



An Coimisiún um
Rialáil Cumarsáide
Commission for
Communications Regulation

Call for Inputs

ComReg Strategy Statement 2025-2027

Consultation

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Commission for Communications Regulation

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Additional Information

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

1. The Commission for Communications Regulation (**'ComReg'**) is the statutory body responsible for the regulation of the electronic communications (telecommunications, radio spectrum and broadcasting transmission) and postal sectors in the State.
2. ComReg has a range of functions and objectives in relation to the provision of electronic communications networks and services (**'ECNS'**) and postal services in accordance with European Union (**'EU'**) and national legislation
3. ComReg is required by legislation to issue a strategy statement every two years, distinguishing between its functions in relation to electronic communications, premium rate services (**'PRS'**), radio frequency spectrum management, and postal services.¹ ComReg currently publishes three separate strategy statements: one each on ECNS and PRS, spectrum management, and postal services.
4. ComReg's role and scope are ever-changing, as EU and Irish legislation refine and expand its responsibilities. Over the next two years, ComReg expects this rate of change to accelerate, as it takes on responsibilities in areas which are new to it (for example, cybersecurity, accessibility, and access to, and use of, data), while continuing to excel in the delivery of its legacy functions. These changes are accompanied by a level of fluidity. For these reasons, ComReg considers that its existing approach to strategy planning needs to change to reflect these new realities. In particular, ComReg's strategy over the next two years must be adaptable and flexible. A shorter, higher-level strategy gives greater scope to account for change over time. This requires a broad vision of ComReg's role with respect to electronic communications, postal services, and ComReg's expanding digital role.
5. Accordingly, ComReg proposes to change its approach for its current round of strategy planning for the period 2025 to 2027. From 2025 ComReg proposes to issue a single Strategy Statement encompassing the entirety of its functions (the **'2025-2027 ComReg Strategy Statement'**) in order to holistically reflect ComReg's direction during that period. This will be a high-level, principles-based Strategy Statement that reflects the outlook for ComReg and its expanding remit over the next two years. Having regard to the guidance in respect of strategy statements set out in the Code of Practice for the

¹ Section 31 of the Communications Regulation Act 2002 (as amended by the Communications Regulation (Premium Rate Services and Electronic Communications Infrastructure) Act 2010) (the **'Act'**).

Governance of State Bodies,² it will set out strategic priorities which inform ComReg's work but will also recognise the likelihood of significant change in the environments in which ComReg operates. ComReg's annual Action Plan will reflect the tasks and activities that give effect to our strategic priorities.³

1.2 Call for Inputs

6. The purpose of this Call for Inputs is to enable ComReg to better understand how the sectors it regulates may evolve over the lifetime of the next Strategy Statement and beyond. For example, what will be the impact of:
 - The regulatory response to a changing technological landscape?
 - Trends and developments such as geopolitical tensions and changes to the investment environment?
7. ComReg welcomes the views of interested parties and encourages all stakeholders to respond to this Call for Inputs. ComReg intends to use this Call for Inputs to inform its 2025-2027 Strategy Statement. ComReg will carefully consider any responses which it receives.

2 2025-2027 ComReg Strategy

8. The purpose of this Call for Inputs is to elicit views from stakeholders to inform the forthcoming 2025-2027 ComReg Strategy Statement. As set out above, ComReg is obliged under the Act to distinguish between specified functions in drafting its Strategy Statement:
 - electronic communications services ('ECS'),
 - premium rate services ('PRS'),
 - management of the radio frequency spectrum, and
 - postal services.
9. Additionally, the 2025-2027 ComReg Strategy Statement will have regard to any additional or changed responsibilities assigned to ComReg arising from EU or Irish legislation.
10. ComReg's existing Strategy Statements cover slightly differing time periods which must be reconciled.

² Department Public Expenditure and Reform (2016) "Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies" at paragraphs 1.15 to 1.19. [Link](#).

³ Section 31B(3) of the Act requires ComReg to prepare an annual Action Plan which has regard to its current strategy statement.

