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Mobile Overcharging Rebuilding customer trust is now vital – says ComReg

The Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) has completed its initial review of the reports submitted to it by O₂ and Vodafone following incidents of overcharging by both companies. ComReg today outlined the steps that it believes would be necessary to start the process of rebuilding customer trust.

These include a number of developments which have now been completed by the operators:

- O₂ and Vodafone have both carried out detailed investigations into what went wrong with their internal systems and have outlined the remedial action and measures they have taken to avoid any repetition. The results of these investigations have been submitted, as required, to ComReg.
- All customers affected have been notified and all accounts have been credited.

In addition both operators have agreed with ComReg that they will:-

- Pay an additional credit to all of those customers who had paid any overcharged amount in recognition of the inconvenience caused.
- Allow external consultants to review independently the remedial actions being taken in relation to billing systems to ensure their effectiveness. These reports are to be completed by September and submitted to ComReg who will determine whether any further action is necessary.

Mr John Doherty, Chairperson of the ComReg said: “ComReg has a statutory duty to protect the consumer interest. We acknowledge that both companies have taken steps to rectify the instances of overcharging, including making changes to internal procedures. They have also, through the payment of an inconvenience credit, sought to recognise the concern and anger that customers felt about being overcharged.”

“It is, however, imperative that trust in the accuracy of billing systems is restored. While in many cases, the individual amounts involved were relatively small, nevertheless, the circumstances involved were very serious.”

- O₂ has reported to ComReg that 136,535 of its customers were overcharged by €721,892 for international roaming and other services.
- Vodafone has reported to ComReg that 22,436 customer accounts were overcharged by €147, 739 for international roaming services.

ComReg is clearly disappointed that internal billing and management control procedures of both companies failed to adequately safeguard customers. It is now up to both companies to demonstrate to their customers, and to ComReg, that this issue is now behind them and to start the process of rebuilding trust. ComReg will continue to monitor developments and will intervene again, if necessary, in the interest of protecting consumers.

ENDS

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