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# Awareness of EU emergency number 112 still lacking

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TO MARK European 112 Day yesterday, the EU has written to member states calling on them to intensify their efforts to raise awareness of Europe's single emergency number 112.

The number is reachable from fixed and mobile phones, free of charge, everywhere in the EU. Since July 2009, citizens using their mobiles while roaming in another EU country receive an SMS with information about 112.

The Commission said that while awareness has increased slightly, three out of four EU citizens still do not know they can call 112 in an emergency to contact the police, fire brigade or medical services, either from home or when travelling in the EU. Having the reflex to dial this 112 lifeline, which now works in all EU countries, could save lives and reduce injuries, Kroes said.

"A single European emergency number only helps if people know about it. On European 112 Day, I call on national authorities to step up and do more to inform their citizens about 112, a number that can save lives."

A recent Eurobarometer survey shows that just a quarter of EU citizens questioned could spontaneously identify 112 as the number to call emergency services anywhere in the EU. This is only one percentage point improvement at EU level since 2009 - up from 24 per cent. In some countries however, citizens are much more aware of 112 as the EU-wide emergency number than last year such as Belgium and Slovakia. However, like last year, in Italy, Greece and the UK less than 10 per cent of citizens know about 112, the lowest awareness levels in the EU. In Cyprus 12 per cent are aware of the number up from ten per cent last year. Three out of four Cypriots also said they were not adequately informed about the 112 number.

In 21 EU countries the European emergency number 112 appears in telephone directories and on emergency vehicles in 20 EU countries. Call centres in 20 EU countries - compared to 9 countries in 2008 - almost instantly give emergency services the location of 112 callers thanks to 'push' or near-instant 'pull' location systems