

Public Consultation

Identification of services of social value in Europe that could benefit from single European freephone numbers starting with 116

The Commission services seek to identify services of social value in Europe that could benefit from single European freephone numbers starting with 116, and to that end invite interested parties to provide their views, suggestions and relevant information, as described below.

Contributions should be sent

- by e-mail to the mailbox INFSO-116numbers@ec.europa.eu or
- by fax to 00 32 2 29 68391

with the subject " 116 numbers".

In the case of an organisation, please also give the name, telephone number and email address of a contact person competent to handle any questions about the response to the consultation in a separate document, (which will not be published).

The consultation will be closed on 20 May 2007.

1. PURPOSE OF THE CONSULTATION

The European Commission has recently adopted a [Decision](#) requiring Member States to reserve the six-digit number range starting with the digits 116 for services of social value in Europe.

The Commission is considering whether to identify additional specific '116' telephone numbers for specific services of social value in Europe (retaining the present definition and conditions set out in the Decision – described further below). It is important that numbering resources are utilised efficiently and so in deciding what action, if any, is appropriate the Commission will take account of the likelihood that a service of social value in Europe will become established in practice. Accordingly, the Commission services would welcome views, suggestions and relevant information concerning the reservation of a specific 116 number for a specific category of service.

Note.

Reserving a 116 number for a specific category of service implies linking a particular 116 number to a specific category of service. Reservation does not imply the granting of rights-of-use for a 116 number to a specific organisation. This latter

step is called *assignment* and is undertaken at national level by Member State Authorities ([see below](#)).

2. THE CONCEPT OF 116 NUMBERS / SERVICES

2.1. Background

In many European countries, certain services of a social nature are available either via normal telephone numbers or via a special short number. Examples are hotlines and helplines for people in need.

Today, numbers for the same service are often different in different Member States. The European Commission has recently adopted a [Decision](#) requiring Member States to reserve the 6-digit number range starting with the digits 116 for harmonised services of social value. These are services which answer a specific social need, in particular those which contribute to the well-being or safety of citizens or particular groups of citizens, or help citizens in difficulty, and which are potentially of value to visitors from other countries. The Commission Decision will allow the same 116 number to be reserved for the same service in different European countries.

A single number will provide a European identity for a service; it will facilitate awareness-raising campaigns and may increase the efficiency/effectiveness of the provision of the service at European level.

This initiative has been developed in close cooperation with Member States and the national regulatory authorities in charge of electronic communications.

The initial Commission Decision lists one number, 116000, which has been reserved for a hotline to report missing children. It is intended that other numbers will be reserved for other services following this public consultation. Reservation of a number in the Commission Decision requires Member States to permit the listed services to be offered under the specified 116 number, but does not impose an obligation on any party to provide the service in question. Ideally 116 services would be available in every Member State, but it may take some time for demand to be established in some countries, or for suitable service providers to emerge.

2.2. The characteristics of services for which the 116 numbering range has been reserved

The characteristics of the services for which the 116 numbering range has been reserved are specified in Articles 2 and 4 of the Commission Decision.

This section provides further explanation of these characteristics.

- The service is targeted at individuals and should be of clear benefit to them. The service is not designed as a service for businesses, but business users or employees would not be precluded from calling the service.
- The service is potentially of value to visitors from other countries.

- The service answers a specific social need; in particular it (a) contributes to the well-being or safety of citizens or of a particular group of citizens or (b) helps citizens in difficulty.
- The service provides information and/or assistance and/or a reporting tool to citizens.
- The service is open to all citizens; no prior registration to the service is required. “Members only” services are excluded.
- The service is not time-limited. Services of a temporary nature, e.g. services that might be associated with a single event of some sort, are excluded.
- The service is not commercial in nature, i.e. there can be no payment, or payment commitment by the caller as a pre-requisite to use the service.

The following activities are excluded during a call: advertisement, entertainment, marketing and selling, using the call for the future selling of commercial services.

2.3. The cost of calling a 116 number

Calls to 116 numbers will be treated in the same way as calls to existing freephone numbers, where most or all of the cost of the call is borne by the called party¹.

The Commission Decision does not oblige the operators to carry calls to 116 numbers at their own expense.

Organisations providing a service of social value using a 116 number must therefore be prepared to accept the cost of incoming calls, in accordance with the terms of the contract with their electronic communication provider (telecom operator).

2.4. Implementation: 3 steps

Implementation of 116 number/services is a 3-step process.

The first step concerns *reservation* of the number at European level and it is the responsibility of the European Commission.

The second step is *assignment* of the number to a particular organisation² at the Member State level. Once a 116 number has been reserved at EU level, national regulatory authorities (NRAs) in the Member States will invite applications for the number to be assigned to a specific organisation. The procedure for assigning numbers is the responsibility of each Member State. Details will be available from the NRA. A list of NRAs is available on the ERG website: http://erg.eu.int/links/index_en.htm

¹ In some countries, callers using mobile phones may pay a charge when calling a freephone number on the fixed network.

² In some Member States, organisations can be granted the right of use of the number; in others, it is the electronic communications provider (telecom operator), e.g. in France, Denmark and Latvia.

The third step is *implementation by the communications provider hosting the service*, in order to make the number fully operational.

3. WHICH NUMBERS ARE BEING CONSIDERED FOR RESERVATION?

Around 200 numbers are being considered for reservation at present. They are all numbers between 116000 and 116199 inclusive, but excluding the numbers 116000, 116111, 116112 and 116116.

