

Support safety, not the gadgets

From Olivier Paul-Morandini

Most Europeans will certainly not buy the new eCall gadget for their cars as reported in the article 'As cars get smarter, roads become safer' (*European Voice*, 9-15 June), not because they do not trust the car industry or because they are not informed but because these gadgets are, for the moment at least, completely useless. For 15-30% of the calls made to 112, the single European emergency call number that will be called automatically by the new gadgets, ambulances, fire fighters and policemen never arrive. This was the conclusion of the CGALIES group in 2002 and of the evaluation of the 112 service-chain in Portugal in 2003. Other countries (Spain, Italy and Greece) refused to evaluate the performances of their 112 service-chain because the results

Photograph: Reuters



Great gadgets? For 15-30% of calls to the EU-wide 112 number, emergency rescue never arrives

would have been devastating.

Swedes, Dutch, Brits and Finns can buy the new gadgets, but they should know that they would function only in their own

countries. Until the EU establishes common quality criteria for emergency services in Europe (including a minimum response time), eCall gadgets will give a false feeling of security and may even cause more deaths than they are supposed to prevent, because people will die waiting for the ambulance which will never come.

The European Emergency Number Association has been actively working for the improvement of the 112 service-chain but the Commission seems inclined to support the industry's new gadgets rather than the citizens' concerns about safety. 14 years after the establishment of the 112 in the EU this is unacceptable.

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