



Office of the Director of  
**Telecommunications  
Regulation**

## **Early Liberalisation of Telecommunications in Ireland**

### **A Statement by the Director of Telecommunications Regulation**

**Document No. ODTR 98/13**

**22 May, 1998**

**Oifig an Stiúirthóra Rialála Teileachumarsáide**  
**Office of the Director of Telecommunications Regulation**  
Abbey Court, Irish Life Centre Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1.  
*Telephone +353-1-804 9600 Fax +353-1-804 9680*

## Early Liberalisation in Ireland

The Director of Telecommunications Regulation, Ms. Eain Doyle, today welcomed the announcement by Minister for Public Enterprise, Ms. Mary O'Rourke T.D., of the Government decision to end Ireland's derogation from full liberalisation of the telecommunications market before the end of the year, rather than the planned date of 1 January, 2000.

The Director, Ms. Doyle, said that up to now competition had been beneficial to customers in certain segments of the market, such as business and mobile, and that these benefits could now be extended to all customers, including residential customers. She also said she hoped that the end to Telecom Eireann's monopoly on voice telephony would accelerate the company's reductions in prices and help bring these prices closer to European averages.

The Director added that, while there was a lot of work ahead, she was confident that her office could conduct the consultations and deliver the framework necessary to facilitate the smooth transition to a fully liberalised market before the end of 1998.

The Director said that significant progress had already been made in developing this framework since the Office started last year and it has identified ways to bring forward the liberalisation timetable from 1 January 2000. The Director proposes to hold a consultative workshop on key issues to be addressed to obtain the views and comments of interested parties. That workshop will take place on 10 June and further details will be announced as they become available.

While progress has been made, the new timetable for liberalisation will require a far more rapid development of the regulatory framework than has taken place in other EU countries. Some of the key issues which the Office will be addressing and which will be discussed at the consultative workshop include:

### **Licensing Regime**

In order to ensure full and effective liberalisation and facilitate competition a licensing regime for all services, including public voice telephony and the public switched telephony network must be set in place. This will involve the creation of new licensing structures. A major change will be the introduction of a licence under which Telecom Éireann will operate. This will provide a valuable tool in levelling the playing field between Telecom Eireann and other operators. The licensing regime will be very important to telecoms companies in deciding their strategy for delivery of services to meet Irish telecommunications needs into the twenty first century.

Key issues to be addressed in this area include:

- rights and entitlements of licensees, including access to essential facilities (e.g. numbers)
- use of radio for voice telephony
- application and licensing procedures
- quality of service standards
- provision of universal service

### **Interconnection Regime**

In a fully liberalised environment, fixed network to fixed network interconnection is a crucial factor. Interconnection accounts for up to 40% of the costs of new entrants into this market. Ireland has already started to move towards an interconnection type regime for all telecommunications licensees. The Director recently welcomed the introduction of interconnection type charges by Telecom Éireann for competitors in the telecommunications services market and encourages Telecom Eireann to reduce these rapidly. In addition, the Director has been pleased to note the introduction of technical terms for network to network interconnection. She also expects to announce details of “carrier access” shortly. This will allow telephone users to access alternative service providers by dialling a short access code.

While these are important elements in the interconnection environment, they are only the initial steps. Ireland must have a fully comprehensive and appropriate interconnection regime in place to facilitate competitors to Telecom Éireann in a fully liberalised environment.

Key issues to be addressed in this area include:

- interconnection rates
- rights and entitlements to interconnection
- costs of Telecom Éireann as the dominant incumbent operator
- procedures for negotiating/obtaining interconnection terms and conditions
- technical terms of interconnection
- dispute resolution procedures

### **Numbering**

While access to numbers will be addressed in the context of the development of a licensing regime, there have already been some important developments in this area. The Director published a detailed consultative document on telephone numbering in March. The responses received are now being carefully considered, taking account of the requirements for liberalisation. A further document setting out the Director’s position on key numbering issues will be published in June.

From the end of this year carrier selection will be available. This will allow telephone users to choose alternative service providers by pre-fixing the dialled number with a carrier selection code. As already indicated by the Minister for Public Enterprise, Mrs Mary O'Rourke T.D., full number portability is to be available by 1 January 2000. This will enable customers to move from one service provider to another without changing their telephone number.

## **Telephone Numbering - Carrier Access & Carrier Selection**

### Examples

#### **Current Situation**

Ms. Kelly living in Waterford wants to contact her friend in Dublin, both are Telecom Eireann Customers.

She dials 01-2345678

#### **Carrier Access**

Ms. Kelly decides to become a customer of Liberalphone Co. Ltd and wants to ring her friend in Dublin.

She dials 13-123 and gets dial tone from Liberalphone Co. Ltd.

Then she dials 01-2345678

#### **Carrier Selection - from the end of the year**

Ms. Kelly decides to become a customer of Liberalphone Co. Ltd and wants to ring her friend in Dublin.

She dials 13-123-01-2345678

If she has a programmable phone, she will be able to program in the selection code (13-123) and need only dial 01-2345678.

ENDS.

22 May, 1998