

[\(EU\) EU/TELECOMMUNICATIONS: 11 February \(11/2\), European emergency telephone number “112” day](#)

*Brussels, 11/02/2008 (Agence Europe) - Only 22% of the inhabitants of the European Union can identify “112” as the emergency telephone numbers which can be used throughout the territory of all 27 member states and two thirds feel that they have not had enough information about 112. This is the conclusion drawn by the Eurobarometer survey published by the European Commission on the occasion of the first “European 112 Day”, this 11 February (11/2). In the light of the results of this survey, the Member States have been called upon to make more efforts to make their citizens aware of the vital importance of dialling this single European emergency number in the case of an accident, throughout the European territory.*

The survey reveals that: 1) 95% of the inhabitants of the EU agree that having a single emergency number available throughout Europe is useful, particularly when travelling in other Member States; 2) one out of every four respondents has had to dial an emergency number in the last five years and 40% of these calls were made to 112. Of all calls made to emergency service numbers, the vast majority of people said they received help (81% obtained help from emergency service). 8% of them, however, had problems communicating with the person on the other end of the telephone; this percentage was the highest among Poles (21%); 3) the proportion of respondents who had received information promoting “112” in the last 12 months ranges between 6% in Denmark and Greece to 56% in the Czech Republic. The inhabitants of the new Member States appear to be the best informed; 4) nine out of every 10 people feel that access to “112” should be improved for the disabled. The results of the survey can be consulted at the following Internet address: *http://ec.europa.eu/information\_society/policy/ecom/pan\_european/index\_en.htm*.

The European Parliament, for its part, has become very involved in the process of the recognition of “112”. Many MEPs took the opportunity provided by the European 112 Day to call for greater awareness of the number to be provided by the Member States to the populations. Many citizens travel and may find themselves in an emergency situation, not knowing what number to dial to get help, stressed Jacek Saryusz-Wolski (EPP-ED, Poland). In Poland, an agreement has been concluded with mobile phone operators to make the services more effective, he said, calling on all Member States to implement similar initiatives. Giovanna Corda (PES, Belgian) spoke of the importance of making children aware of “112” from a very young age and encouraging them to memorise the number. She also levelled criticism at current weaknesses in the process: the lack of multilingualism on the part of the emergency services. A Romanian travelling in France, for example, would struggle to make himself understood in his own language. The provision of the “Universal Service” directive stipulating that Member States must provide an effective and rapid service in case of calls to 112 has been scrupulously implemented in Finland, but this is not the case in other countries and our citizens are far less well protected when they travelled abroad, pointed out Piia-Noora Kauppi (EPP-ED, Finland). Kathy Sinnott (IND/DEM, Ireland), extended the targeted objectives of “112”, which could also be of vital importance for people who have found themselves caught up in trafficking in human beings, with little hope of getting out of an extreme situation: this number must also be used to help people in this situation, she stressed. Finally, Mr Pырros, director of emergency services in Athens, stressed the vital importance of rapid intervention at the site of an accident. We must try to avoid having to bring in a relay, so that people in trouble get help as quickly as possible, which should be an objective of “112”, he stressed. “112”, brought in for the first time in 1991, has been obligatory since 1998. The “Universal Service” directive obliges the Member States to provide emergency services to

people dialling “112” and to advertise this among their citizens. Many Member States are still lagging behind in this: in Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, information on caller location is still not available, the Commission stressed. The Commission has started infringement proceedings against these countries. Before the summer, a major period for foreign travel, the Commission is planning to publish information on “112”, in order to draw the attention of those planning to travel to the importance of memorising this number. (I.L.)