



Media Release- 17th May 2004

ComReg and Ofcom announce cross-border telecoms initiative

The Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) and its UK counterpart, Ofcom, today announced the formation of a joint working group designed to explore solutions to problems which affect telecommunications users in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The joint working group will meet regularly over the next number of months. It will follow an EU-wide policy objective of enhancing the single market, by identifying and seeking to address a range of issues which could benefit consumers on both sides of the border in their everyday use of telecommunications services.

The provision of these services across the border by their very nature involves communications across two jurisdictions. Compared with national services, the introduction of this international element may introduce additional costs and considerations which end-users have to take into account when using these services.

The new working party will be discussing with mobile network and fixed telephony operators a way forward which is in the best interests of consumers and businesses in both parts of the island and which also maintains the competitiveness of the telecommunications industry.

ComReg Chairman John Doherty said: "the facilitation of a better cross-border telecoms service can promote trade and business development in the border region and on the entire island. On behalf of ComReg, we look forward to working on this important project with our colleagues in Ofcom. We hope that our joint endeavours will find solutions which will contribute to resolving some long standing cross-border telecoms issues, including international roaming. In his policy directions issued in March, the Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, Dermot Ahern TD, specifically highlighted the issue of roaming as one which impacts particularly on people living in the Border Regions.

Denis Wolinski, Ofcom Director Northern Ireland, said: "Consumers and businesses in Northern Ireland have been suffering for many years from the high costs associated with international roaming and the transfer of data. Oftel, the UK's previous telecoms regulator, the Northern Ireland Advisory Committee on Telecoms and ComReg have all highlighted in recent years what are now quite longstanding problems and we will be building on the foundations laid by them. The fact that Ofcom under the terms of the Communications Act has an Office and representation dedicated to Northern Ireland makes this move possible."

ENDS

Issued By

Tom Butler

Public Affairs Manager, ComReg

Ph: 01 804 9639 Mobile: 087 2536358

tom.butler@comreg.ie