

**Organisation (if applicable):**

National Council for the Blind of Ireland

**Additional comments:**

It would be appropriate to give a different treatment to broadcasts to the Irish market because they would not require the work and costs associated with creating foreign versions of access services. Because Ireland is predominantly an English speaking country and many UK produced programmes are broadcast into the homes of Irish viewers either directly by UK based TV channels or by Irish TV channels, English language subtitles and audio description that already exist would almost always be adequate for an Irish audience without the need to recreate or translate it. This already happens on Sky TV where the UK channels carry the same access services for an Irish audience as are provided in the UK. This has implications for the costs of provision and the ability of broadcasters to immediately meet their full targets. The specific implications are described within our answers to the consultation questions.

**Question 1: Do consultees agree with the proposed approach to setting audience share thresholds for other EU Member States? If not, do they have practicable alternatives that they would like to propose, which would be comparable with the approach taken to domestic channels:**

Agree

**Question 2: Do consultees have any comments on whether the approach taken to assessing the costs faced by domestic licensees is also appropriate to non-domestic licensees? If so, what alternatives would they propose, and why:**

No comments

**Question 3: Do consultees have any comments on how it is proposed to assess the cost of providing access services, including the provisional assessment of costs:**

No comments

**Question 4: Do consultees agree that non-domestic channels required to provide access services with effect from January 2014 should be permitted to commence provision in accordance with the targets corresponding to the first anniversary of the notice date:**

There is no need to allow this 'ramping up' period for access services provided to the Irish market, at least for subtitles and audio description, because there will be little or no start-up costs or difficulties. Because Ireland is English speaking and culturally very similar to the UK, English language access services that already exists could be broadcast to an Irish audience as they are, without the need for any translation or modification. This already happens in fact. Sky Ireland carries the same English channels as in the UK with the same

access services. Audio description is a little different in that an Irish voice would be preferable to an Irish audience because it is more familiar and easier to understand. However, an English voice would be adequate in most cases and probably few broadcasters, knowing that, would go to the trouble of recording an Irish-voiced version. Certainly none do so at present. Even if they did, the cost would be minimal because the script would not need to be translated, retimed, etc. It would only need to be re-read by an Irish voice actor of which there are many living and working in the UK already, so it wouldn't even be necessary to work with an Irish provider.

There is an assertion in paragraph 3.30 that "it is likely to take time for suitable consumer equipment to become commercially available, particularly in the case of audio description". This is not true for Ireland. The three television services that account for about 99% of the Irish market - Sky satellite, UPC cable and Saorview DTT - already provide subtitles as standard. Two of these - Sky and Saorview - also provide audio description as standard (it is a mandatory requirement for all Saorview certified receivers).

In paragraph 3.31 it says "In most cases, the size of the intended audience for programmes accompanied by access service will be relatively small. Most of the non-domestic channels are niche pay TV services in the countries they serve, where most viewing is to free-to-air domestic channels". UK broadcasters have quite large market shares in Ireland. The combined viewing share of BBC1, UTV, BBC2, Channel 4 and Sky1 was 14% in 2011. It would therefore be no impediment for broadcasters to immediately meet the same targets for subtitling and audio description to the Irish market as apply domestically. The same cannot be said for signing however, because Irish Sign Language is different from British Sign Language.

**Question 5: Do consultees agree that Ofcom should count language subtitling towards access service targets for subtitling:**

Interlingual subtitling cannot be offered as an adequate substitute for subtitles for deaf and hard of hearing viewers. These are two totally different things with different purposes for different audiences. Interlingual subtitling only translates spoken dialogue and written signs. Although it is true that subtitles for deaf and hard of hearing repeats this content, it crucially also conveys other programme sounds which are very often absolutely essential for the understanding and enjoyment of the programme. For example, a gunshot, a telephone ringing, a car screeching to a halt outside, a distant scream, a dog barking, an alarm bell, music being played, etc.

There should be no need to place the subtitles for these other sounds in another part of the screen. If the interlingual subtitles are provided in a closed format, which they ought to be even for the benefit of the viewers that need them, the subtitles for deaf and hard of hearing (which includes the dialogue translation) can just replace them.

**Question 6: Do consultees agree that, for a transitional period of two years from 1 January 2013, broadcasters should be allowed the alternative of providing additional subtitling in place of signing, in order that they can have the opportunity to devise alternative arrangements that may be more beneficial to sign language users:**

**Question 7: Do consultees have any comments on the proposed changes to the Code on Television Access Services, as set out in Annex 3:**

No

**Question 8:Do consultees have any comments on the impact assessment (Annex 2)?:**

Can't see an impact assessment in Annex 2