



Programme Standards & Guidelines

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Introduction

TG4 is the national Irish language television service established by statute in 1996 and funded by Government to deliver a full range of high quality Irish language content to audiences at home and abroad. It is a Public Service Broadcaster.

TG4's mission is to *"provide an attractive and innovative television and content service in Irish, that celebrates Irish creativity and identity – language, culture, music and sport, packaged and presented to be accessible and appealing in order to connect to audiences in Ireland and worldwide"*.

TG4's statutory mandate is set-down in the Broadcasting Act 2009 with its objects specified in Section 118 of the Act. The Act also sets out the broadcasting codes and duties framework for all broadcasters. Fundamental to everything TG4 does is a commitment to adhering to its statutory mandate and to these broadcasting rules, codes and duties.

TG4 has set down principles for the organisation, through which it delivers on its public service objects. These principles are presented in its Public Service Statement (<http://www.tg4.ie/assets/files/PSB-Charter.pdf>). The principles also reflect broadcasting codes and rules and overall, reflect our broadcasting standards and principles. A summary of their key themes is presented below and in further detail later in this document. TG4 will:

- Deliver primarily Irish language programming.
- Reflect the varied elements which make up the culture of the people of the island of Ireland and have special regard for the Gaeltachtaí.
- Reflect the highest standards of editorial integrity including objectivity, impartiality, fairness and accuracy.
- Not broadcast anything which might cause harm, offence, incite crime or undermine the authority of the State.
- Respect children and those with disabilities.
- Respect the privacy of individuals.
- Reflect the democratic and social values of Irish society.
- Be mindful of the need for understanding and peace within the whole island of Ireland.
- Uphold the democratic values enshrined in the Constitution, especially those relating to rightful liberty of expression.
- Be accountable.
- Deliver value-for-money.

TG4's Programme Standards & Guidelines outline its legal obligations and responsibilities, its editorial principles and overall, demonstrate TG4's objective and commitment to achieving the highest standards of programming and content.

These Programme Standards & Guidelines apply to both TG4 internal productions and to the independent production sector in the production of TG4 programming.

TG4's Statutory Mandate & Responsibilities

TG4's statutory mandate is set-down in the Broadcasting Act 2009. Under this legislation, TG4 is required to provide a national television broadcasting service as a free-to-air public service which is made available to the whole community on the island of Ireland. This is for the purposes of promotion and development of the Irish language and the preservation of Irish culture.

The key Sections of the Act which are of relevance for programme makers (both internal and external) are Sections 118 (provisions specific to TG4) and Part 3 which sets out the duties, codes and rules pertaining to broadcasters, to which TG4 must adhere.

TG4's objects are specified in Section 118(1) of the Broadcasting Act 2009 and include the following:

1. To establish and maintain and operate a public service free-to-air national television broadcasting service;
2. To establish and maintain a website and teletext services;
3. To establish and maintain archives and libraries;
4. To establish and maintain a public service television broadcasting service to be made available to Irish communities outside of the island of Ireland;
5. To establish and maintain public service non-broadcast, non-linear audio-visual media services;
6. To make the service available on all platforms; and,
7. To exploit such commercial opportunities as may arise in the pursuit of its other statutory objects.

In the fulfilment of its objects, Section 118(3) states that TG4 is specifically mandated to provide a comprehensive range of programmes:

- primarily in the Irish language;
- that reflect the cultural diversity of the whole island of Ireland;
- that entertain, inform and educate;
- that provide coverage of sporting, religious and cultural activities;
- of news and current affairs, primarily in the Irish language;
- for children; and,
- that provide coverage of proceedings in the Houses of the Oireachtas and the European Parliament.

TG4 is also mandated to facilitate or assist contemporary cultural expression and encourage or promote innovation and experimentation in broadcasting.

Section 118(2) also states that in pursuit of TG4's objects, it shall

"(a) be responsive to the interests and concerns of the whole community, be mindful of the need for understanding and peace within the whole island of Ireland, ensure that the programmes reflect the varied elements which make up the culture of the people of the whole island of Ireland, and have special regard for the elements which distinguish that culture and in particular for the Gaeltachta;

(b) uphold the democratic values enshrined in the Constitution, especially those relating to rightful liberty of expression;

(c) have regard to the need for the formation of public awareness and understanding of the values and traditions of countries other than the State, including in particular those of other Member States".

Part 3 of the Broadcasting Act 2009 sets out the duties, codes and rules pertaining to broadcasters and to which TG4 must adhere.

