



Media Release- Wednesday, 1st October

ComReg says more consumers and businesses need to get connected

The Chairperson of the Commission for Communications Regulation, Etain Doyle said that more attention needs to be paid to understanding the needs of small businesses and residential users in order to get them on-line.

Many people in Ireland have started to reap the educational, business and lifestyle benefits of getting connected. However, we have only just begun to see the benefits. We need to do more if Ireland is to reap the full benefits in terms of productivity and inclusivity. That's why we want to stimulate demand and encourage more people to get on-line.

Ms. Doyle made the comments today, 1st of October 2003 at ComReg's annual conference entitled 'Get Connected' which was opened by Dermot Ahern TD, the Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources and which was attended by over 150 people representing the telecoms industry, Government Departments, public sector bodies and regional authorities.

The ComReg Chairperson, Etain Doyle said a lot has been achieved in upgrading the telecommunications network during the last year. 53% of all eircom lines are now DSL enabled switches. EsatBT have 40 unbundled exchanges, and also offer DSL services at all eircom-enabled switches. Fixed wireless access, cable modems and satellite offer alternative connections in certain parts of the country

To date, demand levels in Ireland have lagged behind average levels in Europe. Recent price decreases should encourage demand but we must devise the necessary ways and means to encourage more people and businesses to get connected. Small businesses may need to work together to reap substantial benefits. For residential consumers, being able to use the internet has become as essential a skill, as driving a car.

Senator Fergal Quinn, Executive Chairman of Superquinn, spoke to delegates about his company's experience of using the Internet to connect with his customers. He said that an estimated almost 50,000 Superquinn customers have registered to use the service with his company.

In his speech, 'Grocery Lessons for the Internet', Fergal Quinn outlined how an experienced customer focussed business can harness new technology in a user friendly and cost-effective way

Senator Quinn said that if Ireland is to become a world leader in the Information Age then Ireland must adopt broadband and make it a way of life.

He added that we cannot lead the Information Age while remaining a nation with dial-up connections to the Internet. We need to get broadband quickly into our schools, into our homes and into our businesses.

UK Telecommunications expert, Professor Jim Norton stressed to delegates the need for affordable broadband tailored to suit the needs of individual customers.

One of the biggest challenges for all EU countries is the provision of affordable broadband. Once broadband becomes affordable its take-up grows very strongly as consumers begin to respond positively.

Professor Norton said there is no single 'magic bullet' technology for the provision of broadband service. It can be provided through a range of technologies which includes DSL, cable modems, Fixed Wireles Access and Satellite among others

The conference heard a series of presentations outlining experiences of getting connected to broadband and there were also presentations on the specific needs of users.

All presentations and speeches from the conference are available on the ComReg website www.comreg.ie

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