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## EU emergency number nearly unknown

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Europe's single emergency phone number has made virtually no impact in the UK, a new survey shows.

Only 6% of Britons even know the number - 112 - exists at all. In fact, 112 has been an EU-wide emergency number to call since it was introduced in 1991 with the aim of reinforcing the European single market by offering just one number in case of emergency in any of the member states.

In 1998 it became law across the EU to ensure the number was available free of charge to all users of fixed and mobile phones.

The survey shows the UK remains wedded to 999 as the number to dial if in trouble.

The 6% aware of the 112 number is a lower proportion of recognition than anywhere else except Greece. The highest recognition factor, in Poland, is only 56%.

Across the EU, an average of just 22% of citizens could name the number as the one to call in emergency.

The European Commission admitted hopes of establishing the number as Europe's unique emergency number are over.

In some member states 112 has become the main national emergency number - Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden. For most others, national authorities have refused to ditch their internally-recognised emergency number, adding 112 merely as an option.

In the UK, the figures show, it is an option unlikely to be taken up, but the commission insisted it would be best if citizens in 27 member states all used 112.

"An emergency number that functions effectively across the EU is a pivotal instrument for ensuring the safety of our citizens," said EU Telecoms Commissioner Vivian Reding.