

116 000 

The European
hotline number
for missing children

A practical guide for hotline operators



**Missing
Children
Europe**



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Overall introduction

What is Missing Children Europe (MCE)?

Missing Children Europe (MCE) is the European Federation for Missing and Sexually Exploited Children. As an umbrella organisation, it represents 24 Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) active in 16 Member States of the European Union and Switzerland¹. All MCE Members deal with cases of missing and/or sexually exploited children at grass-root level, and work in the field of prevention and support for victims and their families. For more information, please visit the official website: www.missingchildreneurope.eu.

The formal creation of the Federation took place in 2001 in the European Parliament in the presence of its President Nicole Fontaine and European Commission Vice-President António Vitorino. These two EU institutions acknowledged from the beginning the added value of a Europe-wide network representing Non-Governmental Organisations working on a national or regional level to tackle child disappearance and sexual exploitation in all its forms.

The overall mission of MCE is to:

1. ensure that in every EU Member State, the basic requirements in dealing with missing and sexually exploited children are met;
2. stimulate European and transnational cooperation to cope with the growing cross-border nature of the problem;
3. extend the level of its Members' activities to a highly standardised operational level;
4. assist its Members in dealing with national authorities to achieve speedy, efficient and accurate implementation of binding European legislation in relation to missing and sexually exploited children.

In order to fulfill its mission, the General Secretariat of Missing Children Europe undertakes all activities necessary to:

- ✓ share best practices among its Members;
- ✓ provide representation of its Members in the European institutions;
- ✓ develop European tools to combat the disappearance and sexual exploitation of children;
- ✓ cooperate with the Washington-based International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC) and with any other relevant international organisation.

Missing Children Europe promotes full respect for, and compliance with, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and takes Articles 6², 9³ and 34⁴ as the relevant framework for its activity.

Why is the work of MCE important?

In a Europe without borders, developing policies and projects for missing and sexually exploited children at a strictly national level has a very limited bearing. Children abducted in one country, can easily end up in another. A parent in a mixed marriage may decide to take the child back to his or her home country, abruptly ending all contact between the child and its other parent. Images of abuse produced in one country, can instantly be sold online in any other country. This is why one of the core aims of Missing Children Europe is to contribute to the development of effective European policies and projects. This guide is the result of one of the projects conducted by MCE and funded by the European Commission – Daphne Programme: “The European 116 000 network: towards a high quality service and effective cross-border cooperation”.

1. Situation in February 2011.

2. 1. States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life.
2. States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.
3. 1. States Parties shall ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child. Such determination may be necessary in a particular case such as one involving abuse or neglect of the child by the parents, or one where the parents are living separately and a decision must be made as to the child's place of residence.
2. In any proceedings pursuant to paragraph 1 of the present article, all interested parties shall be given an opportunity to participate in the proceedings and make their views known.
3. States Parties shall respect the right of the child who is separated from one or both parents to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis, except if it is contrary to the child's best interests.
4. Where such separation results from any action initiated by a State Party, such as the detention, imprisonment, exile, deportation or death (including death arising from any cause while the person is in the custody of the State) of one or both parents or of the child, that State Party shall, upon request, provide the parents, the child or, if appropriate, another member of the family with the essential information concerning the whereabouts of the absent member(s) of the family unless the provision of the information would be detrimental to the well-being of the child. States Parties shall further ensure that the submission of such a request shall of itself entail no adverse consequences for the person(s) concerned.
4. States Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:
(a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;
(b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;
(c) The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

MCE General Secretariat

In 2011, four professionals are working at the General Secretariat in Brussels. Depending on the projects undertaken by MCE in the future, additional professionals may be involved.



Francis HERBERT
Secretary General
francis.herbert@missingchildreneurope.eu

Francis was a partner in the Law Firm Allen & Overy, specialised in European Union law, and before that a research assistant at the University of Louvain (KUL) and a Legal Secretary at the ECJ. He is responsible for the overall management of the organisation. He reports to the President and to the Board of Directors.



Delphine MORALIS
Deputy Secretary General
delphine.moralis@missingchildreneurope.eu

Delphine worked at the European Youth Forum and at Cable Europe (ECCA), before becoming Project Manager at Child Focus and Acting Secretary General of Missing Children Europe (2006-2008). She is, jointly with the Secretary General, responsible for the coordination of the different projects undertaken by the organisation.



Valeria SETTI
EU Project Assistant
valeria.setti@missingchildreneurope.eu
116000@missingchildreneurope.eu

Valeria has a background in International Relations and human rights and worked for Human Rights Watch (Paris Office) and at the EU Fundamental Rights Agency in Vienna. She is working specifically on MCE's 116 000 project.



Hélène DÉCLOUX
**Assistant to
the General Secretariat**
helene.decloux@missingchildreneurope.eu

Hélène joined the Secretariat of MCE in March 2009. She has a BSc Degree in Philosophy and has held different positions as an assistant before joining MCE. She is responsible for the administrative needs of the Federation, including the organisation of the annual meetings.

What do we mean by “missing children”⁵?

Runaways (National / International)

Minors who run away from home, from the people responsible for their care or from the institution where they have been placed.

Abduction by a third person

Abductions of minors by anyone other than the parents or persons with parental authority.

International parental abduction⁶

Cases where a child is taken away to, or kept in, a country or place other than that of its normal residence by one or more of his/her parents or persons having parental authority against the other parent’s will or against the will of the person with parental authority.

Missing unaccompanied migrant minors

Disappearances of migrant children, nationals of a country with which there is no free movement of persons⁷, under the age of 18 who have been separated from both parents and are not being cared for by an adult, who by law is responsible for doing so⁸.

