



Commission for
Communications Regulation

ComReg eGovernment update

eGovernment update - 2010

Date:	June 2010
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ComReg is the independent statutory body responsible for the regulation of the electronic communications and postal sectors. It is a focussed, results-orientated organisation, regulating highly complex sectors where the quality of our skills, structures and systems is critical to our overall performance. Our operating environment is the dynamic and challenging communications market, covering both electronic communications and the postal sector.

The pursuit of ComReg's position as a centre of excellence has been a core objective of ComReg since its inception. ComReg has a strong record in progressing e-government initiatives to achieve both a higher standard of customer service and internal efficiencies. For example, we undertook a major review of our licensing operations function in 2005, resulting in the development of a successful on-line licensing process. We consistently monitor our operations to identify areas where strategic efficiencies can be achieved and, as a practical example of this process, we have outsourced web development and maintenance since 2004.

We are currently finalising our telecommunications strategy for the period 2010-2012 following an extensive consultation process. Our I.T. strategy is influenced, and influences, our overall strategy as an organisation. Our approach is guided by the overall objective of making it easier for stakeholders to do business, i.e.

- a. providing a high quality customer service, including a range of websites to inform consumer choice and e.g. callcosts.ie; askcomreg.ie
- b. positioning Ireland as a place to invest through innovative offerings such as testandtrial.ie, which enables research and development usage of Ireland's spectrum resource
- c. simplifying processes and e-enabling consumers interacting with ourselves through electronic service delivery, e.g. e-licensing
- d. enabling internal efficiencies through technology-driven smart working e.g. internally developed purchase order systems and intranet.

More detail in relation to our approach in meeting these objectives is set out below. In addition, the appendices outline all services currently provided on-line and the plans for the next stage of their development.

a. Informing and Empowering Consumers

The European Commission's Consumer Policy Strategy 2007-2013¹ states that '*confident, informed and empowered consumers are the motor of economic change, as their choices drive innovation and efficiency*'. As competition intensifies, ComReg recognises that consumers must be appropriately informed, empowered and protected. Convergence of voice, TV and broadband has brought a wave of innovation, not only in the products themselves but in how they are packaged and sold. For instance, many consumers now buy *bundles* – integrated services which offer a combination of fixed telephony, broadband, mobile and TV. While these bring added value and convenience to consumers, they also create challenges for consumer protection. It may be harder to compare prices of bundled services, where the bundles offer different packages of services, call minutes etc. It may be more difficult for

¹ [EU Consumer Policy Strategy 2007-2013](#), 2007

consumers who are dissatisfied with one service in the bundle to switch to another provider of this service, due to contractual tie-ins.

Consumers require information regarding the quality of networks, particularly in relation to speed, to facilitate informed choices. Our strategy is to work with industry to ensure that relevant quality information is made available to consumers in a structured and easily-comprehensible format. We seek to understand the needs of consumer segments such as small and large businesses; individual consumers; people with disabilities and vulnerable users. We aim to continue to identify and understand Irish electronic communications consumer's requirements by closely monitoring developments through our Consumer Line; our award-winning websites, www.callcosts.ie and www.askcomreg.ie; Consumer Outreach programme; the ComReg Consumer Advisory Panel; ComReg residential and business surveys and relevant surveys and inputs from consumer organisations with which we liaise closely.

An ongoing challenge for consumers is to analyse the substantive differences between ostensibly similar products and pricing plans. We provide independent, comparative, consumer-friendly information on alternative services, features and prices on our website www.callcosts.ie. More recently, we have launched a new business information section on our consumer website (www.askcomreg.ie/business), which has a dedicated helpdesk for small business and small office/home office consumers. We will continue to ensure that consumers are aware of the availability and tangible benefits of alternative services, features and prices by enhancing our independent comparative consumer-friendly information on our websites. With more product bundles in the market, this is an increasingly complex task.

The ability to switch providers with minimal constraints is important in facilitating real consumer choice. We aim to provide consumers with the tools to ensure that they are aware of the alternative suppliers and services; so that they can easily compare information on prices, features and quality; have the ability to switch at an acceptable cost (that is, without unreasonable barriers, constraints or disruptions) and are aware of their consumer rights, specifically with respect to electronic communications. www.askcomreg.ie, provides consumers with an avenue to make complaints about service providers and to request assistance if they cannot resolve issues directly with service providers. A "Live Chat" service is available for users to discuss these issues directly with a dedicated consumer care agent.

