



Year in Review 2006



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December

An action plan for getting eCall back on track

The European Commission has proposed an urgent set of actions to restart moves to roll-out the in-vehicle emergency call in Europe. The Commission-industry action plan agreed in 2005 to add eCall to all new cars in Europe by 2009 has stalled, warns the Commission status report of 23 November. While there has been significant progress at European level, some Member States have been slow to invest in infrastructure, and industry now refuses further action.



“We urgently need to get eCall back on track,” said Viviane Reding, European Commissioner for Information Society and Media. “We have the technology. Now we need industry and Member States to move up a gear and help us make Europe’s roads safer sooner rather than later.”

The initial 2005 Commission-industry agreement contained a framework for rolling out eCall in Europe, targeting Member States which had to invest in emergency rescue service infrastructure. The Commission also agreed to monitor progress closely, and to take further action if eCall deployment was endangered. As eCall is based on the single European emergency number 112 and its location enhancement, E112, their implementation was also followed.

This led to serious concerns. While the Commission has taken several measures supporting eCall deployment and standardisation, and some Member States have already started eCall deployment, many are not ready with the necessary infrastructure. Industry has already reacted with a new deployment timetable of 2010 instead of 2009.

The Commission’s response is the Communication adopted 23 November, “Bringing eCall Back on Track”. It presents two actions that are crucial for making eCall a reality:

1. Member States have been given clear actions with deadlines for solving the remaining legal, technical and socio-economic issues and proceeding with the necessary 112, E112 and eCall infrastructures.
2. Industry is asked to renew its commitment to eCall. The Commission will also start negotiations with the automotive associations on a voluntary agreement for introducing eCall devices into vehicles. It will provide further assistance by working on privacy and standardisation issues, as well as carry out field tests and public awareness campaigns, as part of the Intelligent Car Initiative within the Commission’s i2010 Strategy.

What is eCall and how does it work?

The in-vehicle eCall is an emergency call generated either manually by the vehicle occupants or automatically via activation of in-vehicle sensors after an accident. When activated, the in-vehicle eCall device will establish an emergency call carrying both voice and data directly to the nearest emergency services (normally the nearest 112 Public Safety Answering Point, PSAP). The voice call enables the vehicle occupants to communicate with the trained eCall operator. At the same time, a minimum set of data will be sent to the eCall operator receiving the voice call. The minimum set of data contains information about the incident, including time, precise location, the direction the vehicle was travelling and vehicle identification. The pan-European eCall service aims to be operative for all vehicles travelling within Europe, irrespective of their country of origin.





December

Iceland signs up to eCall

Following the presentation of the eSafety Commission Communication “Bringing eCall Back on Track” at the Telecommunications, Transport and Energy Council of 11 December, Iceland signed the eCall Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This brings the number of countries which have signed the Memorandum up to 10.

At the signature event, Mr Sturla Böðvarsson, Icelandic Minister of Transport and Telecommunications stated: “We are convinced that eCall will help save lives and therefore fully support the Commission in all its efforts to realise this service. We are pleased to be able to demonstrate our commitment by now handing over a signed declaration of two key players in the chain of starting eCall service in Iceland. We firmly believe that we will have required facilities for eCall in place as a part of a pan-European eCall service in due time to the benefit of road users including Icelandic citizens and the growing number of tourists”. The Minister handed over two other Memoranda signed by Icelandic organisations: Neyðarlínan hf, the Reykjavík PSAP (Public Service Answering Point), and New Development á Íslandi ehf, a company specialised in in-vehicle equipment.

European Commissioner for Information Society and Media Viviane Reding congratulated Iceland for joining Finland, Sweden, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Slovenia, Cyprus, Switzerland and Norway in the growing list of countries that have signed the MoU. She added, “This is an important step towards the implementation of the pan-European eCall service.

I welcome the commitment showed by the Government of Iceland and other Icelandic organisations to advance on its implementation. I hope that other European countries will follow your example soon. eCall is for the benefit of all European citizens!”



December

Austria tests its readiness for eCall

An Austrian pilot project on eCall was conducted by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology together with Dolphin Technologies, a market expert in security systems and telematics units for cars, the ÖAMTC operation centre and the mobile operator Mobikom.

