



Commission for  
**Communications Regulation**

## Information Notice

### Harmonised Services of Social Value using the national '116' Number Range

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## 1 Executive Summary

The Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) is responsible for regulation of the electronic communications sector in accordance with national and EU legislation. Among ComReg's functions in this regard is the management and administration of the National Numbering Scheme.

On February 15<sup>th</sup> 2007, the Commission of the European Communities (the Commission) published its decision<sup>1</sup> to provide Harmonised Services of Social Value across Member States on a consistent basis, using a "Same Number – Same Service" approach. The concept underpinning that decision is that the same number should be reserved for the same service in each of the Member States, with the Commission ensuring a co-ordinated approach.

To facilitate the introduction of these new harmonised services in Ireland, ComReg has reserved the entire number range beginning '116' for such services.

It is important to emphasise that services that will be available on these numbers will not be commercial, but will aim to answer specific social needs that contribute to the well-being or safety of citizens, or particular groups of citizens or which help citizens in difficulty. Citizens travelling within the EU, who will be familiar with these numbers from their home country, are among the intended beneficiaries of this scheme.

So far, the Annex to the Commission Decision lists one number as reserved:

116000	Hotline for missing children
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ComReg will advertise the existence of these Harmonised Services of Social Value during the coming months and will invite applicants to offer the services in Ireland.

ComReg is publishing this Information Notice to raise public awareness of these new Harmonised Services of Social Value. A second objective is to clarify the arrangements which will apply in Ireland for the practical implementation of these new services, including the rights of use that ComReg attaches to numbers in the 116 range and details on the reservation and allocation procedures involved.

ComReg will announce the addition of further Harmonised Services of Social Value within the framework of this Commission Decision as they are decided at European level and will provide information enabling interested service providers to apply for the corresponding Irish 116 numbers, in order to offer the service in Ireland.

Announcements will typically be made by advertisement in a national newspaper and publication on ComReg's official website, [www.comreg.ie](http://www.comreg.ie).

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<sup>1</sup> Commission of the European Communities – Commission Decision C(2007) 249 – 15/2/2007. The full text of the decision can be found at [http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2007/l\\_049/l\\_04920070217en00300033.pdf](http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2007/l_049/l_04920070217en00300033.pdf)

## 2 Introduction

The liberalisation of the market for electronic communications networks and services has led to radical changes in the structure of the marketplace. The addition of new market entrants and increased competition has resulted in benefits to public, private and commercial users in the form of greater choice of services and lower tariffs.

It is desirable that EU citizens be able to reach certain telephone services of pan-EU social importance, such as those that provide information or assistance to citizens, by using easily-remembered telephone numbers that are the same in all Member States. Until now, such numbers have varied from State to State, and there has been a patchwork of numbering and dialling schemes in the Member States to access such services.

On 15<sup>th</sup> February 2007, the European Commission adopted a Decision<sup>1</sup> requiring Member States to reserve the six-digit number range starting with the digits 116 for Harmonised Services of Social Value in Europe.

The combination of “same number – same service” will ensure that a specific socially important service will always be accessed through a specific number, regardless of which Member State the caller is in. This will give the service a pan-European identity and European citizens will know that the same number will give access to the same service in every Member State. This measure will also encourage pan-European services to develop. It should be noted that there is no obligation to provide all of the Harmonised Services in all Member States and whether a specific service is provided in a Member State or not (e.g. in Ireland) is largely dependent on whether some service provider is willing to offer the service there.

### 3 Background

#### 3.1 Harmonised Services of Social Value

A “Harmonised Service of Social Value” can be defined as a service which answers a specific social need, is accessed via a free-to-caller short telephone number, and meets a common description throughout the European Union. In particular, such a service should contribute to the well-being or safety of citizens, or particular groups of citizens, or help citizens in difficulty.

The 6-digit numbering range beginning with ‘116’ has been reserved in all Member State national numbering plans for “Harmonised Services of Social Value”. The specific numbers within this range and the services for which each number is reserved are listed in Annex A of the Commission Decision.