Reflecting the variety of stakeholder information needs that we aim to meet electronically, ComReg have developed www.comstat.ie, which provides users with the ability to view the data collated by ComReg which is used to produce quarterly industry reports. This website provides users with the ability to interrogate only the data specific to their needs.

b. Promoting Ireland as a Centre of Excellence in Innovation

ComReg sees spectrum as a key asset which can drive competition and enable innovation. Our strategy to promote innovation focuses on creating the right conditions for innovation through spectrum. Compared to many other countries, Ireland has a natural spectrum advantage in having a wide range of clean radio

spectrum available for test and trial purposes. ComReg is actively promoting Ireland's spectrum advantage and operates the Test & Trial licensing programme, "Test & Trial Ireland", to support organisations who wish to use Ireland's radio spectrum for test or trial purposes. The ready availability of clean radio spectrum can be a valuable advantage for companies carrying out R&D activities in Ireland, as access to many of the most desired radio spectrum bands (e.g. the mobile or digital dividend bands) may not be possible in other countries.

The gateway to our test and trial strategy is an innovative website, available in various languages, as a one-stop-shop for companies seeking to avail of spectrum in this way. Testandtrial.ie was launched in May of 2009 and was developed as the centrepiece of promotional material to inform users of Ireland's spectrum resource and licensing scheme. The site contains detailed information regarding the licensing process, testimonials from companies who have benefited from the scheme and an educational video demonstrating why Ireland is a prime location for Research and Development. Currently the site is available in Japanese and work has commenced to translate it into Chinese, Korean and Spanish.

Since Test & Trial Ireland was launched, over 110 licences have been issued to a wide variety of organisations for a wide variety of purposes. Some organisations have used Test & Trial Ireland to trial new services and technologies in advance of an anticipated future commercial launch, e.g. RTE's trial of Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) technology. Others have used this licensing programme to test and develop new wireless devices which may become widely used in the future, e.g. the Centre for Telecommunications Value-Chain Research (CTVR) tests of reconfigurable software-based radio. Others have used Test and Trial Ireland to support their ongoing business activities, e.g. Altobridge's testing for their remote community GSM solutions. ComReg will continue to promote innovation through new initiatives such as these.

c. Electronic Service Delivery

ComReg have a number of other websites dedicated to providing users with a number of ComReg specific services. (e.g. Radio Licenses applications, Postal service registration, Personal locator beacon registration). We strive to ensure that all services provided are available in an online format.

elicensing.comreg.ie, is ComReg's electronic licensing website. This website has been established for a number of years and initially provided ComReg licensees with the ability to make payments online for their outstanding radiocommunications licenses. Phase one of elicensing.comreg.ie was developed to allow existing license holders to pay outstanding invoices online, reducing the administrative burden on ComReg's financial department. Following on from this success, the application was further developed to increase the suite of financial services available. Subsequently an online service was developed to enable potential licensees to submit applications. Online applications for the highest volume license types, Point to Point, resulted in a reduced application processing turnaround time.

ComReg will continue to add to the suite of application types that can be submitted online. Further development is underway to facilitate the upload of electronically

signed licenses to member's accounts. The final stage in infrastructure development is currently in progress and will result in users receiving a digitally signed version of their license.

Next steps will focus on bringing the bespoke applications such as e-licensing and numbering online and e-enabling authorisation processes for telecommunications and spectrum services.

d. Enabling Internal Efficiencies

The continued development of the e-licensing application is a key enabler of change internally, allowing for more streamlined process and efficiency gains. In addition, we continue to look at how our customers interact with ComReg and how they can be facilitated. Last year, for example, we developed internally a new purchase order system with a view to assisting with order tracking for external customers and budget monitoring internally. E-enabling of internal administrative processes will continue to increase process efficiency e.g. online access to payslips and expenses. Existing IT facilities such as SharePoint have the capability to meet much of the internal e-enablement requirements.

Plans For Next 12 Months:

ComReg requires a professional, efficient and user-friendly medium through which it can inform users and serve customers. E-business and online initiatives provide the opportunity to do this in a way that reaches our national and international stakeholders, Considering that ComReg is a small organisation with a national remit, the utilisation, where possible, of online systems and solutions is a natural fit to ensure objectives are served.

