

## Exchange of best practices Calling PSAPs from abroad

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*Please note that this document is shared only with members of EENA's network of emergency services staff. Should you like to receive more information on how the possibility to contact PSAPs from abroad works in a specific country (based on responses to the EENA survey), please feel free to contact Benoît Vivier at [bv@eena.org](mailto:bv@eena.org), who will liaise between you and people who responded for this country. Note that the information in this document is based on answers provided by individual members of EENA. EENA shall not be held responsible for any false or incomplete information. Corrections or complementary information can be sent to [bv@eena.org](mailto:bv@eena.org).*

*Dialling emergency numbers enable people to contact emergency services in the country or region where they are located. However, there are often situations where one is aware of an emergency taking place in another country and therefore needs to contact emergency services in this specific country. The main reasons are for instance people knowing that their relatives in another country are in danger after a phone or video call with them or people travelling abroad and made aware of a burglary at home by their alarm and webcam systems... Allowing citizens to contact Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) in other countries can be however quite difficult to run, be it for technical or operational reasons. This results in diverging strategies on whether and how PSAPs can be reached from abroad. Not being able to contact emergency services in other countries can however have fatal consequences and public authorities should therefore consider taking measures to address this issue.*

## Reaching PSAPs with a country code and a short code

A few countries in the European Union allow people to contact their emergency services from abroad. In Denmark and Austria, PSAPs can be reached by anyone by adding a geographic code to the relevant number. Hence, in Denmark, emergency situations can be reported by dialling +45 112 (+45 being the country code for Denmark and 112 being the single emergency number). The non-emergency numbers 1813 (Medical helpline in the Capital Region) and 114 (police) can also be reached following the same model (i.e. +45 1813 and +45 114). In Austria, where each state has separated PSAPs, emergency services can be reached by dialling a number that consists of +43 (country code for Austria); the 1 to 4-digit geographical number (list available [on the website of RTR](#)) and the relevant emergency number (112 or 133 for police; 144 for medical services; 122 for fire).

### **Austria**

Anyone can contact PSAPs in different locations by using the following structure: +43 AAAA BBB where +43 is the country calling code for Austria; AAAA is the area code (1 to 4 digits), and BBB is the emergency number. Hence, somebody wanting to contact the police in Vienna could do so by dialling +43 1 133.

### **Belgium**

There is no possibility for a person who is not in Belgium to call directly a Belgian PSAP. Same applies between regions in Belgium.

### **Bulgaria**

There is no possibility for a person who is not in Bulgaria to call directly a Bulgarian PSAP. One of the main reasons for this is that it is not possible to sue authors of malicious calls who are located abroad. PSAPs abroad have the possibility to forward calls to Bulgarian PSAPs through long number available on ECO's PSAP Directory. All PSAPs in Bulgaria are fully interconnected, which makes it possible to get help in a different region in the country.

### **Denmark**

People abroad can contact Danish emergency services by using the country code +45 and the desired number. Hence: +45 112 for all emergency situations; +45 1813 for the medical helpline of the Capital Region of Denmark; +45 114 for the non-emergency number of the police.

### **Estonia**

Somebody who is not in Estonia can contact Estonian emergency services through the long number +372 6000 112. This number is separated from the PSAPs' integrated communications system, in order to mitigate the risk of malicious calls, which hasn't happened so far. This number is available on the websites of EERC and the Police and Border Guard Board. 350 calls to this number were received in 2019 (including calls from PSAPs in other countries, Third-Party Service Providers (TPSPs) centres and from citizens), of which 105 calls led to a dispatch.

### **Finland**

Finnish 112 Emergency Response Centre can be accessed from abroad through a long number. This number is however not promoted to the general public but instead to other countries' PSAPs, eCall TPSPs...

### **Finland – Åland Islands**

There is no possibility for a person who is not in the Åland islands to call directly the PSAP. However, there are many calls that are forwarded from the Finnish 112 Emergency Response Centre or Sweden's SOS Alarm through a specific long number. Ålandic PSAP can also forward calls to these countries through a specific number.

### **Germany**

There is no possibility for a person who is not in Germany to call directly German PSAPs. It is not possible either for people in Germany to contact PSAPs in different parts of the country.

### **Iceland**

A long number is available to reach Icelandic PSAPs. This number is available on ECO's PSAP Directory. Even though the number is not promoted to the general public, it can be shared with anyone asking for that number. This has not led to any issue of malicious calls.

### **Ireland**

There is no possibility for a person who is not in Ireland to contact directly Irish PSAPs. The main reason for that is the risk of abuse of such service. PSAPs abroad can contact the Irish Emergency Call Answering Service through a long number which is available on ECO's PSAP Directory. Specific long numbers are also available to TPSP centres.

### **Italy**

Each PSAP has a long number which can be contacted from abroad if the number is known, which is rarely the case, as such numbers are generally not promoted. For some PSAPs, the long number can be found online, which led to some successful rescue operations. PSAPs within Italy have the possibility to forward calls to different PSAPs or even to collect information and send information sheets to dispatch centres in other regions.

## Reaching PSAPs through a long number

In most cases, PSAPs can be reached via a long number. But there are differences across Europe on whether these numbers are promoted to the public, not promoted to the public or confidential.

In Estonia, the long number to reach the Estonian Emergency Response Centre (EERC) is published on the website of the Estonian Emergency Response Centre and of the Police and Border Guard Board. The introduction of this number has also been promoted during 112 Day 2019, which contributed to make Estonian citizens aware of this possibility. In 2019, 350 calls were received through this number, of which 105 led to a dispatch within the borders of the country.