The 116 range will be a 6-digit range in the format 116xyz, where each ‘xyz’ refers to a three digit number that identifies a specific service. The number 116000 has already been reserved as a hotline for missing children. 116112 will not be used, to avoid any risk of confusion with the ‘112’ Pan-European short code for Emergency Services<sup>2</sup>.

In order to reflect the social function of the services in question, the harmonised numbers will be freephone numbers. The freephone nature of the numbers is an essential component of the harmonisation being carried out.

#### 3.2 Rights of Use of 116 Numbers

In accordance with the terms of Regulation 22 of the European Communities (Electronic Communications Networks and Services) (Framework) Regulations, 2003 (‘the Framework Regulations’)<sup>3</sup>, ComReg is vested with sole responsibility for administering the Irish National Numbering Scheme.

The National Numbering Conventions<sup>4</sup> is the set of rules under which the Irish National Numbering Scheme is managed and administered. This includes conditions of use for different number types. The 116 number range falls under the remit of ComReg as part of the National Numbering Scheme and is therefore governed by the Conventions.

Article 4 of the Commission’s decision requires that Member States shall attach the following conditions to the right of use of harmonised numbers for the provision of Harmonised Services of Social Value:

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<sup>2</sup> In Ireland, Emergency Services can be accessed by dialling 112 or 999. 112 is the Pan European Short Code to access Emergency services and can be used accordingly across EU member states.

<sup>3</sup> S.1. No. 307 of 2003

<sup>4</sup> National Numbering Conventions (Version 5.0) - ComReg 05/62 – 5/8/2005

- The service provides information, or assistance, or a reporting tool to citizens, or any combination thereof.
- The service is open to all citizens without any requirement of prior registration.
- The service is not time-limited<sup>5</sup>.
- There is no payment, or payment commitment as a pre-requisite to use the service.
- The following activities are excluded during a call: advertisement, entertainment, marketing and selling, using the call for the future selling of commercial services.

ComReg will update the National Numbering Conventions to reflect these conditions.

### 3.3 Reservation and allocation of specific numbers within the 116 range

The European Commission is responsible for maintaining an Annex of numbers in the 116 range which have been reserved for particular Harmonised Services of Social Value.

ComReg will provide an up-to-date list of Harmonised Services of Social Value and their respective reserved or allocated 116 numbers on the ComReg website<sup>6</sup>. The list may also be communicated via other media (e.g. newspaper advertisements), from time to time.

As per Article 3 of the Commission's decision, ComReg will ensure that:

- Numbers listed in the Annex are used only for the services for which they have been reserved.
- Numbers within the '116' numbering range, which are not listed in the Annex, are not used.
- The number 116112 is neither assigned nor used for any service so as to avoid confusion with the pan-European shortcode for emergency services i.e. 112.

Once a number has been listed in the Annex, ComReg will make known that the specific number is available for the provision of the associated Harmonised Service of Social Value, and that applications for the rights of use for this specific number may be submitted.

As per Article 5 of the decision, it is envisaged that ComReg will be in a position to allocate such numbers by 31st August 2007.

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<sup>5</sup> This requirement may be interpreted as meaning that where the service is not continuously available (i.e. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, national-wide), the service provider shall ensure that information about availability is made publicly available in an easily accessible form, and that during periods of unavailability, callers to the service are advised when the service will next become available.

<sup>6</sup> Visit ComReg at <http://www.comreg.ie>

## 4 Regulatory Considerations

There are a number of issues that need to be addressed, specifically in an Irish context, to making the 116 number range available for service. This section deals with those issues.

### 4.1 Specifics of allocation

An important decision for ComReg is whether or not to allocate 116 numbers to network operators or directly to the provider of the Harmonised Service of Social Value.

Section 8.1.3 of the National Numbering Conventions states that “except as otherwise stated herein and for efficient management purposes, primary allocation or reservation of most numbering resources is made only to (authorised) undertakings (network operators or certain service providers), who are then responsible for carrying out secondary allocations in accordance with these Conventions”.

