



Commission for  
**Communications Regulation**

ComReg eGovernment Strategy

## eGovernment Strategy – 2010-2012

## 1 Strategic Approach

ComReg is the independent statutory body responsible for the regulation of the electronic communications and postal sectors, and more recently for premium rate services. It is a focussed, results-orientated organisation, regulating highly complex sectors where the quality of our skills, structures and systems is critical to our overall performance.

The pursuit of ComReg's position as a centre of excellence has been a core objective of ComReg since its inception. ComReg has a strong record in progressing e-government initiatives to achieve both a higher standard of customer service and internal efficiencies. For example, we undertook a major review of our licensing operations function in 2005, resulting in the development of a successful on-line licensing process. We consistently monitor our operations to identify areas where strategic efficiencies can be achieved and, as a practical example of this process, we have outsourced web development and maintenance since 2004.

Our eGovernment strategy is influenced, and influences, our overall strategy as an organisation. Following an extensive consultation process, our telecommunications strategy for the period 2010-2012 was finalised in June and published on 1 July, 2010. This strategy was completed at the same time.

Our approach is guided by the overall objective of making it easier for stakeholders to do business, i.e.

- a. providing a high quality customer service, including a range of websites to inform consumer choice e.g. AskComreg.ie; callcosts.ie
- b. positioning Ireland as a place to invest through innovative offerings such as testandtrial.ie, which enables research and development usage of Ireland's spectrum resource
- c. simplifying processes and e-enabling consumers interacting with ourselves through electronic service delivery e.g. e-licensing
- d. enabling internal efficiencies through technology-driven smart working e.g. internally developed purchase order systems and intranet.

More detail in relation to our approach in meeting these objectives is set out below. In addition, the accompanying updates outline all services currently provided on-line and the plans for the next stage of their development.

### a. Informing and Empowering Consumers

The European Commission's Consumer Policy Strategy 2007-2013<sup>1</sup> states that '*confident, informed and empowered consumers are the motor of economic change, as their choices drive innovation and efficiency*'. As competition intensifies, ComReg recognises that consumers must be appropriately informed, empowered and protected.

<sup>1</sup> EU Consumer Policy Strategy 2007-2013, 2007

Convergence of voice, TV and broadband has brought a wave of innovation, not only in the products themselves but in how they are packaged and sold. For instance, many consumers now buy *bundles* – integrated services which offer a combination of fixed telephony, broadband, mobile and TV. While these bring added value and convenience to consumers, they also create challenges for consumer protection. It may be harder to compare prices of bundled services, where the bundles offer different packages of services, call minutes etc. It may be more difficult for consumers who are dissatisfied with one service in the bundle to switch to another provider of this service, due to contractual tie-ins.

Consumers require information regarding the quality of networks, particularly in relation to speed, to facilitate informed choices. Our strategy is to work with industry to ensure that relevant quality information is made available to consumers in a structured and easily-comprehensible format.

We seek to understand the needs of consumer segments such as small and large businesses; individual consumers; people with disabilities and vulnerable users. We aim to continue to identify and understand Irish electronic communications consumer's requirements by closely monitoring developments through our Consumer Line; our award-winning websites, [www.AskComreg.ie](http://www.AskComreg.ie) and [www.callcosts.ie](http://www.callcosts.ie); Consumer Outreach programme; the ComReg Consumer Advisory Panel; ComReg residential and business surveys and relevant surveys and inputs from consumer organisations with which we liaise closely.

An ongoing challenge for consumers is to analyse the substantive differences between ostensibly similar products and pricing plans. We provide independent, comparative, consumer-friendly information on alternative services, features and prices on our website [www.callcosts.ie](http://www.callcosts.ie). More recently, we have launched a new business information section on our consumer website [www.askcomreg.ie/business](http://www.askcomreg.ie/business), which has a dedicated helpdesk for small business and small office/home office consumers. We will continue to ensure that consumers are aware of the availability and tangible benefits of alternative services, features and prices by enhancing our independent comparative consumer-friendly information on our websites. With more product bundles in the market, this is an increasingly complex task.

