

THE CHALLENGES OF AUDIO DESCRIPTION IN IRELAND: UNITING EDUCATION, USERS AND INDUSTRY

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Credit: Leolintang



ACCESSIBILITY AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION AUDIO DESCRIPTION*

***AD:** the service that provides descriptive narration of visual elements in multimedia and live performances for the blind and visually impaired.

****MA:** Media accessibility ensures that everyone, including people with disabilities, can access and engage with content across TV, film, online videos, social media, and digital platforms.

HOW IS IRELAND DOING? A CALL FOR INDUSTRY-EDUCATION COLLABORATION TO ENHANCE ACCESSIBILITY

What does **Ireland** provide in terms of **accessibility for the blind and the visually impaired**?

Is the **amount/type** of accessibility offered enough, not just in **media** but also in **leisure and social experiences**?

ADESI project: **Start a national conversation** about **expanding accessible content**, enhancing the audio description services available, and fostering partnerships between the education sector and the entertainment industry.

Opportunity: **New alliances can create a more inclusive Ireland** where accessibility is not an afterthought but a standard—empowering the blind and visually impaired to engage with entertainment, social events, and leisure activities on equal terms with the rest of society.

Is Ireland meeting European standards for accessibility in the media and beyond?

I asked: What is the situation of audio description in Ireland?

ChatGPT said: Audio description (AD) in Ireland has seen **significant developments** across various sectors, enhancing accessibility for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

DEVELOPMENTS

- **Broadcasting and Media** focus on the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) — Source: BAI.IE
- **Live Performances and Cultural Events** focus on organizations such as Arts & Disability Ireland (ADI) — Source: ADIARTS.IE
- **Sports Broadcasting** focus on events like the Six Nations rugby matches — Source: VI.IE
- **Research and Development** focus on studies, such as improving audio description production practices — Source: CNAM.IE
- **Educational Initiatives** focus on promoting accessibility and inclusion within educational settings — Source: DORAS.DCU.IE



**EVOLVING ROLE OF HUMAN
LANGUAGE PROFESSIONALS IN
A TECHNOLOGY-DRIVEN WORLD**



ADESI PROJECT

The logo for DCU (Dublin City University) features the letters 'DCU' in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font.

Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

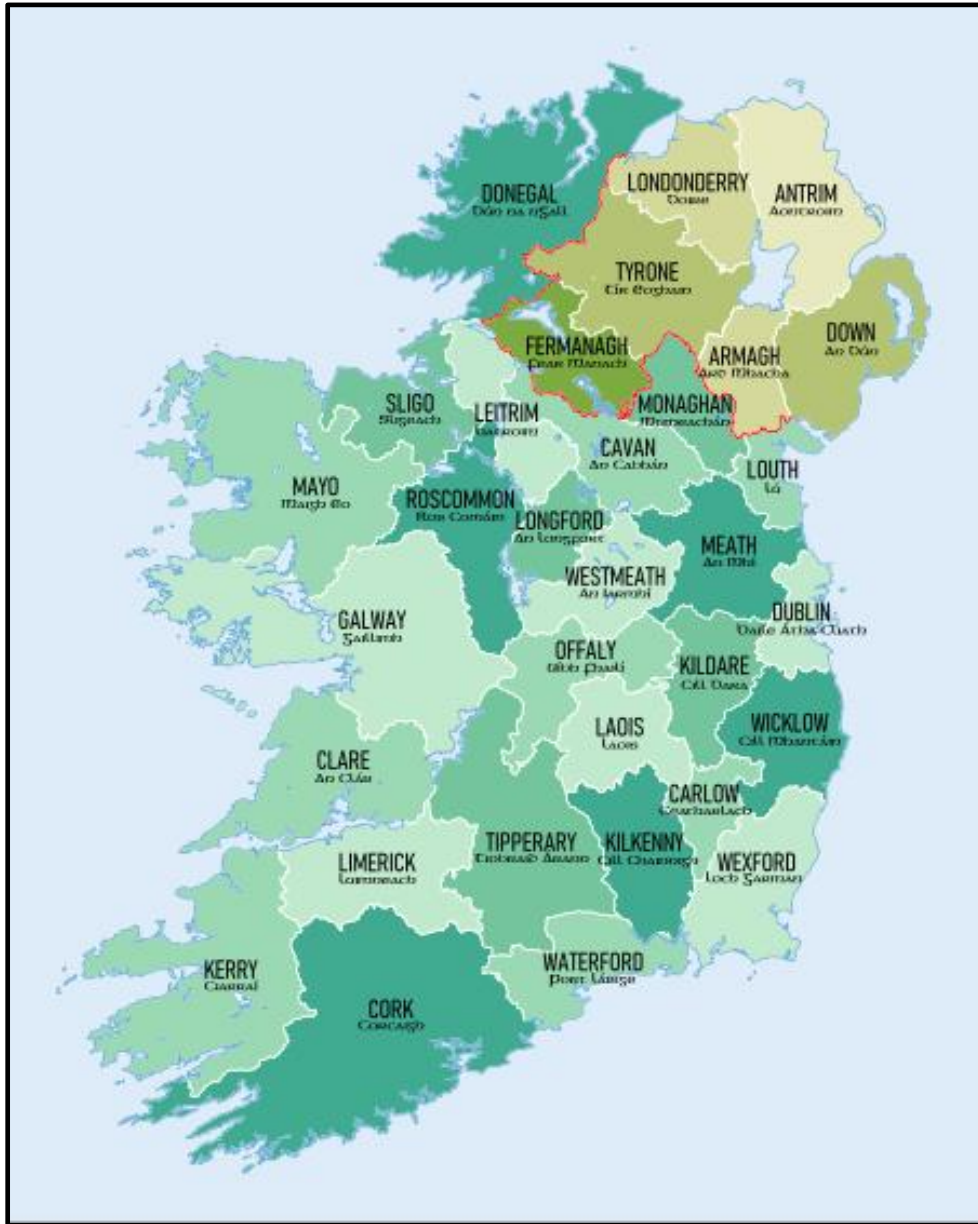
The logo for Vision Ireland consists of three small dots in a triangular arrangement above the text 'Vision Ireland' in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font.