Lost, injured or otherwise missing children

Disappearances for no apparent reasons of minors who have got lost (e.g. little children at the seaside in summer) or who have been injured and cannot be found immediately (e.g. accidents during sport activities, at youth camps, etc.), as well as children whose reason for disappearing has not yet been determined.

What is the 116 000 hotline?

On 15 February 2007, the European Commission issued a Decision reserving 116 000 as **the hotline number for missing children in Europe**. The dedication of this number to missing children was a major step for Missing Children Europe and its Members, that had been campaigning for the introduction of such a number for many years. In 2009, the number was included in the revised Universal Services Directive⁹. With the 116 000 hotline, parents faced with a missing child in their home country or in another EU Member State will increasingly have access to the support they need, as **the number is connected to the national organisations specialising in dealing with these cases**. In particular, NGOs operating the service are specialised in helping runaways and lost children to safety, and in supporting the parents both emotionally and in practical ways to find their child. They also work for the prevention of further disappearances, and assist in liaising with the police and other competent authorities.

As research shows, the first hours after the disappearance of a child are of vital importance. Therefore having such an “easy to remember” telephone number at the disposal of parents across Europe is a vital link in the **immediate involvement of the responsible local authorities**.

By the beginning of 2011, the 116 000 number was operational in 13 European Member States:

- **Belgium:** Child Focus, member of MCE
- **Denmark:** Thora Center, member of MCE
- **France:** Fondation pour l’Enfance (116 000 enfants disparus), member of MCE
- **Greece:** The Smile of the Child, member of MCE
- **Hungary:** Kék Vonal, member of MCE
- **Italy:** Telefono Azzurro, member of MCE
- **The Netherlands:** Centrum Internationale Kinderontvoering, not member of MCE
- **Poland:** ITAKA, member of MCE
- **Portugal:** Instituto de Apoio à Criança, member of MCE
- **Romania:** Focus, member of MCE
- **Slovakia:** Linka detskej istoty, member of MCE
- **Spain:** Fundación ANAR, member of MCE
- **United Kingdom:** Missing People, member of MCE

More information on the 116 000 hotline is available at www.hotline116000.eu.

5. Definitions used for the different categories of missing are based on:

- Childscope (www.childscope.net): based upon the definitions used by various organisations active in the field of missing children, they have been discussed and agreed upon with all academics, NGO representatives and law enforcement authorities involved in the Childscope project.
- The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction;
- Council Resolution 97/C221/03 of 26 June 1997 on unaccompanied minors who are nationals of third countries;
- Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime;
- United Nations, General Assembly, Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions, A/56/333.

6. Please note that some NGOs operating the 116 000 hotline also deal with cases of national abductions by parents.

7. The countries with which there is free movement are those that belong to the Schengen area (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland in January 2011).

8. It is important to mention that hotlines are increasingly detecting the worrying phenomenon of children coming from EU Member States who move across Europe without being accompanied. While they may not be reported as missing, they suffer from poor - unsuitable living conditions, are often exploited and exposed to severe risks.

9. Directive 2002/22/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 March 2002 on universal service and users’ rights relating to electronic communications networks and services: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/internal_market/single_market_services/l24108h_en.htm

“The European 116 000 network: towards a high quality service and effective cross-border cooperation”: what is this project about?

While Commission Decision 2007/116/EC emphasises the need for people travelling across Europe to have the same services at their disposal through the same telephone numbers, the 13 organisations currently operating a 116 000 hotline offer various and different services when called for help in a case of disappearance. This is primarily due to their diverging structure, mission, historical background, etc. However, according to the principle “same number, same service” stated in the EC decision, when faced with a disappearance parents and children across Europe must be able to rely on the same level of quality support, whether at home or abroad.

Furthermore, on a transnational level, cooperation between NGOs dealing with a cross-border case of disappearance currently occurs on an ad hoc basis. The lack of systematic exchange of information and of standardised operational procedures often hampers the effectiveness of the service offered¹⁰. In order to provide for effective responses to the increasing amount of cross-border cases, it is essential that all NGOs operating a 116 000 hotline agree on common guidelines and procedures for cooperation.

With a view to improving the 116 000 service across Europe, MCE and its Members submitted the project entitled “*The European 116 000 network: towards a high quality service and effective cross-border cooperation*” for funding of the European Commission, Daphne Programme. The main objectives of the project are to:

- Harmonise the service delivery throughout the European Union, in order that parents and children may rely on the same quality and on the same help, no matter the country in which they call the hotline;
- Enhance the cooperation among the NGOs running the 116 000 hotline, in order that cases with a cross-border nature may be dealt with in a more efficient and effective manner.

10. It is very important to underline how the issue of cross-border cases of missing children is already and will become increasingly serious within the framework of the European Union. Due to the elimination of all border controls within the Schengen area (22 out of 27 Member States), and due to the increasing freedom of movement EU citizens can benefit from, it has been noticed how many cases of runaways or abducted children do concern the geographical territory of more than one country. It is nowadays very easy for a child to escape from home or from an institution in, for example, Belgium, and end up in France, Luxembourg, or the Netherlands. Similarly, it is also possible for a person abducting a child to bring her/him to another EU country without having to pass through a border control.

What is the aim of this guide & How to use it?

This guide “*116 000 The European hotline number for missing children – A practical guide for hotline operators. Minimum quality standards, cross-border procedures and tools*” represents one of the main deliverables of the project. It contains key recommendations and examples of existing practices that every NGO running, or wishing to run, the 116 000 hotline can draw inspiration from and make use of.

This guide is primarily conceived as a tool to be used in the day-to-day running of 116 000 hotlines. It has not been devised as a set of mandatory rules or as an exhaustive manual for a “perfect running” of the service. On the contrary, it should be seen as a living document that can and will be changed, updated, and improved on the basis of experience.

Who are the direct beneficiaries of this guide?

