



Audiovisual content regulation that empowers citizens and promotes plurality

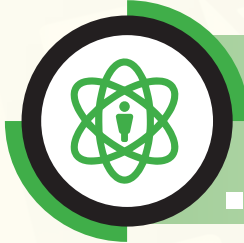


To deliver the above Vision IFCO will:

provide trusted guidance that reflects and shapes stakeholder expectations and decisions

support the availability of a diverse range of audiovisual content

enhance the public's understanding of, and engagement with, audiovisual content



The core values that underpin all IFCO activities and are the foundation of its organisational culture are as follows:



Accountability
for our decisions, processes, governance and use of resources



Responsive
to the evolving views and needs of all our stakeholders



Learning
as an organisation and in our engagement with stakeholders



Independent
in our deliberations and decisions



Strategic Theme

2

Resource Effectiveness and Excellence in Governance

Strategic Objective	Action	KPI	Target
Maintain strong financial and governance oversight and management.	Implement robust financial management and reporting procedures in co-operation with relevant Departmental shared functions.	Annual income and expenditure with reference to agreed targets. Outcomes of internal audits and other financial reviews.	Maintain income at or above annually agreed targets. Maintain expenditure at or below agreed annual allocation.
		Scheduled review of financial controls.	Implement any recommendations from internal audits reports and Annual Review of Financial Controls within agreed timeframes.
	Engage with the Department to ensure that the Annual Performance Delivery Agreement (PDA) is agreed and reviewed in a timely manner.	PDA is developed and agreed within specified timeframes.	PDA reviewed and agreed in Q1 annually.
Model high standards in governance and organisational responsibility practices.	Engage with the Department in delivering a Periodic Critical Review (PCR) of IFCO.	Information and analysis in support of the PCR are provided to the Department in a timely manner.	Engage with the Department in delivering a Periodic Critical Review (PCR) of IFCO commencing in 2023.
	Publish and review a new Strategy Statement every 3 years and report on delivery annually in the Annual Report.	Strategy Statement is developed in consultation with stakeholders and published on IFCO website.	New Strategy Statement in place by Q3 2023.
		Annual Report includes review of delivery against Strategy Statement.	Annual Report is published in Q2 each year.
	Ensure compliance with the Code of Practice for Governance of State Bodies 2016.	Reports on compliance with the Code.	Full compliance with the Code.
	Provide Secretariat and other relevant supports/ inputs for Film Classification Appeals Board, Censorship of Publications Board and Censorship of Publications Appeals Board.	All boards operate effectively. The provision of any required input to support the development and implementation of proposals on the future of the publications Boards being brought to Government by the Department of Justice in 2023 (Action 62 of the Justice Plan 2023).	Secretariat support provided as required within agreed timeframes. Provision of support to the Boards and the Department of Justice.
Engage with and support other relevant public policy initiatives e.g. Public Sector Climate Action Mandate.	Promote an innovative working environment that supports and develops staff.	Staff satisfaction.	Staff satisfaction with working environment and support remains over 80%.
	Climate Action initiatives and targets to be included in PDA.	Initiatives are included in and reported on in PDA and Annual Reports.	Delivery on initiatives in PDA.

Strategic Theme

1

Quality Service

Strategic Objective	Action	KPI	Target
Provide trusted and timely classifications and advice.	View and certify content in accordance with the legislation and published Classification Guidelines.	Number of certifications issued for cinema release and Home Entertainment.	Increase the volume of cinema certificates issued by 20% from 2022 levels. Maintain Home Entertainment classifications at 2022 levels.
	Maintain a high level of stakeholder confidence in classifications and advice.	Number of successful appeals and number of audience complaints that result in updated advice.	Successful appeals are less than 1% of all classifications and the number of audience complaints that result in updated advice is less than 1%.
	Ensure that Classification Guidelines reflect current community standards.	Revised Classification Guidelines with reference to outcomes of 2021 research and stakeholder feedback are published.	Final version of new Classification Guidelines published in Q1 2024.
Provide quality service for business customers that supports a vibrant sector and a diversity of content.	Ensure that current processes and timeframes for classification decisions are clear to distributors.	Distributor satisfaction with process and timeframes for the submission and review of material.	Over 95% of classification decisions are provided within agreed timeframes.
	Implement process enhancements in consultation with stakeholders. Explore options for an IT system that will replace Lotus Notes for managing the classification process.	Conclusion of process review and implementation of changes. Agree options for new IT system.	Process review to be concluded by Q1 2024. Process improvements implemented by end 2024. Options for a new online system by end 2025.
	Ensure that the classification fee structure is fit for purpose	Review of fee structure based on sectoral consultation is presented to the Department for consideration with a clear case for any proposed SI changes.	Present fee review report to the Department by Q1 2024. Agree timeframe for implementation of any agreed legislative changes by end 2024.
	Continue to process video retail licence applications.	Number of video retail licence applications processed annually.	Maintain number of licences at 50% of 2022 level.
	Review current structure and approach to video retail licences.	Review of current approach to licensing complete by Q2 2024.	Present report and recommendations on licensing to the Department by Q2 2024. Agree timeframe for implementation of any agreed legislative changes by end 2024.

