

Commercial launch for multi-firm WAC mobile apps group

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A worker prepares a stand the day before the opening of the 3GSM World congress in Barcelona, on February 13. The Wholesale Applications Community (WAC), set up last year by major international operators to develop a universal platform for mobile applications, was commercially launched in Barcelona Monday.

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WAC chief executive Peters Suh announced the commercial launch of the organisation at the Mobile World Congress in the northern Spanish city of Barcelona.

The aim of the WAC members, 68 companies including AT&T, China

Mobile and Vodafone, is to encourage open standardised technologies which will allow developers to deploy an application across multiple devices and across multiple mobile phone operators.

"With the commercial launch of operator storefronts, handsets and applications, all based on WAC, we can say that WAC is now officially open for business," Suh told a press conference, as he hailed "a new era".

The WAC members aim to provide broadly all the applications; games, videos services which the likes of Apple and Nokia reserve for their own clients.

There has been "a real risk of restriction of freedom and choice for the costumers... We thought that it was important to launch and to create a platform which really allowed interoperatibility," he stressed.

The WAC ranks also include other operators such as Orange and manufacturers such as Ericsson et Samsung, who want to offer "thousands of applications" to consumers while helping simplify the owrk of developers who must currently adapt their services to various platforms and often seek permission to do so.

The announcement came as, elsewhere at the Barcelona conference, Microsoft announced an Internet-friendly revamp of its Windows Phone operating system to help capture new territory in the smartphone wars.

Microsoft chief Steve Ballmer unveiled a series of improvements this year to Windows Phone, which got a major boost last week when it was adopted by leading handpone maker Nokia.

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