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## EU promotes awareness of single emergency number

BRUSSELS, Feb. 11 (Xinhua) -- The European Union (EU) on Wednesday declared Feb. 11 "European 112 Day" to raise awareness of its single emergency number and push its member states to make it operational in even more languages.

Since December 2008, EU citizens can contact emergency services from anywhere in the EU by dialing 112 free of charge. But only a quarter of them know that this number exists in other member states and almost three in 10 callers in other countries have encountered language problems.

"The European emergency number should no longer be Europe's best kept secret. We have a single emergency number, 112, that works for every emergency and every member state and every citizen that needs it. But it is unacceptable that less than a quarter of the citizens are aware of 112, or that language barriers prevent travelers calling 112 from communicating with the emergency operator," EU Telecoms Commissioner Viviane Reding said.

"The EU must work to guarantee the safety of our 500 million citizens with the same intensity as we have worked to guarantee their ability to travel freely across the borders of 27 countries. Europe's first 112 day should act as a wake-up call to national authorities who need to improve the number of languages available in their 112 emergency centers and boost awareness about this life-saving number," she said.

An EU-wide survey conducted for the European Commission shows that 94 percent of EU citizens think it is useful to have a single emergency number available in the EU. The survey, whose results were published on Wednesday, also shows that a quarter of EU citizens have called 112 in the last five years.

But only 24 percent of the respondents could spontaneously identify 112 as the number on which they can call emergency services anywhere in the EU. The percentage was only 3 percent in Italy.

Some 28 percent of callers had language problems when they called 112 while abroad, although 21 member states claim their emergency centers are able to handle 112 calls in English.