ADESI PROJECT

IRISH RESEARCH COUNCIL

(2023/2025)

- It **maps the presence of AD** in higher education, services offered in the entertainment industry and the needs of users of audio description.
- Alignment with **UN SDGs**:
 - **SDG 4**: Accessibility in education.
 - **SDG 10**: Reducing inequalities and promoting social inclusion.
 - UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Promotes **accessibility to entertainment and social interaction** for the B/VI.
- Questionnaire → results → consultation & recommendations → **report**



- Population & visual impairment:
 - Ireland: **5 million** (CSO, 2022).
 - 296,000 people blind or visually impaired (**over 6%**).
- Accessibility:
 - *European Audiovisual Observatory* (2023) >> broadcasters to meet **accessibility standards**.
 - Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI, now CNAM) to **adopt new accessibility standards from 2024**.

BROADCASTING ACCESSIBILITY & LEGISLATION

- Previous Standards (2019-2023):

Annual quotas for subtitling, sign language, and audio description.

RTÉ 1 and RTÉ 2 aimed to increase audio description from **5% to 10% of their programs**.

- New Legislation (2022):

Online Safety and Media Regulation Act: Requires traditional broadcasters & online platforms to provide audio description, captioning, etc.

CNAM ensures accessibility for broadcasting and on-demand services.

- Government and Media Initiatives:

Greater focus on **sign language interpreters** (e.g., during Covid-19).

Technical reports like the 2023 report on audio description production.



**AUDIO
DESCRIPTION
IN/AND EDUCATION**

HIGHER EDUCATION

General profile:

56,4% Universities in Dublin

Field of knowledge:

