

**BEREC opinion on the Draft Commission  
implementing decision amending Decision  
2007/116/EC as regards the introduction of an  
additional reserved number beginning with 116  
– new helpline for victims of violence against  
women**



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# 1 Introduction to 116 numbers

According to Article 93(8) of Directive 2018/1972 establishing the European Electronic Communications Code (hereinafter: EECC), Member States shall support the harmonisation of specific numbers or numbering ranges within the Union where it promotes both the functioning of the internal market and the development of pan-European services. Where it is necessary to address unmet cross-border or pan-European demand for numbering resources, the Commission shall, taking utmost account of the opinion of BEREC, adopt implementing acts harmonising specific numbers or numbering ranges. Those implementing acts shall be adopted in accordance with the examination procedure referred to in Article 118(4) of EECC.

In this respect, Article 1 of Commission Decision 2007/116/EC on reserving the national numbering range beginning with '116' for harmonised numbers for harmonised services of social value (hereinafter: Commission Decision) establishes that the numbering range beginning with '116' shall be reserved in national numbering plans for harmonised numbers for harmonised services of social value and the Commission Decision also provides a procedure for reserving national numbers for such services. The Annex to the Commission Decision) contains a list of specific numbers within this numbering range and the services for which each number is reserved. This list may be adapted in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 93(8) of EECC.

The Annex to the Commission Decision was amended by Commission Decision 2007/698/EC and Commission Decision 2009/884/EC respectively.

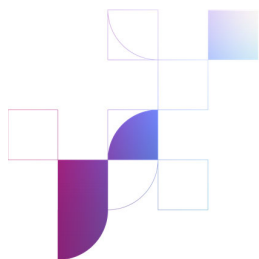
A harmonised number for harmonised services is a 6-digit number from the numbering range beginning with '116' of each national numbering plan of EU Member States.

A harmonised service of social value is a service meeting a common description to be accessed by individuals via a freephone number, which is potentially valuable to visitors from other countries, and which answers to a specific social need, in particular which contributes to the well-being or safety of citizens, or particular groups of citizens or helps citizens in difficulty.

As regards '116' numbers, there is a need to ensure that the common core set of conditions listed in Article 4 of Commission Decision is attached to any assignment of a '116' number.

The conditions are the following:

- (a) the service provides information, or assistance, or a reporting tool to citizens, or any combination thereof;
- (b) the service is open to all citizens without any requirement of prior registration;
- (c) the service is not time-limited;
- (d) there is no payment, or payment commitment as a pre-requisite to use the service;
- (e) the following activities are excluded during a call: advertisement, entertainment, marketing and selling, using the call for the future selling of commercial services.



The Annex to the Commission Decision indicates the name of the service, a description of the service and specific conditions attached to the right of use for those individual numbers. The description includes whom the service is aimed for and what services should be provided through the helpline.

In addition to the common requirements described above, there could be differences in services provided under the EU-wide number in different Member States.

It has to be highlighted that harmonised services of social value that are provided in one Member State using a harmonised number from the numbering range beginning with '116' (allocated by the national numbering plan of the respective Member State), are not reachable from abroad.

BEREC also notes that on the basis of the provisions of the Commission Decision, the listing of a new specific number and the new associated harmonised service of social value does not carry an obligation for Member States to ensure that the service in question is provided within their territory.



## **2 Background for 116016 number - helpline for victims of violence against women**

The German Presidency of the Council of the European Union launched in 2020 an initiative to reserve a harmonised EU-wide helpline number (116 016) for victims of violence against women.

In line with the procedural guidelines for requesting, reserving and assigning harmonised numbers, Member States have been asked to provide a signed declaration of commitment as well as a declaration of a helpline service provider to show that the provision of the service in the Member State under a harmonised EU-wide number would be feasible.

The initiative was presented at the meeting of the Communications Committee on 16 February 2021 to launch the comitology procedure for amending the Annex to the Commission Decision. No objections or comments were expressed by the members of the Communications Committee.

The Commission services confirmed that the service description and the request for a harmonised number is valid and that it received the demonstrated support by a majority of Member States. Therefore, the Communications Committee decided that an amendment to the Annex of the Commission Decision may be drafted.

Declarations of commitment for the new service named “helpline for victims of violence against women” have been provided by 15 Member States and 14 of these also provided a declaration by a helpline service provider.

In line with Article 93(8) of EEC, BEREC was requested on 10th August 2022 to provide an opinion on the draft Commission implementing decision amending Decision 2007/116/EC as regards the introduction of an additional reserved number beginning with 116.



### 3 BEREC opinion

Taking note of the declarations of commitment provided by the majority of Member States, accompanied by declarations by helpline service providers available to provide the service concerned, and in the light of the draft implementing decision prepared by the European Commission, BEREC concludes that it is necessary to amend the Annex to the Commission Decision.

The amendment is necessary in order to enable Member States to assign 116 016 harmonised number, and to enable helpline service providers to provide harmonised services of social value on such number, because only numbers in the numbering range beginning with '116' listed in the Annex can be used and, in such case, they shall be used only for services they have been reserved for.

For what falls within its institutional remit, BEREC agrees with the Commission proposal. BEREC takes note of the declarations of commitment provided by the majority of Member States, accompanied by declarations of helpline service organizations that intend to offer a helpline for victims of violence against women; the number 116 016 is available and can be used for the proposed service and BEREC does not see any technical or operational issues for the implementation 116 016- number in the electronic communication networks.

