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MEPs to help raise profile of 112 emergency number

MEPs have joined forces with representatives from the telecoms industry in a new bid to promote the little-known 112 emergency number.

As well as raising public awareness of the EU-wide number, they want to improve the service.

Seventeen years after the creation of the emergency number by the EU, a new Eurobarometer survey reports that 78 per cent of Europeans remain unaware of the 3 digit number that, potentially, can save their lives.

ALDE deputy Diana Wallis admits that she did not know about the number 112 until relatively recently.

"We need a large publicity campaign to make sure that all Europeans know this number," she added.

Olivier Paul-Morandini, founder of the European Emergency Number Association (EENA), explained where the service can still be improved.

He said, "Our whole emergency communications and response service today is facing great challenges.

"Caller-location is still not available to several emergency services, multilingual calls are not appropriately handled, and the number of false calls to 112 remains very high due to the lack of education campaigns.

He was speaking ahead of an event in Brussels next week at which EENA will announce awards to those groups or individuals which are deemed to have done most to promote the number.

Wallis, who has joined the EENA advisory board, said, "With these awards, we want to highlight some great initiatives undertaken throughout the EU that will help to raise the awareness to those authorities which have not yet fully engaged in improving their 112 service.

"The participation of EU commissioner Viviane Reding in this event also shows the positive will of the commission to promote good practices in this field," she concluded.

EENA intends to promote 112 by launching a Europe-wide 'community education' project and improve recognition of and response to 112 calls through a 112 'excellence centre' initiative.

"Support from the European parliament to improve the 112 service has provided us with a great opportunity to gather all actors that that can contribute to its improvement," said

Thu 29th May 2008
Martin Banks

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