- ComReg's **ECS Strategy Statement** (which sets out goals for ECS, PRS, and radio spectrum management) has effect until June 2025;
- ComReg's **Postal Strategy Statement** covers the two-year period from the start of 2024 to the start of 2026; and
- ComReg's **Radio Spectrum Management Strategy Statement**,⁴ which includes a radio spectrum management operational plan, has effect until the end of 2024.

11. The 2025-2027 ComReg Strategy Statement will take effect on expiry of the 2023-2025 ECS Strategy Statement.
12. On the expiry of the 2022-2024 Radio Spectrum Management Strategy Statement at the end of 2024, strategic direction in respect of radio spectrum management will continue to be provided by the 2023-2025 ECS Strategy Statement. ComReg is currently consulting on its proposed Radio Spectrum Management Operating Plan ('**RSMOP**') for the period 2025 to 2028⁵ which will succeed the radio spectrum management operational plan set out in its 2022-2024 Radio Spectrum Management Strategy Statement.
13. The 2024-2026 Postal Strategy Statement will continue to have full effect until its scheduled expiry at the start of 2026. From 2026 until June 2027, strategic priorities in respect of the regulation of postal services will be provided by the 2025-2027 ComReg Strategy Statement.
14. The 2025-2027 ComReg Strategy Statement will, accordingly, be a high-level, principles-based strategy statement which will better reflect our outlook for these functions over its two-year term. The likely significant change in our role and responsibilities in the short to medium term will also be reflected.
15. The 2025-2027 ComReg Strategy Statement will cover ComReg's existing evolving remit, along with its newly expanded responsibilities to the extent reasonably foreseeable over the two-year period.
16. At this point, the level, timing and impact of expected change on ComReg is unclear. The exact parameters of our role and responsibilities are dependent on expected new legislation. ComReg must therefore plan its strategy under conditions of greater uncertainty than is normally the case. We may revisit matters as appropriate once our operating parameters become clearer.

⁴ https://www.comreg.ie/?dln_download=radio-spectrum-management-strategy-statement-2022-to-2024

⁵ <https://www.comreg.ie/media/2024/08/ComReg-2465.pdf>

2.1 Considerations

17. ComReg expects that, in addition to continuing to carry out its legacy statutory functions, its role will expand and change over the next five years driven by a number of developments. While the final status of a number of these developments is not yet fully clear, the more significant developments at the moment include:

- the transposition at national level of EU legislation,
- the assignment of new roles and functions arising from policy and legislation at EU level, including,
 - In respect of **ECS/ECN**
 - The Consumer Rights Act 2022,
 - The European Accessibility Act (**'EAA Directive'**)⁶ transposed by the European Union (Accessibility Requirements of Products and Services) Regulations 2023, S.I. 636 of 2023, which provides for accessibility requirements for a wide range of ECS,
 - The European Electronic Communications Code (**'EECC'**) revised the EU ECS regulatory framework, and brought into the scope of regulation for the first time Number-Independent Interpersonal Communications Service (**'NI-ICS'**) such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Skype, and
 - The Competition (Amendment) Act 2022.
 - the expected assignment of new roles and functions arising from policy and legislation at EU level, including, but not limited to,
 - In respect of **ECS/ECN**
 - The EU Gigabit Infrastructure Act Regulation (**'GIA'**).⁷ ComReg's roles are to be provided for in national legislation
 - The scheduled review in 2025 of the EECC.
 - In respect of **cybersecurity**
 - Statutory Instrument expected to be made by the Minister under Part 2 "Security of Networks and Services" of the Communications Regulation and Digital Hub Development Agency (Amendment) Act 2023.

⁶ Directive (EU) 2019/882 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on the accessibility requirements for products and services (the European Accessibility Act, or '**EAA**'). The provisions of the EAA will apply to an ECS provided to consumers after 28 June 2025, and ComReg has been designated as the competent authority for the EAA in the State.