60% Modern Languages, Applied Linguistics

16,4% Media, Communication, Journalism

14,5% Education

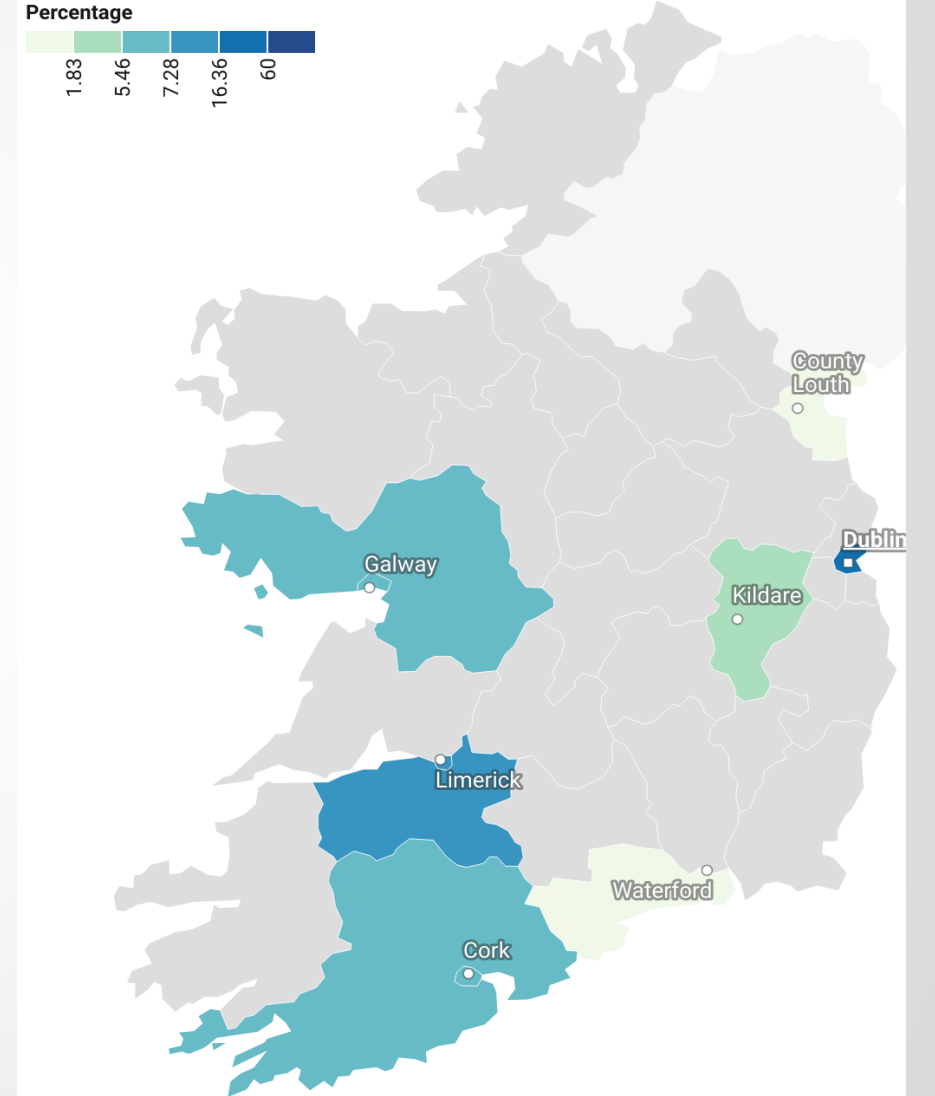
12,7% Translation Studies

Teaching Experience:

42,3% over 15 years

10,9% 11-15 years

Distribution of Participating Irish HE Institutions by Percentage/County

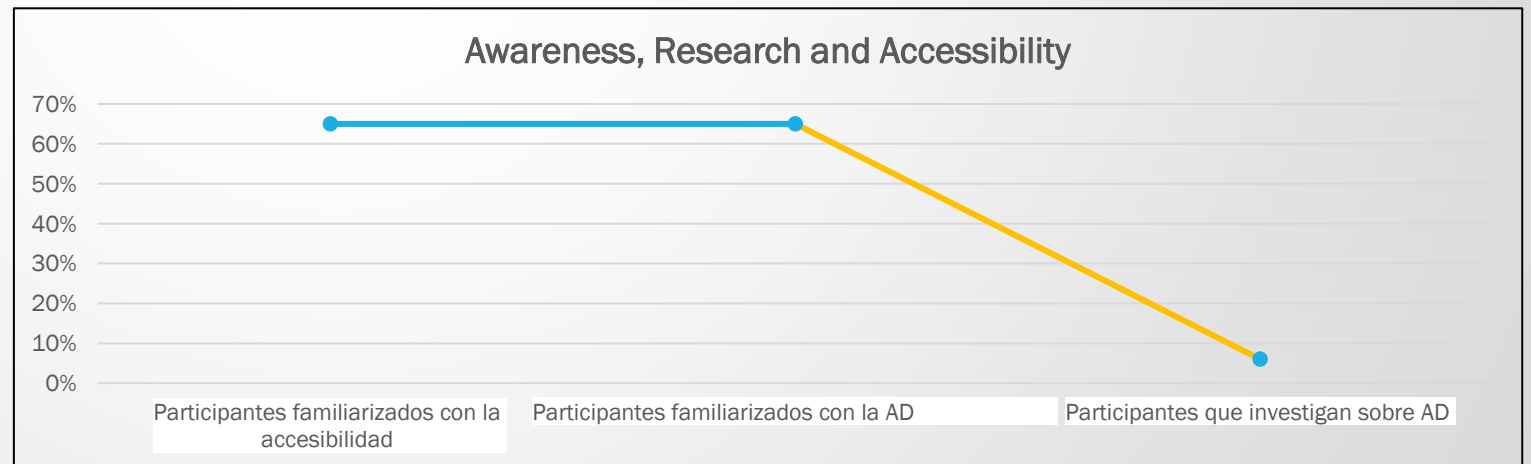


HIGHER EDUCATION

RESEARCH, ACCESSIBILITY, AND AD

RESEARCH AND/OR ON ACCESSIBILITY

Participants familiar with accessibility:	65%
Participants familiar with AD:	65%
Participants researching AD:	6%