The direct beneficiaries of this guide are:

1. the staff members of all organisations running the hotline,
 2. the staff members of all organisations planning to run the hotline in the future.
1. In the NGOs already running the hotline, it is meant for the training of and direct use by:
 - A. **Hotline operators:** those who have the first contact with children, parents of missing children and people calling to report a sighting. The guide addresses their needs in so far as it reports some general suggestions on how to handle a call, as well as concrete examples of standard questions to ask callers - depending on the case;
 - B. **Case managers:** those who follow up the first contact and deal with the entire case¹¹. As a response to their specific needs, this publication proposes examples of actions to undertake in case of cross-border cases; a model of cooperation with the police; the documents to be used to start a cooperation with another 116 000 NGO located in another EU country.
 2. As for its relevance for staff members of all NGOs which are planning to run the 116 000 hotline in the future, this publication will help them prepare for launching the service. In particular, it will help them understand what the main obstacles are, how these can be overcome, and which examples of practice exist to draw inspiration from.

11. Please note that the distinction between hotline operators and case managers is not pertinent to all NGOs running the 116 000 service. Some of them have the same staff members responding to calls and managing the cases.

For both categories of beneficiaries, this guide presents concrete suggestions and recommendations to improve the service quality of the hotline, as well as important information on how to strengthen the international cooperation among NGOs, especially within the MCE network. It suggests in particular well-established procedures for cross-border cooperation – which proves to be crucial in many cases of disappearances that are not confined within the borders of a single Member State.

How was this guide developed?

In order to map the existing standards and to be able to develop some guidelines for improving the 116 000 *modus operandi* and cross-border cooperation, a consulting firm was called upon to conduct interviews with NGOs running the hotline. Bain & Company, a world leading global strategy consulting firm, participated in the project as *pro bono* associate partner from the very beginning. A staff member of Bain¹² took part in the three meetings that were organised, and conducted the operational analysis in the course of the project. In particular, between March and May 2010 Natacha conducted 22 interviews¹³ with 11 NGOs operating the 116 000 service. In most cases, the interviews were conducted with two persons from each organisation: one hotline operator (the person who first answers the calls) and one manager (responsible for the management of cases).

The analysis conducted by Bain & Company has laid the foundations for this guide, which has been based on the evidence collected through interviews as well as on preliminary recommendations formulated by Bain.

12. Natacha Defeche, Marketing and Communication Manager, Bain & Company Belgium, www.bain.com.

13. Of which 4 face-to-face interviews, and 18 by telephone.

1. Common minimum quality standards in operating 116 000 hotlines

1.1 Introduction

Research shows that all NGOs operating the 116 000 service are investing a lot of time, money and energy in running it, and are fully dedicated to help finding missing children and supporting their families. Nevertheless, they represent a heterogeneous group, diverging as far as their mission statement, size, history, cultural background and funding are concerned. Therefore, it is understandable that each of them offers a different degree of service when it comes to operating the 116 000 hotline. However, despite the natural differences characterising each NGO in charge of the hotline, it is of the utmost importance that the service provided by the 116 000 hotline is the same all across Europe. In particular, missing children and their families should be able to rely on the same minimum quality service, no matter in which European Union country they are benefiting from it.

Within this scope, the following chapter presents some key elements referred to as *common minimum quality standards*, that organisations running or wishing to initiate a 116 000 hotline should comply with. In particular, it lists some elements that a 116 000 hotline should observe, both on the basis of the Decision of the EC on 116 000 as well as on the research conducted in the framework of the EU funded project “*The European 116 000 network: towards a high quality service and effective cross-border cooperation*”. Moreover, some recommendations and examples of existing good practices are provided, aiming at helping the organisations which do not yet meet the necessary criteria to run a 116 000 hotline to find solutions to possible obstacles and problems.

To reach common minimum quality standards in operating the hotline, this guide presents:

- **General principles:** reference standards for organisations operating the 116 000 hotline.
- **Basic requirements:** the key mandatory requirements every hotline has to comply with.
- **Mid-term objectives:** additional elements that should be achieved in the mid-term in order to increase the quality of the service offered to parents and children.
- **Tools:** template documents aimed at helping hotline operators responding to calls and registering information. These documents will also be available on the 116 000 website: www.hotline116000.eu, where professionals will be able to download and use them in their daily work at the hotline.

1.2 General principles

1. The organisation operating the hotline must be an **officially registered organisation**.
2. It must have **transparent organisational structure, activities and management**.
3. Its mission statement must **make reference to missing children** and refer to the protection of the rights of the child as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC).
4. It must have **secure and audited funds**.
5. It must work according to **clear operational guidelines**.
6. It must work on a **complementary basis with competent authorities in prevention and intervention** in cases of missing children.

1.3 Basic requirements

1. **The service must deal with all categories of missing children**
Given the nature of the service, the 116 000 hotlines shall be competent and accessible for the 5 categories of missing children:
 - runaways;
 - parental abductions;
 - criminal abductions;
 - lost, injured or otherwise missing children;
 - missing unaccompanied migrant minors¹⁴.However, it might be the case that in some countries the NGO to which the service is allocated does not deal with all categories. In this case, a possible solution could be to cooperate with (an)other organisation(s) in order to complement the scope of activity and cover all the categories of missing children.
2. **The service must be continuously available: 24/7, nationwide** (see EC Decision¹⁵)
In order to make the hotline continuously available, there are several possible options to put in place:
 - Deal with all the calls in-house: assure 24/7 availability internally;
 - Transfer calls after working hours to another organisation that answers the line outside office hours: other NGO, telephone switchboard, police etc.¹⁶;
 - Transfer calls to the cell phones of staff members who are on duty working from home.

14. Please refer to page 5 of this publication for the Missing Children Europe definitions of these categories of missing children.