We have already made significant progress in developing new ways to interface with the customer through the development of the bespoke e-licensing system to simplify the interaction of our licencees with us, and websites such as callcosts.ie where we deliver customer value through a technical solution.

The focus over the next 12 months will be to continue the e-enablement of business processes and utilisation of online solutions. In particular, we will:-

- support consumer information and protection objectives in relation to our new powers to regulate premium rate services, including by developing a new website aimed at the target youth audience www.phonesmart.ie.
- provide new, on-line customer services, particularly a Personal Locator Beacon register. and making the testandtrial available in additional languages
- further enhance e-licensing arrangements to enable licensees to download an electronically signed version of their license
- implement PRS regulation into the current licensing environment
- review and consolidate content, format, navigation and audiences of current and proposed ComReg websites to ensure that specific organisational objectives are met in a manner that is as efficient and standardised as possible, including improving accessibility standards and search engine visibility
- increase process efficiency internally e.g. online access to payslips and expenses.

June 2010

Comreg.ie

Comreg.ie is ComReg's main website which provides users with information and support services relating to the telecommunication, radiocommunications, broadcasting and postal industries.

Ownership

Director of Corporate Services, Yvonne White

Schedules / Timelines

Established – Continued enhancement

Facilities being offered

- Publications / consultations / decisions
- ERAU registration
- Postal Registration
- Other Authorised Operator information
- Numbering
 - SMS number checker
 - Numbering
- Licensing
 - High Low database checker

Benefits / Impacts

- Impacts/Benefits for the State
 - Staff Savings
 - Administrative overhead savings
 - Improved Service Delivery
 - Enhancements to policy processes
- Value for Citizens/customers
 - Reduced queuing times
 - Reduced waiting times
 - Reduced regulatory burden or paperwork
 - Improved information transfer

Capacity of Organisation to deliver

- Internal project management and product support
- External development

Monitoring arrangements

- Monthly review of site activity using Google Analytics
- Ongoing monitoring of user comments / emails

Next Phase

- Improved accessibility standards
- Improved Search Engine visibility
- Release of Personal Locator Beacon register

Awards: EIQA

eLicensing.comreg.ie

eLicensing.comreg.ie provides existing and potential radio licensees with the ability to manage their licenses online.

Ownership

Director of Market Framework, George Merrigan

Schedules/Timelines

Established – Continued enhancement

Facilities being offered

- Account registration
- License Application
- License renewal
- License Application
- Invoice payment
- Account top Up

Benefits/Impacts

- Impacts/Benefits for the State
 - Staff Savings
 - Administrative overhead savings
 - Improved Service Delivery
- Value for Citizens/customers
 - Reduced queuing times
 - Reduced waiting times
 - Reduced transaction times

Capacity of Organisation to deliver

- Internal project management and product support
- External development

Monitoring arrangements

- Monthly review of site activity using Google Analytics and bespoke transaction monitoring.
- Ongoing monitoring of user comments / emails

Next Phase

- eLicensing was initially developed to provide existing ComReg licensees with the ability to pay outstanding invoices online. Since its launch the site has continually been added to such that it now provides a full suite of licensing facilities. ComReg is currently in the process of further enhancing the website such that licensees will be able to download an electronically signed version of their license. This service is due to be delivered in Q3 2010.

CallCosts.ie

CallCosts.ie an interactive website that has been developed to help consumers to compare the cost of personal/non-business mobile, home phone and broadband price plans.

Ownership

Director of Retail, Shay O'Malley

Schedules/Timelines

Established – Continued enhancement

Facilities being offered

Cost calculators for

- Mobile Phones
- Home Phone
- Broadband
- Home Phone and Broadband

Benefits/Impacts

- Impacts/Benefits for the State
 - Improved Service Delivery
- Value for Citizens/customers
 - Improved citizen awareness / satisfaction

Capacity of Organisation to deliver

- Internal project management, product support and concept development.
- External development.

Monitoring arrangements

- Monthly review of site activity using Google Analytics and bespoke calculator usage.
- Ongoing monitoring of user comments / emails

Next Phase

- Further development of price plan presentation methodology
- Improved calculators due to changes within industry
- Improved Search Engine visibility
- Improved accessibility standards

Awards

- Eircom/ Inside Government Merit Award for our website.
- Golden Spider Award for best public sector website
- Public Service Excellence Award for our website

Askcomreg.ie

Askcomreg.ie is ComReg's principal consumer-focused website. It provides users with information on Home phones, Mobile, Internet, Postal and Small Business.