Section 39(1) states that every broadcaster shall ensure that:

"(a) all news broadcast by the broadcaster is reported and presented in an objective and impartial manner and without any expression of the broadcaster's own views;

(b) the broadcast treatment of current affairs, including matters which are either of public controversy or the subject of current public debate, is fair to all interests concerned and that the broadcast matter is presented in an objective and impartial manner and without any expression of his or her own views;

(d) anything which may reasonably be regarded as causing harm or offence, or as being likely to promote, or incite to, crime or as tending to undermine the authority of the State, is not broadcast by the broadcaster;

(e) in programmes broadcast by the broadcaster, and in the means employed to make such programmes, the privacy of any individual is not unreasonably encroached upon".

Section 39(5) states that a broadcaster shall ensure that the broadcast treatment of any proposal, being a proposal concerning policy as regards broadcasting, which is of public controversy or the subject of current public debate, which is being considered by the Government or the Minister, shall be reported and presented in an objective and impartial manner. It should be noted that paragraphs (a) and (b) of subsection (1), in so far as they require the broadcaster not to express his or her own views, do not apply to any broadcast made under this subsection.

Quite apart from the statutory obligations in relation to programme content imposed by the Broadcasting Act 2009 and obligations imposed by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) Code as detailed below, other considerations must be borne in mind. Programme makers must ensure that material is not included in the programme which will infringe third parties copyright. Programme makers must further ensure that the content is not defamatory or in contempt of court.

Section 42(1) and (2) describes what will be included in the Codes to be prepared and updated from time to time by the BAI.

The BAI Codes governing broadcasting standards and practice (see next section) must be observed by broadcasters.

BAI Code of Programme Standards

The BAI has developed a Code of Programme Standards to which TG4 must adhere. Compliance with the Code is assessed with reference to the statutory provisions, the provisions of the Code and the procedures, practices and policies of the BAI. Complaints in respect of any alleged breach of the BAI code are adjudicated upon by the BAI.

Key principles of the BAI Code, to which TG4 must adhere in its programme standards are presented below. All programme makers (both internal and external) must be fully familiar with, and take cognisance of, the BAI Code of Programme Standards as updated from time to time, which is available on its website (www.bai.ie). The key provisions of the BAI Code are the following:

2.1 General Community Standards

Programme material shall not offend against commonly held standards considered acceptable in contemporary Irish society.

2.2 Due Care

A broadcaster shall exercise due care by taking all reasonable measures to ensure that viewers and listeners of programme material on its channel/service are protected from undue offence and from harm.

2.2.1 Audience Information and Guidance

Where appropriate, due care shall include the provision by the broadcaster of audience information and guidance using at least one of the following mechanisms:

- The use of prior warnings for programme material which has the potential to offend.
 - The operation of a 'watershed', during which time more adult-orientated programme material may be broadcast.
 - The implementation of an evaluative or descriptive classification system for programme material.
- Audience information and guidance shall be provided in a manner which is clearly visible and audible.

A broadcaster shall regularly promote the audience information and guidance mechanism(s) used on a service. When promoting a watershed as an audience information and guidance mechanism, broadcasters shall specify the times during which it operates.

2.2.2 Identification with Characters, Actions and Personal Circumstances

Broadcasters shall exercise due care when broadcasting programme material containing characters, actions and personal circumstances with which a person may identify. Broadcasters shall exercise particular care when scheduling and broadcasting the following programme material:

- Sexual violence i.e. rape and sexual assault.
- Self-harm (including suicide).
- Reconstructions of factual events and archive footage which may impact adversely on a viewer or listener because of their personal circumstances.

Programme material of this nature shall be accompanied by the provision of one of the three audience information and guidance mechanisms set out in 2.2.1. Broadcasters shall also provide other appropriate information and guidance deemed necessary such as the provision of relevant telephone helpline details.

2.3 Protection for Children

The *BCI Code of Programme Standards* recognises that broadcasters share a responsibility with parents and guardians in protecting children i.e. those under 18 years of age, from exposure to inappropriate and harmful programme material.

To this end, broadcasters shall have due regard to the protection of children when scheduling programme material.

Particular care shall be taken in the following circumstances:

- i. When scheduling programme material that is broadcast either side of programmes that are likely to be watched or listened to by children
- ii. When scheduling programme material during school-run times,
- iii. When scheduling programme material during school holidays when the viewing and listening patterns of children can change.

2.4 Assessment

Programme material shall be assessed with reference to the principles and rules contained in the Code.

The principles are indivisible – that is, all programme material shall conform to all principles. Broadcasters should be mindful of all the provisions of this Code as programme material may be required to comply with one or more applicable provision.