15. Annex to Commission Decision 2007/698/EC amending Decision 2207/116/EC, OJ L 284/31 of 30.10.2007.

16. In this case, a written cooperation agreement has to be signed between organisations.

3. **The service must take calls coming both from children and parents/family**

Given the nature of the service, the hotline must offer support to children calling, as well as parents/relatives. Furthermore, in cases of calls coming from children which are not pertinent to the scope of the 116 000 service, the hotline operator must direct the child to, or provide contact details of, the appropriate service/organisation/helpline.

4. **Organisations will attempt to their best endeavour to provide the service in the national language(s) and at least in English**

Also in this case there are several possible options:

- Hire staff that can speak English;
- Train staff in English;
- Cooperate with a network of pro bono English-speaking volunteers.

5. **All staff members (remunerated and volunteers) must:**

- A. Receive a **training** corresponding to their task/function:
- Frontline operators:
 - Answering the phone;
 - Listening actively, synthesising information;
 - Knowing how to handle irrelevant calls, jokes;
 - Understanding basic IT matters;
 - Using the organisation's database;
 - Understanding data protection/privacy issues; ...
 - Case managers:
 - Offering emotional/social support;
 - Understanding legal issues regarding missing children;
 - Understanding and applying the cooperation protocol with relevant authorities (see Annex II for examples of existing practices);
 - Understanding basic IT matters;
 - Using the organisation's database;
 - Understanding data protection/privacy issues;
 - Undertaking specific readings, case studies, role-play, workshops;

- Undertaking continuous supervision and sharing experience with other case managers;
- Receive training on cross-border cooperation among 116 000 organisations, if in charge of cross-border cases; ...

- B. Have a basic understanding of **Missing Children Europe**, its mission and its members.

- C. Be bound by **contract** and have to comply with professional secrecy.

- D. Be screened for **sex offences/criminal record**, in accordance with the national system¹⁷.

- E. Work according to **clear operational guidelines** – adopted by the organisation.

6. **The service must provide for free social, legal, emotional and administrative support** (outsourced, if necessary)

Each 116 000 hotline must define the support given in the context of the cultural, legal and historical background of their country. Support must be given free of charge. See Annex I for examples of existing practices of additional support offered.

7. **The service must offer parents/legal guardians and children follow-up care after the case is closed**

- In-house: home visit, visit to the centre, calls, e-mails, etc.
- Redirect to other services that can assure a follow-up (116 111 helplines, psychological support, social services, etc.)

17. Ideally, a regular screening should be conducted throughout the entire employment period.

8. The service must cooperate with relevant authorities, including law enforcement and central authority, on the basis of a written cooperation protocol

Cooperation between the organisation operating the 116 000 hotline, law enforcement representatives and other competent authorities is one of the key features of the service.

In particular, organisations must consult with and get approval from relevant authorities before disseminating to the wider public any picture of and/or information on a missing child. Annex II lists some examples of existing practices for implementing such cooperation. Furthermore, this guide presents the European Model Protocol of Cooperation (p. 28) as a sample of written agreement the cooperation can be based on.

9. The service must rely on an organised system of information classification and data storage

A designated system should be used to collect, classify and store information for every call the hotline receives and every case opened. This will allow for easier management of all information and for a more effective organisation of related activities. See Annex III for concrete examples of existing systems you can draw inspiration from.

10. The service must provide for controllable and manageable dissemination of information

If information on a missing child is disseminated with the aim to collect sightings from the general public, it must be done in a controllable and manageable way, without damaging the child and preserving her/his best interest to the greatest extent possible. In case of missing children pictures which are circulated on the internet, the date, the 116 000 number, as well as the country of origin of the child should be indicated on the picture. Pictures should be immediately deleted from the internet once the child is found.

11. The service must ensure confidentiality

Hotline operators must observe confidentiality rules in dealing with information given by the callers, always with a view to promoting and ensuring the child's best interest as referred to by the UNCRC.

12. Organisations operating the hotline must communicate to the general public the specific features of the service, and must clearly specify what kind of support they can and cannot provide

In order to best serve the needs of missing children and their families who call the hotline to receive first-hand support in a moment of crisis, the operator must clearly explain to them what the organisation can do for them, and which kind of help they can be given. It is important not to create misunderstandings/to add frustration, given the significant emotional stress the callers are facing in such circumstances.

13. The service must be operated according to the principle of the best interest of the child

As it is also stated in the third general principle, all activities carried out by NGOs within the framework of the 116 000 hotline must be child-centred, and must be in accordance with the best interest of the child, as referred to by the UNCRC¹⁸.

18. For a more detailed analysis of the principle of the best interest of the child, see the UNHCR Guidelines on Determining the Best Interest of the Child, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, May 2008, Geneva (Switzerland).

1.4 Mid-term objectives¹⁹

Organisations operating the 116 000 hotline shall:

1. **Re-direct the calls that are not pertinent to the 116 000 hotline's scope to appropriate services**

Research shows that quite often people call the 116 000 to ask for help in cases that are not related to missing children, nor to the scope of the 116 000 service. In these cases, hotline operators have a social responsibility to provide contact details of, or re-direct the caller to, other competent hotlines and/or organisations.

2. **Build strategic partnerships with other relevant 116 numbers**
As well as re-directing non-pertinent calls to other services (see point 1. above), 116 000 hotlines are encouraged to cooperate closely with other 116 numbers, insofar as their scope is complementary to that of the European hotline for missing children.²⁰

Examples of relevant helpline/hotlines are:

- **116 111**: the European Harmonised Number for Child Helplines;
- **116 123**: the European Emotional Support Helplines.

