



MG ALBA's response to Ofcom's consultation on Measurement framework for media plurality

A consultation on Ofcom's proposed advice to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

MG ALBA

MG ALBA is short for Meadhanan Gàidhlig Alba (Gaelic Media Scotland). MG ALBA delivers **BBC ALBA** (the Gaelic language television channel) in partnership with the BBC. BBC ALBA is the first partnership television service to operate under a BBC licence.

BBC ALBA is a success: although less than 2% of Scotland's population speaks, reads, writes or understands Gaelic, BBC ALBA reaches almost ten times that number each week on television. In 2014, viewing of Gaelic programmes on BBC iPlayer was 8.2 million (MG ALBA, 2014), a 40% increase on 2013.

Average weekly 15 minute reach in Scotland was 750,000 throughout 2013-14.

Do you agree with our approach to measuring plurality in the UK Nations? If not, how could plurality in the nations be better measured?

MG ALBA notes that the scope of this consultation was limited to news and current affairs. The question as set out in the consultation does not make express this restriction.

It is MG ALBA's view that there is merit in considering broader plurality, i.e. plurality in other genres and the relationship with media diversity.

This has particular pertinence in the Nations, especially Scotland, because despite the availability of hundreds of UK TV channels and online content, this UK plurality does not provide diversity of content reflecting contemporary Scottish life. This is a result of the decline in domestic Scottish TV content since the mid nineties.

Not only is this decline evidenced in substantial weakness in the reflection of the 'rich tapestry' of Scottish life, it results in a weak domestic production sector composed principally of microbusinesses, which find it challenging to acquire scale and grow, in either a UK or international context.

It is MG ALBA's view that any consideration of UK strategies for media plurality should take into account (i) non-news plurality and diversity and (ii) the very particular circumstances of Scotland, in terms of on-screen representation and domestic production.