



Media Release – 7 September 2005

ComReg issues decision on Universal Service Obligations

The Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) today issued its decision concerning aspects of the Universal Service Obligation (USO) to be met by eircom.

The decision relates to the obligation to provide connections to the public telephone network, the general detail of which is set out in Regulations made by the Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources. Those regulations also permit ComReg, with the consent of the Minister, to set particular requirements in connection with those obligations. In March 2005, ComReg sought views on proposals in relation to requests for connection to the telephone network and on functional Internet access.

ComReg has directed that all connections which involve expenditure of less than €7,000 be provided for the standard connection charge and that where the cost exceeds €7,000 applicants should be able to get service by paying the excess.

On functional Internet access, ComReg has directed eircom to use all reasonable endeavours to ensure a reasonable minimum data rate of 28.8 kbit/s for functional Internet access. Under European legislation, the provision of broadband access is not a feature of the Universal Service Obligation which is confined to a single narrowband connection.

ComReg Commissioner Mike Byrne said: *“Universal service is really all about social inclusion, allowing people in marginal areas or circumstances to avail of basic telecoms services that most of us take for granted. ComReg is grateful to all those who took the time to make submissions during the course of the consultation. All opinions were considered before we finalised our decision. We believe the requirements and guidelines which we have now issued will be of benefit both to consumers and eircom. They will provide consumers with a clearer idea of what to expect when requesting a telephone connection or when accessing the internet.”*

A prominent issue in the views expressed on the consultation was the availability of broadband. While the measures issued today relate only to narrowband (i.e. dial-up) data speeds, ComReg has sought to ensure that the measures do not detract from the priority and investment focused on meeting the national objective in relation to Broadband roll-out.

ENDS

Issued By

Tom Butler

Public Affairs Manager, ComReg

Ph: 01 804 9639

Mobile: 087 253 6358

tom.butler@comreg.ie