



An Coimisiún um
Rialáil Cumarsáide
Commission for
Communications Regulation

Response to Consultation and Final Determination regarding the Emergency Call Answering Service Call Handling Fee for 2025/2026

Decision D02/25

Response to Consultation

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Commission for Communications Regulation

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Chapter 1

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Communications Regulation Act, 2002 (as amended) ("the Act") sets out ComReg's statutory role in respect of the Emergency Call Answering Service ("ECAS") and, in particular, its functions relating to the review of the maximum permitted call handling fee ("CHF") that the ECAS operator is allowed to charge for handling emergency calls.¹
- 1.2 This Response to Consultation and Determination is published to make the review process appropriately transparent and to summarise ComReg's consideration of stakeholder responses to the Consultation and draft Determination² ("the Consultation"). In addition, this Response to Consultation and Determination contains ComReg's determination on the maximum CHF that the ECAS operator is allowed to charge for handling emergency calls for the period from 12 February 2025 to 11 February 2026.
- 1.3 ComReg did not receive any responses to the Consultation which was published on 22 October 2024 and closed on 25 November 2024.
- 1.4 In discharging its functions under the Act, ComReg is mindful of the agreement ("the Agreement") between the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications ("DECC")³ and the ECAS operator, BT Communications (Ireland) Limited ("BT").
- 1.5 ComReg is not a party to the Agreement and the terms of same are not within ComReg's remit. Therefore, in most instances, ComReg does not have discretion in relation to the treatment of certain cost categories. Furthermore, it is not appropriate for ComReg to comment on the specifications or the requirements of the ECAS as detailed in the Agreement.
- 1.6 ComReg has reviewed the costs incurred by the ECAS operator in providing the service. As noted in the Consultation, ComReg considered the costs incurred by the ECAS operator to be reasonable. ComReg remains of this view.
- 1.7 The draft Determination contained in the Consultation proposed a maximum permitted CHF of €3.93 based on a forecast annualised rate of 2.2 million calls. In the present Determination, ComReg considers a forecast annualised rate of 2.2 million calls remains appropriate.

¹ See section 58D of the Act, as inserted by section 16 of the Communications Regulation (Amendment) Act 2007.

² ComReg Document No 24/84 accompanied by a consultant's report 24/84a.

³ Previously Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment ("DCCAE").

1.8 As identified in the Consultation the following are the movements in the CHF:

2024 CHF	€3.12
Increase in operating costs	€ 3 (+)
Variation in call volumes – the Android issue	€ 3 (+)
Depreciation	€ 3 (+)
2025 CHF	€3.93

1.1 Increase in operating costs

1.9 There was an increase in operating costs mainly due to pay scale adjustments for call centre operators.

1.10 The impact of the increase in operating costs is to increase the CHF by €~~3~~.

1.2 Variations in call volumes – the Android issue

1.11 The likely extension of the term by two years prolongs the period over which costs are recovered. Prior to BT withdrawing from the procurement process for the ECAS the CHF set by this consultation would have been in place from February 2025 to November 2025. However, because call volumes had been significantly lower than anticipated there was a significant under recovery of costs.

1.12 Absent extension of the term, it was estimated that, because of this under recovery, the CHF for the coming year would have been €4.92 mainly due to the lower call volumes.

1.13 As ComReg noted in its consultation of 2023, late 2022 and early 2023 saw a significant increase in ECAS call volumes. At that time, ComReg stated that it understood the increase was caused by a software issue on certain Android phones⁴ and that updates had been developed by manufacturers to address this. ComReg observed that the issue was not unique to Ireland and had been seen in other jurisdictions.

⁴ <https://eena.org/knowledge-hub/news/false-calls-originating-from-android-devices-acknowledged-by-handset-operators/>

- 1.14 The deployment speed of the “fix” for the Android issue was much faster than anticipated. Fewer affected phones than anticipated meant that call rates were below those forecast and thus there were lower revenues. In short, the CHF for 2024/2025 was, with hindsight, too low to cover the ECAS costs.
- 1.15 Without the extension of the term, the under recovery would have had to be recovered over circa nine months or circa 1.65m calls. With a 24-month extension, this recovery period is extended and the under recovery is now spread over circa 6m calls.
- 1.16 The impact of the variation in call volumes is to increase the CHF by €X.

