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Escher Group and An Post Celebrate 10-Year Anniversary of First Riposte® Installation

-- Escher Honors An Post's Achievements in Postal Counter Automation --

Cambridge, Mass. – March 12, 2003 – Escher Group Limited, a leading provider of peer-to-peer messaging and data management solutions, today announced the 10th anniversary of its first Riposte® software installation, which was implemented at An Post — the national postal service of Ireland. Riposte is Escher's flagship messaging product, offering a complete networking system from point of sale to delivery and enabling organizations to rapidly develop and implement distributed, mission-critical applications.

An Post implemented Riposte throughout its retail network in 1993 to automate 1,000 post offices and link remote branches with central headquarters. In addition to providing mail services, An Post acts as a community hub by offering savings and investment products and processing utility and welfare payments, passports, and licenses. It is currently extending its service offerings to include banking, other financial services, and gift vouchers. The ability of An Post to extend a wide range of government services to all Irish citizens was highlighted in a book by Bill Gates, *Business @ The Speed of Thought* (Penguin Books, 1999). In the chapter "Take the Government to the People," Gates writes: "Government should bring together the agencies involved to develop a single system for handling all transactions. …An Post, the Irish postal service, has done this best."

"In the 10 years since we launched our Riposte-based counter automation system, we have achieved unprecedented volume increases for our counters business," said Eamonn Ryan, managing director of PostTS — An Post Transaction Services. "Within the first four years alone, we went from a predicted 22% decrease in transaction volumes to a 25% *increase*. Escher's technology enabled us to integrate new business offerings such as household bill payments and social welfare payments. Today, our counters network processes over 100 million financial transactions each year worth in excess of €6 billion, making new services a significant source of income for us."

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An Post's new services have been well received by the 1.7 million customers its counters network serves each week. Overall counter transaction volumes in 2002 were up 38% compared to 1992.

In addition to such innovative service offerings as Passport Express and electronic top-up for mobile phones, Riposte allowed An Post to deliver its successful BillPay service, which is now the market leader in Ireland. In 1993, An Post customers could pay seven different bills at the post office, and they conducted a total of 3.2 million bill payment transactions. In 2002, An Post processed over 17.5 million bill payments, and their customers can now pay over 70 different bills at postal outlets throughout the country.

An Post was also a pioneer in terms of its counter workstation setup, as the first postal service in the world to implement touch-screen technology at its counters. The touch-screen functionality and user-friendly interface helped An Post's counter staff — even those with little or no previous computer experience — to quickly learn and feel comfortable with the new workstations. On June 10, 1997, An Post's Riposte-driven counter system was included in the Smithsonian Institution's Permanent Research Collection of Information Technology Innovation at the National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C.

"I would like to personally congratulate An Post's management team on their achievements and acknowledge the innovative ways they have addressed industry challenges to generate new business. As a tribute to our successful 10-year relationship, we will be presenting An Post with a token of our admiration and appreciation," said Michael J. Murphy, president and CEO of Escher Group. "We are proud that An Post chose Escher as a partner in their business transformation process, and we look forward to working with them to achieve new levels of success and innovation in the future."

About Escher Group Limited

Escher Group Limited is a leading provider of peer-to-peer messaging and data management solutions and services. The company offers a business-to-business, XML-based transaction management environment that is used in thousands of locations worldwide. Escher introduced Riposte — its flagship peer-to-peer messaging solution — in 1993, and later extended the product's functionality with support for Internet-based applications when it launched WebRiposte in 2000. Today, the Riposte family of products has established Escher as the market leader in post office counter automation. The company is a proud sponsor of the MIT Media Lab's "Things That Think Consortium," which researches advances in information technologies. In addition to its headquarters in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Escher has offices in Dublin, London, and Singapore.

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