



Industry meeting: wholesale charges for non-geographic numbers for fixed- line operators

Information Notice

Reference: 14/08

Date: 29/01/2014

Summary

Calls to non-geographic numbers are numbers whose retail charges to end users are capped within Ireland regardless of the location of either the caller or recipient. Recently some operators have proposed changes to arrangements that up to now have governed how the cost of routing such calls is dealt with at the wholesale level by fixed-line operators. ComReg believes that these proposals may pose considerable challenges for the sector and wishes to initiate a debate amongst interested operators. To this end, ComReg proposes to host an industry workshop to discuss future wholesale pricing arrangements for fixed-line operators originating these number types.

Background

Non-geographic numbers (which have a prefix in the format 18xx, for example 1850 or 1890, or premium services and 0818 etc.) are used by organisations to allow incoming calls at a fixed or reduced rate. For example, a business may wish to have a unique number for its customers to call a help-desk or answering service.

Usually businesses requiring such unique non-geographic numbers (known as the “service provider”) will engage a telecommunications operator (the “hosting operator”) to handle the telecommunications aspects of the service and terminate the call. These telecommunication operators may be fixed-line or mobile operators.

In some cases a call may transit more than one fixed-line network before arriving at the service provider and the question arises as to how these additional operators are to be compensated for the use of their networks. The practice for many years has been that fixed-line operators have deducted a retention from retail revenues (“retention charges”). These have been based on Eircom wholesale interconnect rates which are currently regulated¹. This is to say that fixed-line operators have all levied the same retention charges as Eircom on a symmetric basis.

¹ See ComReg Decision Number D04/07.
<http://www.comreg.ie/fileupload/publications/ComReg0780.pdf>

Recent Developments

ComReg has been made aware that some operators are no longer satisfied with this charging mechanism and have sought to change the way wholesale interconnect charges are derived for these call types for fixed-line operators. Any such change could have significant consequences for all fixed-line operators, Service Providers and possibly consumers. ComReg is concerned that such changes may prove to be highly disruptive.

In order to provide an overview of any potential impact of any proposed changes to the current status quo might have going forward, ComReg will facilitate an industry workshop in its offices on Thursday 27 February 2014 at 2pm.

The purpose of the workshop is to discuss: the regime to date; issues that have been raised; and the likely implications of any changes that may be made. Eircom wholesale will provide a presentation, by way of background, on how the various call types interconnect and are currently charged.

Please confirm by 5pm on Friday 14 February whether you wish to attend by e-mail to kjeld.hartog@comreg.ie