Ownership

Director of Retail, Shay O'Malley

Schedules/Timelines

Established – ongoing enhancement

Facilities being offered

- Information portal
- Consumer advice / contact forms & live chat service
- Consumer complaints

Benefits/Impacts

- Impacts/Benefits for the State
 - Staff Savings
 - Administrative overhead savings
 - Improved Service Delivery
- Value for Citizens/customers
 - Improved citizen awareness / satisfaction
 - Timely advice/guidance on key consumer issues

Capacity of Organisation to deliver

- Internal project management and product support.
- External development

Monitoring arrangements

- Monthly review of site activity using Google Analytic.
- Ongoing monitoring of user comments / emails and customer complaints

Next Phase

- Improved accessibility standards
- Improved Search Engine visibility
- Updated / improved content

Awards

- EIQA

PhoneSmart.ie

Phonesmart.ie is a new site which will be focused on educating users about Premium Rate Services.

Ownership

Director of Retail, Shay O'Malley

Schedules/Timelines

New site to be developed and delivered within Q4 2010

Facilities being offered

- Information portal

Benefits/Impacts

- Impacts/Benefits for the State
 - Staff Savings
 - Administrative overhead savings
 - Improved Service Delivery
- Value for Citizens/customers
 - Improved citizen awareness / satisfaction
 - Enhanced level of protection for vulnerable users

Capacity of Organisation to deliver

- Internal project management and product support.
- External development

Monitoring arrangements

- Monthly review of site activity using Google Analytics.
- Ongoing monitoring of user comments / emails and customer issues

Comstat.ie

Comstat.ie publishes statistical information on the Irish electronic communications market

Ownership

SEA & Director of Research Unit, Patrick Kenny

Schedules/Timelines

Established – ongoing enhancement

Facilities being offered

- Information portal
- Data mining / Query building / Data export
- Publication delivery

Benefits/Impacts

- Impacts/Benefits for the State
 - Staff Savings
 - Improved Service Delivery
- Value for Citizens/customers
 - Improved citizen awareness / satisfaction
 - Operators able to process data for own purposes

Capacity of Organisation to deliver

- Internal project management and product support.
- External development

Monitoring arrangements

- Monthly review of site activity using Google Analytics.
- Ongoing monitoring of user comments / emails.

Next Phase

- Improved Search Engine visibility
- Improved accessibility standards

Siteviewer.ie

Siteviewer.ie provides users with a geographical representation of mobile mast locations and service availability.

Ownership

Director of Market Framework, George Merrigan

Schedules/Timelines

Established – ongoing enhancement

Facilities being offered

- Geographical search facility for 2G / 3G mobile services
- Administrative portal for mobile operators to manage site locations

Benefits/Impacts

- Impacts/Benefits for the State
 - Staff Savings – Administration maintained by mobile operators
 - Improved Service Delivery
- Value for Citizens/customers
 - Improved citizen awareness / satisfaction

Capacity of Organisation to deliver

- Internal project management and product support.
- External development

Monitoring arrangements

- Monthly review of site activity using Google Analytics.
- Ongoing monitoring of user comments / emails.

Next Phase

- Improved Search Engine visibility
- Improved accessibility standards

TestandTrial.ie

TestandTrail.ie is designed to support the needs of the wireless research and development community and to promote Ireland as a venue for testing and trialling wireless technologies.

Ownership

Director of Market Framework, George Merrigan

Schedules/Timelines

Established – ongoing enhancement

Facilities being offered

- Information Portal

Benefits/Impacts

- Impacts/Benefits for the State
 - Staff Savings – Administration maintained by mobile operators
 - Improved Service Delivery
- Value for Citizens/customers
 - Improved citizen awareness / satisfaction
 - International audience targeted for R&D in Ireland

Capacity of Organisation to deliver

- Internal project management and product support.
- External development

Monitoring arrangements

- Monthly review of site activity using Google Analytics.
- Ongoing monitoring of user comments / emails.

Next Phase

- Translation to 3 additional languages.
- Improved Search Engine visibility
- Improved accessibility standards