3. **Work on a complementary basis with the Child Alert System²¹, where it exists**

It is important that, when a Child Alert System is in place, the organisation running the 116 000 service effectively co-operates with the organisation managing the Child Alert System. In fact, in several countries the Child Alert is run by the police, whereas an NGO is in charge of the 116 000 hotline. Experience in a number of countries has established that there might be situations in which people are reluctant to call the police first when they want to report on a case of a missing child (for example when they are in an illegal situation or involved in criminal activities but still want to help in a case): they prefer to call the NGO through the 116 000 and benefit from the possibility to stay anonymous. However, it is essential that the hotline is linked to a Child Alert System when the latter is available, in order that worrying disappearances may be advertised to the public and an alert launched.

4. **Make use of other means of communication, in particular 116 000 text messaging**

Given the great accessibility and diffusion of text messaging, Missing Children Europe and its Members will undertake the necessary efforts for the 116 000 number to be reserved also for a missing children SMS European service.

19. Hotlines agreed to achieve the mid-term objectives within one year from the practical training for operators, organised in Lisbon on 5-8 April 2011.

20. Furthermore, cooperation with law enforcement authorities and the 112 European Emergency Number is essential.

21. Child Alert systems are modes and models of broadcasting and disseminating information in order to involve the public to obtain useful information on worrying child and adolescent disappearances. Different broadcasting and dissemination tools are generally used (alone or in combination) such as e-mails, SMS on mobile phones, electronic advertising displays, illuminated signs on highways, flash information on radio and television, etc. A child alert is "a message that conveys information about a recently missing or abducted person, usually displayed on electronic signs positioned along roadways and broadcast by mass media, intended to enlist the public's help in finding the abducted person and often in catching the abductor" (www.thefreedictionary.com/Amber+Alert).



1.5 “Common Minimum Quality Standards” Tools

1. Recommendations in terms of general attitude
2. Questions to ask
 - Examples of general questions
 - Runaways: recommendations and questions
 - Parental abduction: recommendations and questions
 - Abduction by a third person: recommendations and questions
 - Missing unaccompanied migrant minors: recommendations and questions
 - Lost, injured or otherwise missing: recommendations and questions
3. Testimony report template
4. European model protocol of cooperation between law enforcement and civil society organisations in cases of missing children



Recommendations in terms of general attitude

On a general basis, all telephone operators need to be trained to very high standards on how to receive calls. Please note that this section only provides for a few basic recommendations concerning the general attitude to adopt when responding to a call. It does not represent an exhaustive list of listening skills, nor is it intended to replace the essential training all operators must follow in order to be able to deal effectively with any call.

- ✓ When speaking to parents, always **remain calm**. Parents whose child is missing may be panicking, may raise their voices and sometimes may appear to be uncooperative or angry. Remain calm and patient when speaking to them.
- ✓ **Receiving a call about missing children can be very delicate and difficult**. You should remember that relatives of the missing child are under a lot of emotional stress, and are not always able to provide a coherent picture of the situation. However, this does not mean that they are not telling the truth. **It is important to take the call in an open manner, without judging and without giving direct advice.**
- ✓ When receiving a call from parents and relatives, try to give **emotional support**. You can help the parent/relative searching for the child more efficiently, as well as help them feel better.
- ✓ **Never sound or be judgmental** towards parents whose child has gone missing, even if there appears to be some negligence or neglect on their part.
- ✓ Try to help the caller to put aside anger, fear, pain or guilt. Help him/her structure the information and facts in order to have a **clear picture of the disappearance and of what to do next**.
- ✓ **Start by asking open ended questions** in order to get as much information as possible, then go back over the information, ask for details and confirm the accuracy of the information gathered.
- ✓ Attempt to get **as many details as possible**, including names and telephone numbers of friends or relatives that may have information on the child's whereabouts. Try to find out what has been done so far to deal with the disappearance. In particular, find out whether the fact has been reported to the police.
- ✓ **Explain that information may be provided to the police** in order to assist in the investigation, unless it goes against the best interest of the child.
- ✓ Offer your help in
 - **reporting to the police** if the caller had tried but the police refused;
 - **maintaining communication** with the police;
 - thinking of other places to look for the child;
 - thinking of additional persons to involve in the search.



- ✓ **Explain the role of your organisation** and the type of services and support that are offered. Be clear also about its limits (i.e. the organisation does not have the power to investigate – this is the role of the police).
- ✓ **Keep parents informed** on what the organisation is doing to assist their case.
- ✓ Once the child is found, **offer help for family reunification**:
 - offer emotional support to the parents;
 - meet with the child and give her/him the needed support;
 - in case of conflict within the family, offer mediation between the child and the parents.

Never assume anything! Treat each case individually!



Examples of general questions

This section provides you with a few examples of questions you can ask in order better to understand the case, to get a clear picture of the disappearance, and to help the child(ren) or the family in the best way possible. Please consider that these are not universal questions that might be useful for all kinds of calls. Depending on the specific features of the case, it may be necessary to assess whether these examples of questions are relevant. In any case, remember that the most important thing is to build and maintain the caller's trust.

Information about the caller (if s/he is willing to give it)

- Name and surname
- Contact details (address, phone number, mobile number)
- What is your relation to the child? (Person with legal custody, family, third person, etc.)

Information about the missing child

- Name and surname (and nickname, if any)
- Date of birth (if not obtainable, age)
- Gender
- Origin and nationality
- Address, habitually resident with:
- Spoken languages
- Disabilities (physical or mental), illnesses the child is suffering from, medical treatment
- Physical description: age, hair colour and length, eye colour, height, weight, clothes last seen wearing, special physical traits (i.e. moles, scars, spectacles/glasses etc.)
- School, class
- Mobile phone number, e-mail address, Facebook, Hi5 or Netlog account, etc.
- Recent picture, if available

Information about the parents

- Name and surname
- Contact details (address, phone number, mobile number, job and working address)
- Family status (marriage, cohabitation, legally separated, non-legally separated, divorce, any quarrel over child custody?)