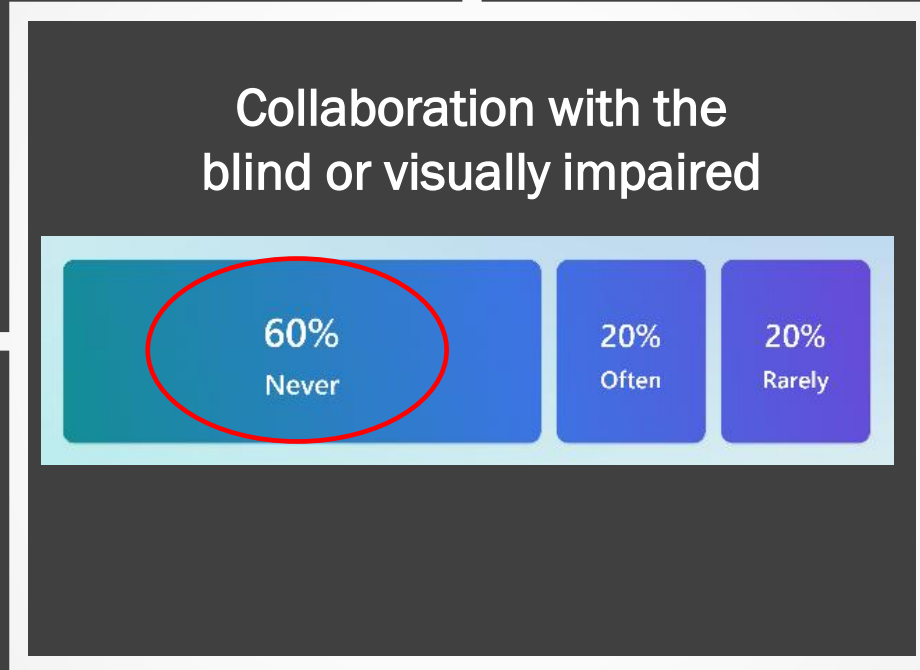




Teaching experience in HE

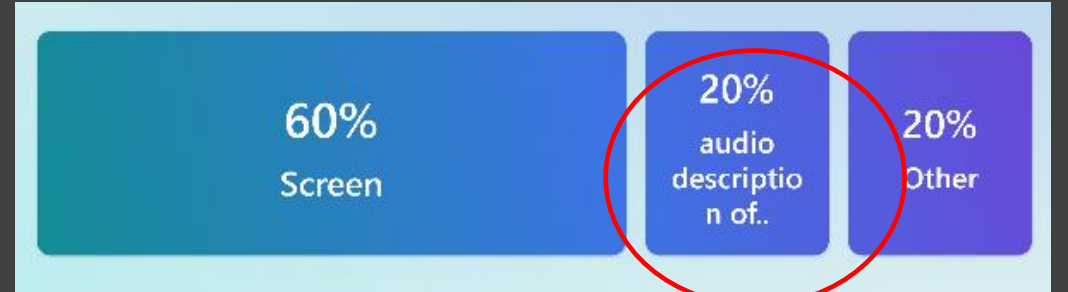
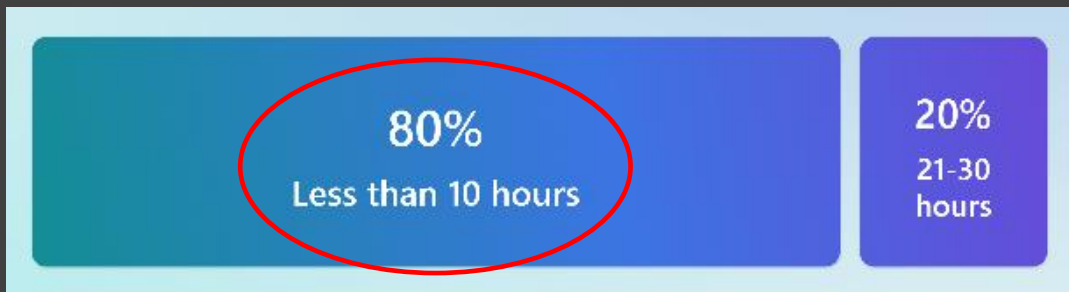


Average group size



Duration of the course

Type of AD



AUDIO DESCRIPTION IN/AND THE INDUSTRY



AD AND THE INDUSTRY

Agencies/Organisations:

61,9% based in Dublin

52% Public sector 29% private sector 14% both

*Biggest representation: broadcasters and theatre

Experience:

23,8% over 15 years

38,1% 4 - 8 years

28,6% 1 - 3 years

14,3% reception

23,8% NGO representative

14,8% Company reps (broadcasting, museum)