- The number 116000 has already been reserved for hotlines for missing children (see [IP/06/1866](#) and [IP/07/188](#)).
- The number 116112 will not be used in order to avoid confusion with the single European emergency number '112'.

The Commission services are currently examining the possibility to reserve:

- The number 116111 for child helplines
Child helplines provide listening and assistance to children and are accessed 80% by children. In its Communication [COM \(2006\) 367 “Towards an EU strategy on the Rights of the Child”](#), the Commission made children's rights one of its first priorities and announced in particular its intention to reserve two 116 numbers: one for child helplines and one for hotlines for missing children. The number 116000 has already been reserved for missing children (see above).
- The number 116116 for a hotline to report and block lost and stolen payment cards.
Such a single number is the objective of the "Card Stop Europe" project, which has been supported by the Commission since 2001, following the adoption of two consecutive Action Plans on Fraud Prevention. For more information, See http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/payments/fraud/cardstopeurope/index_en.htm

Other parts of the 116 number range may be opened up at a later stage, in the light of experience gained, but reservation of numbers outside the above range is not being considered at present.

4. HOW TO RESPOND TO THIS CONSULTATION

(Consultation responses will be published on the Europa website unless confidentiality is requested. See section 6.)

4.1. Details of the person or organisation suggesting a service/number

Please give the name of the organisation or person, postal address, telephone and fax numbers, and email address.

4.2. Details concerning the type of service

Give information about the service as indicated below.

- (1) *A detailed description of the type of service, including an explanation about why a single European number (i.e. a 116 number) would be beneficial.*

This description should explain the categories of people who would benefit from the service and give a detailed description of the type of service that would be provided.

It should explain the benefit of having a single European number for this service.

It should make obvious that the service complies with Article 2 of the Commission Decision, and that it can be provided in compliance with the conditions set out in Article 4.

In addition, a concise summary of the proposed type of service (maximum length 500 characters, spaces included) should be provided. If the Commission decides to reserve a 116 number for this service, this summary could be published alongside the number as the 'official' description of the service for which the number is reserved.

- (2) *A description of the type of organisation(s) that is (are) interested in providing the service*

Where a service of this type already exists, give if possible the names and contact details of the organisations already providing the service in different Member States, and the telephone numbers currently being used for the provision of the service. (Copies of promotional literature or links to websites may also be provided).

In the case of a service not currently being provided, indicate whether there are existing types of organisations that would be able to provide the service, or whether new bodies would need to be established. In the case of new bodies, describe if known the structure envisaged for providing services in different Member States.

- (3) *Other information concerning the service*

Provide such documents as letters of intent from national organisations ready to provide the service at national level in the short or medium term. (For a number to be reserved for a specific service at European level, it is important that there is interest from organisations to supply the service and from consumers to use the service, in a number (e.g. 5) of Member States.)

4.3. Whether any particular telephone number would be preferred

Please indicate whether any particular numbers (up to three, in order of preference) would be preferred.

5. WHERE TO SEND THE CONSULTATION RESPONSE?

Suggestions should be sent:

- by e-mail to the mailbox INFSO-116numbers@ec.europa.eu,
- or by fax to 00 32 2 29 68391,

with the subject " *116 numbers*".

In the case of an organisation, please also give the name, telephone number and email address of a contact person competent to handle any questions about the response to the consultation **in a separate document** (which will not be published).

6. PUBLICATION OF PUBLICATION RESPONSES

Consultation responses will be published on the Europa website unless confidentiality is requested. (Where confidentiality is requested, neither the name of the contributor nor the contribution will be published). Personal data gathered in the course of this consultation will be processed in accordance with the applicable legislation on data protection. See

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/policy/ecommm/info_centre/documentation/public_consult/privacy_statement/index_en.htm

7. PUBLICATION OF THE REVISED DECISION

When adopted, any revised Commission Decision updating the list of reserved numbers would be published in the Official Journal of the European Union. The list would provide for each reserved 116 number a short description of the type of service for which the number is reserved, together with any conditions attached to the service. The list would also be published on the Europa website.

8. IS IT POSSIBLE TO RESPOND AFTER THE CONSULTATION DEADLINE?

The purpose of this consultation is to allow the Commission services to identify services and to draft a new Commission Decision in order to update the list of reserved numbers.

After this first exercise, the mailbox INFSO-116numbers@ec.europa.eu will continue to be the central point for receiving suggestions. If it considers this appropriate, the Commission may further update the list of reserved numbers.

9. IMPORTANT NOTES

This consultation concerns only the stage of *reservation* of 116 numbers for specified services of social importance.

Reservation by the European Commission of a specific 116 number for a specific service does not give any rights (e.g. of receiving the number in any given national environment) to the person or organisation suggesting that number for that service.

It is a Member State responsibility to assign specific 116 numbers to individual organisations³, in accordance with Community law and in particular Article 10 of the Framework Directive.

There is no obligation on the Commission, or on Member States to ensure that the service for which a 116 number is reserved is actually provided. However, where a 116 number is assigned at national level and not used, it is open to a Member State to re-assign the number to another entity, in accordance with relevant national law.

The use of the 116 number is not intended to prejudice the continuing use of another number for the same service.

The European Commission has no responsibility for any service provided using 116 numbers.

116 numbers are designed to be used within a Member State. It may not be possible to make an international call from one Member State to a 116 number in another Member State.

There are no European funds for this action.

³ In some Member States, organisations can be granted the right of use of the number; in others, it is the electronic communications provider (telecom operator), e.g. in France, Denmark and Latvia.