

Protecting Independent Journalism, Protecting Democracy

— *How Government Policy Can Support Trusted News in the Digital Age*

Trusted journalism is a cornerstone of democracy.

Independent journalism holds power to account, informs citizens, strengthens communities and protects democratic values.

At a time when misinformation and disinformation are proliferating online, trusted journalism has never been more important, or more vulnerable.

Ireland's news media needs a policy framework that supports continued innovation:

Protecting original journalism from commercial exploitation without fair compensation.

Safeguarding trusted news from falsification, manipulation and misuse through advanced AI technologies.

Ensuring regulation reflects the operational realities of modern journalism and supports sustainable news production.

Our message to Government is clear:

Protect trusted journalism.

Support responsible innovation.

Ensure fair market conditions for public service news.



NewsBrands
Ireland

Protecting Freelance Journalism and Media Plurality

Freelance journalism is essential to Ireland's media ecosystem, particularly in local, specialist and community reporting.

Freelancers ensure diversity of perspectives, strengthen democratic debate and provide coverage of grassroots events that would otherwise go unreported.

*The implementation of the **Karshan** ruling and Revenue's five-step employment framework risks creating unintended consequences for journalism.*

Without sector-specific guidance, many genuine freelance arrangements could be reclassified as employment relationships.

The consequences are already emerging:

- *Increased operating costs for publishers of approximately 20%.*
- *Reduced budgets available for commissioning trained journalists and photographers.*
- *Fewer freelance opportunities.*
- *Fewer voices and perspectives represented in public debate.*
- *Reduced media plurality at a time when misinformation is growing.*

The impact is not simply administrative.

It risks structurally reducing the breadth of voices, expertise and local reporting available to Irish audiences.

NewsBrands Ireland is seeking:

Clarification of Revenue guidance for genuine freelance journalism.

Recognition of the unique operating realities of the news industry.

Protection of media plurality while fully respecting employment and taxation law.

Our request is not about avoiding tax or employment obligations.

It is about ensuring legislation achieves its intended objective without unintentionally undermining public interest journalism.

Responsible Innovation Requires Strong Intellectual Property Protection

- News publishers are not opposed to technological change.
- We have continually invested in digital transformation and innovation and recognise the enormous opportunities presented by AI.
- AI can strengthen journalism by improving workflows, increasing efficiency and allowing journalists to focus on original reporting.
- But innovation cannot come at the expense of responsibility.
- The companies driving AI are among the most powerful corporations in history.
- Many AI systems rely heavily on original journalism to train and improve their models.
- Journalism requires investment.
- Professional reporting, verification and editorial oversight carry significant costs.
- Others should not be permitted to derive commercial value from that investment without permission, transparency or fair compensation.

Robust protections for intellectual property must be reinforced for the AI era

- *Publishers must retain control over how their content is accessed, licensed, reproduced, and used to train AI systems*
- *Strong intellectual property rights are not barriers to innovation.*
- *They are the foundations upon which innovation depends.*

Government action is required:

Strengthen Ireland's implementation of the EU Copyright Directive by introducing:

- *Binding data transparency requirements.*
- *Independent valuation mechanisms for publisher content*
- *Mandatory arbitration where negotiations fail.*
- *A requirement for genuine engagement between information society service providers and news publishers in order to develop a meaningful and sustainable solution and clear and fair payments to publishers.*

Protect copyright within implementation of the EU AI Act

Rights holders must be able to understand, monitor and enforce how their content is used by AI systems.

Without transparency there can be no meaningful consent or licensing.

The Future of Trusted News Depends on Action Today

Government policy should support a competitive and sustainable environment for journalism - one that rewards investment in original reporting, protects intellectual property and promotes media plurality.

NewsBrands Ireland calls on Government to:

- *Protect freelance journalism and media plurality.*
- *Strengthen copyright protections for the AI era.*
- *Ensure fair compensation for original journalism.*
- *Support responsible innovation.*
- *Create a competitive environment that enables trusted news to thrive.*

The cost of inaction is significant. A weaker news industry means:

- *Closure of trusted media outlets.*
- *Fewer journalists.*
- *Less national and local reporting.*
- *Less scrutiny of public institutions.*
- *Greater vulnerability to misinformation and disinformation.*

The health of Irish democracy depends upon the continued strength and independence of trusted journalism.

**Trusted journalism
matters**

**Responsible
innovation
matters**

**Ireland's democracy
depends on both**

About NewsBrands Ireland

NewsBrands Ireland is the representative body for Ireland's multi-platform national news publishers.

Our mission is to support a free and independent press, promote sustainable public service journalism and ensure a fair and competitive media environment for all news publishers.