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## EU goes on offensive over 112 emergency number

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BRUSSELS, June 3 (Reuters) - All European Union states except Bulgaria have fully introduced the pan-EU 112 emergency phone number but most people don't know they can use it everywhere in the 27-nation bloc, a EU official said on Tuesday.

Since 1991 EU states have to make the call-free 112 number available across all their territory, the aim being that when any of the bloc's 490 million citizens need emergency help, they know what number to call even outside their home state.

EU Telecommunications Commissioner Viviane Reding unveiled a website to inform citizens about the benefits of 112 as they prepare to head off for their summer holidays.

"The main problem is the lack of awareness. Making citizens aware is the responsibility of national administrations. It's not a job well done so far," Reding told a news conference.

A survey showed that just over a fifth of people were aware they could use the 112 number outside their home state while only 41 percent knew it was available in their own country.

Reding dismissed a British newspaper article that said Britain would be forced to give up its 999 emergency services number in favour of 112.

"112 does not replace national emergency numbers. It's an additional number targeted at those travelling to other countries," Reding said.

EU states were also urged to increase the number of languages offered with the 112 number.

Six EU states also failed to ensure that when 112 was called from a mobile phone, the caller's location was immediately shown in order to help the emergency services get there more quickly. (Reporting by Huw Jones, editing by Richard Williams)

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