

# **SOUND & VISION – BROADCASTING FUNDING SCHEME** **POLICY ON SPECIAL SCHEMES FUNDING**

## **Introduction**

The Broadcasting (Funding ) scheme supports new television or radio programmes on Irish culture, heritage and experience, adult literacy and such programmes in the Irish language.

Section 4.2 of the scheme (p.7) also permits the provision of funding for special schemes as follows:

‘The BCI may, at its discretion, allocate funding in respect of programming based on special schemes under any of the thematic areas outlined above. [...] The purpose of the schemes will be to encourage the development of programming on particular themes or to mark major anniversaries or events of particular historic or cultural importance. Such programmes must come within the range of programming laid down in the Act’

This document presents a policy framework enabling *Sound & Vision* to develop special schemes and fund additional programmes as part of its remit and outside of regular rounds.

### **1. Remit of the *Sound & Vision* scheme**

*Sound & Vision* is rooted in three key documents: the Broadcasting (Funding) Act, 2003 (hereafter the Act), the scheme written in 2004 and approved by the Commission, the Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources and the European Commission in 2005 and the EU decision on the compliance of the scheme with European State Aid regulations, which was also published in 2005.

The Act gives the Commission a remit to fund high quality programmes on the themes of Irish culture, heritage and experience, adult literacy, and such programmes in the Irish language. The Act also requires these programmes to add to the viewing and listening options of audiences in the State, to add to the diversity of Irish culture and heritage, to record Irish heritage under threat or disappearing, and to develop local and community broadcasting.

The objectives of the scheme are derived from the Act. The core objective is defined as increasing ‘public access at national, local and community level to high-quality radio and television programmes in English and Irish, which explore the themes of Irish culture, heritage and experience, in contemporary or historic contexts’ (p. 4 of the scheme). Other important objectives in addition to the thematic criteria above are diversity, value for money, partnerships with the industry, additionality to the viewers/listeners and national, local or community interest.

In approving the scheme, the European Commission stated that it should have a particular focus on funding programmes which are low-budget, difficult to make or are in the Irish language (or bilingual). This provision aims at making the scheme particularly suited to State Aid regulations and enables the scheme to fund programmes which would otherwise not be made, due to their specific nature or their lack of commercial appeal.

## **2. Policy in respect of Special Schemes**

As outlined in the introduction above, page 7 of the scheme caters for the development of special schemes provided programmes funded come within the thematic range of programming laid down in the Act.

The Scheme also states in page 5 that the role of the BCI would be to give priority to the following:

- a) establish structures that focus on the primary objectives of the scheme and ensure the effective distribution of funding .
- b) build strong links and establish mechanisms for dialogue with the broadcasting sector and with other public sector agencies in order to gauge trends in broadcasting and in relevant programme areas.
- c) maintain flexibility within the structure of the scheme to ensure the efficient administration and management of the scheme in order to respond effectively to the needs of the broadcasting sector and to ensure that the objectives of the scheme are realised.

The policy in respect of special schemes will help to fulfil two of these roles, namely the building of links with broadcasters and public sector agencies and the maintenance of flexibility and ability to respond effectively to the needs of the broadcasting sector. This policy is in keeping with the Commission's strategic mission 'to stimulate the development of an excellent indigenous broadcast industry that meets the diverse entertainment, education and information needs of the people of Ireland while making effective use of a national resource'.

### **3. Policy objectives**

The policy objectives are as follows:

- provide programming which is in accordance with the primary scheme (i.e. quality, Irish language, additionality, diversity, heritage, local and community broadcasting, adult literacy, new or innovative concept, national, local or community interest, track record of creative and technical personnel, partnerships, value for money)
- build strong links and establish mechanisms for dialogue with the broadcasting sector and with other public agencies
- maintain flexibility within the structures of the scheme in order to respond effectively to the needs of the broadcasting sector
- foster industry development in partnership with other industry stakeholders.

#### 4. Policy provisions in respect of special schemes

The provisions below represent the guidelines for accessing funding under special schemes.

- a) The criteria that apply for funding rounds will be used in selecting suitable initiatives, namely quality, Irish language, additionality, diversity, heritage, local and community broadcasting, adult literacy, new or innovative concepts, national, local or community interest, track record of creative and technical personnel, partnerships, value for money.
- b) Unlike regular funding rounds, partnerships in the case of special schemes are more narrowly defined. Key requirements include that at least one additional public service partner, non-governmental organisation or private partner is contributing funds and expertise to the project. This partner could be either from the State or from another EU country.
- c) Another difference with the regular funding rounds is that a project is to be looked at in a holistic manner: from development to production. This is not the case with the calls for proposals which focus on the readiness of initiatives submitted to go into production.
- d) An essential element of selection is a focus on training and development, even though *Sound & Vision* itself will not actually fund the training and development costs. As an example, proposals will need to demonstrate a commitment to coach and mentor, to train new or existing members of the industry outside of support already provided by the Broadcasting Commission.
- e) Annual amounts for this type of initiative equate to no more than 5% of the overall annual funding estimated at €8.5M. This means a maximum total of €425,000 per annum for such initiatives. Any unspent amount will be returned to the fund for 'regular' programming initiatives.
- f) Funding for special schemes will be available for radio and television initiatives.

- g) The eligible broadcasting criteria remains the same and no flexibility exist in the areas of thematic relevance, eligible broadcasters, peak time requirements, etc.
- h) The staff of *Sound & Vision* will operate the assessment in order to ensure adherence to the general requirements (e.g. peak time broadcasting) as well as the more specific ones (e.g. partnerships with funding bodies).
- i) Allocation of funds for special schemes will be submitted to the Board of the Commission for approval.

## **5. Procedure**

- a) *Sound & Vision* will from time to time seek suitable partners for proposals under the special scheme provisions. These calls for proposals will be advertised through the Commission's website.
- b) *Sound & Vision* will also accept proposals for funding through the special scheme provisions from industry bodies, public or non-governmental agencies or private partners. Such proposals will then be assessed by the *Sound & Vision* team against the policy objectives and a recommendation issued to the Board of the Commission in this regard.