

E-2192/07 24 April 2007

WRITTEN QUESTION by Kader Arif (PSE) to the Commission

Subject: Single European emergency number — 112 Answer(s)

In its latest report entitled 'European electronic communications regulation and markets 2006' (12th report), the Commission states with reference to emergency number 112 that 'while the availability and quality of the basic service now appear to be ensured quite widely, the Commission's powers in this regard are limited under the current framework. Any improvement will depend on strong support in particular from the co-legislators in the regulatory review process'.

Will the Commission state how it measures the 'availability' and 'quality' of the service, and according to what criteria and methodology the phrase 'ensured quite widely' is defined? Will the Commission also state what improvements the report refers to? Finally, when will the Commission propose these improvements to the co-legislators, given that the Commission alone holds the right to initiate the legislative procedure?

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Answer given by Mrs Reding
on behalf of the Commission
(11.06.2007)

In its latest report on 'European electronic communications regulation and markets 2006 (12th Report)¹, the Commission refers to the fact that, in relation to the implementation of the 112 emergency number, the provision of caller location information remains a problem, and that it had opened proceedings against 13 Member States. The Commission can confirm that, of the ten proceedings that remain open, five have recently been referred to the Court of Justice². In its report the Commission also draws the broad conclusion that the availability and quality of the basic service now appear to be ensured quite widely. A more detailed analysis of the situation is set out in the Annex to the Report in the form of a Commission services' working document³.

As regards the availability of the basic service, that is, the ability of subscribers to call 112 free of charge from fixed and mobile networks in each Member State, the Commission has examined the national implementing provisions and their practical application carefully, and finds that the number is available free of charge from all networks in the twenty five Member States at the reference date of the report, that is, December 2006. The Commission is verifying the situation in the two new Member States, Bulgaria and Romania.

As regards the quality of the basic service, the Commission believes that this is on a par with that of the national emergency numbers. Indeed, the Commission has received no complaints indicating that there is a difference in treatment as between 112 and the national emergency number in any Member State. It should be noted in this connection that three Member States⁴ have designated 112 as their sole emergency number.

The Commission reiterates that it has no powers to ensure the harmonisation of the quality of the responses to emergency calls provided by the various national emergency services, which remains a competence of the Member States.

¹ COM(2007) 155 final

² The Member States concerned are Italy, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Portugal and Slovakia

³ SEC(2007) 403

⁴ Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands

Finally, the Commission will bring forward proposals relating to possible amendments to the Universal Service Directive⁵, Article 26 of which provides the legal basis for 112, once the consultation and other procedures for adoption have been completed in accordance with the Treaty and of the principles of better regulation. Specific proposals concerning access to 112 were outlined in the Staff Working Document⁶ that complemented the Communication on the Review of the EU Regulatory Framework for electronic communications⁷ adopted in June 2006.

⁵ Directive 2002/22/EC of the Parliament and of the Council of 7 March 2002 on universal service and users' rights relating to electronic communication networks and services, OJ L 108, 24.4.2002

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/policy/ecomms/doc/info_centre/public_consult/review/staffworking_document_final.pdf

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/policy/ecomms/doc/info_centre/communic_reports/review/po_com_2006_334_reexam_ecomm_en_acte1_clean.pdf