



1/12/2020

Dear Professor Brian MacCraith,

**A submission to the Commission on the Future of Irish Public Service Broadcasting**

I am contacting you on behalf of *The Campaign for RTE TV in Britain*.

We were very pleased indeed to see that the Commission includes as one of its terms of reference: “*To bring the nation and Diaspora together at moments of great national importance.*” That complements our aim very well.

In fact, it also complements and follows on from what the Government is already committed to doing by legislation according to the Broadcasting Act, 2009 which says in Chapter 2 subsection 114:

*-(f) to establish, maintain and operate a television broadcasting service and a sound broadcasting service which shall have the character of a public service, which services shall be made available, in so far as RTÉ considers reasonably practicable, to Irish communities outside the island of Ireland. (Broadcasting Act 2009).*

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2009/act/18/enacted/en/print#sec113>).

Progress has been made on the radio front but the real need now is progress on the TV front.

The Lockdown needed to counter the Covid 19 virus has brought home very poignantly the need for this service for the Diaspora and particularly the elderly members of it.

All elderly people are vulnerable during the present Covid pandemic. This applies to the elderly Irish of the Diaspora in a distinctive way. They have traditionally been keen to attend the usual family events from cradle to grave in Ireland whenever possible. This had become more and more feasible in recent years due to cheaper air travel.

It is particularly heartbreaking that this has been abruptly ended for the foreseeable future. What is particularly missed is the denial of the opportunity for grieving and the natural and spontaneous consolation offered for those grieving at times of bereavement which is characteristic of Irish funerals. To be alienated from this time honoured practice is particularly heartbreaking.

This combined with the inevitable daily isolation makes life very difficult indeed for this community.

We believe that this situation could be alleviated very considerably if RTE TV was available to them in the normal way that UK TV channels are.

This would be useful not just for the elderly but would be a boon to members of the Diaspora of all ages and interests in helping to keep them fully up to date on all Irish affairs. This would be a great benefit to everybody concerned in their work and in their social and cultural life.

The recent referendum has shown how involved the Diaspora wishes to be in Irish life.

It could have many more benefits. For example, it could be very helpful in a post-Brexit world in maintaining good relations and understanding between the UK and Ireland which is in danger of deteriorating under the pressures of the new environment now being created.

All members of the Diaspora are willing ambassadors for Ireland (unpaid!) wherever they are and are a resource that the Government should never underestimate.

We do not underestimate the difficulties involved but it is fundamentally a political decision for the Government to make that will benefit it and Irish society generally in a myriad ways.

And, whatever the practical difficulties, in politics, where there's a will there's a way.

We would like to follow up this introductory submission by a verbal submission which of course would have to be a virtual one in the foreseeable future.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Jack Lane

(Spokesperson for the Irish Elderly Advice Network)

cc Sally Mulready OBE