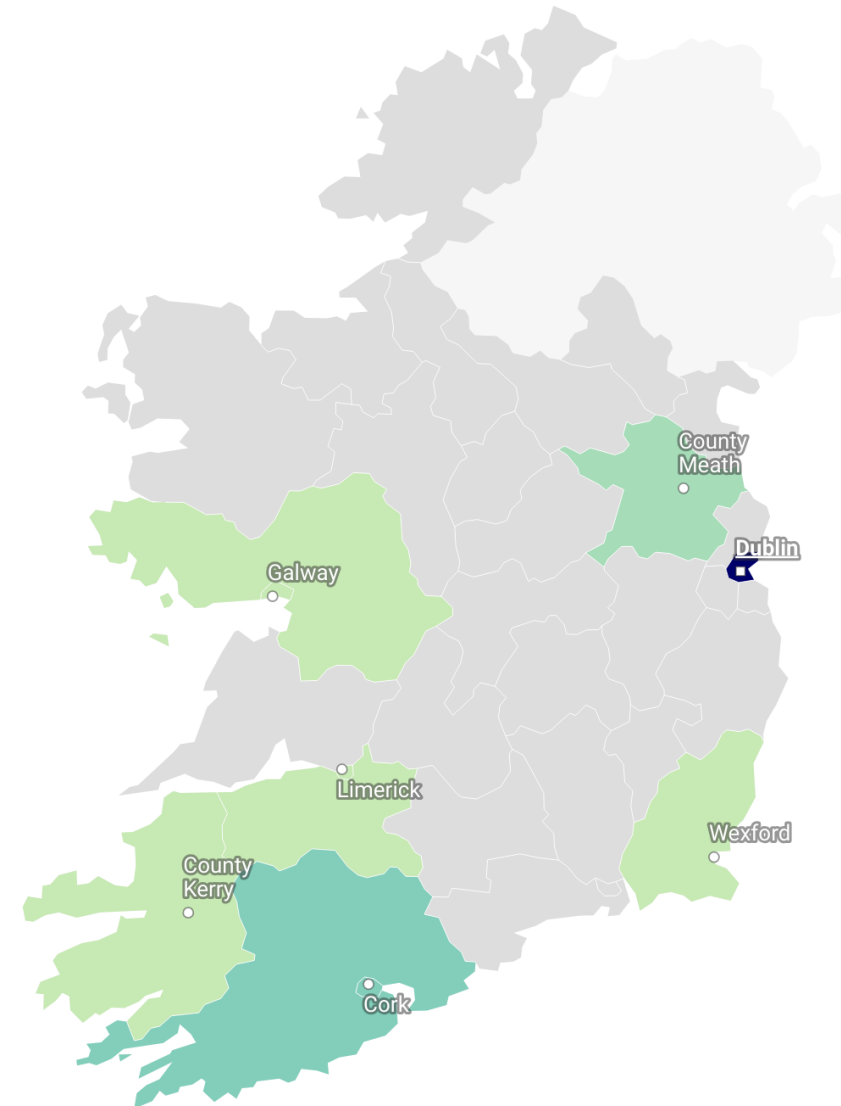
Respondents who work with AD: 28,6%

19,1% audio describers

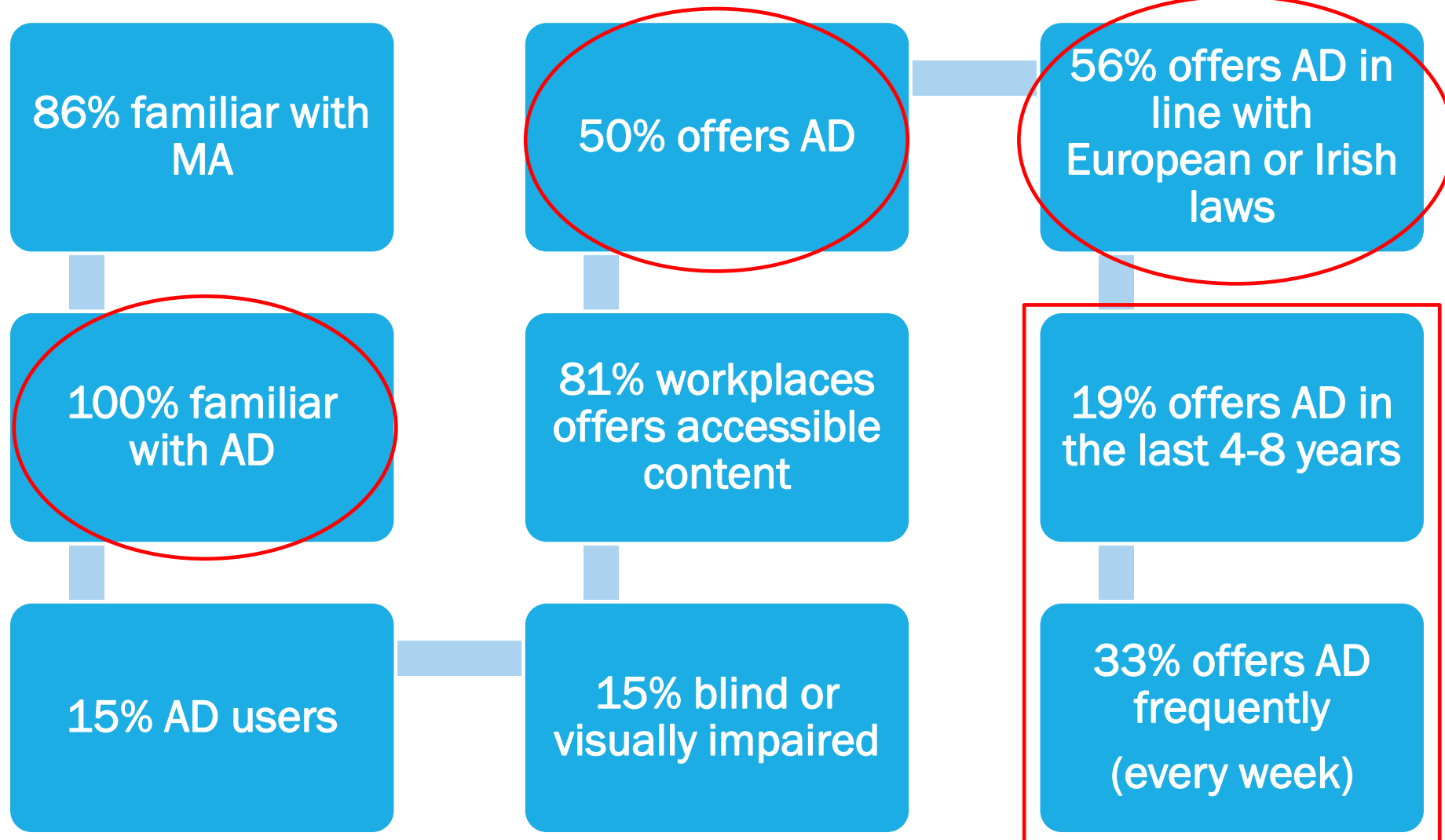
4,8% reps of companies offering AD

4,8% AD assessors

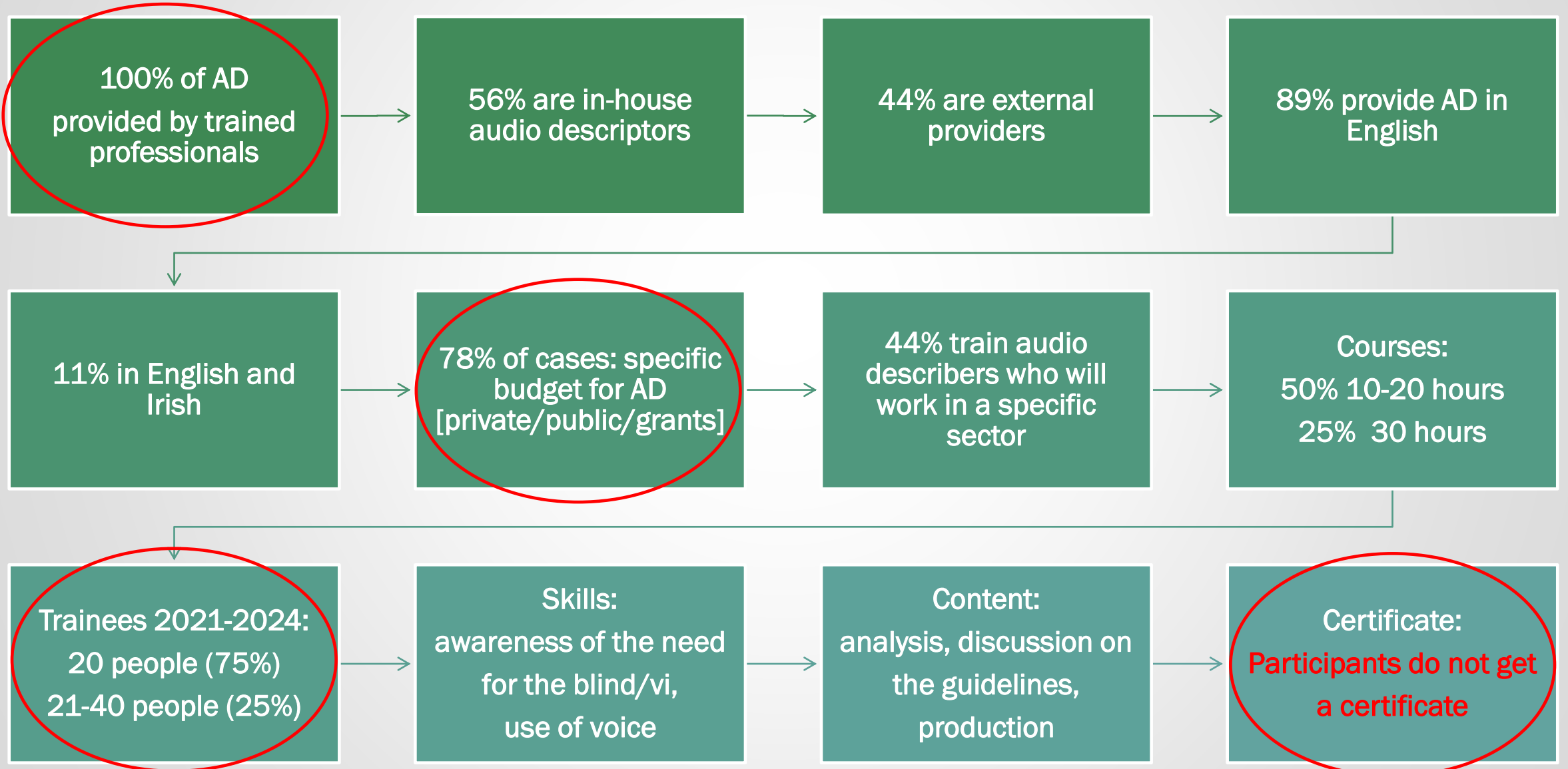
Distribution of Entertainment Industry Participants by Percentage/County



ACCESSIBILITY IN THE WORKPLACE



TRAINING AUDIO DESCRIBERS



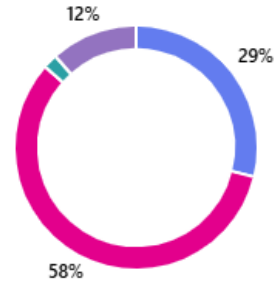
AUDIO DESCRIPTION END USERS



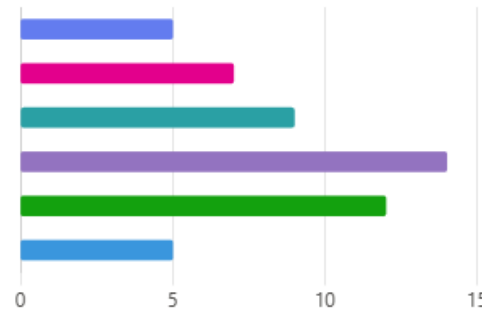
END USERS

I am blind	15
I am visually impaired	30

I am not blind or visually impaired	1
I am not blind or visually impaired but I have family member(s)/friend(s)/colleagues who are blind or...	6