In the Austrian simulation of eCall infrastructure, the ÖAMTC operation centre is informed in two different ways after the alarm is triggered. It receives an SMS message, which is reformatted into an e-mail containing relevant data regarding the driver and the vehicle, as well as the position from where the alarm message was sent. At the same time, a voice call to a special telephone number of the operation centre is triggered, while the integrated voice processor informs about the reason of the alarm (accident, emergency, theft) and the identity of the vehicle.

The test bed was scheduled with 100 test drivers using eCall technology installed in their vehicles. Each test driver had to trigger at least 10 alarms by using the emergency button. The test results showed that 72% of the eCall alarm messages were answered within two minutes, with a further 12% answered within four minutes — meaning that in 84% of cases, help could have been on the way in less than four minutes.

The Austrian test also investigated the driver acceptance of the system. It found out that more than 60% of drivers would agree to pay €9-14 per month for an eCall subscription that would allow them to get prompt support in case of an accident or an emergency. Moreover, almost 50% of drivers were willing to pay at least €300 for the eCall hardware and installation. Most interesting was that drivers were willing to pay for additional add-on services to eCall, with 71% saying they would pay for breakdown assistance via the system, 61% interested in receiving travel information and 20% willing to receive weather information.

With this pilot project and systems already on the road, Austria has demonstrated its preparedness for eCall and its serious intention to the EC’s effort in this area by making an important contribution to road security.

September

European service providers agree to push ahead with eCall

European service providers met with the European Commission and DG eCall representatives 12 September 2006 to define their future role in the deployment of eCall, the pan-European in-vehicle emergency call system.

The 12 September meeting concluded that European service providers should not only play an active role in the implementation of eCall by supporting the rapid introduction of the basic eCall service, but also provide additional value-added information to the 112 emergency call operators.

The meeting identified a need to specify and agree on a common

pan-European interface between European Service Providers and first level Public Service Answering Points (PSAPs) in order to ensure that the PSAP operators will have access to the value-added information provided by the various service providers.

The European service providers could also take on the role as first-level PSAP in some regions of Europe where this is more cost efficient or effective, which is done today in the UK.

The meeting concluded that there was broad agreement among participants to press on for the speedy adoption of the basic eCall solutions.

September

European Data protection Authorities consider eCall admissible

The independent European advisory body on data protection and privacy, Article 29 Working Party, adopted on 26 September 2006 a working document on data protection and privacy implications in eCall initiatives.

In the paper, Article 29 recognises the socio-economic benefit and public safety value that the wide introduction of the harmonised pan-European eCall service might bring to citizens. It also addresses the associated privacy and data protection implications.

Two implementation options for eCall are analysed in the document, eCall chosen on a voluntary basis or as a mandatory service.

In the case of a voluntary implementation of the service, a user-friendly solution with a free-of-charge possibility to activate or de-activate the eCall service on a case-by-case basis should be introduced. Any pressure from third parties to keep the eCall tool activated is considered illegal. For the mandatory option, rules have to be embodied in a dedicated piece of legislation, taking into account data protection principles. Privacy enhancing technologies

should be embedded in the system in order to provide eCall users with the desired level of privacy protection.

Article 29 also analysed the privacy and data protection implications resulting from the inclusion — into the eCall value chain — of service providers providing value-added services. Here it is noted that the rules on data security must be strictly complied with, especially as some of this data to be processed is of a sensitive nature. Finally, it addressed other issues around eCall, namely the concerns related to the creation of databases by telecommunication operators, storage periods of collected data and issues related to the security of the stored data. In its conclusions, it recommends a voluntary approach to the pan-European introduction of eCall. It recognises that from a data protection point of view, an emergency call released automatically or triggered manually and resulting in geo-localisation of the emergency event is in principle admissible, provided that a legal basis exists and that sufficient data protection safeguards are provided.

July

eSafety initiative spurs increased customer demand for eCall

The German automobile club ADAC, Europe's largest automobile club, has completed its 7th year as a telematics service provider in Germany. eCall is a key part of its service portfolio and at the time of writing it has responded to over 7,000 emergency calls from ADAC members, non-members and car manufacturers.

