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ComReg consults on future strategy for the telecoms sector

The Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) today set out a number of possible scenarios for the Irish telecoms sector in a consultation document entitled: *Forward-Looking Strategic Review of the Irish Telecoms Sector*.

The telecommunications sector makes an important contribution to the Irish economy, as the sector contributes an estimated €4 billion to the economy and employs over 15,000 people.

The purpose of this ComReg document is to stimulate debate and encourage feedback on key issues and trends that may affect the sector as it develops up to 2010. The outcome of this consultation will feed into ComReg's forthcoming Strategy Statement which will be published this summer.

The consultation document is presented in two parts, the first looks at establishing a Regulatory Strategy for the telecommunications sector from 2005 to 2010 and the second part focuses on key emerging trends.

The document sets out two potential scenarios for the sector to help stimulate thought. The first of these is a high-growth scenario based on a high level of investment in telecoms infrastructure and services. The second scenario sets out what may happen if there is low or modest growth in the sector over the next number of years.

The ComReg paper outlines a number of key trends that are likely to impact on telecoms, such as:

Investment in telecoms infrastructure: Continued investment is needed in telecoms infrastructure such as broadband and Next Generation Networks. There are indications that such investment is beginning to be made in Ireland.

Convergence in the sector: Convergence is likely to occur between different aspects of the telecoms sector including technologies, services and markets.

Adapting regulation: As the telecoms sector evolves over the next five-year period, careful consideration will need to be given to issues that may require further regulation and also to issues that will require less regulation.

The changing social role of telecoms: The importance of telecoms for social inclusion is increasing as telecommunications become further ingrained in our daily lives. As Next Generation Networks develop the role of universal service obligations may need to be re-examined.

The Chairperson of the Commission for Communications Regulation, Isolde Goggin said: “Ireland is currently entering a period of significant change in the telecoms sector. New technologies are emerging at an increasingly rapid pace that will potentially change the shape of the industry in the most fundamental way.

“It’s imperative for a Regulator to consider the possibilities that may emerge in the future to help avoid potential pit-falls. By giving due consideration to future developments, it will enable ComReg to provide a degree of clarity and certainty to the market with the aim of encouraging investment and innovation.”

“In order to develop our own strategy ComReg welcomes views from the public, industry and interests groups in relation to the scenarios outlined in the document.”

The full document ComReg 05/30 is available on the ComReg website www.comreg.ie

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Issued By

Tom Butler
Public Affairs Manager, ComReg
Ph: 01 804 9639 Mobile: 087 2536358 tom.butler@comreg.ie