



112 and emergency services

Input to the Own-Initiative Report on Universal Service and 112

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About EENA

EENA, the European Emergency Number Association, is a Brussels-based NGO set up in 1999 dedicated to promoting high-quality emergency services reached by the number 112 throughout the EU. EENA serves as a discussion platform for emergency services, public authorities, decision makers, associations and solution providers in view of improving emergency response in accordance with citizens' requirements. EENA is also promoting the establishment of an efficient system for alerting citizens about imminent or developing emergencies. The EENA memberships include 480 emergency services representatives from 39 European countries, 30 solution providers, 9 international associations/organisations as well as 26 Members of the European Parliament.

About 112

- Created in 1991 (council decision)
- Common EU emergency number (in parallel with national numbers but unique in some countries)
- Implemented in all EU countries + EEA
- Works 24/7
- Access to Fire, ambulance and police

112 in practice

- 112 is not managed by a supranational organisation but by each Member State
- 112 does not intend to replace national emergency numbers
- 112 is a service for all citizens, not only for travellers
- 112 functions only in all EU Member States
- 112 functions from mobile phones, fix phones and some VoIP
- 112 does not dictate how emergency services should be organised

Obligations pertaining to 112 in the Universal Service Directive

- Information of citizens
- Free of charge access to be ensured for all
- 112 to be handled as well as other emergency numbers
- Obligation to provide caller-location information
- Accessibility for people with disabilities

112 as perceived by citizens

112 is perceived by the EU institutions as a mean to provide access to emergency services all over Europe. 95% of EU citizens agree about the usefulness of having an emergency number available anywhere in the EU. However, from a citizen's point of view, 112 is not used only to access Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) but rather to get prompt and appropriate help and care from emergency services when in distress (accident, injuries, threats, etc...). For instance, citizens do not call 112 to speak with a 112 operator but to get an ambulance and the related care at the place of incident as quick as possible. Therefore, EU citizens consider 112 as a service from which they expect a certain quality. This is why the EENA regularly receives complaints pertaining to the quality of the service provided after dialling 112.



IMPROVING THE 112 SERVICE

Introduction

The purpose of EENA's contribution is the improvement of the 112 service in the European Union. In this context, two major aspects can be highlighted:

1. The telecoms access component: This is regulated by the EU in the Universal Service Directive. On this issue, a great deal of work has been done and the legislation has been regularly adapted. However, there is still room for improvements detailed below. It should be noted that, although an improvement of the telecoms access to 112 is necessary, the quality of the 112 service is still largely dependent on other issues (cooperation between PSAPs and emergency response organisations, training of first responders, resources available, etc...)
2. The emergency services component: This has been considered out of the scope of the EU regulation. However, the perception of the quality of the 112 service is a consequence of the functioning of emergency services. In other words, citizens expect a prompt and appropriate intervention after dialling 112. The EENA believes that this concern is fundamental to any improvement of the 112 service and that decision-making at EU level should not anymore ignore this fact. While respecting the subsidiarity principle and the different cultures and organisational models of national emergency services, the EU should consider seriously extending the legal basis of the 112 by considering the Charter of Fundamental Rights mainly articles 2 (Right to life), 3 (Right to the integrity of the person), 6 (Right to liberty and security), 26 (Integration of persons with disabilities) and 35 (Right to health care) as well as article 168 TFEU (public health) in order to ensure the quality of services offered to citizens.

Policy context

112 should be considered as a service to European Citizens. It is important in the framework of :

1. Health Policy - on the basis of statistical data available from the EU¹ for the EU-27, injuries are the fourth most common cause of death in the EU (they cause 252.000 deaths, 7 million hospital admissions and 3 million permanent handicaps every year), while in children, adolescents and young adults, injuries due to accidents and violence are the leading cause of death. According to WHO² data cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, which often also require the use of emergency medical services (ambulances) available through 112 are respectively the first and third cause of death in the EU.
2. Security and safety - Data available by insurance companies³ show that fire is currently costing countries of the EU approximately 1% of their GDP, something that shows the importance of the timely intervention of fire-fighting services, available through 112. 15% of citizens in the EU have been victims of at least one crime in 2004⁴, and would have required help by calling the police available through the 112.
3. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union especially concerning the implementation of articles 2 (Right to life), 3 (Right to the integrity of the person), 6 (Right to liberty and security), 26 (Integration of persons with disabilities), 35 (Right to health care).