The ability to switch providers with minimal constraints is important in facilitating real consumer choice. We aim to provide consumers with the tools to ensure that they are aware of the alternative suppliers and services; so that they can easily compare information on prices, features and quality; have the ability to switch at an acceptable cost (that is, without unreasonable barriers, constraints or disruptions) and are aware of their consumer rights, specifically with respect to electronic communications. [www.askcomreg.ie](http://www.askcomreg.ie) provides consumers with an avenue to make complaints about service providers and to request assistance if they cannot resolve issues directly with service providers. A “Live Chat” service is available for users to discuss these issues directly with a dedicated consumer care agent.

Reflecting the variety of stakeholder information needs that we aim to meet electronically, ComReg have developed [www.comstat.ie](http://www.comstat.ie), which provides users with the ability to view the data collated by ComReg which is used to produce quarterly

industry reports. This website provides users with the ability to interrogate only the data specific to their needs.

#### **b. Promoting Ireland as a Centre of Excellence in Innovation**

ComReg sees spectrum as a key asset which can drive competition and enable innovation. Our strategy to promote innovation focuses on creating the right conditions for innovation through spectrum. Compared to many other countries, Ireland has a natural spectrum advantage in having a wide range of clean radio spectrum available for test and trial purposes. ComReg is actively promoting Ireland's spectrum advantage and operates the Test & Trial licensing programme, "Test & Trial Ireland", to support organisations who wish to use Ireland's radio spectrum for test or trial purposes. The ready availability of clean radio spectrum can be a valuable advantage for companies carrying out R&D activities in Ireland, as access to many of the most desired radio spectrum bands (e.g. the mobile or digital dividend bands) may not be possible in other countries.

The gateway to our test and trial strategy is an innovative website, available in various languages, as a one-stop-shop for companies seeking to avail of spectrum in this way. Testandtrial.ie was launched in May of 2009 and was developed as the centrepiece of promotional material to inform users of Ireland's spectrum resource and licensing scheme. The site contains detailed information regarding the licensing process, testimonials from companies who have benefited from the scheme and an educational video demonstrating why Ireland is a prime location for Research and Development. Currently the site is available in Japanese and work has commenced to translate it into Chinese, Korean and Spanish.

Since Test & Trial Ireland was launched, over 110 licences have been issued to a wide variety of organisations for a wide variety of purposes. Some organisations have used Test & Trial Ireland to trial new services and technologies in advance of an anticipated future commercial launch, e.g. RTE's trial of Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) technology. Others have used this licensing programme to test and develop new wireless devices which may become widely used in the future, e.g. the Centre for Telecommunications Value-Chain Research (CTVR) tests of reconfigurable software-based radio. Others have used Test and Trial Ireland to support their ongoing business activities, e.g. Altobridge's testing for their remote community GSM solutions. ComReg will continue to promote innovation through new initiatives such as these.

#### **c. Electronic Service Delivery**

ComReg have a number of other websites dedicated to providing users with a number of ComReg specific services. (e.g. Radio Licenses applications, Postal service registration, Personal locator beacon registration). We strive to ensure that all services provided are available in an online format.

e-licensing.comreg.ie is ComReg's electronic licensing website. This website has been established for a number of years and initially provided ComReg licensees with the ability to make payments online for their outstanding radiocommunications licenses. Phase one of e-licensing.comreg.ie was developed to allow existing license holders to pay outstanding invoices online, reducing the administrative burden on ComReg's financial department. Following on from this success, the application was further developed to increase the suite of financial services available. Subsequently an online service was developed to enable potential licensees to submit applications. Online applications for the highest volume license types, Point to Point, resulted in a reduced application processing turnaround time.

#### **d. Enabling Internal Efficiencies**

The continued development of the application is a key enabler of change internally, allowing for more streamlined process and efficiency gains. In addition, we continue to look at how our customers interact with ComReg and how they can be facilitated. We developed internally a new purchase order system with a view to assisting with order tracking for external customers and budget monitoring internally. E-enabling of internal administrative processes will continue to increase process efficiency e.g. online access to payslips and expenses. Existing IT facilities such as SharePoint have the capability to meet much of the internal e-enablement requirements.