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Education & Science

TCD-based competition for Skype

09.07.2007 - Software created by researchers in the Centre for Telecommunications Value Chain Research (CTVR), based in Trinity College Dublin (TCD), uses wireless technology that hopes to "bring advanced new mobile telephone systems to the global market".

Enterprise Ireland has granted €400,000 in funding to bring this new technology through the commercialisation process, as the CTVR see the potential for a "fully-fledged commercial spin-off".

Metakall will enable users to make cheap mobile calls using wireless hotspots and the internet as a network base, with emphasis on the fact that customers would be able to roam at low cost rates.

"Imagine the possibility of going anywhere in the world and using your wireless phone or laptop to make calls through the internet for as little as 5 cents a minute, with no other costs," said Professor Donal O'Mahony, director of CTVR.

"Right now you can make internet based phone calls, but you will also have to pay a monthly registration charge of over €20 to an Internet Service Provider or buy a scratchcard in each location for about €10. Only then can you use services like Skype or Vonage for example."

Metakall can offer low-cost calls because it pays hotspot providers small amounts of cash in real time, he said.

The software that sits on the mobile or laptop will have a meter that logs the amount of time you spend online making a call and only charges per minute online, letting your know how much you are spending as you talk.

It is estimated that this service will be offered at, on average, five cents per minute, although, as yet CTVR is still in talks with industry players on how it will implement Metakall.

"We are in contact with hotspot operators, internet telephone service providers and handset manufacturers. There is growing excitement about the new platform we have created," O'Mahony said.

Currently the CTVR claims that Metakall will be compatible with all Windows based PCs, as well as PDAs and smart phones running on Microsoft Windows Mobile.

By Marie Boran

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