¹ Injuries in the European Union - Statistics Summary 2005-2007 see https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/idb/documents/2009-IDB-Report_screen.pdf

² Global Burden of Disease see http://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/en/index.html

³ World Fire Statistics Newsletter, see http://www.genevaassociation.org/Affiliated_Organizations/WFSC.aspx

⁴ The Burden of Crime in the EU http://www.europeansafetyobservatory.eu/downloads/EUICS_The_Burden_of_Crime_in_the_EU.pdf



Telecoms access component

Many accomplishments have been achieved but there is room for improvement in the following areas:

1. Awareness of citizens about the existence and use of 112 (unknown to 74% of Europeans⁵), also in view of the reduction of the numerous false calls.
2. Prompt transmission of caller-location information to the emergency services. Today, a large number of emergency services do not receive any type of automatic location information or receive it too late (may require several hours in some countries⁶) while this information is available at the network providers. The accuracy and reliability of the information provided should largely be improved, as indicated by EENA in its Position Paper on Caller Location⁷. Moreover, 112 centres in some Member States are not provided with caller location information in case of roaming.
3. Ensure better accessibility for people with disabilities (actually only seven countries ensure access⁸).
4. Ensure deployment of the eCall service (cars connected to 112 in case of an accident) which has been postponed several times.
5. Ensure interoperability with the 116 numbers of social value that are also regulated by the Universal Service Directive.
6. Support the recognition of Next Generation 112 standards and its testing (with financial support). This includes VoIP access to 112 and the possibility for EU Emergency Services to receive more data (text, video, pictures, medical files of injured people, sensors' data, etc...) thanks to widespread internet access from fix and mobile devices. This is included in the EU Budget 2009, 2010 and 2011 following a proposal from the European Parliament.
7. Standards to enable the establishment of a pan-European, multilingual, accessible and efficient reverse 112 system for alerting citizens about imminent or developing emergencies (already provided in several existing directives⁹, repeatedly requested by the European Parliament (see Written declaration 0100/2007, the EP reports on the Civil Protection Mechanism and the Civil Protection Financial Instrument¹⁰, as well as numerous resolutions¹¹).

Additional problems have also been identified:

1. Absence of Key Performance Indicators pertaining to the access to 112. This means that Member States are still unable to compare the quality of the access to 112 on the basis of commonly agreed indicators (network connection time, pick-up time, accuracy of location information, etc...)
2. Absence of EU guidelines/recommendations (and financing) to modernise 112 systems and call centres. Emergency services representatives from countries that have joined the EU during the last 10 years regularly reported to EENA that official EU information and guidelines on the implementation of a qualitative access to 112 was clearly lacking.
3. There are not enough opportunities provided at EU level to foster sharing of best practices between 112 authorities. The creation of a permanent platform with the necessary financing to enable constant sharing of information and progress on EU performance indicators is necessary.

⁵ Annual Eurobarometer surveys about the knowledge of the 112 in the EU (for the 2011 survey see http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/112/docs/report_2011.pdf)

⁶ COCOM10-09 REV1 της 16.3.2010 (DG INFSO/B2)

⁷ http://www.eena.org/ressource/static/files/EEINALocationPositionPaper_withsupport.pdf

⁸ www.tiresias.org/cost219ter/vision_action/timmers.ppt

⁹ See for example: Directive on the Safety and health signs at work (92/58/EEC); Directive on Major chemical installations (96/82/EC; Seveso Directive); Directive on Radiological Emergencies (89/618/Euratom); Authorization Directive (2002/20/EC); Directive on the assessment and management of floods (2007/60/EC); directives dealing with the transport of dangerous goods; Directive (2008/114/EC) on European Critical Infrastructure.

