



department for
**culture, media
and sport**



Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources
Roinn Cumarsáide, Fuinnimh agus Acmhainní Nádúrtha



AN ROINN GNÓTHAI EACHTRACHA
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



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Boost for Irish Language Broadcasting

Irish and UK Governments sign Memorandum of Understanding on Digital Television

Irish language broadcasting in Northern Ireland received a boost today as the Irish and UK Governments agreed a Memorandum of Understanding which provides a framework for continuing co-operation on broadcasting issues on the island of Ireland.

The Memorandum, which is aimed at ensuring a smooth transition to digital switchover and the switch-off of analogue services in Northern Ireland and Ireland, was signed by Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport Ben Bradshaw and the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, Eamon Ryan TD.

The Memorandum commits the two Governments to facilitating the widespread availability of RTE services in Northern Ireland and BBC services in Ireland on a free-to-air basis. It will also ensure the continuing widespread availability of the Irish language channel TG4 in Northern Ireland following the digital switchover.

Shaun Woodward, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said:

"The Good Friday Agreement and St Andrews Agreement recognised the importance of the unique cultural and linguistic diversities that exist on the island of Ireland. The Government remains committed to the full implementation of the Agreements, and will support the Executive, in any way it can, in the development and implementation of its Irish Language strategy. Broadcasting has a key role to play in the continuing development of minority languages. I am therefore delighted to see the signing of this Memorandum of Understanding, which underlines the Government's continuing commitment to the development of the Irish language in Northern Ireland, by ensuring the continued widespread availability of TG4 across Northern Ireland following the digital switchover."

Ben Bradshaw, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, said:

"I am very pleased to sign this MoU which is an important step towards ensuring that switchover goes smoothly on both sides of the border, and that BBC services will continue to be available in Ireland and Irish services continue to be available in Northern Ireland."

Communications Minister Eamon Ryan said:

"This agreement is the culmination of a very successful period of co-operation on broadcasting issues between the Governments of Ireland and the UK and its benefits will be manifold. It will help to ensure a smooth transition to digital television, the availability of TG4 throughout the island of Ireland and will facilitate RTE availability on an all-island basis. The Agreement will also help the delivery of broader economic and social benefits which are to be gained by all our citizens from the release of

digital dividend spectrum following the closure of the analogue TV services. "

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Micheál Martin TD, also welcomed the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding and said:

" I am delighted that the two Governments have today laid the foundations for continued and increased availability of Irish television services in Northern Ireland following the transition to digital terrestrial television. The Irish Government is acutely aware of the huge cultural importance of RTE and TG4 for so many people in all parts of Northern Ireland. We are very pleased that today's agreement will help facilitate their enjoyment of Irish television services long into the future. The Irish Government is committed to assisting the development of the Irish language in Northern Ireland and the implementation of outstanding commitments made in the St Andrews Agreement, including an Irish Language Act. We look forward to early agreement on an Irish language strategy. "

Notes to editors

1. The Memorandum of Understanding provides a framework for the changes that are taking place in Northern Ireland and Ireland to the technologies used in the reception of television services. Switchover in Northern Ireland is planned for 2012 with digital TV rollout being planned for Ireland on a similar timescale. Both the Good Friday Agreement and the St Andrews Agreement recognised the important role television plays with regard to the diverse cultural and linguistic identities that exist on the island.
2. The Memorandum was signed by Ben Bradshaw, Secretary of Culture, Media and Sport, who has overall responsibility for UK broadcasting issues and Eamon Ryan, the Irish Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.
3. The full MoU can be found at:
http://www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/broadcasting/4015.aspx#mo
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