

Exchange of best practices on call-back

Date of the document: May 2020

Should you like to receive more information on how call-back is handled in a specific country (based on responses to the EENA survey), please feel free to contact Jérôme Pâris at jp@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 jp@eena.org.

Be it to get an update or additional information on the situation or because the call has been dropped, emergency services sometimes need to call back a person who previously called them. However, the so-called “call-back” capability can be implemented in different ways across countries. On 24 April 2020, EENA received a question from the Ministry of Interior of Bulgaria (which is in charge of 112) asking for information about how the phone number of the emergency response organisation is presented when they call back a person in distress. On 8 May 2020, some questions about this topic were sent to EENA’s ESSN (Emergency Services Staff Network) mailing list. 37 replies from 24 countries were received and showed differences in how the calling number of emergency call-takers is presented to people who are called back.

One of the main differences in how the call-back functionality is implemented is whether the calling line identification (CLI) of the operator calling back is presented to the caller in distress or appears as “private” or “unknown”. While most PSAPs calling back a person in distress have a phone number presented to the people being called, calls made from PSAPs in countries such as Australia, Bulgaria, Lithuania or the Netherlands come with no CLI for different reasons.

Representatives from Canada raised concerns over the safety of the person being called back: for instance, if the 911 centre calls back a victim of domestic violence, displaying the number ‘911’ can be dangerous. To address this issue, police

Australia – South Australian Police

Phone number appears as “unknown”. Call-takers are trained to tell the callers that they can be called back from an unknown number.

Austria – Red Cross, Styrian Branch

The phone number displayed is the gateway phone number, which is a long number. People can call this number back.

Belgium

The number presented is a standard long number, which differs from one PSAP to another. When people try to call this number back, they would hear a message in several languages saying “The emergency services have tried to call you, please call [112 for fire/EMS; 101 for police] back.”

Canada - Quebec

For most PSAPs, the number is not displayed.

Czech Republic – Fire & Rescue Services

Calls coming from 112 PSAPs are presented with the number "112".

Finland

The number 0800112112 is displayed. If people call this number back, they will hear a voicemail saying that the 112 Response Centre has tried to reach them.

France – Fire & Rescue Services

The phone number is generally displayed, but this may not necessarily be the long number of the PSAP. Some PSAPs use a dummy number instead.

Germany

Some PSAPs have a local long number displayed. Other PSAPs have no number displayed.

Iceland

When the call-back is made from a 112 call-taker: 112 is displayed; when the call-back is made from elsewhere, another number is displayed.

Ireland

A local number may be displayed but not always (sometimes the presentation of CLI is prevented for safety reasons) and not everywhere.

Italy

The number is visible but cannot be dialled back.

Latvia

If the person being called back has deactivated the option to show numbers, a technical number from the MNO will appear. Otherwise, the direct number of the call-taker is presented.

Lithuania

The phone number is not displayed and appears as private.

Luxembourg

Call number presented: 112 (also in case of SMS).

Montenegro

Phone number displayed.

Netherlands

The phone number is hidden, which does not seem to be a major problem.

operators in Norway can make a call with a hidden number if they fear for the safety of the people calling.

In Lithuania, the phone number is hidden because it is not possible to display '112' and emergency services want to encourage users to call back 112 so that the call can be treated like an emergency call (location provided, priority in the network...).

In the state of South Australia, operators from the police also make call-backs with a hidden number. However, they usually mention during the initial call that the person might be called back from a private number. In the Netherlands, the CLI also appears as private, but this does not seem to be a major problem.

In most countries however, a phone number is displayed when emergency services call a person back. These numbers can differ: it can be the emergency number linked to the PSAP, another short number, or a long number.

In several countries, it is possible to display the emergency number that was dialled to reach the PSAP (for instance '112'). This is the case for instance in Iceland, Luxembourg, Turkey or the Czech Republic, but this is not always possible in other countries.

However, authorities in several countries may need to add a regional country code before the emergency number (02999 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates). In Romania, outgoing calls from all PSAPs are presented with '21112', 21 being the regional code for Bucharest.

In the majority of countries, it is a long number that is displayed when calling a person back. This long number can correspond to:

- the direct line of the operator, as it is the case in Latvia (and people can call back the 112 call-takers on their direct lines);
- a long number that can be identified as coming from the PSAPs (for instance: 0.800.112.112 in Finland);
- or a random long number.

Having a long number presented leads to two challenges to tackle:

- First of all, if people in a situation of emergency are called from a number that they do not know, they may reject the incoming call (as if the number was 'private'). To address this, if operators in the medical services of Norway fear that the person they want to call will not answer, they have the possibility to make a call with the number '113' (emergency number for medical services in Norway) displayed (instead of the long number).
- A second challenge of having long numbers presented is that people may want to call this number back to provide additional information, which some authorities may want to prevent. It is for this reason that Lithuanian authorities prefer to have an unknown CLI. In Belgium or Finland, when the long numbers are called back, there is an automatic voicemail explaining that the emergency services have tried to call the person back and they should call the relevant emergency number if they want to communicate again.

Hence, while the countries share similar concerns and opinions on the importance of being able to call someone back, the strategies regarding how this number should be presented may differ. These differences may be summed up in the diagram below:

North Macedonia

A phone number, which is different from the emergency number is displayed.

Norway

The local number of the emergency service organisation is usually displayed. However, call-takers may have the possibility to make a call with the emergency number displayed or with the number hidden.

Peru

Phone number displayed.

Romania

Call number presented for all calls: 21112 (21 being the regional code for Bucharest). Now working on a reform which will allow the presentation of the '112' number.

Slovakia

Either 112 or a fixed line number is displayed.

Switzerland – EMS number / Cantons of Neuchâtel and Vaud

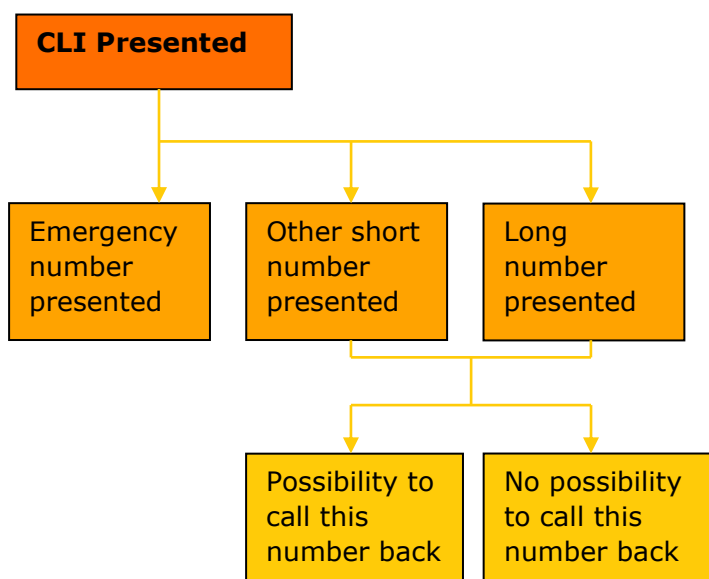
The number presented consists of the telephone prefix for Switzerland and the emergency number used to reach the PSAP. Hence: +41144.

Turkey – Emergency Medical Services

112 number is presented for both calls and SMSs.

United Arab Emirates

The number displayed consists of the regional prefix where the PSAP is located and the emergency number linked to the PSAP (e.g. for police in Abu Dhabi: 02999).



Reasons :

- Technical issue
- Safety concerns
- Not a major problem