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ComReg issues direction on Mobile Number Portability

The Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) today issued a draft direction which will introduce a tone alert system to inform mobile phone users when they are making calls to other mobile networks.

ComReg said that as a result of the introduction of Mobile Number Portability, consumers must be informed when they are making calls to other networks, also known as an off-net call. These calls are usually more expensive than calls to the same network or on-net calls.

ComReg is directing the mobile phone companies to introduce tone alert on mobile phones which will inform customers when they are making off-net calls.

Mobile Number Portability allows mobile users to move to another network without the need to change their full mobile number. Since the introduction of Mobile Number Portability (MNP) in July 2003, over 48,000 people have 'ported' their mobile number.

Mobile Number Portability (MNP) has facilitated greater competition between mobile operators and it has given consumers the ability to move between operators without the need to change their mobile number. In addition, consumers and business users avoid the cost and inconvenience usually associated with changing their number.

These positive benefits reflect the fact that the MNP process introduced in Ireland is one of the most efficient, with the majority of 'ports' for single line users being completed in under an hour.

Given the current tariff differentials between on-net and off-net tariffs charged by mobile operators, it is vital that consumers are provided with clear tariff information in a meaningful format. This can arise as the mobile prefix of the number dialled is no longer the definitive indicator of the network that a customer is calling.

ComReg's direction will seek to ensure that consumers will take full advantage of the benefits of MNP and it will also address the risk of any reduction in tariff transparency.

The core objectives underlying the decisions in this paper are the continued promotion of competition through MNP and the protection of consumers. The measures proposed in this document are designed to ensure, in a balanced and proportionate manner, that consumers are protected in an increasingly competitive environment. ComReg will continue to work proactively with industry and consumer groups to achieve that end.

The full paper covering this direction – ComReg 03/149 – is available on the ComReg website.

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