by offering content based on, for example, language or location in a way that suits everyone's own preferences. This will also provide much richer data to highlight content gaps and underserved audiences and inform our digital content and product strategy.

We will make further improvements to the user interface as well as the resilience and reliability of RTÉ Player on mobile devices and Smart TVs. With the on-going roll-out of high speed broadband reaching all corners of Ireland, we will continue to strengthen our streaming capabilities to ensure the reliable delivery of content via our products. As streaming grows in popularity, we will fully migrate some services and content to streaming through our digital products. This will rationalise some of the traditional broadcast services while protecting free to air.

The investment in digital services will be accompanied by ending the 'timeshift' channels RTÉ One +1 and RTÉ2 +1 by 2028, as this content will be available more widely on-demand. Closing these services will allow us to reduce the cost of traditional broadcast distribution, as we prioritise delivery of our live and on-demand content via our digital products,

The new RTÉ audio app will provide comprehensive and high-quality access in a single place. As audience preferences for audio are also increasingly for on-demand, we will close RTÉ Radio 1 Extra, RTÉ 2XM, RTÉ Pulse and RTÉjr radio in 2024, offering on-demand playlists and podcasts via our new app. Our long-established and popular radio channels that provide strong connection points for diverse audiences and interests - RTÉ Radio 1, RTÉ 2fm, RTÉ lyric fm and RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta - will remain accessible via FM radio, and alongside RTÉ Gold on digital TV platforms, online and via the new audio app. We will evolve and develop these services as we continue to respond to audience needs.

RTÉ Archives maintains a unique collection of audio-visual recordings, photographs and documents, dating from 1926. As well as safeguarding - through digitisation and preservation programmes - these collections of national and international significance, RTÉ will enhance access to the collections through new digital services, with a focus on partnerships with cultural heritage bodies and institutions. To ensure this crucial national archive continues as a resource for the nation, RTÉ Archives will continue digitising legacy recordings. Audio material is expected to be completed by end 2024 and video material completed by 2027. This includes adding to previously digitised collections, with support from the Coimisiún na Meán Archive Funding Scheme: for example, the largest collection of Irish-language audio material in the state, incorporating all regions and dialects.

08.

New Protections for Free- to-Air Access



While digital migration provides many opportunities to improve the accessibility, quality and range of content available, it is only one part of ensuring that RTÉ's content is available where audiences want it.

We will continue to protect the future of free broadcast TV in Ireland for the years to come. This includes continuing to operate Saorview and continuing to provide RTÉ One and RTÉ2 on Freeview in Northern Ireland, subject to renewals of licences. We will also ensure that RTÉ Radio 1, RTÉ 2fm, RTÉ lyric fm and RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta continue to be available via FM radio, alongside RTÉ Gold on digital TV platforms, online and via the new audio app.

We are working on developing a next generation service for Saorview to provide an expanded choice of free channels and on-demand content, combining Digital Terrestrial Television and broadband. The plan is to launch the service in 2025 subject to regulatory approvals, and the development of the new service. This will involve continued work with industry participants to roll-out the technology for this new service.

We will endeavour to consistently deliver our public service content to our audiences as their media and content habits and preferences change, innovating with new platforms and protecting 'free-to air' as this concept evolves with digital distribution. We will work with existing and emerging content platforms in the market to make sure Irish content is easily accessible to Irish audiences in the future. This will need to be facilitated by prominence codes: a measure to be developed by Coimisiún na Meán under the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022 to ensure that RTÉ and other public service content can be easily discovered and accessed. The implementation of prominence codes will be important to preserve the ability of audiences to readily find public service media and content on Electronic Programme Guides, smart TV menus and user interfaces.

We will protect the quality of our access services including subtitles, audio description and Irish Sign Language on platforms.

09.

A New Approach on Financial Management



We will achieve a long-term stable and sustainable financial position for RTÉ within a reformed public funding model. We will do this through a number of measures that constitute stronger management of our financial operations, spanning cost control and cuts, income generation and oversight. We will eliminate drawing on reserves or one-off asset sales to sustain deficits that arise from funding shortfalls. We will engage constructively and transparently with stakeholders including the New Economy and Recovery Authority (NewERA) on the financials underpinning the plans set out here.