Information about the disappearance

- Type of disappearance
- Date, hour and place of disappearance (ask very specific information)
- When and where was the child last seen and by whom? Was s/he alone then?
- How long before the child was located and where was the child found the last time?
- Has the child ever gone missing before?
- What do you believe could have happened to the child? Where do you think the child may be? Is there a possibility s/he could be abroad?
- Did something special happen before the disappearance?
- Did the child disappear alone? If no, with whom could s/he be?
- Have you filed a missing child report with the police (number of report, police department in charge of the case, contact details police officer in charge of the case)?
- Items the child has with her/him: ID, money, mobile phone (ask for the number), clothes, medicines, valuable items, other objects.



Runaways: recommendations and questions

Because of its very nature, the 116 000 hotline receives calls concerning runaway cases both from parents (or other persons responsible for/worried about a missing child) and from children or young persons who have run away or are considering doing so.

Runaways

“Minors who run away from home, from the people responsible for their care or from the institution they have been placed (Note: including residence during holidays, ...)”

When the caller is a parent or another person looking for the child, your first task as a telephone operator is to help the caller summarise what has happened and what has been done so far to find the child. This is not always easy. Parents are very worried and often are so agitated that they may not sound coherent. Anger or guilt feeling can further jeopardize the clarity of the picture. Therefore, you need to help the person express these emotions and deal with them in order to act effectively. The main aim is to help the person think about the ways the child can be found. Cases differ greatly, and therefore it is vital to listen carefully to the caller in order to be able to assist by asking the right questions.

The following questions might help putting the picture together and finding a lead in the search:

- Has the disappearance been reported to the police?
- What makes the person believe that the child has run away?
- Have other alternatives been checked (lost, over-stayed somewhere, . . .)?
- When was the child last seen? / How long ago did the child run away?
- Has there been any previous sign indicating that the child was considering leaving?
- Does the caller know who the child may be with, or who may have information on the child's whereabouts? If so, have those people been asked?
- Is there any specific reason to believe that the child is in immediate danger (gone with someone, suicidal, ill or disabled, etc.)?

In most cases, the actual search is done by the police. However, after the first support provided over the phone, your role as case manager may be to:

- Keep in touch with the parents;
- Support the parents emotionally and in any practical way necessary (this can be done by arranging appropriate help/redirection to other competent services);
- Make sure the police are actively searching;
- If there is an emergency concerning the child's safety, make sure that immediate and effective action is taken;
- Offer follow-up when the child is found: this may include, inter alia, arranging mediation or family therapy.

If the child has a mobile phone, we advise parents not to call repeatedly but to send a message that can read along the lines: *“we are worried about your safety. Please send us a message so that we know you're okay”*. In more than half the cases of runaways, the child will SMS back to the parent and open communications. You can also encourage the parents to establish a contact with the child through email and social networks (such as facebook; twitter...).



You might also receive a call from a worried person who is afraid that the child may run away in the near future. What you will have to do in this case is to:

- Find out what this worry is based on;
- Help the person to identify what may cause the intention of the child to run away;
- Help the person to work out a preventive strategy;
- Offer direct contact for the child;
- Offer mediation or family therapy if necessary.

Remember that you play an important role in mediating between parents and children. You might also contribute to the **prevention of cases of runaways**.

From the first telephone contact, always reassure both the parents and the child that there are solutions to their conflicts – other than throwing the child out from home/running away from home. Keep in mind your role and the capacity you have to mediate within the family, and remind parents that:

- They should encourage communication and dialogue within the family in order to avoid misunderstandings and serious conflicts.
- They should contribute to building a positive and healthy atmosphere within the household. Children are much more likely to run away from something than to run towards something.
- They should not be afraid of their child trusting people from outside the family. Sometimes it is much easier for them to talk about private matters with an uncle, a teacher, a neighbour, than with their own parents.
- They should help the child be self-confident and positive about her/his relationship to people and to life.

The hotline can also be called by children and young people who consider running away or have already done so.

If a **run-away child** calls the hotline, it is extremely important that the trust s/he expressed by calling the hotline can be maintained. When a run-away child does not provide her/his name and does not seem willing to cooperate, you should not insist. The child needs time to build trust towards you before s/he will accept help.

You should never mislead the child or make promises that cannot be kept. Although it is extremely important for the child to get to a safe place, you should not deceive the child, promising something that cannot be fulfilled (e.g. “your parents will be extremely happy and there will be no consequence of your running away”, or “we can definitely arrange placement to a different care home”). In any case, children are partners in deciding about their own future. A child, who is desperate enough to run away from home or from care, will very quickly run away again if s/he finds that the situation has not improved upon returning home. If you promise something that s/he cannot have, the child will not trust you enough to call back again.

If the child is not in great danger, you should do everything to obtain the consent of the child before anyone acts on her/his behalf. Losing the trust of the child may expose her/him to more risk. Remember that your primary consideration is always the child’s safety.



When talking to the child, you:

- Do not question what the child says;
- Need to find out, without interrogating
 - what is s/he running away from
 - does s/he feel threatened
 - does s/he have a place to be at
 - are there people s/he trusts and who are they (trustworthy?)
 - what would s/he consider as help;
- Need to support the child emotionally;
- Offer help in thinking over
 - if there is a place that the child would accept as a temporary place to stay
 - is there a person in the child's surrounding from whom the child would accept help
 - what sort of consequence would /could each decision have;
- Offer/suggest the way to practical help
 - make sure that the child finds a safe temporary place to stay
 - in settling the conflict that made the child run away
 - mediation between the child and the parents, care persons
 - attempt to restore relations
 - follow up on the relationship of the child with parents, care persons;
- Contact the relatives and pass on a message, if the child requests this;
- Offer to call back, if the child can and is willing to provide a telephone number, and time is needed for arrangements;
- Offer help with the necessary arrangement for the child's return from hiding.

