# PRESS RELEASES

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# Interview with MEP Carlos Coelho on emergency access & public safety in Europe

> "It is actually quite simple: increased 112 awareness can save lives."
>
> **CARLOS COELHO**
> MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, PORTUGAL
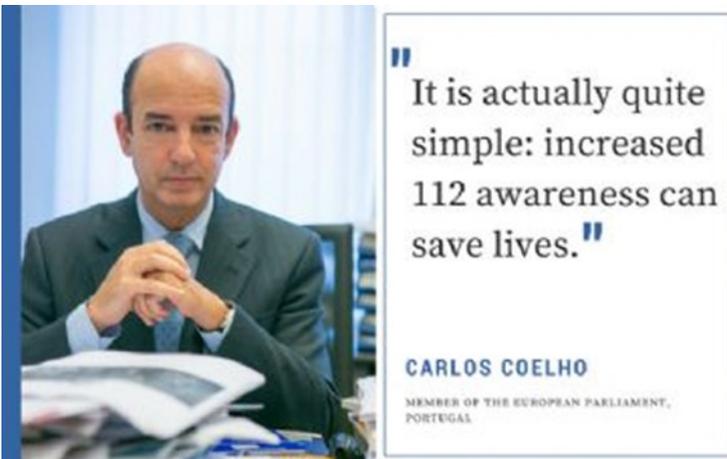
**EENA interview series -
Decision makers and 112**

In June 2017, **Benoit Vivier**, EENA Advocacy Officer, met with **Mr Carlos Coelho**, Portuguese Member of the European Parliament (MEP) to discuss emergency access, the 112 service and what the European Union can do to advance the protection of its citizens.

> "We need to reverse the status quo and help improve awareness,
> usage and functioning [of the 112 service]."

**BV: As an MEP, you have been very active when it comes to 112 awareness. What is your motivation behind this?**

**CC:** It is actually quite simple. I am convinced that increased 112 awareness can save lives. We have a collective obligation to save lives; this is especially true for politicians. Emergency services and especially 112 have had my close attention since I've been active as a politician, starting from the national level and now as Member of the European Parliament.

The common European emergency number 112 exists for 25 years already, so it's shocking that more than half of the EU citizens remain relatively unfamiliar with it. We need to reverse this status quo and help improve awareness, usage and functioning.

**BV:  The EU is currently debating the European Electronic Communications Code (EECC) and you submitted amendments on the 112 service. According to you, what opportunities does the EECC offer?**

**CC**: For me this proposal shows why European cooperation is vital. It's not often that you see such a close link between action at European level and saving people's lives!

Through the European Electronic Communications Code, major technical issues related to 112 can be addressed. The legislative amendments proposed include improvements such as:

- *On emergency caller location*

A more precise location of a caller in danger will allow for reduced emergency response time. Ambulance service measurements show that when a caller is unable to describe their location, better location systems would save on average 30 seconds of an emergency call, as well as several minutes from the rescue operation.

A way to address this is Advanced Mobile Location, a technology that allows the phone, after an emergency call to 112 is placed, to automatically send a message with the coordinates of the caller to the emergency service.

With no doubt, emergency services should use 112-friendly technologies to ensure shortened response times as this could save many lives. It is unacceptable that people die because the accuracy of the caller's location provided to the Public Service Answering Points is on average 2km in the European Union, despite the fact that new geo-location technologies are readily available today.

- *On the establishment of a reverse 112 system*

This is basically a public warning mechanism. Such a system will allow emergency services to rapidly alert citizens on their phone – without any prior action required by them- in case of a major emergency, such as a terrorist attack or an earthquake.

- *On multilingual response*

Language is often a barrier to call 112 for people travelling abroad. Europeans travel more and more, so we should look into improving access of visitors to emergency services. When you are in danger, the language barrier should not prevent you from getting the help you need.

- *Easier access to emergency services for people with disabilities;*

Equal access to emergency services for people with disabilities is already part of European legislation. So it actually comes down to implementation. We need to make sure that member states ensure that people who are hard of hearing or deaf have the same access to requesting an ambulance, the police, or the fire-fighters.

> "The internal market is more than just economics. Well-functioning emergency services cannot be overlooked."

**BV: Is there anything you would like to add?**

CC: We have successfully created an internal market. People are traveling throughout Europe. This has been a great success for our economies. The internal market is however more than just economics. Well-functioning emergency services cannot be overlooked while completing this process. This requires closer cooperation, making optimal use of digital developments and raising awareness.

I am very optimistic about new ways in which emergency services can connect with people. The eCall system in cars, which automatically dials 112 in the case of a car crash, significantly reduces response times. This will save hundreds of lives in the EU, every year. Moreover, the use of drones can bring many opportunities for quicker emergency response.

Let me finish with some good news. In October, I am co-organising the "Meet your MEP" event that you and your colleagues at EENA are organising. This event brings together emergency service professionals and their MEPs to discuss how emergency services can further improve and raise awareness towards EU stakeholders on the importance of 112. Bridging communication between those professionals and politicians at the European level is crucial so I am very happy to be part of this initiative.

**Contact**

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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, researchers, associations and solution providers with a view to improving the 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 more than 1300 emergency services representatives from over 80 countries world-wide, 80 solution providers, 15 international associations/organisations, more than 200 Members of the European Parliament and over 90 researchers.

http://www.eena.org/press-releases/interview-mep-coelho#.WVIx5HrD_h6