We will progressively reduce costs and overheads, reallocating some of that spending to deliver on our stated ambitions. We will significantly reduce staff costs through an up to 20% reduction in head count by 2028, by delivering on the maximum pay cap set in 2023 (as contracts expire and as we hire new people), and by reviewing and reducing allowances. We will continue to reduce the pay of RTÉ's highest paid presenters.

We have evaluated our future use of the Donnybrook campus. This includes reducing the size of the footprint needed for our production and broadcast facilities and exploring options for the vacated areas or land sale. We have considered relocating off the current site and at this stage it does not appear to be economically viable.

We will generate income from our commercial operations, developing and implementing a new commercial strategy from 2024 to increase the contribution made to the production of public service content. We will prioritise digital advertising as a critical growth area, across our new and improved products and content. This follows the strategies adopted by leading broadcasters in the UK, including Channel 4, which set a target for digital advertising to reach 30% by 2025. In parallel, we will protect revenue from TV and radio advertising and sponsorship and grow distribution and licensing revenues.

We will maintain strong controls and oversight over significant financial decisions already implemented in 2023 - whether these are new initiatives, the negotiation of rights to broadcast sports events or to retain highly paid presenters - with Board approval required at a new lower threshold. These controls and oversight will be reinforced by the transparency and reporting measures that are part of the new corporate governance framework.

The stable and sustainable financial performance of RTÉ will be made possible by the success of other elements of this strategy including the investment in digital products and content, increased commissioning from independent production companies and the agreement of a reformed public funding model.

10.

A New Framework for Better Governance



We must ensure that the public has trust and confidence in how RTÉ is managed and held accountable.

We will continue to strengthen governance in how the Board and Leadership Team operate and interact, and commit to best-practice led by the RTÉ Board and Director-General. New procedures have already been put in place from mid-2023 to ensure transparency and open dialogue between the Board and the Interim Leadership Team (ILT). All minutes from the ILT now go to the Board as part of the Director General's report. The Board's sub-committees now meet more regularly and report in to each RTÉ Board meeting, with a review of the Terms of Reference of all of the RTÉ Board's sub-committees underway and to be completed.

We will achieve greater transparency through introducing a number of registers and reports: the Register of Interests and the Register of External Activities from January 2024; and reports of Published Expenses, Salaries of Leadership Team and anonymised Top 100 Salaries.

We will introduce a new corporate governance framework by December 2023 in which we will set out the rules, systems, and procedures through which RTÉ will be controlled and directed in future. This framework will incorporate mandatory reporting requirements along with Environmental, Social and Governance targets and best practice standards. This framework is being developed with the support of an independent external advisor and will be further informed by the findings and recommendations of the internal and external reviews underway.

We will introduce a new enterprise risk management programme in 2024, to better integrate risk management with decision-making across the organisation. We will consistently integrate risk management into all of RTÉ's strategies, projects, and operational and financial decision-making processes, in line with RTÉ's objectives, values and culture. Through this programme we will ensure that risks are managed appropriately across the whole organisation.

We will improve our engagement with our diverse stakeholders through the development of our Statement of Strategy and beyond, ensuring their voices shape our future as an organisation.

Serious lapses that were not reflective of the standards of governance and integrity maintained by RTÉ staff must not be allowed to reoccur, and the governance framework will ensure that no part of the organisation falls below best-practice standards in future.

Summary

This plan is the first step in engaging with our many stakeholders – the public, our audiences, our employees, independent producers, Government, regulators, service providers, and others – on the future for RTÉ. This feedback will inform the development of RTÉ’s Statement of Strategy for 2024 – 2028.

The commitments in this plan represent major changes to RTÉ in order to be a better organisation that is capable of providing better public service content to our audiences. Many of the commitments require investment, some of which will be funded by reductions in our operating costs while our commercial operations will also contribute; the majority will need to come from a reformed public funding model. Without that, RTÉ is not sustainable.

