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Commission for
Communications Regulation



FOREWORD

SPECTRUM MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2005 - 2007

1

Foreword

The Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) is responsible for the efficient management and use of the radio spectrum, one of Ireland's key natural resources. In May 2002 the ODTR (now ComReg) published its first Radio Spectrum Strategy document¹. ComReg aims to update its spectrum strategy every two to three years and to this end published a draft strategy document for consultation in January 2005². This final version of the 2005 spectrum strategy takes account of comments received in response to that consultation, a summary of which can be found in ComReg document 05/36.

The radio frequency spectrum is used to support a large number of electronic communications services and applications. Access to radio frequencies is an essential requirement for telecommunications, particularly for aviation, shipping, defence services, public safety, broadcasting and the many private businesses that rely on mobile radio. One of the most significant users of both mobile and fixed link radio spectrum are mobile phone services which continue to expand, currently delivering services to over 3.5 million subscribers in Ireland.

Wireless communications are also increasingly being used to provide broadband access to the Internet, e-mail and other on-line services. As part of an initiative to promote more competition in the delivery of broadband, ComReg recently awarded local wireless broadband licenses which, it is hoped, will make a major contribution to achieving affordable broadband access, especially in rural areas.

ComReg was also the first regulator in Europe to introduce licence exempt wireless broadband access in the 5.8 GHz band (5725-5875 MHz) and in May 2005 we launched a new licensing regime for radio service and technology trials which will bring Ireland to the forefront as an ideal location for research and development. This will allow new service concepts to be tested in a realistic environment at an early stage of development, ensuring that subsequent commercial offerings are properly tailored to meet the needs of users.

ComReg reviews its spectrum strategy at regular intervals to reflect changes in markets, technologies and legislation. Of particular relevance currently is greater emphasis from a regulatory perspective on technology neutrality, obligations to promote sustainable competition and the development of the internal European market. ComReg's strategy needs to reflect international and regional developments including, for example, changes arising from the recent World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-03).

We are cognisant of moves by Regulators across Europe and beyond towards a more liberalised market-based approach to spectrum management. In line with these developments, we have consulted on and will offer four licences for wideband digital mobile services in 2005 on a first-come-first-served basis, leading to an auction if demand exceeds supply.

Our approach to spectrum management is to regulate only where required and to intervene only where necessary to promote competition or avoid harmful interference. Key elements of this approach include enforcing compliance with licence conditions and careful frequency planning to avoid harmful interference between radio services.

Isolde Goggin
Chairperson.

¹ Document ODTR 02/43, "Strategic Management of the Radio Spectrum in Ireland"

² ComReg Document 05/01 "Preparing the radio spectrum management strategy for 2005 – 2007."