

E-4848/06 10 November 2006

WRITTEN QUESTION by Dimitrios Papadimoulis (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

Subject: Emergency calls on 112 Answer(s)

The Commission has announced in press release IP/05/1239 that 'The single European emergency telephone number can now be called from any telephone, fixed or mobile, across the EU 25, but in practice, the 112 number is not working as well as it should.'

Given that Greece is one of the most frequent tourist destinations for other Member States' citizens, will the Commission say whether it is satisfied with the operation of 112 in Greece? Does it consider that Greece has made available the necessary resources to handle sufficient languages? Has the necessary technology been installed to enable callers from mobile telephones to be traced geographically? What is the Commission's view of the information campaign carried out to familiarise the Greek public with this service?

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Answer given by Mrs Reding on behalf of the Commission

The Commission is aware of the current state of implementation of caller location information to the 112 number in Greece. Caller location information to emergency authorities for all calls is not yet available in Greece (see Press Release IP/06/464). For this reason, the Commission has taken action against Greece by opening infringement proceedings for the incorrect application of the Universal Service Directive(1) and in particular its Article 26(3). This provision stipulates that 'Member States shall ensure that undertakings which operate telephone networks make caller location information available to authorities handling emergencies, to the extent technically feasible, for all calls to the single European emergency call number 112'. The decision to send a letter of formal notice was taken by the Commission on 4 April 2006. On the 12 October 2006, the Commission decided to send a reasoned opinion to Greece. Greece has to comply with the reasoned opinion within two months upon receipt of the opinion.

Regarding languages, the information available to the Commission suggests that the emergency services can answer calls to 112 in three languages, namely, Greek, English, and French. On this issue of language handling by the 112 services, the conferences organised by the Commission in 2005-06 on 112 and the eCall initiatives revealed that successful experiments have been carried out in some EU Member states regarding their public safety answering points (PSAPs), which process 112 calls. The language barriers have been resolved by rerouting the calls to other PSAPs that have the necessary language skills, where the problems could be understood more quickly and necessary emergency service actions defined. The authorities in Greece and other Member States could borrow from this example.

A public awareness campaign was conducted when the service was introduced, mainly through TV and newspapers. Regarding the technology installed on mobile phones, while the Commission understands that a solution in the short term for mobile operators in Greece would be the 'pull' (on-demand) method of caller location at cell identification (ID) level, it has as yet no information on whether this solution is effectively in place.

According to the information available, citizens are informed about the existence and use of 112 via notices in payphones and in phone books. Information on this service is also included in leaflets of main points of entry into Greece (airports, ports, and station trains) as well as in travel agents' magazines and hoteliers' associations' leaflets. A recent household study on electronic communication undertaken by Eurobarometer and published in January 2006 reported on the public awareness of the European single emergency number in the EU<sup>25</sup>. Respondents were asked to identify the single European emergency number that could be called from any Member State. Public awareness of the 112 number in Greece scored the lowest figure of 7 %, compared with the EU<sup>25</sup> average of 35 %. In view of that, additional campaign actions on 112 services in Greece would be welcomed.

(1) Directive 2002/22/EC of the Parliament and of the Council of 7 March 2002 on universal service and users' rights relating to electronic communications networks and services, OJ L 108, 24.4.2002.