Subject to the outcomes of the consultation, this strategy will result in a transformation in the value for money provided in return for public funding. Our core public service output will be high-quality and engaging; a much larger share of our spending will be outside of Dublin; we will be a more streamlined and efficient organisation; more funding will flow to independent producers nationwide; new digital products and content will result in a better experience and wider choice for the public and audiences we serve; and free-to-air access will be protected and enhanced.

RTÉ developed this plan to respond to the urgent need for a transformation of performance and a restoration of trust, but also to set new ambition to be a national public service media organisation that delivers on its mission to serve, and of which Ireland can be proud.

Measuring Our Performance

We will measure our performance and be accountable as we implement this strategy. Each year, we will set and transparently report on our targets and success metrics. This will include:

Audience:

We will measure and track how and where Ireland's diverse population engages with RTÉ content through our different products. We will measure who is watching, listening to, or reading our content, with a particular focus on digital consumption.

Digital transformation:

As well as monitoring digital consumption, we will track the delivery of our digital products and user-experience roadmap, including metrics to evaluate overall performance and availability.

Public perception:

We will track what people think about RTÉ, with a particular focus on restoring trust in the organisation. We need to better understand and track the value of RTÉ for individuals, the impact for Ireland and for the creative economy so that we can continuously improve.

Financial sustainability and control:

We will track our financial sustainability, that we are efficient in how we use public monies to deliver public service media, including progress in the committed headcount reduction, and the generation of commercial revenues.

RTÉ's Financial Context

While considerations on RTÉ's longer-term public funding are on-going we have prepared a high-level financial outlook for the next five years. As requested by the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, we will engage with NewERA – *who provides financial and commercial advice to Government Ministers* – to validate these numbers. Following this, our formal Statement of Strategy will be fully costed when we submit it to the Minister.

Our plans, set out in this new direction for RTÉ are intended to transform the organisation to one that is significantly streamlined, with internal overheads permanently reduced. This transformation, supported by a reformed and index-linked funding model, can return RTÉ to a sustainable financial position and enable the organisation to fulfil its public service remit as set out in the Broadcasting Act 2009.

We have based our outlook on public funding levels set out in the Government's Future of Media Commission report (and subsequent inflation), including that:

The Government have stated they plan to decide on a funding model for RTÉ in the next few months and that they will **implement that new model from 2025.**

The FOMC modelled various options to fund Ireland's public service media and content. Their evaluation was based on **generating a target sum of €300m, where 10% or €30m would be allocated to a new Media Fund** designed to offer a wide range of other sectoral supports.

Over the strategy period, and taking into account inflationary pressures, we aim to have only nominal increases in our overall operating costs. As we do this we will:

Firstly, implement a minimum of **€10m cuts in expenditure planned for 2024.**

Reduce RTÉ's headcount by up to 20% or 400, **significantly reducing one of our fixed costs.**

Increase our investment in the independent production sector, **committing to grow it by 50% from its current base**, commissioning audio and video content across all genres in Irish and in English.

Invest in our digital products: RTÉ Player and a new audio app, an enhanced and broader RTÉ news app, and our website.

Implement a new commercial strategy from 2024 that will increase the contribution made to the production of public service content.

In line with the FOMC recommendation we are preparing a strategic capital assets management plan which we will consult with NewERA on. This work is on-going and includes capital investments to modernise our sites and technological infrastructure, and restructuring costs to reduce headcount. Some important considerations are:

Future use of the Donnybrook campus: this includes reducing the size of the footprint needed for our production and broadcast facilities and **exploring options for the vacated areas or land sale.**

Relocating RTÉ off the current Donnybrook site: we have considered this option and at this stage it does not appear to be economically viable. Savills have commenced a high-level assessment of the site, which will take some time to conclude. They note the commercial real estate market faces several challenges at this time, and that the Donnybrook site is complex with a number of protected buildings. **Their preliminary estimate is that the site has a value of approximately €100m, which is well below value achieved per acre in 2017.**

Funding a targeted voluntary exit programme of up to 400 people: this is likely to cost **€40m or more.**

Protecting free-to-air: investment in infrastructure that will **ensure all Irish media services are universally available free to air** and that all Irish content is afforded prominence with manufacturers.







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