



Irish Research Council Submission to the Future of Media Commission

The Irish Research Council welcomes the opportunity to send a short submission to the Future of Media Commission.

The Irish Research Council welcomes the establishment of the Commission and the work underway to examine the critical role of the media, including public service media, and its future in Ireland.

About the Council

The Council's mission is to support excellence in research talent, knowledge and engagement by:

- Funding excellent discovery and enterprise research across all disciplines and showing the benefits for Ireland of this investment
- Supporting exceptional individual researchers and their development
- Responding to emerging research and societal challenges and proactively assisting stakeholders to address complex issues
- Positively contributing to innovation, reform and best practice in the Irish higher education and research ecosystem
- Demonstrating a consistent, impartial and transparent approach to the award of funding, delivered to a high standard of service
- Actively seeking to collaborate with others, in Ireland and internationally, to enhance the research ecosystem
- Building support for discovery research among the public, the research community and other stakeholders.

Our vision is for a connected, agile Irish Research Council that invests in the people, skills and ideas, across all disciplines, that will deliver new possibilities for the future, within Ireland and beyond. Further information is contained in our [Strategic Plan 2020-2024](#).

The Council is an associated agency of the Department of Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, and operates under the aegis of the Higher Education Authority.

Role of the Council

The Irish Research Council both contributes to the health of the media environment and partners with media on the dissemination to the public of important research and evidence from experts in the field.

The Council funds excellent research in any discipline, including media, from early-career (postgraduate) stage. In this way we are supporting a pipeline of current and future expertise which will be critical in successfully addressing the broad range of societal challenges we face. We do so in the context of the need for expertise in multiple domains – our research institutions, within government and the public sector, and for industry and civil society. Of importance also is the support for research from different perspectives, whether technological, historical or cultural.

In 2020, we awarded our annual Researcher of the Year award to a media researcher, Dr. Jane Suiter of Dublin City University. The award was made in recognition of Dr. Suiter's work in democratic deliberation and the information environment.

Media and research

Our engagement with media is predicated on the vital role of research in supporting an open, informed society and an advanced knowledge economy. As we navigate through the pandemic, we have seen very clearly the critical contribution made by researchers and experts, including in contributing via the media to public awareness, 'the facts' and discussion/debate. This is a fundamentally healthy feature of an open and citizen-centred democracy. Both researchers and public service media, in particular RTE, have played a central role in delivering evidence-based information and informed debate during this crisis. The role of each, separately and jointly, will continue to be critical post-COVID as our greatest challenges nationally and internationally are still ahead of us in the context of climate change and biodiversity loss.

From an Irish Research Council perspective, initiatives by RTE have significantly helped to bring to the wider public the outputs and outcomes of the excellent research that is funded by the public purse. Brainstorm in particular has been a stand-out innovation, and the Council is pleased to be a strategic funding partner for this initiative. This is complemented by vibrant programming content such as 10 Things to Know About, Eco-Eye and Science Week. Sponsorship of '10 Things' along with a number of other agencies is another part of our public service communication measures. Brainstorm and public service broadcasting is vital for a scientifically literate and informed community and must form part of the future of the media landscape. It is apparent that the funding of such work is somewhat precarious and often dependent on external sponsorship, and the risks inherent in this should form part of the consideration of the future of media.

ENDS
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