

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0172/08  
by Kathy Sinnott (IND/DEM)  
to the Commission

Subject: European emergency call number '112'

In the 2000 Eurobarometer survey on knowledge of the 112, the question was 'Imagine you are on a trip to another country of the European Union and you have an emergency (an accident, you are attacked, a fire). Which telephone number would you call for help?' In the 2006 and 2007 Eurobarometer Surveys, instead of a single straightforward question identical to the above, two questions were asked as follows: QB37. 'Can you tell me the number of emergency services, for example in case someone would urgently need medical assistance? (Answer: 112 in national context)' and QB38. 'Can you tell me what single telephone number enables you to call emergency services anywhere in the European Union, from a fixed or a mobile phone? (Answer: 112)'.

However,

1. 112 is already used as one of the national emergency numbers in several EU countries such as Italy, Estonia, Slovenia, Germany, Portugal or as the single national number in others, for example Sweden, the Netherlands, Finland, Spain;
2. 112 is known to be the emergency call number to use with a mobile phone.

Does the Commission consider the results of the 2006 and 2007 surveys unbiased and comparable with the ones of the 2000 survey?

How is the Commission planning to avoid 'guiding the responder' and evaluate the real knowledge about the existence and use of the 112 as provided for in Article 26.4 of the Universal Service Directive 2002/22/EC and requested in Written Declaration 0044/2007 of the European Parliament?

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P-0172/08EN

Answer given by Ms Reding  
on behalf of the Commission  
(13.2.2008)

The most recent e-Communications Household Surveys published in 2006 and 2007 have included two questions on 112 awareness: one related to the use of '112' in a national context (QB37: Can you tell me the number of emergency services, for example in case someone would urgently need medical assistance) and another related to the use of '112' in a European context (QB38: Can you tell me what single telephone number enables you to call emergency services anywhere in the European Union, from a fixed or a mobile phone). Although the wording of the questions is different, the Commission considers that replies to question QB38 are comparable to replies to the question included in the Eurobarometer Survey of 2000, which referred to an emergency situation during a trip to another EU country, allowing the Commission to follow the trend. Moreover, the wording of questions QB37 and QB38 in the most recent surveys does not guide the interviewee towards a specific answer. It is worth noting that the possible replies to these questions are not read out and that multiple answers are permitted. Therefore the respondent can refer to different emergency numbers according to his knowledge.

On the contrary, the existence of questions QB37 and QB38 permits the differentiation between '112' awareness in a national and in a European context, therefore providing a clearer picture of the awareness of '112' across Europe. This is important in view of the different national situations in relation to '112' implementation ('112' used before its introduction as the single European emergency number in 1991<sup>1</sup>, '112' used as the sole national emergency number) and to other related issues

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<sup>1</sup> 91/396/EEC: 91/396/EEC: Council Decision of 29 July 1991 on the introduction of a single European emergency call number, OJ L 217, 6.8.1991.

(promotion of use of '112' in a national and/or European context), which might have an impact on '112' awareness in a European context.

For example, according to the most recent published data<sup>1</sup>, in Finland 93% of respondents replied that they would call '112' in case of emergency in their home country, but only 52% will do so when they are abroad anywhere else in the EU. In Ireland, 13% of respondents would call '112' in a national context compared to 30% in a European context. As far as EU wide knowledge of '112' is concerned, it showed that 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.

With regard to Parliament's Written Declaration 0044/2007, the Commission envisages taking specific action in close cooperation with Parliament and the Member States, in particular, with a view to raising citizens' awareness of the European emergency number '112'.

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<sup>1</sup> e-Communications Household Survey (April 2007).