



Office of the Director of
**Telecommunications
Regulation**

PRESS RELEASE

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REGULATOR ANNOUNCES DISPUTE RESOLUTION MECHANISMS TO PROTECT TELECOMMUNICATIONS OPERATORS RIGHTS

The Telecoms Regulator has announced new procedures to facilitate the effective resolution of inter-operator telecommunications disputes. The proposed mechanisms for the lodging and handling of disputes, including the level of information required to enable the Office consider the issues, and guiding timeframes for resolution, are detailed in the Decision document **D11/99**.

The Director said "As markets develop, there are issues which do cause difficulty, in particular for new market entrants and it is essential that these are dealt with quickly and effectively, with the weight of the Regulator's office behind them, as appropriate. Disputes between telecommunications operators in the market can hinder the development of competition, or delay the provision of innovative services and reductions in prices. The effective and timely resolution of disputes and the mechanisms to ensure this are therefore a key priority for my Office."

The assigning of disputes to particular "case officers" who will be the sole contact point for the duration of the process is central to the procedures. Where a dispute is considered of a nature that may affect other parties or the market generally the Regulator may publish a summary of the dispute on the ODTR website and invite comments from interested parties. A report on the level and nature of disputes received and on the decisions made will be published regularly.

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The Regulator is mindful of the role that less formal procedures may play in resolving disputes. In particular her Office is prepared to help mediate between parties where it is felt that such a course of action would be more appropriate in reaching a more speedy resolution to a dispute.

In her decision the Director has also indicated her intention to consider further the issue of consumer complaints. She will consult with the Minister for Public Enterprise and other relevant parties in this regard. In the meantime the ODTR will continue to handle consumer complaints on an informal basis. Consumers may bring their complaints to the Small Claims Court which provides a low cost judicial means of settling disputes where claims do not exceed £600.

ODTR 99/53 - "Dispute Resolution Procedures – Decision Notice D11/99" can be viewed on the ODTR web-site (<http://www.odtr.ie>).

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