



Media Release – 8th July 2007

ComReg outlines regulatory principles for Next Generation Networks

The Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) today released a paper outlining its view on the implications of the introduction of Next Generation Networks (NGNs) in Ireland. The paper provides guidance to industry on ComReg's policy position on the existing suite of regulated wholesale products, such as Local Loop Unbundling (LLU). It also outlines some of the main issues relating to possible regulated products which will be taken into account in upcoming Market Reviews.

This document forms part of a number of initiatives undertaken by ComReg to enable the timely introduction of NGNs and the continuance of a competitive and diverse communications sector. These have included:

Holding a national conference in March to encourage and stimulate the national debate and thinking around the introduction of NGNs.

The establishment in April of a NGN Steering Group with an independent chair and senior representatives from the sector to discuss, identify and resolve the issues that NGN deployment will bring.

Key among the challenges that ComReg wishes to address is the need for clarity around the continuation of existing obligations. In particular, ComReg recognises that the transition to NGNs may cause uncertainty for those operators who currently utilise LLU or who are considering doing so.

ComReg does not want to see the adoption of LLU being hindered. The experience in other European countries clearly demonstrates the LLU is a key driver of competition and broadband deployment. To this end, ComReg believes that LLU will remain an important enabler of competition, particularly given Eircom's commitment to retain its copper infrastructure for the foreseeable future.

Accordingly this paper outlines ComReg's intention to retain the unbundled access obligation on a national basis, where significant market power continues to be found, for the duration of the next market review.

Further, ComReg expects that any proposed withdrawal of network infrastructure that is essential to the fulfilment of those obligations would be preceded by an adequate notification period of between three to five years.

ComReg chairperson Mike Byrne said: “While we look forward to the introduction of Next Generation Networks (NGNs) in Ireland, we recognise that there are some initial questions and challenges that must first be addressed. This paper sets out our view on these issues and what we believe the next steps should be. In doing so ComReg believes it will assist the industry to plan its transition to NGNs, so that all stakeholders – operators, businesses and consumers – can enjoy the many benefits of increased choice, efficiency and innovation that next generation technology can bring. We look forward to continuing to engage with industry as we move this process forward.”

Further information on the NGN Industry Steering Group is available on ComReg’s website at www.comreg.ie/nisg.

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Issued By

Tom Butler

Public Affairs Manager, ComReg

Ph: 01 804 9639 Mobile: 087 2536358

tom.butler@comreg.ie

Notes to Editors:

Next Generation Networks (NGNs) is a term for new technologies which are being integrated into, and progressively replacing, existing legacy telecoms networks. They are leading a transformation of the communications industry by facilitating the delivery of multiple services over a single packet-based infrastructure. In an NGN environment, it is expected that end-users will be able to access their voice, data, video and new and emerging media applications over a single network.