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### The European Union takes legislative measures to improve location of 112 calls


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**Article by the European Emergency Number Association - EENA.**

After about 2 years of negotiations, it is likely that the European Union will adopt the revised Universal Service Directive before the end of the year. As a Brussels-based NGO, the European Emergency Number Association - EENA - has been active in promoting the right of citizens to receive high-quality service when dialling the EU emergency number 112 and considers the new legislation as a major step towards the implementation of accurate emergency caller-location technology in Europe.

While the former Universal Service Directive ensured many possibilities for EU Member States willing to implement caller-location, the latest compromise between EU Institutions is ambitious and in line with the needs of citizens and emergency services. It now stipulates that location information must be provided as soon as the emergency call gets to the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). This is a revolution in the EU since in several countries the location information is still only available upon request and the delay to obtain it can be as long as one hour, according to official documents. In practice, location information is sometimes obtained only several hours later by the emergency services if they have not implemented appropriate technology and set up an automatic collaboration with telecom operators. This is what happened on July 22nd 2009 in France when a Belgian citizen, Dr. Bivort, contacted the emergency services, but the cellular location information was provided only several hours after the call. Moreover, the location information provided was not very accurate and could only define a 9km range. Rescuers were required to search an enormous area in vain for 2 weeks. Industry experts are confident that appropriate technology could have initially reduced the search field to an area of about 100x100 metres.

For more than 10 years, EENA - and its Advisory Board members involved in LBS - has been raising awareness of public authorities on the consequences of the non-implementation or inappropriate use of accurate location-technology. Highlighting the figures provided by the European Commission, location for 112 calls only in the context of eCall could help save at least 2500 lives and 26 billion EUR annually in the EU. The example presented above is clear: how many human and technical resources had to be coordinated to search for Dr Bivort in a 9km range area? Wouldn't it be better to invest in location technology to simply and cost efficiently facilitate emergency responses and search and rescue?

The EU Institutions seem to have heard EENA's message and decided to upgrade the Universal Service Directive with a reference to the role of the Commission in laying down "criteria for accuracy and reliability of the location information provided". This piece of legislation has been supported and reinforced during the Workshop on 112 organised by EENA last June. Emergency services representatives from 25 European countries invited the Commission to update the CGALIES recommendations and enforce the implementation of the best possible technology.

These major improvements will also facilitate the implementation of the automatic "eCall" service all across Europe and the Commission is ready to take the appropriate legislative action to oblige EU Member States (and their emergency services) to install the appropriate infrastructure to be able to read eCall messages based on E112 and location.

EENA is also helping to address IP-location issues through its NG112 technical committee ([www.ng112.eu](http://www.ng112.eu)) in collaboration with international experts from recognised organisations such as NENA in the U.S. and IETF-ECRIT. While the use of VoIP services are increasing, EENA's objective is to make sure that citizens can have reliable access to emergency services and can be located in a way that will ease the work of emergency responders. This challenge is even greater considering that speech-impaired individuals and many other people with disabilities particularly rely on automatic location to be rescued. The REACH112 project ([www.reach112.eu](http://www.reach112.eu)) that started on July 1st with pilot trials in France, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom is specifically addressing this issue.

Author and contact:

Gary Machado  
 European Emergency Number Association  
 Tel: ☎ +32 (0)2 53 49 789 ☎ and ☎ +32 (0) 498 375 962 ☎  
 Email: [gm@eena.org](mailto:gm@eena.org)  
[www.eena.org](http://www.eena.org)

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