

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1411/08
by Kathy Sinnott (IND/DEM)
to the Commission

Subject: European emergency number 112

I am not entirely satisfied with the Commission's reply to my Written Question P-0172/08. That reply, dated 13 February 2008, stated that 'the most recent e-Communications Household Surveys published in 2006 and 2007' show that 'as far as EU-wide knowledge of "112" is concerned on average 40% of EU citizens at that time identified "112" as the number to call in case of emergency outside their Member State, as compared to 35% almost one year earlier'.

However, on 11 February 2008, on the basis of a special flash Eurobarometer dedicated exclusively to the European emergency number 112, the Commission stated that 'only 22% of EU citizens could spontaneously identify "112" as the number to call for emergency services anywhere in the EU' (IP/08/198 of 11 February 2008). This finding, which is more consistent with the outcome of the 2000 survey (i.e. that only 19.2 % would have called 112 in an emergency in another EU country), shows beyond doubt that the findings of the e-Communications Household Surveys were biased and not trustworthy.

Can the Commission give a credible explanation for the discrepancies described above? What measures will the Commission take to ensure unbiased measurements of knowledge of the 112 emergency number in the future? Will the Commission conduct an investigation to establish the source of the misspelled questions and attribute responsibility?

E-1411/08EN
Answer given by Ms Reding
on behalf of the Commission
(17.4.2008)

The Honourable Member rightly points out the Flash Eurobarometer survey on 112¹ of 2008 showed that only 22% of EU citizens could spontaneously identify 112 as the number to call for emergency services anywhere in the EU. On the other hand, the Special Eurobarometer surveys ('e-Communications Household Surveys') published in 2006 and 2007 showed that 35% and 40% of respondents could respectively identify 112 as the number to call in case of emergency in the EU from a fixed or a mobile phone².

The results of the Flash Eurobarometer survey conducted mainly over the phone, which measured spontaneous awareness of 112, do differ from the results concerning the passive knowledge about 112 obtained previously in the Special Eurobarometer surveys of 2006 and 2007, which were conducted by means of face to face interviews. However, these discrepancies can be accounted for by the differences in the wording of the survey question, the questionnaire context and the different interview method used in the two types of survey. It should not be concluded that the results of any of these surveys is biased or not trustworthy. On the contrary, these two studies should therefore be considered as different in their essence and complementary in their objectives.

It should be remembered that at the time of the preparation of the reply to the previous written question P-0172/08³ from the Honourable Member, the results of the Flash Eurobarometer survey were not yet available.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/policy/ecomms/doc/current/executivesummary.pdf

² Please note that the figure for 2006 refers to EU25, whilst the figure for 2007 refers to EU27.

³ OJ C...