⁷ Regulation (EU) 2024/1309 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2024 on measures to reduce the cost of deploying gigabit electronic communications networks, amending Regulation (EU) 2015/2120 and repealing Directive 2014/61/EU (the '**Gigabit Infrastructure Act**').

- The Network and Information Security Directive ('**NIS2**')⁸ which is due to be transposed into national law by 17 October 2024.
- The pending National Cyber Security Bill will transpose NIS2.
- This legislation will designate ComReg as the Competent Authority for Digital Infrastructure, ICT Service Management, Digital Providers, and Space.
- In respect of **physical resilience**
 - The Critical Entities Resilience Directive (the '**CER Directive**'),⁹ which is to be transposed into national law by 17 October 2024.
 - The expected European Union (Critical Entities Resilience) Regulations 2024 will transpose the CER Directive into Irish law.
 - This legislation will designate ComReg as the Competent Authority for Digital Infrastructure.
- In respect of **data**
 - The Data Act,¹⁰ which will apply from 12 September 2025.
 - The Data Act will be transposed into Irish legislation by means of the pending EU Data Act Bill.
 - Under this legislation, ComReg may be designated as the Competent Authority for certain areas, such as cloud switching.
- the prospective study being carried out on behalf of the European Commission to assess the future of the postal sector in Europe,¹¹
- the coming into effect of the powers related to enforcement and adjudication set out in the Communications Regulation and Digital Hub Development Agency (Amendment) Act 2023, and
- continued developments in the ECN and ECS markets that ComReg currently regulates.

⁸ Directive (EU) 2022/2555 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022 on measures for a high common level of cybersecurity across the Union, amending Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 and Directive (EU) 2018/1972, and repealing Directive (EU) 2016/1148.

⁹ Directive (EU) 2022/2557 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022 on the resilience of critical entities and repealing Council Directive 2008/114/EC (the '**CER Directive**').

¹⁰ Regulation (EU) 2023/2854 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2023 on harmonised rules on fair access to and use of data and amending Regulation (EU) 2017/2394 and Directive (EU) 2020/1828 (the '**Data Act**').

¹¹ [Future of the Postal Sector Study | RPA Ltd.](#)

3 Trends, challenges, and ComReg's strategy

3.1 Current Strategic Intents

18. ComReg's 2023-2025 ECS Strategy Statement categorised our activities into four broad areas:

- **Competition**
- **Consumer Protection**
- **Investment**
- **Compliance and Enforcement**

19. In addition, our ability to fulfil our role and mission is underpinned by ongoing development of, and investment in, our **Organisation**.

20. On this basis, our 2023-2025 ECS Strategy detailed five Strategic Intents for ComReg, as set out in **Table 1** below:

Table 1: ComReg's Strategic Intents for the 2023-2025 strategy period

Strategic Intents under the 2023-2025 ECS Strategy		
1	Competition & Investment	A competitive sector that delivers efficient investment, innovation, and choice
2	Consumer Protection	Consumers can choose and use electronic communications services with confidence
3	Connectivity & Network Resilience	End users have widespread access to high-quality and secure communications networks, services, and applications
4	Compliance & Enforcement	Regulated entities comply with regulatory requirements
5	Organisation	We are an effective, agile, and relevant regulator

21. These Strategic Intents reflected our thinking in respect of ECS and radio spectrum in 2023. They offer a snapshot in time and, in that regard, they do not reflect ComReg's goals in respect of postal regulation, nor do they take into account new roles and challenges which ComReg may face. ComReg must therefore determine – taking into account the views of stakeholders - whether

those Strategic Intents continue to be appropriate or whether, bearing in mind the Trends and Challenges identified below, new or updated strategic priorities must be identified.

