



Media Release- 15 September 2008

International roaming charges for Irish customers reduced

The Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) today published an Information Notice showing the trend of international roaming charges on Irish mobile phone networks for the period October 2007 to March 2008. It shows that Irish retail roaming pricing, as reported on 31 March 2008, is on a par with or lower than the EU average. Data collected by ComReg shows that the average price per Irish SMS sent while roaming is in line with the EU average.

The EU Roaming Regulation came into effect on the 30 June 2007. The Regulation required mobile service providers to offer all customers a “Eurotariff” with a specified price ceiling by end August 2007. On 30 August 2008 the price ceiling was reduced in accordance with the annual reduction required by the Regulation.

The Roaming Regulation also requires mobile service providers to send a free personalised pricing text message (SMS) to an individual’s mobile while roaming in the EU. In addition, service providers are required to provide a free number where detailed price information may be obtained.

ComReg welcomes evidence of reduced costs for Irish consumers when making and receiving calls while travelling in the EU. However, ComReg also observes that roaming charges are billed in some cases on a per minute basis rather than per second. This has the effect of charging users for unused service portions, and the Information Notice highlights this by detailing the pricing for various call durations for each operator.

To further promote the transparency of mobile pricing, ComReg has recently updated its interactive price comparison website www.callcosts.ie with a new mobile roaming price comparison section. Consumers who are planning to travel within the EU can log onto the website, enter their planned mobile roaming usage and get an estimate of their mobile roaming costs for that trip. Consumers can get a comparison between the cost of their planned roaming usage under the ‘Eurotariff’ and also as part of a roaming plan which their operator may offer. In this manner, consumers can estimate the mobile roaming charges that they will incur while abroad and can tailor their usage accordingly.

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