

Media Release - 5 November 2008

## **ComReg and NDA host workshop on inclusive/ universal design in telecommunications products and services**

The Commission for Communications Regulations (ComReg) and the National Disability Authority (NDA) are today hosting a workshop on “*Inclusive/Universal design for all telecommunications users*” at the Conference Centre in Croke Park.

Universal design means designing products and services that can be used by people of any ability, age or size, without the need for special adaptations. Delegates will have the opportunity to experience for themselves the disabling factors that can occur as a result of inefficient product design through a number of exercises and simulations that will be employed at the workshop.

The workshop is part of an initiative by ComReg and the NDA to ensure that telecoms operators are fully aware of the communications needs of all consumers. The purpose of the workshop is to explore and map the potential for universal design in product and service development, communications and customer service.

Dr. Angela Kerins, Chairperson of the NDA, said “*Universal design is about getting the design right at the start by being aware of different needs and abilities. It not only benefits the public in general but also those who produce goods and services. It is important to be able to understand and take account of human difference so that everyone can interact with their environment to the best of their ability.*”

ComReg Commissioner Alex Chisholm said “*One of ComReg’s key responsibilities is to ensure that all communications users – including users with disability – derive maximum benefit in terms of choice, price and quality. As communications technology develops and improves, ComReg believes it is incumbent on operators to ensure that their products and services can be accessed by all users. Universal design is good design*”.

The workshop will be addressed by a number of leading experts and practitioners in the field, including Professor John Clarkson, Professor of Engineering Design at Cambridge University; Gerry Ellis of People with Disabilities Ireland; Mary Doherty of Red Dog Design and Fiachra O'Marcaigh of AMAS.

**ENDS**

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**Notes to Editors**

ComReg and the NDA jointly established the **Forum on Services for People with Disabilities** in 2006 in order to take forward our work in this area. ComReg is specifically charged under the Communications Act 2002 with ensuring that *all users*, including people with disabilities, derive maximum benefit in terms of choice price and quality.

The Forum is a joint undertaking with the NDA and includes both telecoms operators and representative groupings for people with disabilities. Significant progress has been made, notably with the publication of the Phone and Broadband Guide for People with Disabilities and Older People, the Disability Survey, improved accessibility of operator websites and services, and the hosting of the CEO Breakfast Briefing on disability awareness on 15 October, 2008.