Increased demand

"We have also suffered from the low customer acceptance of the early years, as all players have had to, but we never thought of giving up or close the service, as many players have had to during the last years," says Dietrich Heide, CEO of ADAC Service GmbH, responsible for the telematics offer. "Since early 2005, we have noticed more customer demand regarding telematics services – and eCall."

ADAC estimates that this is partly thanks to the eSafety initiative and its eCall Road Map, which aims at equipping all new vehicles in Europe with an automatic emergency call system as of 2010. Together with other leading automobile clubs within the ARC-Network, ADAC actively contributes to the eCall discussion and development at both the European and national level.

eCall is top priority

ADAC members expect a good service and information about all telematics services and products, and the eCall service is one of the most important issues for safety on the road. ADAC sees offering this service to members and non-members as one of its top priorities.



June

Norway signs up to eCall

On the occasion of the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council in Luxembourg on 8 June 2006, Norway signed the eCall Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The move gives a significant boost to the service, which aims to substantially reduce the time needed for emergency services to respond to road accidents.

Viviane Reding, European Commissioner for Information Society and Media, congratulated Norway for joining Finland, Sweden, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Slovenia, Cyprus and Switzerland as signatories of the MoU. "This is an important step towards the implementation of the pan-European eCall service. As the European Parliament stressed in its recently approved report, it is important that all Member States sign the MoU as soon as possible, in order to demonstrate a clear commitment to the implementation of eCall to other stakeholders. I would like to encourage all the Member States to join Norway and the other European countries that already signed the eCall MoU. eCall is for the benefit of the European citizens," she said.

"We firmly believe that the system will save lives and reduce the social burden by improving the notification of road accidents and speeding up emergency service response. Norway supports the ambition of introducing the system by 2009, and will actively contribute to the development and agreement of implementation plans conforming to the principles of a pan-European eCall service," said Norwegian State Secretary, Steinulf Tungesvik.



May

Work on eCall standardisation requirements one step nearer to completion

Meeting at ERTICO headquarters in Brussels on 16-17 May 2006, members of the Mobile Standards Group of the European Telecommunication Standardisation Institute (ETSI-MSG) and other transport and telecommunications stakeholders made good progress in the work to define specifications for the pan-European in-vehicle emergency call.

The development of the standardisation requirements that will enable the transmission of such in-vehicle voice and data to the PSAP (Public Service Answering Point) will be the responsibility of the 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP), a collaboration effort between Europe, Japan, China, North America and South Korea, aimed at defining a globally applicable third generation (3G) mobile phone system specification. ETSI_MSG will provide recommendations on the path that 3GPP should follow.

One clear recommendation emanating from the meeting was to use in-band modems for transmitting the minimum set of data about the accident to the emergency centre.

Debating whether or not SIM cards should be required for eCalls, (former) ERTICO Project and Development Manager Rasmus Lindholm pointed out that the eCall Driving Group has not put forth a firm requirement for the PSAP to be able to call back the vehicle, eliminating one justification for SIM card use. The ability to identify the calling number has been another argument used to justify their need. However, as the minimum set of data transmitted to the PSAP includes the vehicle identification number — an alternative and equally good means of identification — this argument has been weakened. A report assessing the pros and cons of requiring SIM cards for eCalls will be published shortly by a group of network operators.

Discussing the timeline for work on the eCall standard, there was agreement that March 2007 should be the target date for completion.



April

Road cleared for pan-European implementation of eCall

The eCall Driving Group (DG) held its final meeting 24-25 April 2006, aiming to pave the way for the introduction of the pan-European in-vehicle emergency call system by 2010. The different sub-working groups under the eCall DG presented the results of their activities, and a final set of recommendations for the introduction of eCall was agreed.

Participants discussed a series of potential obstacles to full-scale roll-out of eCall. When activated, eCall will automatically transmit a minimum set of data (MSD) containing information about the vehicle involved in the accident to the nearest emergency centre (PSAP). Although participants reached an agreement about what should be included in this MSD, a final study is needed in order to get an overview of whether the PSAPs have access to a Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) database to identify the vehicle, or whether vehicle make and model should be included as mandatory information in the MSD.