3.2 Trends and challenges

22. The development of the electronic communications, digital infrastructure, and postal sectors is shaped by different social, economic, legislative, and technological forces. Some of these forces have a positive impact on markets, acting as catalysts for the advancement of technology and digital inclusion, while others present challenges. ComReg has identified a number of key trends that are likely to pose regulatory challenges over the period covered by the 2025-2027 ComReg Strategy Statement:

- i. **Enhanced Connectivity & New Technologies:** Investment in commercial networks, the National Broadband Plan and (non-standalone and standalone) 5G technologies will play an increasingly important role over the period covered by the 2025-2027 ComReg Strategy Statement.
- ii. **Network Demand, Network Security and Resilience:** Demand on electronic communications networks has grown considerably as more people work remotely, and end users demand services which require higher speeds and consume greater bandwidth. The importance of network security, integrity and resilience will increase as end users become more reliant on electronic communications.¹²
- iii. **Consumer Experience:** Consumer use and adoption of electronic communications and associated technologies will continue to evolve as networks and service become available. However, consumer experience may not be uniform across all consumer types or geographic areas.
- iv. **Evolution of Adjacent and Related Markets:** The evolution of related markets, including input (e.g. equipment) and complementary markets (e.g. mobile handsets) will shape the adoption, use and experience of electronic communications.

¹² For example, 2024 research carried out by Frontier Economics on behalf of ComReg suggests traffic growth on mobile data networks will increase by, on average, 16.5% per annum from 2023 to 2028, as set out in *Mobile data traffic forecast in Ireland 2024-2028 – A report by Frontier Economics*, available online at [ComReg-2458a.pdf](#)

- v. **Sustainability** in electronic communications can play an important role in creating a more sustainable economy. The carbon footprint of the sector is also changing as new networks are deployed. In particular, under the CER Directive ComReg will have a role in respect of climate adaptation measures required to ensure resilience in respect of climate adaptation by critical entities, notably providers of digital infrastructure, which includes data centres. This is in addition to ComReg's existing obligations under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2023.
- vi. **Changing Future of Regulation:** The planned review of the EECC and other legislative changes and proposals will impact the way ComReg regulates, and potentially the scope of our role and remit.

4 Next steps

23. ComReg intends to use this Call for Inputs to shape key elements of its 2025-2027 Strategy Statement. As set out above, ComReg intends to move to a principles-based strategy statement which sets out its strategic priorities and key objectives associated with those strategic priorities, bearing in mind:
- i. Trends and developments in fields where ComReg currently has, or is likely to gain over the lifetime of the 2025-2027 ComReg Strategy Statement, regulatory responsibilities, and
 - ii. ComReg's existing statutory remit and potential changes to this remit arising from Irish and EU legislation.
24. ComReg has set out above the changes which it is likely to encounter over the lifetime of the 2025-2027 ComReg Strategy Statement and beyond, as well as those areas where the future is unclear or unknown at this stage.
25. ComReg is anxious to seek the views of both existing, but also especially, new, stakeholders on
- i. the trends and challenges which will shape the 2025-2027 ComReg Strategy Statement, and
 - ii. any other issues ComReg should consider in shaping its strategy statement.
26. ComReg welcomes all written responses from stakeholders by **5pm on Friday, September 27th, 2024**. In all cases, please provide evidence or cogent reasoning in support of your views.

27. This Call for Inputs follows the principles set out in ComReg's Consultation Procedure Guidelines.¹³ In particular, ComReg will publish all responses to this Call for Inputs. Where submissions include confidential information, such information should be clearly identified, with the reasons supporting the claim, and respondents should also provide at the same time non-confidential versions of submissions. Claims of confidentiality will be treated in accordance with ComReg's published Confidentiality Guidelines.¹⁴

28. Responses must be submitted in written form (post or email) marked '**Submissions to ComReg 24/68**' by **5pm, Friday, September 27th, 2024** to:

Dave O'Connell
ComReg,
One Dockland Central,
1 Guild St.,
Dublin 1,
D01 E4XO.
Email: strategy@comreg.ie

29. ComReg will consult on its draft 2025-2027 Strategy Statement in Q4 2024.

¹³ [Microsoft Word - Consultation Guidelines ComReg 24_04.](#)

¹⁴ Guidelines on the treatment of confidential information - Final text of Guidelines Document 05/24. Available online at [Microsoft Word - Document in Microsoft Internet Explorer \(comreg.ie\)](#)