



Office of the Director of
**Telecommunications
Regulation**

MEDIA RELEASE

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Telecoms Regulator to Consult on Mobile Numbering and Mobile Number portability

Etain Doyle, Telecoms Regulator published a consultation on the future development of Mobile Numbering and Mobile Number Portability. The consultation incorporates the findings of a study commissioned by the ODTR and conducted by OVUM on the options for this fast developing market. The study provides an economic analysis of mobile number portability in the Irish context and sets out proposals for extending the life of the current mobile numbering scheme.

According to the Regulator “ Given the current growth in mobile subscriptions there is a real risk that we could run out of mobile numbers in late 2002. Action is therefore required to provide extra numbers. The most beneficial solution from the consumer perspective would be the introduction of Full Mobile Number Portability but this will take some time to implement. In the meantime a number of minor interim adaptations to the current numbering scheme are proposed. The purpose of this consultation is to seek the views of interested parties on the study findings and provide them with an opportunity to offer their opinions as to the best solution with the lowest economic costs to Ireland as a whole.”

The main objectives of the OVUM study were to ascertain firstly whether or not it is in Ireland's best interests to move as quickly as possible to Full Number Portability and secondly in the interim to consider how the ODTR should deal with the increased demand for mobile numbers.

In carrying out their analysis Ovum met with the mobile operators, retailers and ODTR staff and drew on extensive previous relevant research.

The OVUM report concludes that

- It is in Ireland's best economic interests to move from Subscriber Mobile Number Portability to Full Number Portability as soon as is practicable.
- It should be possible for operators to implement Full Mobile Number Portability by the beginning of 2003, perhaps even mid 2002. The mobile operators would need up to 15 months to develop a low cost, speedy and reliable number portability solution.
- To minimise the risk of running out of numbers in the interim, the existing number scheme must be adapted.
- The option of moving from 7 to 8 digit subscriber numbers does not appear to make economic sense since Ovum estimated that the Net Present Cost to the country of this option was £65 million.
- As an interim numbering solution Ovum suggests using subscriber numbers beginning with 0 and 1 for pre paid customers: Subscriber Mobile Number Portability would not be available for these numbers, but it is generally not offered to pre-paid customers at present.

Ovum considered whether or not there was an economic case for moving from the current system i.e. Subscriber Mobile Number Portability (SMNP) to Full Mobile Number Portability (FMNP) using a cost benefit analysis. The Net Present Value of SMNP was estimated at £83 million and for FMNP the net Present Value is estimated at £129 million. This result contributed to the above conclusions.

Mobile Number portability has already been raised in the context of expansion of mobile numbering capacity generally and opening the market for 3G mobile services in Ireland. In the report on the consultation on access in the mobile market, the Regulator indicated that an early implementation of mobile number portability can have considerable consumer benefit given the likely competitive and economic benefits, the expected European legislative requirement and the additional numbering benefits particularly to Ireland.

The consultation documents ODTR 00/86 “ Mobile Numbering and Mobile Number Portability in Ireland – Consultation Paper” and the accompanying study are available on the ODTR website (www.odtr.ie) and copies can also be obtained from the ODTR. The consultation period runs from 13th November to 1st December 2000.

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Notes to the Editor

The Ovum report is primarily a technical document on numbering. The demand forecast for numbers rising from 4 million in 2000 to 12 million in 2009 takes account of the maximum potential demand for numbers including multiple terminals per user, utilisation inefficiencies and churn, and higher usage among teenagers, the mobile

workforce, retired people and particularly amongst pre-paid customers. These numbers are necessarily much higher than actual subscriber numbers.

Subscriber Mobile Number Portability (SMNP)

Subscribers who wish to change operator can keep their subscriber number when they do so. They have to change only the three-digit network operator code at the start of the number. With the potential increase growth in number of mobile operators in the market the use of Subscriber Number Portability becomes progressively more inefficient.

Full Mobile Number Portability (FMNP)

Subscribers who wish to change their operator can bring their whole number with them to the new operator.