



An Coimisiún um
Rialáil Cumarsáide
Commission for
Communications Regulation

Nuisance Communications

Agreed revised Terms of Reference for
Nuisance Communications Industry
Taskforce

Information Notice

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Commission for Communications Regulation

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1 Background

- 1.1 On 17 December 2021, published an Information Notice as ComReg Document 21/129 outlining its intention to form a Nuisance Communications Industry Taskforce (“NCIT”). ComReg established the NCIT in early 2022, comprising fixed and mobile network operators whose networks collectively carry more than 90% of fixed voice traffic and 100% of mobile voice traffic in Ireland.
- 1.2 The enduring support and expertise of the telecommunications industry and the endorsement of the work of the NCIT from its highest levels remains essential. Where network and service specific interventions are required to address nuisance communications, it is ultimately only the industry players – in collaboration with one another, that can implement these interventions.
- 1.3 Twelve months on and nuisance communications remains a complex and ever evolving threat to consumers of electronic communications services that has diminished trust in telecommunications. The need for continuing cross-industry and cross-sectoral effort to combat the problem is as acute now as it ever was.
- 1.4 The NCIT Terms of Reference, as outlined in ComReg Document 21/129 made provision for *“a review of whether the taskforce could continue beyond the initial 12 months and if so an intervention strategy and plan for same.”*
- 1.5 Given the extent of the fraud and the damaging effect it continues to have on trust in Irish telecommunications services, at an NCIT meeting on 4 January 2023, members agreed that the NCIT should continue beyond the initial 12 months. A new Terms of Reference was also agreed, with an emphasis on members of the NCIT to be fully focused on rapid implementation and accelerated deployment of these interventions.
- 1.6 Accordingly, the NCIT will continue to meet monthly and will be chaired by an independent chairperson and secretariat, reporting to ComReg.
- 1.7 ComReg is grateful for the continuing and active support of Minister Ossian Smyth, Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, and the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (“DECC”) in this endeavour.
- 1.8 The revised, agreed terms of reference of the NCIT are at Annex 1 below.

Annex 1: Terms of Reference of NCIT

Objectives

A 1.1 The objective of the Nuisance Communications Industry Taskforce (“NCIT”) is to bring together representatives of the electronic communications industry to:

- Discuss potential new interventions to be applied to networks to minimise/mitigate nuisance communications and develop an implementation roadmap for same;
- Keep under review the means by which industry collaborate and share information over the long term should nuisance communications evolve, or should a network/networks come under a sustained nuisance communications attack;
- Where the success of the implementation of an intervention requires it, reach out to and involve other non-members/sectors, and
- Report on the progress of the taskforce, as agreed in the terms of reference.

Terms of Reference

A 1.2 The Terms of Reference for the NCIT are:

- Deliver on agreed member’s implementation roadmaps to ensure that the interventions are implemented by the appropriate network and/or service providers as quickly as possible, providing metrics as outlined in agreed technical specifications and in line with the expected timelines of the deliverable of the taskforce;
- Following a gap analysis, review and update existing interventions to ensure they remain fit for purpose in response to new technological developments and /or as a consequence of evolving threats;
- Continue to identify and recommend practical interventions that can be taken in the short, medium and long-term to combat nuisance communications by operators, in line with the objectives of the taskforce, setting out an intervention strategy and plan for same;
- To prepare two progress reports: one after six months of operation and one after 12 months.

- At six months, a report should include an update on interventions and their metrics, and new interventions under development or already in-place.
- As part of the report at 12 months, this should include
 - i. a further update on implementation and their metrics, and new interventions under development or already in-place;
 - ii. a review of the taskforce and whether and/or in what form it could continue beyond 12 months and if so an intervention strategy and plan for same.
- These reports may, at the discretion of ComReg, be published or shared with relevant interested parties such as the Minister for State with responsibility for Communications and Circular Economy. As such an appropriately redacted version of each report should also be produced alongside the non-redacted version.

A 1.3 The work of the Taskforce will assist ComReg in its own work on combatting nuisance communications.