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Telecoms: EU citizens need to be better informed about Europe's single emergency number 112

Reference: IP/08/198 Date: 11/02/2008

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IP/08/198

Brussels, 11 February 2008

Telecoms: EU citizens need to be better informed about Europe's single emergency number 112

Only 22% of EU citizens could spontaneously identify 112 as the number to call for emergency services anywhere in the EU. A recent EU-wide survey has found that there is significant room for national authorities to better inform their citizens. The Commission is therefore calling on Member States to boost awareness of 112. Since the EU Telecoms Rules entered into force in 2003, 26 of the 27 Member States have made it possible for citizens to call 112 from fixed and mobile phones. An infringement proceeding against Bulgaria for lack of availability of 112 is still pending (see [IP/07/1530](#)). Improving awareness of 112 both inside a country and when going abroad is now the next logical step in ensuring effective implementation of 112, as only informed citizens will be able to make use of 112 in case of accidents. Following a call from the European Parliament in September 2007, the Commission is using today's date, 11 February (11/2), to raise awareness about 112.

"An emergency number that functions effectively across the EU is a pivotal instrument for ensuring the safety of our citizens. Especially for travellers, safety in emergencies is the other side of the coin of the single market and the freedoms it offers. Citizens should be able to call the same emergency number wherever they are or travel in Europe," said Viviane Reding, the EU Telecoms Commissioner. "So far, the Commission has focused its energy on ensuring that 112 is made available in all Member States. Now, the time has come to boost people's awareness of 112 as the single emergency number they need to remember. I therefore call on all Member States to continue their efforts to make 112 a fully reliable service everywhere in Europe and to join in an active promotional campaign for 112"

The results of the survey, which are published today, indicate that 95% of EU citizens agree that having a single emergency number available everywhere in the EU is useful. The proper functioning of 112 was felt to be particularly important for citizens away from their familiar surroundings. For example, people travelling abroad are generally less likely to be able to provide the exact location of the emergency when they call 112 (only 53% could give the exact location compared to more than 80% in their home country).

Survey results also indicate that one in four interviewees had needed to call an emergency number in the past five years. Almost 40% of these calls were made to 112. Of all calls made to emergency numbers, a large majority of respondents said that they got help (81% received an emergency unit, 7% appropriate information and 5% other kind of follow-up). 8% of the respondents who called emergency services experienced difficulties in establishing or maintaining the communication with Polish respondents encountering most difficulties (21%). The survey also found that respondents who called 112 while abroad were less likely to experience language-related problems than those who called other national emergency numbers (28% vs. 12%).

Two out of three respondents to the survey believe that people are at the moment not adequately informed about 112, which is a call for further action by national authorities. Even where people recognise 112 as a national emergency number, only 22% are aware they can call this number for all emergency services, and from anywhere in the EU. The proportion of respondents who received information promoting the European emergency number 112 in the past 12 months ranged from 6% in Denmark and Greece to 56% in the Czech Republic. Citizens in the new Member States were in general better informed.

Finally, 9 out of 10 EU citizens agree that access to emergency services for disabled users should be improved. The Telecoms Reform proposed by the Commission last November (see [IP/07/1677](#)) includes several measures to strengthen the efficiency and availability of 112 as the single European emergency number. The Commission proposes, inter alia, to make 112 more accessible for disabled users. In addition, the new European Electronic Communications Authority would be entrusted with checking annually the effective functioning of 112 in all Member States and giving advice on necessary technical improvements.

Background

When the European emergency number 112 was introduced in 1991, the aim was to provide just one number to call in the case of emergency in all EU Member States, thus rendering emergency services more easily accessible, especially for travellers. Since 1998, EU legislation requires Member States to ensure that all end-users of fixed and mobile services can call the emergency services free of charge using the 112 number. Since 2003, telecoms operators must provide caller location information to the emergency services to allow them to locate and find victims of accidents in time. The EU Member States must also ensure that citizens are kept informed about the existence and purpose of the 112 number.

To ensure the effective implementation of 112, the Commission so far launched infringement proceedings against 14 Member States due to a lack of caller location information. 7 of these cases could be closed since, following corrective measures in the Member States concerned. Caller location information is still not available in Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Romania and Slovakia (see table below).

The Commission is working closely with all Member States to further improve 112 and to make it a really single European Emergency Number. In December 2007, the Commission sent a questionnaire to the Member States to enquire about further important details related to the functioning of 112 (such as access by disabled users and accuracy of caller location information). The Commission intends to publish the results of this enquiry before the summer holidays to give travellers full information about the status of 112 in the EU countries where they wish to travel. The results of the Flash Eurobarometer survey can be found on:

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/policy/ecommm/current/pan_european/index_en.htm

More information on the EU Telecoms Reform:

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/policy/ecommm/index_en.htm

European Parliament initiatives on 112:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/065-10135-246-09-36-911-20070906IPR10134-03-09-2007-2007-true/default_en.htm

Annex 1: Status of 112 implementation

Member State	112 can be called from fixed and mobile phones		Caller Location information is provided for all calls	
Austria	+		+	
Belgium	+		+	(infringement closed in 2007)
Bulgaria	-	(infringement started in 2007)	N/A	
Cyprus	+		+	(infringement closed in 2006)
Czech Republic	+		+	
Germany	+		+	
Denmark	+		+	
Estonia	+		+	
Spain	+		+	
Finland	+		+	
France	+		+	
Greece	+		+	(infringement closed in 2007)
Hungary	+		+	(infringement closed in 2007)
Ireland	+		+	(infringement closed in 2006)
Italy	+		-	(infringement started in 2006)

Lithuania	+		-	(infringement started in 2006)
Luxembourg	+		+	(infringement closed in 2006)
Latvia	+		+	(infringement pending but caller location now available)
Malta	+		+	
Netherlands	+		-	(infringement started in 2006)
Poland	+	(infringement closed in 2005)	-	(infringement started in 2006)
Portugal	+		+	(infringement closed in 2007)
Romania	+		-	(infringement started in 2007)
Sweden	+		+	
Slovenia	+		+	
Slovakia	+		-	(infringement started in 2006)
United Kingdom	+		+	

Annex 2:

[Figures and graphics available in PDF and WORD PROCESSED]