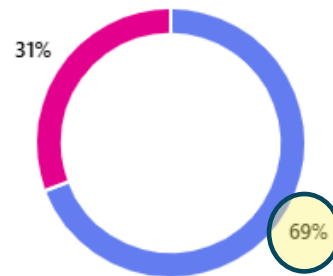


18-25	5
26-35	7
36-45	9
46-55	14
56-70	12
Over 70	5

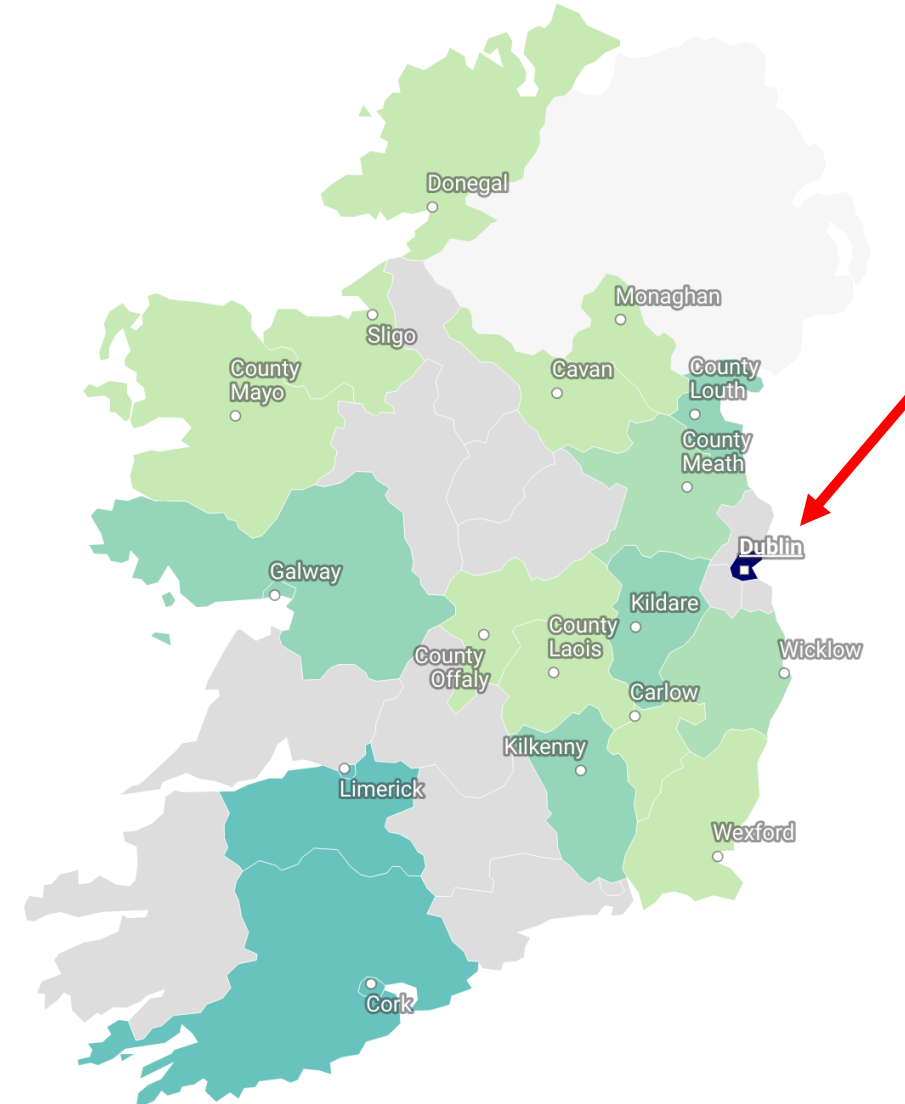


Do you use audio description?

Yes	36
No	16



Distribution of Participating AD Users by Percentage/County



Do you use audio description?

69%
Yes

30%
No

How often do you use audio description services for TV, video on demand, cinema, video games?

61%
Regularly

25%
Sometimes

13%
..

How often do you use audio description services for live performances such as theatre, museums, sport?

36%
Rarely

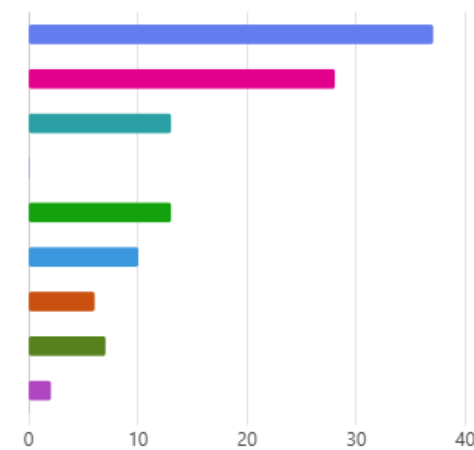
22%
Sometimes

22%
Never

19%
Every time

Of the above, which audio description services do you use the most? Please choose your top three answers in no particular order:

TV programmes	37
Platforms (video on demand)	28
Cinema	13
Video games	0
Theatre	13
Museums	10
Sport	6
N/A	7
Other	2



Do you find that there is enough audio description provided in the following services?