As the 116 range is reserved for specific services and a condition of allocation will be to prove that applicants for a particular number are genuinely providing such a service, ComReg has concluded that it would be more practical for ComReg to allocate the numbers directly to providers of Harmonised Services of Social Value, rather than to network operators. The fact that the total number of Harmonised Services of Social Value is unlikely to be large is another reason why direct allocation by ComReg would be more efficient.

### 4.2 Rights of use

Article 4 of the Commission Decision clearly states the conditions which define a Harmonised Service of Social value. These conditions will be attached to the rights of use of such numbers and ComReg will decide on a case by case basis whether additional conditions should be attached. The rights of Authorised Persons to use number blocks and of end users to use numbers are clearly stated in the National Numbering Conventions.

In general terms, these principles will be applied to the rights of use of numbers in the 116 range also, although ComReg is providing for more specific rights of use of 116 numbers in the upcoming consultation on the review of the National Numbering Conventions.

### 4.3 Communication of new services added to the Annex

At a European level, an updated Annex of numbers available for Harmonised Services of Social Value will be available on the Europa Website<sup>7</sup> and in the Official Journal of the European Union<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Europa Website – [www.europa.eu](http://www.europa.eu)

<sup>8</sup> Official Journal of the European Union – [www.ojec.com](http://www.ojec.com)

At a national level, ComReg will make sure that interested parties and the general public are aware of any new numbers added to the Annex, and their corresponding services.

ComReg will keep an updated list on [www.comreg.ie](http://www.comreg.ie). ComReg will also publish the list, each time a new harmonised service is added, in the print media in the form of an advertisement. Once a number has been listed in the Annex, applications for rights of use of this number may be submitted.

Furthermore, numbers for Harmonised Services will then be available for inclusion in the telephone directory.

#### 4.4 Handling of 116 calls between Member States

It is envisaged that calls made to 116 numbers will be nationally originated, routed and terminated to a national network termination point. This should be an appropriate arrangement for the majority of calls as citizens would usually be calling a Harmonised Services of Social Value in their country of residence.

However, there will be situations where citizens from other EU Member States, who are visiting Ireland, make calls on 116 numbers with the intent and anticipation of accessing the specific service provided in their Member State of residence (bearing in mind that the same number will be used for the same service in all participating Member States).

With this in mind, the ability to transfer calls between Member States would have to be organized by the holder of the number, beyond the national network termination point. Service providers of a particular Harmonised Service of Social Value would need to make arrangements with their counterparts in other EU Member States to carry the cost of routing such calls.

Handling of calls between Member States is, therefore, not an issue for ComReg provided that the specific conditions attached to rights of use are adhered to. This function would be best achieved through co-operation between organizations or entities providing the same service across EU Member States.

#### 4.5 Cost of calling 116 numbers

In order to reflect the social function of harmonised services, the harmonised numbers should be freephone numbers, as envisaged by the Commission's decision. The freephone nature of the number is an essential component of such services as callers may be in dangerous or vulnerable circumstances when they need help.

This, however, does not mean that providers of electronic communications networks and services would be obliged to carry calls to 116 numbers at their own expense.



## 5 Next Steps

ComReg will be in discussions with providers of electronic communications networks and services in Ireland regarding the practical issues relating to the implementation of such services on the 116 number range. For most purposes this will take place in the forum of the Numbering Advisory Panel (NAP) which provides guidance to ComReg on a wide range of numbering-related issues.

ComReg will also be co-operating with other National Regulatory Authorities and with the European Commission, as necessary, to finalise reservation and allocation procedures.

Furthermore, ComReg is consulting on the National Numbering Conventions in the coming weeks and issues regarding the 116 range are addressed in that consultation.

Annex A: List of reserved numbers for Harmonised Services of Social Value

<b>Number</b>	<b>Service for which this number is reserved</b>	<b>Specific conditions attached to the right of use for this number</b>
<b>116000</b>	<b>Hotlines for missing children</b>	