

CMFE

COMMUNITY MEDIA FORUM EUROPE

To: Minister Eamon Ryan T.D.
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2
IRELAND

Nijmegen (The Netherlands), 19 January 2010

Subject: Composition of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) board

Dear Minister Ryan,

We, the Community Media Forum Europe (CMFE), have been following closely the development of the Irish legislation. Under your charge it has become a very progressive piece of lawmaking and indeed it is worth highlighting how European colleagues appreciate the Irish understanding of community media.

Of particular note is the co-operative spirit and excellent working relationship between the community media sector and the former BCI, but one can also look to the AMARC (World Association of Community Radio) charter on community radio, and how it is used word-for-word in Irish media regulation, and the funding of the annual Community Radio Féile, one of the largest and most exciting media gatherings on the calendar. All of the above and more have been highlighted in the last two books by Dr. Rosemary Day of University of Limerick's Mary Immaculate College¹.

However we are now writing to you to express our concern at having learned that community broadcasting experience has been omitted from the newly appointed Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) board. No BAI members, either from your own appointments or those of the Oireachtas Committee, have any experience of or within the community media sector. We are concerned that an authority so composed would find it difficult to make proper decisions around the implementation of a progressive act and thus there are real concerns for the further development of community broadcasting in Ireland.

We are aware from our member organization in Ireland - CRAOL, the Community Radio Forum of Ireland - that there is a lot of expertise in community broadcasting and we question why such experience was overlooked. This sudden retrogressive omission of community media from the new Broadcasting Authority seems out of character with the positive developments that have characterized the Irish community broadcasting history so far.

¹ Rosemary Day, Community Radio in Ireland: Participation and Multi-flows of Communication, Hampton Press, 2008

Rosemary Day, (Editor) Bicycle Highway. Celebrating Community Radio in Ireland, The Life Press, 2007

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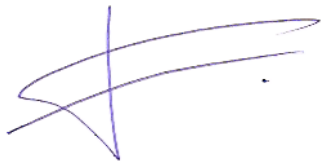
It is very disappointing to see Ireland seem so to fall behind in its development of community broadcasting while such important issues as digitalization of broadcasting and the importance of media pluralism are prominent themes, also at the European policy level.

Community broadcasting has become a much more recognized player in the media and communications field in Europe. Both the European Union and the Council of Europe are putting ever more stress on the value of community broadcasting for supporting community diversity, integration policy and for adding to media pluralism, as it has been reaffirmed by the *Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on the role of community media in the promotion of the social cohesion and the intercultural dialogue*², adopted by the Council of Europe on 11 February 2009, and the *Resolution of 25 September 2008 of the European Parliament on Community Media in Europe (2008/2011 (INI))*³.

We support the Irish community media sector in their urge to correct this oversight and request to add a member with community broadcasting experience to the Board. Failing that, and perhaps a poor substitute, Section 17 of the Legislation could be used, as it would allow the Authority to establish Advisory Committees.

We look forward to a positive outcome. CMFE would be available to offer any help with expertise if needed and welcomes your feedback to this letter.

Yours sincerely,



Pieter de Wit
President CMFE

Community Media Forum Europe (CMFE)

The Community Media Forum Europe (CMFE) is a gathering of policy experts, non-governmental organizations and national community media federations that, since 2004, supports the participation of the Community Media sector in policy debate and decision making at the European and national level.

The CMFE is working in collaboration with its members and European institutions to raise the profile of community media across Europe.

² <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1409919>

³ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P6-TA-2008-0459&language=EN>