Programme material shall be assessed in whole and in context. The following contextual factors shall apply:

- Time of broadcast.
- The type of programme.
- The use of audience information and guidance.
- The channel/service type.
- Whether the inclusion of material is editorially justified.
- The likely composition of the audience listening to or watching the programme.

3.1 Violent Programme Material

3.1.1 As a general rule, broadcasters shall have due regard to the appropriateness of, and/or justification for, the inclusion of violent content in programming material.

3.1.2 The inclusion of the following violent programme material must have strong editorial justification in a factual context or be justified in the context of the development of a story and/or characters:

- Graphic violence.
- Sexual violence i.e. rape and/or sexual assault.
- Self-harm, including suicide.
- Violence against children.

3.1.3 In programme material featuring sexual violence, the detail of this violence shall be kept to a minimum and such violence shall not be condoned.

3.2 Sexual Conduct

3.2.1 As a general rule, broadcasters shall have due regard to the appropriateness of, and/or justification for, the inclusion of sexual conduct during programme material.

3.2.2 The inclusion of programme material which features detailed scenes of a sexual nature must have strong editorial justification in a factual context or be justified in the context of the development of the story and/or characters.

3.2.3 Programme material featuring sexual relationships between under-aged young people or between an adult and a child shall not encourage such activities or present them as being legal.

3.2.4 Nudity in programme material shall only be broadcast when justified by context.

3.3 Coarse and Offensive Language

3.3.1 As a general rule, broadcasters shall have due regard to the appropriateness of, and/or justification for, the inclusion of coarse and/or offensive language in programming.

3.3.2 Broadcasters shall be alert to, and guard against, the use of coarse and/or offensive language in live programmes.

3.3.3 Recognising that the inappropriate use of names considered sacred or holy by believers may cause serious offence, broadcasters shall take a responsible approach to their inclusion during programming and their inclusion must be justified.

3.4 Persons and Groups in Society

3.4.1 The manner in which persons and groups in society are represented shall be appropriate and justifiable.

3.4.2 Programme material shall not support or condone discrimination against any person or section of the community, in particular on the basis of age, gender, marital status, membership of the Traveller community, family status, sexual orientation, disability, race or religion.

3.4.3 Broadcasters shall take measures to ensure that programme material does not stereotype or stigmatise those people with a disability.

Broadcasters shall have particular regard to the treatment of people with a disability in programmes, including the language used during programming. The use of colloquial terms of abuse during programme material shall require strong editorial justification.

3.4.4 Broadcasters shall not make an unwarranted correlation between a criminal act and the mental health of a perpetrator during programme material featuring criminal activities.

3.4.5 Broadcasters shall take measures to prevent undue offence in the treatment of religious views, beliefs or images during programme material. This is not intended to prevent the critical scrutiny of religion.

3.5 Factual Programming – News, Current Affairs and Documentaries

3.5.1 Factual programming shall not contain material that could reasonably be expected to prejudice respect for human dignity.

3.5.2 Factual programming shall not contain material that could reasonably be expected to cause undue distress or offence unless it is editorially justified and in the public interest.

3.5.3 Factual programming shall only emphasise age, colour, gender, national or ethnic origin, disability, race, religion or sexual orientation when such references are justified in the context of the programme or in the public interest.

3.5.4 Factual programming shall ensure that the dead are treated with respect. The moment of death shall not be shown nor shall the dead be shown in close-up, unless, in exceptional circumstances, it may be justified in the public interest.

3.6 Children's Programming

3.6.1 For the purpose of this Code, the term 'Child' refers to any person under 18 years of age. For the purpose of this Code, the term 'Children's Programmes' refers to programmes that are commonly referred to as such and/or have an audience profile of which over 50% are under 18 years of age

3.6.2 Graphic violence, strong sexual content and strong coarse language shall not feature during children's programming.

3.6.3 The use of illegal drugs, the abuse of drugs and/or solvents and the misuse of alcohol or tobacco shall not feature in children's programming, unless there is strong editorial justification for the inclusion of such material.

3.6.4 Trailers for adult programming containing material not reasonably regarded as suitable for children shall not be shown immediately before, during or immediately after children's programming.

3.6.5 Children's programming shall not condone anti-social behaviour or encourage others to imitate such behaviour.

3.7 Drugs, Alcohol and Solvent Abuse

3.7.1 Programme material shall not encourage the abuse of drugs and/or solvents or the use of illegal drugs.

3.7.2 Programme material shall not encourage the over-consumption or abuse of alcohol

3.7.3 Programme material shall not present depictions, either fictional or factual, which detail techniques for the administration of illegal drugs unless there is strong editorial justification for its inclusion.

