



An Coimisiún um
Rialáil Cumarsáide
Commission for
Communications Regulation

Tackling Nuisance Communications CLI Call Blocking Update

Information Notice

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Content

Section	Page
Introduction	3
Fixed CLI Call Blocking	4
Industry Support & Deployment	5
Next Steps.....	6

Introduction

Irish society and its economy have become ever more reliant on telecommunications technology. However, this constant in our lives comes with its own threats and vulnerabilities. Recent times have seen a marked increase in scam calls and texts (Nuisance Communications).

Consumers are being inconvenienced, confused, and threatened by the volume of scam calls and fraudulent texts they receive on a daily basis. The aim of these is to perpetrate fraud by misleading the receiver, so they unknowingly provide sensitive personal information. As a result, trust in the telecommunications network is being eroded, adversely impacting consumers and the economy at large.

In response to this scourge, ComReg, on 17th December 2021, moved to form the Nuisance Communications Industry Taskforce (“NCIT”) to tackle this menace.¹

The focus for ComReg and the NCIT is the restoration of trust in our telecommunications services by putting in place interventions to reduce the damaging effects of scam calls and texts on Irish consumers and society.

ComReg observes that most NCIT members are committed to the rapid deployment of applicable interventions. Indeed, NICT members blocked over 1 million calls in March with several interventions already deployed. One of these interventions is called Fixed CLI² Call Blocking.

¹ ComReg document [IN 21/129](#)

² CLI – Calling Line Identification, the number presented or displayed to the person receiving the phone call or text. Note: this may or may not be the actual number of the calling party.

Fixed CLI Call Blocking

This intervention blocks calls originating from abroad presenting with Fixed Irish CLIs. Its aim is to help protect against calls from fraudsters that are using spoofed Fixed Irish CLIs originating from outside of Ireland. The operator network designs required for the Fixed CLI blocking intervention commenced in Q3 2022. An implementation target date of 31st March 2023 was proposed to the NCIT operators.

As a preliminary step to implementation, Irish operators were required to identify the levels of incoming international originated traffic using the Irish country code +353, determine if their customers are originating this traffic and move them to a 'long line'³ solution before blocking commences.

To aid operators ComReg issued [IN 22/114 Fixed CLI Blocking Intervention – Arrangements for International Operators](#) in December 2023.

When fully implemented this intervention will block calls originating from abroad presenting with Fixed Irish CLIs, shutting the door on criminals who use this technique to defraud the Irish public.

³ Long-Lining is the provision of a dedicated long-distance telecommunications path from origination to termination without traffic break-outs or break-ins by third party carriers.

Industry Support & Deployment

The Fixed CLI call blocking anti-fraud initiative has the full support of Irish operators. Initial testing in operator networks proved successful and quickly went 'live' by the first operator in Q4 2022.

ComReg notes that to date, implementation of this intervention by key operators, i.e., those operators who switch international calls into the Irish telephone network (PSTN), has been slow, but has gathered momentum as Q1 2023 progressed.

As of 17th May 2023, the following six operators have activated the measure in their networks.



All remaining applicable NCIT operators are being urged to accelerate their plans to deploy this intervention, the target date for full deployment was expected to be 31st of March 2023.

While the progress to date is encouraging, the delay in some quarters continues to put Irish telephone users at serious risk from fraudsters, while undermining the integrity of the PSTN voice service. Clearly this is an undesirable situation.

Next Steps

Alongside the Fixed CLI Call Blocking measure sits a similar intervention called Mobile CLI Call Blocking. This intervention aims to block calls originating from abroad presenting with Mobile Irish CLIs, except in cases where the call has been verified to have originated from an Irish mobile user who is roaming overseas.

As the origin of calls with 'spoofed' Mobile CLIs is generally outside the state, there is a particular focus on the implementation of this scheme by the international transit and mobile operators in Ireland. It is anticipated that testing and deployment of this intervention in the operator networks (international gateway and mobile network operators) will proceed over the coming months.

A target date of September 2023 has been proposed for the activation of this intervention by Irish operators. Given the ongoing high level of fraud and identity theft risk to Irish telephone users arising from Mobile CLI spoofing, ComReg has continually urged Irish operators to ensure priority is given within their organisations to meeting this date.

The Fixed and Mobile CLI call blocking initiatives function by detecting and blocking calls from fraudsters that are using spoofed Irish CLIs. The implementation of these blocking initiatives will have a significant impact and represents a major step forward in closing a CLI spoofing based security loophole that is currently being exploited by fraudsters.

ComReg will soon launch a public consultation to set out proposals for the long term. This consultation will also propose new guidance on how telecoms operators should ensure that Irish numbers (Fixed and Mobile) are not misused in the future.

To stay informed and up to date on all the latest NCIT activities and publications, visit the dedicated ComReg web page [Nuisance Communications](https://www.comreg.ie/industry/electronic-communications/nuisance-communications/).

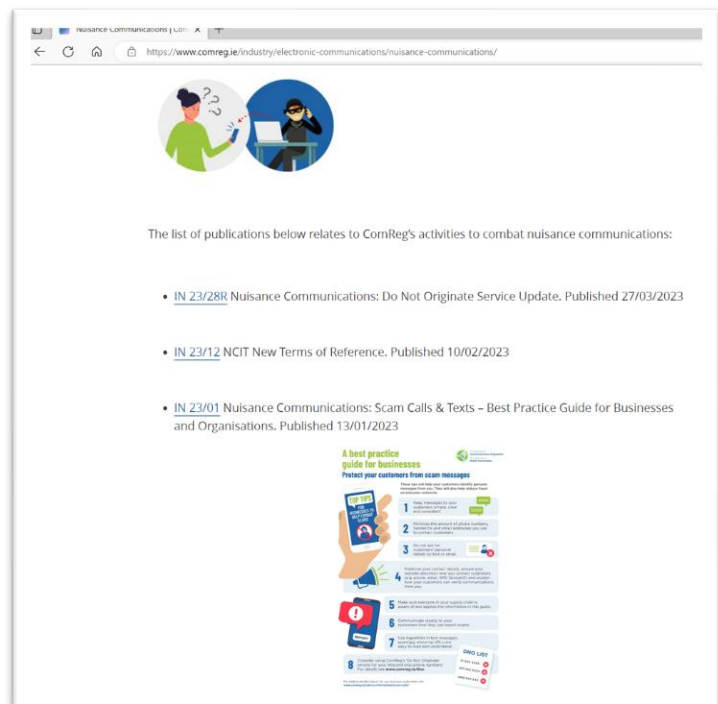


Figure 1: ComReg Nuisance Communications webpage