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European Union Brussels calls capitals into line over pan-EU emergency number awareness 03/06 19:41 CET

In an emergency, throughout the EU, telephone 112. Not enough Europeans know it, but this will put them in touch with police, fire or ambulance services. Because it is so little known, Brussels is sounding a wake-up call.

Coinciding with increased travel coming up for the summer, EU Commissioner Viviane Reding blamed national authorities: "Making citizens aware is the responsibility of the national administrations. I must say it is not a job well done so far. Because on average only 22% of people are aware they can use 112 outside their home country."

Reding also unveiled a website to inform people. It is in English but they are working on other languages. Whether the telephone operators are multilingual is another hurdle. All the EU states except Bulgaria have fully introduced the pan-EU 112 emergency phone number. It does not replace national emergency numbers. But it gives people travelling to other countries the security of knowing there is that one number they can use anywhere.

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