3.7.4 The use of illegal drugs, the abuse of drugs and/or solvents, smoking or the consumption of alcohol by children shall not be presented in a favourable light.

3.8 Imitative Behaviour

Broadcasters shall avoid the inclusion of programme content which could encourage people to imitate acts which are dangerous or prejudicial to the environment and/or the health and safety of themselves or others.

Principles in Fulfilment of TG4's Public Service Objects

TG4's **Public Service Statement** (<http://www.tg4.ie/assets/files/PSB-Charter.pdf>) sets out the principles to which it adheres in fulfilling its public service objects which are set out in the Broadcasting Act 2009. These principles are as follows:

- Deliver programming primarily in the Irish language and provide a daily link for the Irish language to every household in the island of Ireland.
- Ensure that our programming reflects the varied elements which make up the culture of the people of the island of Ireland and have special regard for the elements which distinguish that culture and in particular, for the Gaeltachtaí.
- Ensure that our services reflect the requirements of the Gaeltacht communities and households whose daily language is Irish.
- Ensure that our programming reflects the democratic and social values of Irish society.
- Feature programming across all genres that informs, entertains and educates audiences of all age groups within Irish society.
- Always strive to deliver and maintain the highest standards of editorial integrity and to deliver a diverse range of high quality programming.
- Show no editorial or programming bias in terms of gender, age, disability, race, sexual orientation, religion or membership of a minority community.
- Show no editorial bias in news and current affairs reporting being fair, impartial and objective.
- Ensure that our broadcasts do not cause harm or offence, do not incite crime or undermine the authority of the State.
- Respect children in its programming and advertising broadcasts.
- Take into account, the needs of those with physical, sensory or intellectual disability.
- Respect individuals and ensure that the privacy of any individual is not unreasonably encroached upon.
- Play a leading role in the development of Irish language television by encouraging high standards of programme quality in addition to supporting the talents and creative resources of the independent production sector in Ireland.
- Be mindful of the need for understanding and peace within the whole island of Ireland.
- Uphold the democratic values enshrined in the Constitution, especially those relating to rightful liberty of expression.
- Have regard to the need for the formation of public awareness and understanding of the values and traditions of countries other than the State, including in particular, those of other Member

States.

- Deliver audiences and stakeholders real value-for-money by successfully promoting the Irish language and culture through high quality broadcast and content services and by operating a business model which works as efficiently as possible.

TG4 Accountability

As a Public Service Broadcaster, TG4 is accountable to a broad range of stakeholders, primary amongst which is our audience, the Department of Communications, Energy & Natural Resources and the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland. TG4 is accountable for all that it does, including the programmes and content it produces, commissions, acquires and broadcasts, and the way in which it spends its funding in doing this. In this regard, TG4 is governed through a range of supervisory mechanisms which are described in detail in our Public Service Statement (<http://www.tg4.ie/assets/files/PSB-Charter.pdf>).

TG4 welcomes feedback from the audience in Irish or in English. We are committed to responding fully to all complaints we receive about programme standards and other aspects of our output. All programme makers with whom TG4 works, are obliged to participate in this process. TG4's **Code of Practice for the Handling of Complaints** (<http://www.tg4.ie/assets/files/complaint-handling.pdf>) describes this process and describes the procedures to be followed in the event of a complaint, the relevant contact in TG4 and the time period in which the complaints shall be responded to. This Code is also available on the website of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (www.bai.ie).

Amendments to TG4 Programme Standards & Guidelines

TG4 may from time to time, revise and publish amendments to these Programme Standards & Guidelines. The most up to date version will be published on TG4's website (<http://www.tg4.ie/en/corporate/background.html>).

It should be noted that the reviews of our Programme Standards & Guidelines are informed by best practice, by our colleague Public Service Broadcasters in Ireland, by other Celtic broadcasters and other broadcasters in Europe.

Communications with TG4

All feedback and communications are welcomed. They will be handled by:

Pádhraic Ó Ciardha

Deputy Chief Executive / Leas Phríomh Fheidhmeannach

TG4

Baile na hAbhann

Co. Galway

padhraic.o.ciardha@tg4.ie

Phone: 091 505050

Fax: 091 505021

You can also contact us directly through our website <http://www.tg4.ie/en/corporate/tg4-team.html> / <http://www.tg4.ie/en/contact-us.html> . Any one of TG4's managers or staff will be glad to receive your feedback / enquiries and you can connect directly to their email addresses via our website.