If the child is safe, you must try to find out, without interrogating, what the child believes necessary for her/his return or what alternative solutions the child would accept.

If the child does not accept help during the first call, it will be necessary to assess the risk s/he is exposed to while on the run. Depending on the level of risk a decision of breaking confidentiality may be necessary. This decision has to be taken in consultation with at least one other person (head of team/supervisor...depending on the structure of the organisation). In emergency cases the police may trace the call to find the child. Remember that you have to work out the best solution for the child (which does not essentially correspond to the return to the situation he ran away from).

It might happen that further action other than the telephone consulting is needed. In this case it is necessary to:

- Assess the level of risk the child is exposed to and decide whether or not confidentiality should be broken (see above);
- If the child is safe, make the necessary arrangements for the child's return or other placement;
- Offer follow-up in every case, including family mediation or therapy – if necessary – in order to prevent further impetus/eliminate the causes of the child running away.



Research shows that a consistent percentage of runaways run away from care and institutions. **Children running from care are just as much at risk as those running from a family.** However, there are a few specific issues that may justify different ways of helping the child.

- Children in care are more vulnerable in general and more at risk of being targeted for exploitation.
- It is even more difficult to build the trust of a child running away from care and it is extremely easy to lose it.
- Often children running away from care run back to their families. If confronted with such a case, you need to help the child investigate the possibilities of finding a less risky way to keep in touch with her/his family. If the child accepts, you need to establish relations and work together with the care home and the guardian's office.
- Children often have the (mis)perception that they are at a safe place. When in contact with them, you need to investigate whether it is true, and help the child to have a realistic view on the level of safety of the place. You must also be very careful in finding out what exactly the role of the person providing a place for the child is.
- Children in care have usually gone through a lot already. Remember that it is possible to reason with them, to make them understand and consider the different realistic possibilities they have with regard to their situation. With specific regard to their safety, especially in a situation of emergency, you can come to compromise/negotiation in the interest of their own safety. The settlement of the child situation should involve the person with parental rights as soon as the child agrees to provide her/his contact details.
- It is almost always necessary to offer aftercare when the child is found or agrees to return. This may include facilitating the re-arrangement of the child's placement, working out a new order for family contact, starting mediation between the child and her/his carers, arranging therapy or other ways to overcome her/his problems.



Parental abduction: recommendations and questions

In this section, a distinction is made between:

1. A call from a parent who **fears an imminent abduction** by the other parent (not yet happened)
2. A call concerning an **actual parental abduction** (already happened)

1. Preventive case

- **Take note of the general information:** Who is the parent; who is/are the child(ren) (name and date of birth); why s/he fears the abduction by the other parent; does s/he think the child might be brought to another country (if so, which one)?
- **Try to assess the overall situation. Examples of questions to ask the caller:**
 - How is the family situation? (Married or not, recognising children or not)?
 - What is the legal situation? Who has custody/guardianship of the child? Is there a judgement/court order concerning custody and residence?
 - If yes, what has been agreed concerning visits and the other terms of custody?
 - What nationality are the parents and the child?
 - Why do you think an abduction would occur?
 - Where do you think the other parent would go and why?
 - Is there any sign that an abduction is being prepared?
 - The other parent just ended the relationship?
 - The other parent has started a relationship with someone abroad?
 - The other parent has changed work/work number?
 - Has some money in the account been removed?
 - Was a passport for the child requested by the other parent?
 - Was the lease recently terminated? Was the house sold?
 - Are there testimonies from neighbours, relatives or friends?
 - Has an abduction happened before?
 - Was there a remarkable change in the behaviour of the other parent?
 - Is there any other specific indication (e.g. airline tickets already booked)?

Parental Abduction

“Cases where a child is taken away to or kept in a country or place other than that of its normal residence by one or more of his/her parents or persons having parental authority against another parent’s will or against the will of the person with parental authority”.



Prevention tips:

Again, as in the case of runaways, do keep in mind that you have a key role to play in preventing parental abduction, especially by being able to give the right suggestion and support to parents. These are some of the things you can suggest to the parent who is calling the 116 000 hotline because s/he fears an imminent abduction:

- Consult a lawyer to obtain legal advice concerning the parental situation. Ask also for specific preventive measures with regard to the other parent, to be given by the judge: such as an order banning them from leaving the country with the child; the ban to request the child passport, etc.
- Inform the people around you and your child (school, colleagues at work, consulate and public administration of your district/town) about your suspicion.
- Collect all relevant information about the other parent's:
 - Change of behaviour (buying/selling of property; change of job...)
 - Concrete moves (buying of train/airplane tickets; application for a job abroad...)
- Keep your child's passport in a safe place
- If your child has double nationality, get in touch with the authorities (Consulate, etc.) of the other country of which s/he is a national.

2. Actual case

- **Take note of the general information:** Who is the parent; who is/are the child(ren); is this really an international child abduction? Do we know where the child is? Otherwise, do we at least know to which country the child was abducted?
- **Try to assess the overall situation:**
 - How is the family situation? (Married or not, recognising children or not)?
 - What is the legal situation? Who has custody/guardianship of the child? Is there a verdict/court order concerning custody and residence?
 - If yes, what has been agreed upon about visits, and the other terms of custody?
 - What nationality are the parents and the child?
- **Further questions:**
 - Where do you think they have gone?
 - When did they go?
 - In what circumstances did they leave?
 - When was the last time there was communication with the other parent and how did the conversation go?
 - When was the last time there was communication with the child and how was the child feeling?
 - Have you tried to contact the other parent? Is her/his telephone on?
 - Has this happened before (is the parent usually late in returning the child)?
 - Do you have any contact with shared relatives, mutual friends?
 - Has a report been filed with the police?