A representative of Italian rescue services has also reported cases where PSAPs have been alerted of an emergency situation by people who found a long number of the PSAP online. In that case, even though the long number is not widely promoted, some contact information can be found, which can help deal with emergency situations.

## Keeping a long number hidden to the public

However, in most cases, the long number is generally hidden to the public for several reasons. The main one is the risk of malicious calls to the PSAPs. As the authors of such actions would be located abroad, it would be impossible to trace and sue them. In

Estonia, where the long number is promoted to the public, this risk has also been considered and for this reason, this number is not integrated in the PSAP's communication system. As a consequence, an attack piloted from abroad to this long number would not have any impact on the general 112 traffic. To this date, the countries that allow calls from abroad have not reported any major incident related to the risk of increased malicious calls.

Another reason brought by authorities for not wanting to promote a number to reach them from abroad is that people should always call 112 (or any relevant national emergency number) and then PSAPs reached by the person who wants to report an emergency will do the necessary to connect them to the relevant PSAP.

## Cross-border communicating between PSAPs

When they receive a communication from a person who wants to report an emergency happening in another country, PSAPs may be able to contact emergency services in the relevant country by using the PSAPs' long numbers. But an issue for them is to get access to these numbers. While PSAPs generally have the numbers of the PSAPs of neighbouring countries or regions, this is not always the case for non-neighbouring countries. To address this issue, the European Communications Office (ECO) of the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations (CEPT) is maintaining a database containing long numbers for PSAPs to contact each other throughout Europe when a need arises. This database is called the *PSAP Directory*. The PSAP Directory came into service in December

### Lithuania

A long number is available to PSAPs in other countries through ECO's PSAP Directory and to eCall TPSPs.

### Luxembourg

A long number is available to PSAPs in other countries through ECO's PSAP Directory. Another long number is available to the regions neighbouring Luxembourg, which represents an important amount of calls. These numbers are not shared with the public.

### Netherlands

A long number is available to other PSAPs in Europe but is not promoted to the public. The reason is that authorities want to promote only 112.

### Norway

There is no possibility for a person who is not in Norway to contact directly Norwegian PSAPs. Long numbers of the different PSAPs can be shared to other PSAPs in other countries but Norway is not part of ECO's PSAPs Directory yet, because each PSAP has a different number. If somebody wants to contact emergency services in another region of Norway, PSAPs can transfer the calls to the appropriate region.

### Romania

There is no possibility for a person who is not in Romania to contact directly Romanian PSAPs. One of the main reason is that the communication can then not be treated as an emergency communication (free of charge for the user, priority in the network...). Another reason is the increased risk of malicious and false calls.

### Slovakia

There is no possibility for a person who is not in Slovakia to contact directly Slovak PSAPs. The main reason for this is that authorities want to encourage people to call PSAPs in the country where they are located, as Slovak emergency services cannot intervene outside of their country. Another reason is the risk of malicious calls. PSAPs in other countries can however reach Slovak PSAPs through a number provided in ECO's PSAP Directory.

### Spain

There is no possibility for a person who is not in Spain to contact directly Spanish PSAPs. PSAPs in other countries can however forward calls through a long number (which is different for each PSAP).

## Sweden

There is no possibility for a person who is not in Sweden to contact directly Swedish PSAPs. Calls can however be transferred to SOS Alarm (the authority handling emergency communications in Sweden) internationally through the PSAP Directory or through a long number, which is not shared with the public. In 2019, 987 were transferred to SOS Alarm from another country. 704 of them were from a neighbouring country but 283 were from different countries.

## Switzerland

There is no possibility for a person who is not in Switzerland to call directly Swiss PSAPs. Swiss people abroad still have the possibility to contact insurance companies or the air rescue service REGA. It is not possible either for people in Switzerland to call PSAPs in other cantons. However, PSAPs have the possibility to forward calls to other cantons.

## United Kingdom

There is no possibility for a person who is not in the United Kingdom to contact directly British PSAPs. Stage-2 PSAPs within the UK may have possibilities to contact each other and forward calls.

## United States

Each of the 6.000 PSAPs in the United States can be reached through a long number. These number is not promoted to the general public and therefore not widely used. PSAPs can get access to such information through the *Enhanced PSAP Registry and Census*.

2018 and is not fully populated with contact information for PSAPs in all countries yet. However, efforts to promote participation in the directory by the European Commission, the Body of Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC) and the ECO are well under way. More information about this database can be found on EENA's document on the PSAP Directory, which is accessible [here](#). PSAPs interested in joining the PSAP Directory can contact the ECO at [eco@eco.cept.org](mailto:eco@eco.cept.org).

In the United States, the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) has adopted a similar approach to enable the 6000 PSAPs in the country to contact each other through a directory called *Enhanced PSAP Registry and Census (EPRC)*. This web-based registry allows the 6000 PSAPs in the country to easily find contact details of each other.

## Conclusions & recommendations

In 2019, SOS Alarm, the authority responsible for handling emergency communications in Sweden received nearly 1000 calls from PSAPs in other countries. While 70% of them were calls transferred from neighbouring countries, still 283 calls were coming from non-neighbouring countries, in large part through the PSAPs Directory. This figure demonstrates that there are many cases where somebody wants to report an emergency in another country. Hence, all PSAPs should consider and reflect on how they can be reached from abroad and address such situations.

As a minimum, it is of outmost importance that all European countries are part of ECO's PSAPs Directory in order to allow at least PSAPs to communicate with each other to assist in cross-border emergency incidents. However, some authorities have gone further and allow citizens to contact emergency services from abroad. While one could fear an increased number of false calls, solutions have been implemented to prevent malicious calls coming from abroad from disturbing the national traffic of emergency communications.