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EU tries to spread the word on 112

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The EU institutions called on national authorities to raise citizens' awareness of 112, the new EU-wide emergency telephone number, at a conference in the European Parliament today (11 February).

Europeans have been able to call the free emergency number since December 2008.

To make the service more effective, the European Commission, together with the European Parliament and the EU Council, stressed the need to "spread the word about 112" among EU citizens and "push national authorities to make the EU's single emergency number more multilingual".

A recent Eurobarometer survey estimated that "only 24% of Europeans are aware that they can call this number for all emergency services across the EU".

The survey also reported that "28% of callers encountered language problems when calling 112 abroad".

Speaking to MEPs at the conference, Information Society and Media Commissioner Vivianne Reding claimed that the "European emergency number should no longer be Europe's best kept secret".

"It is unacceptable that less than a quarter of citizens are aware of 112, or that language barriers prevent travellers calling 112 from communicating with the emergency operator," she declared.

The European Emergency Number Association (EENA) recently expressed concern about the degree to which citizens are informed about "efficient use of 112," insisting that every EU citizen calling the emergency service should get "the appropriate help, as soon as possible, at the place of the emergency".

"It is essential that we educate the general public about the 112 number and its correct use," declared EENA President Olivier Paul-Morandini.

A handful of member states, including Austria, Spain and Estonia, are making an effort to inform citizens about 112 by publicising it on motorways, in train stations and in airports.

"With people becoming increasingly mobile throughout the EU, [raising awareness of 112] is clearly an issue which affects us all," ALDE MEP Diana Wallis (UK) told the conference. "It is about time national authorities and European institutions start raising awareness of it and evaluating how appropriately 112 calls are handled in the member states," she declared.

Wallis accused national governments of "not showing the necessary enthusiasm to take this issue forward". "Indeed, several have even gone to court over the matter rather than making the necessary investments," she lamented.

Links

European Union

- Commission: [112 : the European emergency number](#)
- Commission: [112 in your country](#)
- Commission: [The European Emergency Number 112 Eurobarometer:](#)

NGOs

- European Emergency Number Association (EENA): [112.eu](#)