Participants also updated the roll-out plan for the introduction of eCall by including different milestones, the first being that **all** involved stakeholders, including the Member States, must show their commitment by signing the eCall Memorandum of Understanding by the end of 2006.



April

European Parliament adopts road map for eCall

The European Parliament adopted on 27 April, by a large majority, the report by British MEP Gary Tittley on the introduction of eCall as a public service. The report recommends that all European authorities include information about the in-vehicle emergency call within their public road safety campaigns and points out that “the large-scale roll-out of eCall by 2009 is a priority of the eSafety initiative”. Presenting eCall to the MEPs, European Commissioner for Information Society and Media, Viviane Reding, reiterated the importance of full Community support and commitment from all stakeholders if the target to install eCall in all new vehicles by 2009 is to be achieved.

The discussion that followed showed that most of the MEPs fully support the European Commission initiative. This sends a positive message to the industry, which has worked hard on developing the road map for eCall implementation and on defining the eCall architecture. If implemented in all new vehicles and all Member States, the system could save up to 2,500 lives annually on Europe’s roads. The positive feedback from the European Parliament is important for pushing this process forward.

MEPs, however, voiced concern over Member States’ limited involvement in the preparations for European-wide implementation of the system by 2009, pointing out that some Member States have also been reluctant to promote 112 as the single emergency number in Europe. eCall is based on the use of 112.

National efforts to prepare emergency services for handling eCalls were also deemed to be insufficient, and the report recommends that further efforts and resources be allocated for language training and an upgrade of identification and call handling services.

MEPs stressed the importance of all Member States signing the eCall Memorandum of Understanding. The European Parliament also invited stakeholders to pursue more detailed cost-efficiency analysis of the actions to be undertaken to implement eCall. It called on all stakeholders to work together to define incentives to speed up the introduction of the service.

Commissioner Reding expressed her gratitude towards the Parliament for adopting the report supporting the Commission’s efforts in making eCall a reality in Europe. However, she also voiced her disappointment regarding some stakeholders’ lack of involvement in eCall implementation efforts, such as the insurance industry. Referring to a recent letter from the insurers in which they point out that there is a complete lack of evidence to support the view that insurers will derive benefit from eCall, she noted, “The Commissioner finds this position totally unacceptable. I would like to remind all of you that eCall is not about making money to somebody’s pocket, but about saving lives.”



March

Emergency centre representatives meet on 16 March 2006 to discuss eCall

Emergency centre representatives met in Madrid on 16 March 2006 to discuss the pan-European in-vehicle emergency call. They also had the chance to visit the Centro Emergencias 112 de la Comunidad de Madrid Emergency Centre facilities.

At the meeting, Michael Nielsen of the eCall Driving Group and Emilio Davila Gonzalez of the European Commission presented the current status of the eCall initiative, with Mr Alvarez from the 112 Asturias organisation introducing the Spanish position on eCall. Spain supports the eCall initiative in general and wants to continue its involvement. However, its main concern is the possibility that false emergency calls could be generated through the eCall system once it is implemented.

The eCall Driving Group will now investigate further Spain's concerns and issue a study on false calls. The study will look into

similar systems currently on the market triggering alarm calls to service centres. In addition, the Madrid Public Service Answering Point has agreed to make available the information about an automatic distress call system implemented in 3,000 taxis in the city. Spanish experiences from implementing and running this system could potentially be used to minimise the probability for false alarms resulting from eCall implementation.

If the study shows that there is a real risk of a substantial increase in false calls, Spain has suggested that an intermediary centre between the vehicle and the 112 Emergency Centres be established. However, such a solution would require that the emergency authorities introduce quality control mechanisms and that the intermediate operator work under the control of the local, regional or national emergency authorities.



The "eCall Toolbox" on the eSafety Support website provides information regarding all aspects of the pan-European eCall initiative and contains all relevant documents and studies related to this issue.

Visit the eCall Toolbox at www.esafetysupport.org/eCalltoolbox for more information

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