



Commission for
Communications Regulation

Information Notice

Mobile Number Portability

Implementation Timescales

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1 Introduction

In May 2001, the Office of the Director of Telecommunications Regulation issued a Consultation document *Implementing Full Mobile Number Portability in Ireland* (ODTR 01/36). In the response (ODTR 01/56), the Director outlined the specification for Mobile Number Portability (MNP), highlighting the key work streams that needed to be addressed and a timetable for industry implementation of MNP during Q4 2002. This launch date set a target for MNP introduction in advance of the incoming EC Directive on Universal Service and Users' Rights.

The industry Mobile Number Portability Committee (MNPC), which was formed in August 2001, devised and agreed a comprehensive work programme to ensure the delivery of MNP in Q4 2002. Several industry working groups were convened to develop the key technical and process protocols for MNP and a complete programme for testing the MNP product. However over recent months, the mobile operators have suggested pushing back the launch to later and later dates and now have reported to the MNPC that “despite a concerted effort on behalf of the industry” they will be able to deliver a fully tested product launch only by mid-June 2003. They have attributed this delay to the complexity of the numerous system upgrades required to support MNP and to difficulties encountered in the commercial negotiations for the mobile number portability database.

ComReg has conveyed its dissatisfaction with these continuing delays and the current proposed date for launch, given that the date of Q4 2002 was agreed by the mobile operators as being a reasonable timescale for introduction, allowing adequate time for implementation. Number Portability has been identified as an effective tool in promoting competition as it offers consumers the opportunity to change to a new operator without the cost and inconvenience of a number change. This further delay will mean that Irish mobile consumers will be amongst the last in Europe to have access to this facility.

Noting a loss in confidence that the mobile operators can deliver the MNP product at any given industry agreed date, the Commission will now mandate the introduction of MNP in order to advance the issue as effectively as possible. This direction is consistent with the objectives of the Commission in exercising its functions in relation to the provision of electronic communications networks and services¹.

¹ The Communications Regulation Act, 2002, SI No. 510 of 2002, 12(1)(a)

2 MNP Implementation Programme

2.1 Relevant Legal Background

Current EU and Irish legislation recognise that, in the interests of developing and sustaining competition in the telecommunications sector, all subscribers should be able to avail of Number Portability. This obligation is extended to mobile services in the incoming EC Directive 2002/22/EC on Universal Service and Users' Rights. Article 30 of the Directive states that:-

1. Member States shall ensure that all subscribers of publicly available telephone services, including mobile services, who so request can retain their number(s) independently of the undertaking providing the service:

(a) in the case of geographic numbers, at a specific location; and

(b) in the case of non-geographic numbers, at any location.

This paragraph does not apply to the porting of numbers between networks providing services at a fixed location and mobile networks.

2. National regulatory authorities shall ensure that pricing for interconnection related to the provision of number portability is cost oriented and that direct charges to subscribers, if any, do not act as a disincentive for the use of these facilities.

3. National regulatory authorities shall not impose retail tariffs for the porting of numbers in a manner that would distort competition, such as by setting specific or common retail tariffs.

Under the new Directive, Member States are required to ensure that MNP is mandated from 25th July 2003. Therefore the Commission considers that it is reasonable and proportionate to issue the following Directions to 2G mobile operators to ensure that they [the mobile operators] have completed the necessary preparatory work in order to comply with the incoming directive on its date of introduction.

The following Directions are made with reference to the general functions of the Commission under the Interconnection Regulations². In exercising its functions under the Interconnection Regulations, Regulation 10(1) requires the Commission to take into account a number of factors including the need to stimulate a competitive market in telecommunications services and the need to ensure satisfactory communications for users in a manner that promotes economic efficiency. The Commission also has the power under Regulation 10 (3) to intervene on its own initiative to "specify issues which shall be included in an interconnection agreement or to lay down specific conditions to be observed by one or more parties to such an agreement". Regulation 10(5) provides that the conditions set or the changes directed by the Commission under Regulation 10(3) may include the following conditions and changes amongst others: conditions designed to ensure effective competition, technical conditions, tariffs and supply and usage conditions. The mandatory introduction of MNP is designed to ensure effective competition in accordance with Regulation 10(1) and 10(5) and a failure to comply with any such direction is an offence under Regulation 10(3).

