



Abstract EENA Operations Document

112 Accessibility for People with Disabilities

Disability affects 15-20% of every country's population: there are at least 650 million people with disabilities worldwide, while disabled people represent 80 million persons in the European Union. One in four Europeans has a family member with a disability. Disabled people suffer from isolation. Compared to non disabled people, by more than twice, disabled people meet their friends and relatives less than one or two times per month. Isolation and limited options for communication leave those of us with special needs due to a disability, even more vulnerable in emergencies.

97% of Europeans think that something should be done to ensure better integration of people with disabilities into society. All people encountering obstacles in their daily life with a disability simply wish to be heard when calling for help just like their less challenged counterparts.

According to the European Commission, the European emergency number 112, which is used to contact emergency services free of charge all over the EU, is currently not accessible to the majority of disabled people. Only 7 countries were reported to have implemented an accessible 112 for people with disabilities. In 2009, the amended Universal Service Directive invited the Member States to ensure an equivalent access to 112 for all citizens. European countries are now looking into efficient and reliable solutions to comply with EU legislation and improve inclusion of citizens with disabilities.

Attitudes to people with disabilities are changing significantly. From seeing people with disabilities as the passive recipients of charity, society has come to recognise the legitimate demands of disabled people for equal rights, and access to services and opportunities, now facing the challenges in implementing accessibility and removing existing barriers, and improving the availability and choice of assistive technologies.

The objective of this Operations document is to describe main issues related to the accessibility of 112 services for people with disabilities, assemble relevant, currently available information about this issue, outline some of the 'best practices' from system-focused as well as user-focused perspective and inspire further action eradicating barriers in access to crucial, potentially life saving 112 services.