EU rules on 112

The EU telecoms rules ensure that Europeans can call European emergency number 112 from any type of phone, wherever they are in Europe.

[1]

EU Legislation on 112

112 became the single European emergency number in 1991 [2].

The EU telecoms rules [3] brought general obligations on 112:

- ensure that European citizens gain better access to 112 not only by traditional telephony but also using new technologies (such as VoIP);
- operators must provide information about caller location to emergency authorities;
- improve access to 112 for people with disabilities.

The Universal Service Directive [4] introduced the detailed requirements for Member States on 112:

- Member States must ensure that users of fixed and mobile telephones, including payphones, are able to call 112 free of charge;
- 112 calls must be appropriately answered and handled, irrespective of whether other emergency numbers exist in a specific country;
- Member States must ensure that emergency services are able to establish the location of the person calling 112;
- All EU countries must inform their own citizens and visitors of the existence of 112 and in which circumstances they should call it.

The Roaming Regulation [5]obliges roaming service providers to send an SMS to people travelling to another EU country with information about the European emergency number 112.

Collaborating with national authorities

The European Commission is working together with national authorities to ensure the correct implementation of 112:

- The Commission requires Member States to gather and provide detailed data on the implementation of 112 through the Communications Committee [6]COCOM. The latest COCOM report on 112 [7].
- The Expert Group on Emergency Access (EGEA) consists of Member State officials representing emergency response centres, civil protection and telecommunication authorities. The group meets in Brussels every few months. The group seeks practical solutions to problems experienced by the emergency services at local, regional or national levels, and deals with issues related to the application of new technologies for communication with emergency services.

Infringement Proceedings on 112

The European Commission ensures that European rules on 112 are correctly applied in the European Union and has launched 17 infringement proceedings [8]against Member States that have not complied with the relevant requirements of EU law. All cases are now closed following corrective measures in the countries concerned (see table [9]). Problems included the lack of 112 availability, non-availability of caller location information and the degree of effectiveness for handling and answering 112 calls. The European Commission continues to monitor the correct implementation of the EU law on 112 and takes legal action if necessary.

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