² The European Communities (Interconnection in Telecommunication) Regulations, 1998, SI No. 15 of 1998, 10(1), 10(3) and 10(5)

2.2 MNP Implementation Date

Accordingly, the Commission for Communications Regulation adopts the industry time scale of mid-June 2003 for implementing a full commercial launch of MNP, compliant with existing industry agreements³. This means that there is a period of contingency from mid-June, until 25th July 2003, which can be made available by ComReg if necessary.

Direction 1.1: All 2G Mobile Network Operators⁴ are required to have completed a full commercial launch of MNP *no later than 25th July 2003* and shall ensure that relevant conditions to that effect are inserted in their interconnection agreements. The MNP product must be fully compliant with current industry agreements reached at the MNP Committee. This decision is made under Regulations 10(1), 10(3) and 10(5) of the European Communities (Interconnection in Telecommunications) Regulations, 1998, SI 15 of 1998.

ComReg will continue to monitor the progress of industry in relation to the stated deadline through the MNPC and its working groups and will facilitate the industry in the development of the MNP product for launch at the earliest possible date. The outline project plan as currently proposed by the mobile operators, with a launch date in mid June 2003, is adopted by the Commission as the plan for the project. The key milestones, as identified by the mobile operators, are outlined in Annex II.

2.3 Reporting Requirements

In addition to the support offered at MNP Committee and working group level, ComReg will continue to monitor the progress of industry directly with individual mobile operators through the submission of a monthly operator report, on a confidential basis only. This reporting facility will enable the Commission to map the progress of individual operators, to ensure that no one operator should delay the collective development and launch of the MNP product. The monthly report to ComReg should include the following details:-

- (i) Internal project plan

Each mobile operator will be required to share visibility of their internal project plan with ComReg. The plan should highlight the status of all internal development work being undertaken in relation to MNP.

³ A list of MNPC documents is included in Annex I

⁴ Licensed under Section 111(2) of the Postal and Telecommunications Services Act, 1983, as amended, and the Telecommunications (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1996

(ii) Risk register

Operators should provide a short summary document outlining progress to date in each project area and highlighting where there is risk to either the internal or external project plans, with particular reference to critical tasks, or any associated internal and /or external dependencies.

Direction 1.2: All 2G Mobile Operators are required to submit an MNP project report to ComReg on the 1st of the month, until the full commercial launch of the MNP product is complete. The report should outline (i) details of the operators' internal MNP project plan and (ii) a project risk register. This decision is made under Regulations 10(1), 10(3) and 10(5) of the European Communities (Interconnection in Telecommunications) Regulations, 1998, SI 15 of 1998.

Annex I - MNP Existing Industry Agreements

The MNPC industry working groups have defined the MNP product specification in terms of the porting process and the network and IT elements. The existing agreements and established policies are captured within the current MNPC documentation. The key policy documents are defined under the following headings:-

Routing responsibilities and rules

MNP20 Network Design Decisions Document – This document details the design decisions reached by the industry MNP Network Working Group for MNP call routing and transit. It details the functionality that each mobile network operator will be required to support or where appropriate employ another party to perform the functionality on its behalf.

MNP21 Test Specification: MNP Industry Network Trial Document - this document defines the test cases required to verify correct routing between the network operators for MNP.

The porting process

MNP22 MNP Process Manual – the MNP Process Manual defines the agreed industry process for MNP between mobile operators. It describes the processes that mobile network operators follow to allow Customers to change operator and retain mobile numbers allocated to them within the National Numbering Scheme. The porting process is based on a two-stage process, where the Customer takes up a new subscription with the Recipient Operator and then subsequently arranges for their existing MSISDN(s) to be ported. This document details the process and validation procedures for individual Customer types (pre-pay and post-pay) and specifies the business rules and hours of porting.

Mobile Number Portability Database

MNP30 IT Communications Document – this document defines the IT and security specifications for both the inter-operator communications (IOC) and communications between operators and the Mobile Number Portability Database. This document also defines the entrance criteria for a new mobile entrant and *eircom*, should they offer Serving Network Functionality, and also for any other fixed line operator who may opt for direct access to download from the Mobile Number Portability Database.

Annex II - MNP Project Milestones

In order to meet their proposed launch date in mid-June 2003, the mobile operators have identified the following as the key project milestones.

MNP Project Milestone	Commencement Date
MNP Database Testing	February 2003
Inter-Operator Communications Testing	March 2003
End-to-end Process Testing	April 2003
MNP Business Trial	May 2003
MNP Launch	Mid June 2003