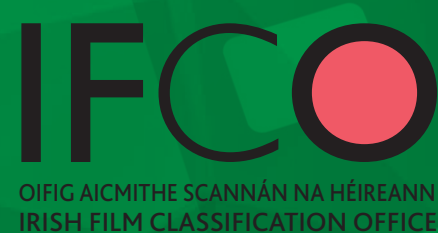
Strategic Theme

3

Communication and Engagement

Strategic Objective	Action	KPI	Target
Promote the role and contribution of the Office.	Enhance the structure and content of the IFCO website to increase accessibility and audience engagement.	Complete a review of the content and structure of the IFCO website. Implement a plan to enhance the website.	Review to be completed by Q1 2024. Costed development plan by end 2024. Plan implemented by end 2025.
	Develop a programme of activities to mark the centenary of the office.	Programme of activities developed, implemented and reviewed.	Programme developed by end Q2 2023. Programme implemented by end Q4 2023.
	Develop and implement a programme of engagement with young audiences.	Programme of activities developed, implemented and reviewed.	Programme developed by end 2023. Programme implemented in 2024 and 2025.
	Programme of engagement with major film festivals to support delivery of this strategy.	Programme of activities developed, implemented and reviewed.	Programme developed by end 2023. Programme implemented in 2024 and 2025.
	Old film classification records to be preserved and transferred to the National Archives.	Records to be evaluated and a plan for the transfer of records to be developed and implemented.	Plan developed by end 2023 and implemented by end 2025.
Contribute to policy debates and practical initiatives that support the delivery of this strategy.	Implement a programme of activities with a particular focus on collaborations with relevant partners.	Research and other activities support the delivery of the strategy and support broader national policy objectives including responding to climate change and increasing diversity equality and inclusion.	5 such activities will be implemented by the end of 2025.
	Contribute to policy debates in a variety of fora.	IFCO is viewed as an authoritative voice in relevant discussions.	The majority of stakeholders view IFCO as an authoritative voice based on research.





Director's Introduction

2023 is an important year for the Irish Film Classification Office (IFCO) as it marks the centenary of the signing of the Censorship of Films Act 1923. This was one of the first pieces of legislation passed by the Irish Free State and Kevin Rockett's book *Irish Film Censorship; a cultural journey from silent cinema to internet pornography (2004)* provides a comprehensive analysis of the operation of the Office over its first 80 years. In the last 20 years the Office has evolved from Censorship to Classification and now focuses on providing advice and guidance for audiences in relation to Cinema and Home Entertainment content sold in Ireland. One of my predecessors described this evolution as moving from "stop sign" to "traffic light", and this was an analogy that resonated with me when I was appointed as the 12th holder of the Office on March 6th 2023.

Two of my priorities since then have been the development of a Strategy Statement to guide the work of IFCO in the post-pandemic period and devising a suitable programme of events to mark the centenary of the 1923 Act. In both cases, the importance of our work as a public service that must balance the right to freedom of expression with the requirement that audiences are protected from harmful and illegal content has shaped our deliberations. While IFCO's role in this regard is very specific, it is also part of a wider regulatory landscape for audiovisual content that is now taking shape across Europe. This is the context in which the IFCO Strategy Statement 2023-2025 has been drafted and is clearly reflected in the draft Vision Statement "Audiovisual Content Regulation that empowers citizens and promotes plurality".

While audiences recognise the

different contexts in which they view audiovisual content, they have an expectation that some basic standards and protections will apply. This is particularly the case in cinema which is a communal experience where the theatrical nature of the presentation remains more immersive and impactful than home entertainment. The swift return of audiences to cinemas post-COVID is a testimony to this reality. IFCO's role in providing trusted guidance that reflects and shapes audience expectations remains the core of its activities as detailed in our first Mission statement. The Mission also identifies our focus on working with others to ensure that available content reflects the increasing diversity of Irish society and our commitment to working with others to enhance digital literacy. This work is underpinned by the four core values that reflect our current operations and organisation culture.

The importance of our work as a public service that must balance the right to freedom of expression with the requirement that audiences are protected from harmful and illegal content has shaped our deliberations

The three Strategic Themes provide more concrete information on our objectives, actions, KPIS and targets over the 2023-2025 period. In most cases these reflect a continuation of our current activities as the mandate of the Office has not changed. However, there is a recurring commitment under each theme to review current

processes, procedures and mandate to ensure that we are efficient and effective in every aspect of our operation. These reviews will be conducted within a wider context of current public policy objectives in relation to areas such as climate action and increasing diversity equality and inclusion. Strategic Theme 3 includes specific commitments in relation to enhanced outreach and engagement with stakeholders, a hallmark of the IFCO's work before the pandemic. The development of a programme of events to make the centenary of the Office has already progressed and it will include a relaunch of the IFCO logo to reflect our focus on guidance and advice. A

The development of a programme of events to make the centenary of the Office has already progressed and it will include a relaunch of the IFCO logo to reflect our focus on guidance and advice.

public competition that celebrates Ireland's contribution to cinema over that last 100 years will be part of this relaunch.

The Strategy Statement is being published in draft form to allow interested parties to comment on its content. Views should be submitted to info@ifco.gov.ie with "draft Strategy Statement" in the subject line. The closing date for submissions is Monday August 1st at 12 noon. A final Strategy Statement will be published in the Autumn. Thank you for taking the time to consider this draft and provide your views.

Dr. Ciarán Kishane

