

# NEWS

## 11/02/08 - Kathy Sinnott MEP hosts press conference to mark 1st European 112 Day



Photo: Kathy Sinnott, MEP

Kathy Sinnott, Irish Ind/Dem MEP, today hosted a press conference to celebrate the first European 112 day.

In Europe there is a campaign to establish an EU wide number-112. 112 is compatible with all phone systems. The idea is to have a European call centre which can accommodate all the European languages plus others like Mandarin, Philipino and Russian. When someone dials 112 in an emergency from somewhere in Europe, the exchange can identify the location of the nearest emergency response system. If the caller's language is different from that of the working language of the response system then the 112 call centre can provide translation.

Today, 11th February, marks the first edition of the European 112 Day with the aims of making sure that Europeans are informed on the European emergency number 112 and that calls to this number need to be appropriately handled.

Speaking in Brussels this morning, Mrs. Sinnott said "I congratulate those who have been working so hard for the past 17 years to promote 112. In Ireland, the emergency number is 999, but does an Italian who would be used to dialling 113 for police, fire and ambulance or 118 for medical emergencies know to ring 999? This is where awareness of 112 comes into play."

During the press conference, Kathy Sinnott outlined a number of important points. "Last year, I wrote a report for the European Parliament on protection against injury and promotion of safety. What I learned while researching this report is that people are most in danger of injury during times of leisure and especially on holiday. For example a Hungarian tourist breaks his leg hill walking in West Cork. He can free phone 112, speak to someone in Hungarian who will put the call through 999 to reach Bandon Garda Station and translate for the on duty Garda. If we were to develop this technology further, translation from 112 could remain available to the tourist when he reaches hospital."

"Another point I would like to mention is the use of 112 and trafficking. With this very simple number, people who are brought into a country for trafficking, if they were able to get even a moment alone with a telephone, could dial 112, speak to somebody in their own language and get help."

In the 2005 Eurobarometer, an average of approximately 40% of Europeans were aware of the single European emergency number. However in figures just released today, that figure has decreased to 22%. Different wording of questions in the survey have indicated this lower awareness of the number.

Concluded Mrs. Sinnott, "This is a real tool which could be very effective, especially in today's multi-cultural society. Sadly, only 27% of Irish people are aware of 112. The Irish government have a legal responsibility to promote awareness and use of 112 through the 2002 Directive on universal service and

user's rights relating to electronic communications networks and services. I call on our government to put this Directive into practice and start saving lives."

Kathy Sinnott can be linked to further rescue and protection projects in Ireland. The Munster MEP has had the privilege to be involved from the early days in the establishment of the Irish Air Ambulance. Kathy also pressed for a project to find out if we in Europe were any more ready to save disabled and elderly people in cases of disaster. She then brought the "Rescuing Disabled Persons in Case of Disaster" project to Ireland through the disability organisation Hope Project, of which she is chair. The result of the research was that Ireland is not prepared to rescue our more vulnerable citizens. Similar conclusions were drawn for the other countries in the project -Slovenia, Spain, Italy and Hungry. The results were drawn up into recommendations in the form of the Verona Charter. The second project running right now is a sequel to the first and focuses Flooding and the Safety of Disabled People and is currently being carried out on the river basin around Clonmel.

Note to Editor:

- The new 2008 Eurobarometer study is available on request.
- Further information on the Rescuing Disabled Persons in Case of Disasters Project, the Verona Charter and the sequel Flooding project is available.
- Further information on 112 is also available.

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