



Media Release- 7 August 2003

Electronic Communications: ComReg agrees to support Industry in the launch of an ENUM Trial

The Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) today announced that it would support the telecommunications industry in an Electronic Numbering (ENUM) trial.

The decision to support the trial will bring Ireland a step closer to the converged world of Internet and Telecommunications. It will also enable operators, service providers and the IT sector here to evaluate all the opportunities and threats that ENUM may provide.

It also opens the door for innovative Irish technology companies to gain first-mover advantage in this new area of technology and such organisations are strongly encouraged to participate in the trial.

The future prospects for ENUM clearly carry no guarantees, as its success will depend on its widespread take-up and its ability to deal with the issues of privacy and data protection that will arise. The strong interest internationally is however one indicator of the potential it may hold. Detailed trials are already underway or planned in at least eight countries, with a number of others carrying out studies or consultations

What is ENUM?

If you have ever wanted to contact someone by email or fax or mobile phone but only have their fixed-line telephone number, then you can immediately identify one of the benefits that ENUM can bring. ENUM is an emerging telecoms protocol that automatically sends back a whole range of alternative electronic addresses for someone when their telephone number is entered into a terminal, making it easy for service providers to then automate an actual connection over the most appropriate, efficient and cost-effective medium.

To picture this in operation, imagine how convenient life would be if you could simply key a telephone number into an email message or in place of a web URL, whenever you don't know the standard addresses for that person or organisation. Of course, the application programs to make this work remain to be developed, but ENUM provides the essential ingredients.

Furthermore, ENUM isn't confined to email and web but also potentially allows you to make contact over fax, Voice over IP, Instant Messaging of any kind, or whatever other electronic medium you care to use; a single phone number becomes the gateway to calling someone using any electronic system.

ENUM is based on handling of personal customer data (their contact addresses), so it raises many important questions that demand strong consumer input. We therefore intend to involve consumer representatives and the Data Protection Commissioner in all future work in this area. We need to be certain, going forward, that the potentially significant benefits of ENUM are not gained at the cost of weakening consumer protections.

Taking Part

Those interested in participating in the ENUM trial or just in finding out more about our decision to proceed with it are invited to download document ComReg 03/96 (The response to the ENUM Public Consultation) from ComReg's web site at www.comreg.ie. They can then contact ComReg to make their interest known. As a preparatory step towards the trial, an ENUM Forum with a widely-based membership will be set up this September to prepare the ground for the trial, agree its scope and, afterwards, oversee its progress.

Issued By

Tom Butler

Public Affairs Manager, ComReg

Ph: 01 804 9639 Mobile: 087 2536358

tom.butler@comreg.ie

Note for Background

ENUM – short for Electronic Numbering - is already on public trial or about to go on trial in various countries (e.g. UK, Austria, Sweden, France, Korea, Taiwan, Japan and China), with some private-sector trials also happening in the USA. Related activities (ENUM forums, Consultations or Government monitoring) are known to be happening in Switzerland, Netherlands, Italy and the United States, but this list is not likely to be exhaustive. ComReg consulted on the question of holding an Irish trial at the end of March (see ComReg document 03/36) and the result was very strong backing for a specific Irish trial rather than simply learning from the results of work elsewhere.

ENDS