1.3 Depreciation

- 1.17 The change in depreciation reflects two issues. Firstly, with a 24-month extension of the term assets which were due to be fully written off by November 2025 now have their asset lives extended by a further two years, thereby lowering the depreciation charge. Secondly NG eCall⁵, which is an EU requirement that needs to be developed and introduced by 01 Jan 2026 (which falls into the extension period) and the cost of which is being written off over the extended life of the contract. DECC, which has mandated the implementation of NG eCall in accordance with legislative requirements, has requested that it be funded through the CHF rather than the sinking fund.
- 1.18 The impact of the change in depreciation is to increase the CHF by €X.
- 1.19 As noted in the Consultation, DECC does not propose to release any funds from the Sinking Fund as part of the current review.
- 1.20 ComReg, as in previous reviews, has redacted commercially sensitive and confidential information from the review in order to respect the interests of the ECAS operator and its third-party suppliers. ComReg is satisfied that these redactions are appropriate, but that, notwithstanding the redactions, sufficient detail is provided for stakeholders to properly understand the basis for the Determination of the CHF. The redactions are made in accordance with Section 24 of the Act and in accordance with ComReg’s Guidelines on the treatment of confidential information (ComReg Document No. 05/24).
- 1.21 **ComReg determines that a maximum permitted CHF of €3.93 should apply for the period 12 February 2025 to 11 February 2026.**

⁵ Next Generation eCall is an evolution of the existing eCall service that is based on IMS using 4G/5G technology. With NG eCall, the IMS emergency call, as specified in 3GPP Release-14, is used. See [here](#) for further information. See also Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2024/1084

Chapter 2

2 Background

- 2.1 The ECAS receives emergency calls made to 112 or 999 through dedicated Public Safety Answering Points ("PSAP") and forwards these calls, as appropriate, to the relevant Emergency Service on the basis of the service required and the location of the incident.
- 2.2 BT provides the ECAS on a 24-hour, 365-day basis, using two PSAPs located in Ballyshannon, County Donegal and Navan, County Meath. The two PSAPs act as one "virtual" centre, with emergency calls being handled on a "next available agent" basis. ComReg conducted visits to the two call centres in 2024 as well as the standby site in Clonsaugh.
- 2.3 Under section 58D of the Act, ComReg must conduct a review of the maximum permitted CHF that the ECAS operator can charge for handling emergency calls, and as soon as practicable after conducting that review, ComReg has to determine the maximum CHF that the ECAS operator can charge for handling emergency calls on an annual basis. This Determination is made under section 58D of the Act and pursuant to the Consultation on this matter held during October and November of 2024.
- 2.4 In making this Determination, ComReg has taken full account of the recommendations made by its consultants, Analysys Mason.
- 2.5 ComReg concluded that the costs incurred by the ECAS operator were reasonable.

Chapter 3

3 Consultation Questions

3.1 In the Consultation, ComReg asked the views of respondents to three questions. These related to:

1. Forecast call volumes;
2. Any matters arising; and
3. The draft determination.

ComReg received no submissions of views to the Consultation.

3.1 Forecast call volumes

3.2 Based on an analysis of the most recent call volumes ComReg considers that a call volume forecast of 2.2m calls remains appropriate.

3.2 Any matters arising

3.3 ComReg is of the view that there are no further matters arising as a result of the Consultation or since the Consultation was published.

3.3 The draft determination

3.4 ComReg concludes that a maximum permitted CHF of €3.93 should apply for the period 12 February 2025 to 11 February 2026. A twelve-month review period is in line with ComReg's statutory obligations.⁶

⁶ Section 58 (D) of the Act

Chapter 4

4 Decision Instrument

1 Definitions

1.1 In this determination:

- “*the Act*” means the Communications Regulation Act 2002(as amended);
- “*the Commission*” means the Commission for Communications Regulation established under section 6 of the Act;
- “*emergency call*” has the same meaning as in section 58A of the Act; and
- “*the emergency provider*” means BT Communications Ireland Limited.

2 Determination

2.1 The Commission makes this determination:

- In exercise of its powers under section 58D (2) of the Act;
- Pursuant to the review conducted by it under section 58D (1) of the Act;
- Having had due regard to section 58D (3) of the Act;
- Pursuant to Commission Document No. 24/84 and Commission Document No. 24/84a;
- Having duly taken account of the responses received to Commission Document No. 24/84 and Commission Document No. 24/84a; and
- Having regard to the reasoning and analysis conducted by the Commission and set out in this response to consultation and determination.

2.2 The Commission hereby determines that for the period from 12 February 2025 to 11 February 2026 the maximum permitted call handling fee that the emergency provider may charge to entities who forward emergency calls to it for handling such a call shall be €3.93.

2.3 This determination is effective from the date of the publication of this response to consultation and determination.