



Media Release - 30 March 2006

ComReg consults on the future provision of Universal Telephone Services

The Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) has today invited views from the public and industry on the provision of Universal Service for basic telecommunications services in Ireland.

Universal Service ensures that basic fixed line services are available at an affordable price to end users. One of the benefits of the Universal Service Obligation is that it provides services to help vulnerable users and those in remote and rural areas, whom the market might otherwise choose not to serve.

The principle of Universal Service means that every person is entitled to have access to a basic set of telecommunications services. These include:

- provision of a telephone line capable of providing functional Internet access
- provision of a comprehensive telephone directory
- provision of public payphones to meet the reasonable needs of end-users

Universal Service also provides for specific measures to ensure that services are affordable and that consumers have facilities to enable them to exercise control over their telephony costs.

In July 2003, ComReg designated eircom as the Universal Service Provider for the period of 3 years. This period is nearing its completion and ComReg has the responsibility for designating one or more undertakings for such period as may be specified by ComReg. The consultation paper also allows for any telecom operator to make a case to be designated as a universal service provider should they so wish.

Commissioner Mike Byrne said: “ComReg is pleased to publish this public consultation on the future provision of Universal Service. ComReg is obliged to ensure that access to basic telephone and internet services is provided to all users in Ireland. This consultation paper will allow stakeholders to comment on the relevant issues, and will provide ComReg with information to allow it to decide which telecom operator(s) will be designated with this important function from July of this year”.

This consultation process is open from today until May 11, 2006 during which time ComReg will welcome written submissions on the proposals. All views will be considered by ComReg before a final decision is made.

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