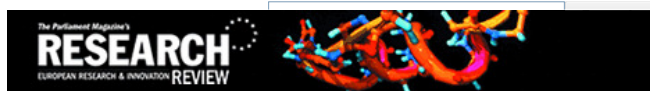


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MEPs call for increased awareness of EU emergency number

MEPs have joined forces in a fresh attempt to promote European emergency number 112.

Less than one in four EU citizens know about the number - and this falls to one in 20 in the UK, Italy and Greece.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the European emergency number association (EENA), set up to promote 112, and several MEPs have thrown their weight behind a new campaign designed to raise awareness.

They include Polish centre-right MEP Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, who told this website he thinks all candidates standing in the upcoming European elections should include a reference to 112 in their campaign material.

Speaking at an awards ceremony on Tuesday organised by EENA, he said, "The number clearly needs promoting and this would be one way of doing so."

The annual event honours those groups and individuals in Europe who have tried to raise awareness of 112.

ALDE deputy Diana Wallis - who in 2007 initiated a written declaration calling for improved implementation of the number - also gave her support to the campaign.

The declaration attracted the highest ever number of signatures in the history of parliament, gathering cross-party support from over 500 MEPs.

Wallis said, "The declaration I initiated achieved historic support amongst fellow MEPs.

"The commission has understood this and has included 112 in several recent initiatives but member states are still not showing the necessary enthusiasm to take this issue forward.

"Indeed several have even gone to court over the matter rather than making the necessary investments."

She added, "The number was introduced across the EU over 15 years ago, so it is about time national authorities and European institutions start raising awareness of it, and evaluating how appropriately 112 calls are handled in the member states.

"With people becoming increasingly mobile throughout the EU, this is clearly an issue which affects us all. The figures revealed by the latest research are worrying to say the least."

She said the 112 number does not replace national emergency numbers such as the UK's 999.

Only three member states, Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden, use only 112 rather than their own national emergency number.

French Green MEP Gerard Onesta said, "An estimated 5,000 lives a year could be saved in Europe if more people knew about 112.

"We need a big information campaign to raise public awareness."

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Wed 11th Feb 2009

Martin Banks

"An estimated 5,000 lives a year could be saved in Europe if more people knew about 112"

Gerard Onesta

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