

Reference: 01960491

Information Requests
information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

17 March 2025

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information concerning the UK government's stance and assessments on foreign ownership of British media outlets.

We received this request on 17 February 2025 and we have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the FOI Act").

Your request

I am submitting a Freedom of Information request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 regarding the UK government's stance and assessments on foreign ownership of British media outlets, particularly in relation to national security and press freedom.

Specifically, I request:

Government Assessments on Foreign Ownership Risks

Any assessments conducted since January 2020 on the impact of foreign ownership on media plurality, editorial independence, or public trust in UK journalism.

Copies of any risk assessments, reports, or policy documents produced by or shared with Ofcom regarding the national security or press freedom implications of foreign entities acquiring UK media outlets.

Interventions & Policies

Details of any internal discussions, recommendations, or regulatory actions taken by Ofcom in response to concerns over foreign ownership of UK media companies.

Any communications between Ofcom and the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), the Home Office, or other government bodies regarding foreign takeovers of UK media entities.

Investigations or Reviews of Specific Cases

Records of any investigations or reviews conducted into specific foreign takeovers of UK media organizations, including but not limited to:

Telegraph Media Group takeover by RedBird IMI (backed by UAE interests).

Any other recent foreign acquisitions of major UK newspapers, broadcasters, or digital media companies that have raised national security or media plurality concerns.

Our response

We can confirm that we do hold some information falling within the scope of your request. However, we are unable to provide this information under your request as we consider that disclosure of this information is exempt under section 12 of the FOI Act. Section 12 of the FOI Act provides that we are not obliged to comply with a request for information if we estimate that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the “appropriate limit”. The appropriate limit is set out in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 (the “Regulations”), and is, for Ofcom, £450. That sum is intended to cover the estimated costs involved in determining whether Ofcom holds the information requested, locating, retrieving and extracting the information from any document containing it. The Regulations provide that costs are to be estimated at a rate of £25 per person per hour, which equates to 18 hours of time.

We estimate that it would take over 18 hours to search for, identify and extract the information you have requested. There appears no way to search for the information without searching the whole of Ofcom because the information requested includes documents which could have been sent from externally to any person at Ofcom (well over a thousand people) and between any people working for Ofcom, including all contact with us from any member of the public. Nor do we consider it possible to identify a set of keyword searches which would call up all relevant information and not call up many thousands of irrelevant documents.

We may be able to provide the information if the request was narrowed substantially. You would need to consider a shorter time period, a limited list of countries and limited topics or Ofcom business areas. If you do wish to submit a narrower request, you would also need to define what you are asking about more precisely – for example what makes a media company a “UK” media company, what “details” are you asking for, what is a “foreign acquisition” and do your questions relate to any acquisition by any foreign owner/acquisition which raises any concerns, or do you intend to limit it to concerns arising because the owner is “foreign”.

However, please bear in mind that we are subject to various statutory disclosure prohibitions in relation to information we obtain in the carrying out of our functions that relates to a particular business, which means that to the extent you wish to obtain information about a particular business or particular businesses, it is likely that an absolute exemption under section 44 of the FOI Act (not disclosing information about a particular business which we have obtained in the course of exercising a power) would apply.

We note your request for information about the Telegraph Media Group takeover by RedBird IMI; you may wish to refer to the previous FOI responses on our [published FOI responses webpage](#) under the heading “2024” and the sub-heading “Corporate”:

[The report submitted regarding the proposed acquisition of The Telegraph newspaper by RB Investco Limited](#)

[Ofcom's report on the potential merger of Telegraph Media Group by Redbird IMI](#)

[The public interest test relating to the Telegraph Media Group's potential merger](#)

[Annex A – Campaign for Press Freedom](#)

[Annex B – Media Reform Coalition](#)

[Annex C – a member of public response](#)

[Annex D – News UK](#)

[Annex E – xxxxx response](#)

Please note that at the time of responding to this FOI request, the Secretary of State is still yet to publish Ofcom's advice on this potential merger.

If you have any further queries, then please send them to information.requests@ofcom.org.uk – quoting the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,

Information Requests

Request an internal review

If you are unhappy with the response you have received to your request for information, or think that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law, you may ask for an internal review. If you do, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom. We will either uphold the original decision, or reverse or modify it.

If you would like to ask us to carry out an internal review, you should get in touch within two months of the date of this letter. There is no statutory deadline for us to complete our internal review, and the time it takes will depend on the complexity of the request. But we will try to complete the review within 20 working days (or no more than 40 working days in exceptional cases) and keep you informed of our progress. Please email the Information Requests team (information.requests@ofcom.org.uk) to request an internal review.

Taking it further

If you are unhappy with the outcome of our internal review, then you have the right to [complain to the Information Commissioner's Office](#).