● Enough ● Not enough ● Unsure

TV programmes

Platforms

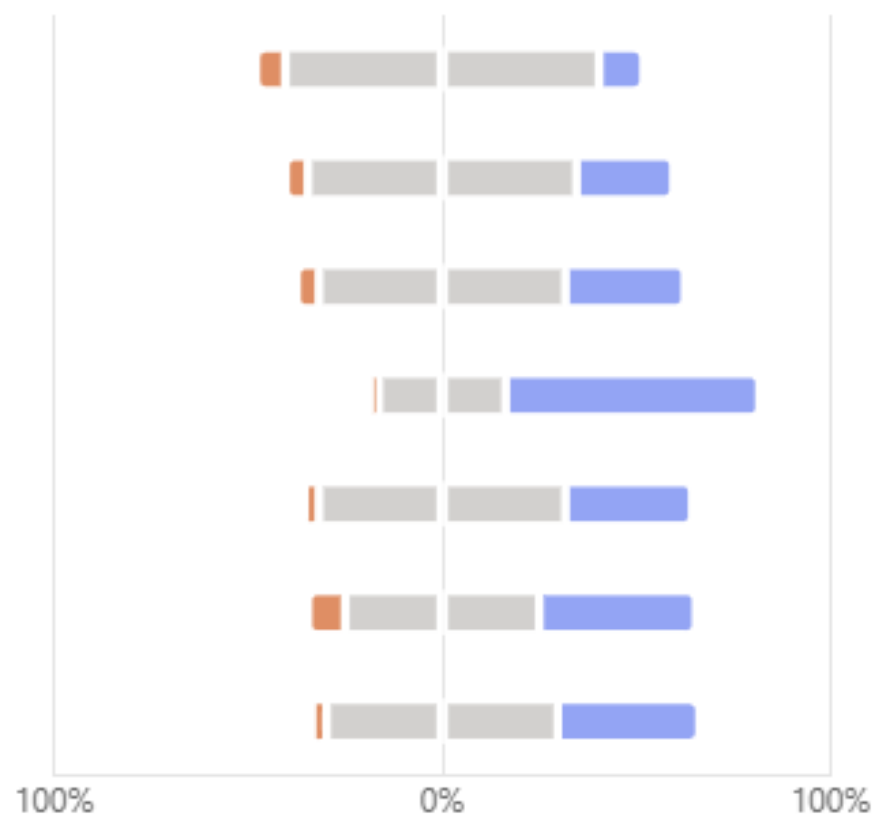
Cinema

Video games

Theatre

Museums

Sport





**CONSULTATION:
STEERING
GROUP**



RTÉ



Arts & Disability
Ireland



Coimisiún
na Meán



Vision Ireland



sky



LESSONS TO TAKE HOME



1 Ireland is making progress in media accessibility, but challenges remain.

1 in 20 people in Ireland are B/VI, inclusive access to media is not just a legal requirement — **it's a social responsibility.**

2 Legislation is evolving, but enforcement and expansion are key.

The Online Safety and Media Regulation Act marks a step forward, but **we must ensure its implementation reaches beyond TV to all forms of entertainment and media.**

3 Cross-sector collaboration is essential for real impact.

Partnerships between academia, industry, and the end users **drive innovation and create change** in accessibility.

4 The future of media and entertainment must be accessible to all to truly foster an inclusive society.

We must ensure that audio description, captioning, and other accessibility tools become standard, not afterthought.

5 The Future of AD and AI – Humans still matter.

Technology and AI can help to advance accessibility. The **human factor** is intrinsically important for **meaningful and engaging AD and experiences.**

6 No Certification means no standards.

Without official certification, the quality and consistency of AD services suffer. Establishing recognized qualifications for audio describers will ensure excellence and **professionalism in the industry.**

Capitalise on home grown, qualified actors, actresses and audio describers **to strengthen the AD industry.**

7 AD and practical matters: **capacity, viability, cost.**

Audio desc

Updated / Tuesday, 17 Sep 20



Kevin Kelly (right) savours the atmos

Expand



Joanne C VMTV and Guinness Partner to Provide Audio Description and Sign Language for Six Nations

January 31, 2025

'Diverse fans co



With Ireland's Six Nations campaign set to kick off this weekend, Virgin Media Television has teamed up with Guinness to provide audio description and Irish sign language for fans on a special pop-up channel on Virgin Media PLAY, the broadcaster's online platform.

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ales lead to better investmen

STORIES >

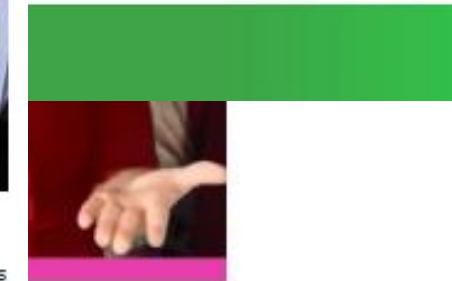
k's Day live: Parades taking place in Dublin and eland

ers Championship play-off live: Rory McIlroy aun face off over three holes

ks for developers to build apartments under ation by Minister of Housing

ny St Patrick's Day parade cancelled after an fatally struck by car in early hours of ;

gn affairs chief questions Russia's desire for



THANK YOU

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS WELCOME

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