¹⁰ Doc. A6-0286/2006, adopted on 24.10.2006 and A6-0027/2006 adopted on 14.3.2006.

¹¹ See for example resolutions A5-0381/2000 (Priorities in EU road safety); A6-0390/2006 (Management of Terrorism); A6-0286/2006 (Community civil protection mechanism); A6-0149/2006 (Natural Disasters); A6-0027/2006 (Rapid response and preparedness instrument for major emergencies); P6_TA(2005)0334 (Natural disasters - fires and floods); P6_TA(2005)0006 (Tidal wave in the Indian Ocean), P6_TA(2008)0304 (Stepping up the Union's disaster response capacity), P6_TA(2006)0584 (Prevention, Preparedness and Consequence Management of Terrorism).



4. There is no framework for the interconnection between European 112 services providing for real time interaction with other EU emergency services (e.g. forwarding calls to other countries – border areas, multilingualism). While many emergency services receive frequent calls from citizens reporting an incident in another EU country, there are currently no possibilities to enable a 112 centre from *country X* to contact an emergency centre in *country Y* (besides an initiative by the EENA that does not intend to replace an official interconnection). This means that in most cases, interventions can't be done and citizens can't be rescued.

Emergency services component

Actions are needed in the following areas:

1. Definition of Key Performance Indicators at EU Level pertaining to the quality of the 112 service as perceived by citizens: Today, emergency services are not provided with EU performance indicators pertaining to the quality of service. These indicators could answer the following set of questions, non-exhaustive: how long should an emergency call last? How should emergency calls be transferred? What could be a reasonable time for an intervention considering the area of operations of emergency services (urban, sub-urban, rural, etc...)? What would be the target in terms of cardiac arrest survival rates? Such indicators could be defined at EU level while the implementations of the strategies to reach the maximum level of service would be defined by Member States. This would ultimately drive up the quality of service.
2. The independent evaluation of the service from the point of view of the user: There is currently no independent evaluation of the 112 service although this has been requested by the European Parliament in the Written Declaration 0044/2007 on 112 supported by 530 Members of the European Parliament. The only independent study using EU financing was conducted in Portugal in 2003. It highlighted the shortcomings to the service and led to a global reform of Portuguese emergency calling system. The Portuguese 112 service was awarded the prize for "Outstanding National 112 system" in 2010. Meanwhile, PSAPs are lacking such an evaluation since there are cases where they can't ensure the quality of service and the time of intervention. In a large number of Member States, PSAPs are independent from emergency response organisations (Fire, Police, Ambulance, etc...). Their role is to handle the 112 call and pass on the information to the emergency response organisations. There are cases reported in several EU countries where emergency vehicles were not dispatched although both the citizens calling and the 112 call centres requested them. In this context, only an independent evaluation of the service can confront all involved stakeholders with the actual status of the functioning of emergency services in their countries.

Reasons for EU actions

1. Stop serving as an excuse for the inaction of some Member States: Too often, the lack of ambition of the EU regulation is used as an excuse by some Member States to reach only a minimum level of expectations. Some European countries that are not EU members have shown more ambition, for instance on the issue of caller location accuracy and reliability. In some cases, the lack of ambition of the EU policy prevents, in practice, national authorities from setting up higher mandatory requirements, when these involve network operators for instance.
2. Be proactive while respecting subsidiarity/proportionality: EU level initiatives will drive the improvement of the 112 service without looking into matters under national competence. The EU initiatives should set up targets while never mandating any reorganisation of national emergency services. In practice, an EU level definition of key performance indicators on the entire service as perceived by the citizens would never oblige Member States to change their emergency numbering policy, to change the number of PSAPs involved, etc... Such initiatives would only aim at ensuring an identical quality of the service across the EU.
3. Improve EU's image as really serving its citizens: Too many citizens calling 112 today consider that any failure of the 112 service is under the responsibility of the EU, while in practice the service is managed by Member States. In this context, any issue occurring in the context of a 112 call affects the EU's image and the trust of EU citizens in the capacity of the EU to really serve its citizens.