



Office of the Director of
**Telecommunications
Regulation**

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
3rd March, 1999

CARRIER PRE-SELECTION: REGULATOR'S PROPOSALS TO EASE CONSUMER CHOICE OF TELECOMS OPERATORS

New proposals, enabling Irish telecommunications consumers to decide in advance which operators they wish to use for international and national calls, were announced by the Director of Telecommunications Regulation, Etain Doyle, today. The recommendations offer an alternative to dialling extra digits or fitting extra equipment to the telephone line when choosing to route calls through alternative operators.

The proposals for "carrier pre-selection" will allow consumers select an alternative operator in advance to carry certain pre-defined types of calls. Once agreements are signed between the provider and the customer, these calls will be automatically delivered by that operator. Call types not included in the pre-selection scheme will continue to be connected by Telecom Éireann, with TE also continuing to provide the telephone line. The new service would be available from 1 Jan 2000.

"A well-defined carrier pre-selection scheme will prove a key enabler for the growth of competition in the newly liberalised Irish telecommunications market" the Director said, "It simplifies the process for the consumer and should bring about reduced prices, increased choice and quality of service and enhance the international competitiveness of Ireland".

The scheme proposed by the Regulator initially offers two pre-selections (international and national calls). Additional call types may be added to the scheme at a later date. The consultation document on the subject "**Introducing Carrier Pre-Selection in Ireland**" (ODTR 99/08), can be viewed on the ODTR web-site (<http://www.odtr.ie>). Responses are requested before 5pm on Monday, 29th March, 1999.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON CARRIER PRE-SELECTION

How Carrier Pre-Selection (CPS) Works

With CPS, consumers select an alternative service provider in advance to carry certain pre-defined types of call. The choices available to the consumer depend on the pre-selection scheme which has been defined by the ODTR. The scheme proposed by the ODTR offers two pre-selections initially, one for international calls and one for long distance national calls. The Office believes that this scheme will be easily understood by the consumer, whilst offering maximum choice. Additional call types may be added to the scheme over time.

What this means is that the consumer can ‘pre-select’ an operator other than Telecom Éireann to carry all his international calls and if he wishes, he can also independently choose an alternative operator for national calls. The pre-selected operator could be the same or different for each call type. It is proposed that all licensed telecommunications operators should be allowed to offer CPS services to consumers in Ireland.

For example, if a customer simply pre-selects a service provider other than Telecom Éireann for his international calls, only those calls will be delivered by that service provider. The consumer’s national calls and other call categories not included in the pre-selection scheme (e.g. local calls and 112/999 emergency calls) are still connected by Telecom Éireann. Telecom Éireann continues to provide the telephone line to the customer’s premises and is responsible for billing line rental.

The customer does not need to dial extra digits or have any additional equipment fitted to the telephone line. The mechanisms required to support CPS will be enabled by Telecom Éireann in their telephone network. Calls to numbers subject to a pre-selection are immediately routed by the network to the appropriate alternative operator for completion. Only Telecom Éireann, as the operator with significant market power is obliged to modify its network to provide CPS facilities for competing operators. The proposals do not extend obligations to other fixed or mobile operators at this stage, but may do so in the future.

If necessary, pre-selection can be over-ridden on a call-by-call basis by dialling the carrier access or carrier selection code of another operator. For example, if Telecom Éireann offered a special promotional price for calls to Australia for a particular weekend, the customer could over-ride his international pre-selection by dialling Telecom Éireann’s 5 digit carrier selection prefix before the required number.

Advantages of CPS over Existing Mechanisms

Current arrangements involve either dialling a 5 digit code or having an auto-dialler installed. Neither would be necessary with CPS which can be arranged directly from the TE switch.

Consumer Protection Issues

All the telecommunications operators involved in providing CPS service will need to develop new procedures to support CPS services. Consideration needs to be given to the ease of serving a customer’s request. It is vital that consumers are confident that their interests are being protected. To ensure the consumer is adequately protected, it is proposed that a Code of Practice for the provision of CPS will apply to the operators. Consumer protection measures should ensure that offers to customers are clear, concise and the service is implemented in accordance with the consumer’s preferences.

For further press information please contact Tara Delaney, Public Affairs Manager, ODTR.

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