In general, it is very important that you keep a **neutral position** throughout the entire follow up of the case, without taking one of the parents' side. You should act according to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) respecting the interests of the child first. Sometimes it can be difficult to follow this perspective, as you will often get only one side of the story. Nevertheless, remember that **you are not the defender of one parent**.



Abduction by a third person: recommendations and questions

When you receive a call concerning an abduction by a third person, it is of crucial importance that you try to get as much information as possible about the abductor (apart from the information regarding the child, for which you can refer to the questions sample of page 16). Please consider that every case of criminal abduction has to be handled by the police, who take the lead in the investigation process.

Information about the third person:

- Name and surname
- Contact details (address, phone number, mobile number)
- Physical description, picture if available
- Clothing
- Information about the vehicle (if pertinent)
- Type of relationship between the child and this third person
- Is the life of the child in danger?
- Have the police been contacted? (if not, suggest to do so immediately).

Abduction by a Third person

"Abductions of minors by anyone other than the parents or the persons with parental authority".



Missing unaccompanied migrant minors: recommendations and questions²²

Cases of missing unaccompanied migrant minors are extremely difficult to handle.

Information about these children, their name, origin, and age is often scarce and not proved. They hardly have any connection with people in the country where they arrive (they are usually hosted in centres), and are subject to language obstacles. You can find below a few basic questions to start with when receiving a call concerning such a case.

Missing unaccompanied migrant minors

“Disappearances of migrant children, nationals of a country with which there is no free movement of persons, under the age of 18 who have been separated from both parents and are not being cared for by an adult, who by law is responsible for doing so”

- Identity of the child: Is the child known under any other name?
Are there one or more possible dates of birth?
- Is the child an asylum seeker?
- Is s/he going to school? Has s/he followed any class/activity at the centre?
- Does s/he have connections inside or outside the center?
- Does s/he have a tutor assigned? (in that case, get in touch with the tutor)
- Is this disappearance contrary to her/his normal behaviour?
- Are there clear signs of runaway? (he has taken clothes, personal belongings)
- Is there any signal for a worrying case?
- Is there enough information to find her/him? (clear identity or recent picture)

22. It is important to mention that hotlines are increasingly detecting the worrying phenomenon of children coming from EU Member States who move across Europe without being accompanied. While they may not be reported as missing, they suffer from poor - unsuitable living conditions, are often exploited and exposed to severe risks.



Lost, injured or otherwise missing: recommendations and questions

As the definition of this category of missing children says, it can be that a child goes missing without apparent reason. In this case, you will not be able to ask very specific and targeted questions to the person calling the hotline. However, you will ask the caller whether s/he has already contacted the police and, if the answer is no, suggest they immediately report the disappearance. Besides the general information regarding the child (see page 16), there are some key elements you should be able to assess during a first contact:

- Have you searched in all the places within the house where a child could fit (not only where you think that they are likely to be)?
- Has the child disappeared in the past (tendency to wander etc.)?
- Are there any water basins/waterways (lakes, rivers, wells...), busy streets or other potential dangers in the surrounding area?
- If there is water, does the child know not to go near the water or does s/he know how to swim?
- Is the child able to communicate and ask for help?
- Does s/he know her/his name, address, telephone number?
- Have you spoken to neighbours or friends of the child that may have seen her/him?
- Have you checked the areas next to the places s/he was seen last?
- What was the child wearing when s/he disappeared?
- Does the child have any identifying marks (moles, scars, spectacles/glasses etc.)
- Have you spoken with emergency services, local hospitals etc. (to see if they have located the child).

Lost, injured or otherwise missing

"Disappearances for no apparent reasons of minors who have got lost (e.g. little children at the seaside in summer) or hurt themselves and cannot be found immediately (e.g. accidents during sport activities, at youth camps, etc.), as well as children whose reason for disappearing has not yet been determined"



Testimony report template

This document contains a list of questions that can help you when receiving a call by a person who has seen a missing child and wants to report some information.

1. General Instructions

- Make sure the person gives you **as concrete information as possible**. In particular, s/he should be clear about:
 - ☐ The moment in which the child was seen
 - ☐ The location where this happened
 - ☐ Her/his identity
 - ☐ The identity of the child
- Take note of the way you received the testimony:
 - ☐ Phone
 - ☐ E-mail
 - ☐ Fax
 - ☐ Other
- Ask **open questions** instead of yes/no-questions (e.g. "how do you think the child felt?" Instead of "was the child scared?")
- Whether or not **anonymity** can be granted depends on national legislation. However, it is important that you convince the caller to stay reachable to the investigators, in order for them to be able to call back for more details.
- The testimony should be **immediately transmitted** to the competent authorities.

2. Questions Regarding The Child

Here is a sample of questions you can ask the caller in order to get **clear information about the child**:

- Which child are we talking about?
- Do you know the child?
- How did you recognise the child?
 - ☐ Through posters
 - ☐ Through television
 - ☐ Other
- Description of the child:
 - ☐ Height
 - ☐ Hair colour & length
 - ☐ Eye colour
 - ☐ Skin colour
 - ☐ Hairstyle
 - ☐ Age estimate
 - ☐ Distinguishing gestures (body marks, build, under alcohol or illegal substance abuse, clean/dirty, sad/happy, etc.)
 - ☐ Clothes
 - ☐ Other details?



3. Description Of The Situation

Try to collect **as many details as possible concerning the sighting**:

- Where did you see the child? (precise location)
- When did you see the child? (precise moment)
- In what circumstances did you see the child?
- Was the child alone or accompanied? If accompanied, give description of people s/he was with.
- Could the child do what s/he wanted?
- Did you talk to the child?
- What attracted your attention?
- Was the child in a vehicle? Do you have any information about it (number plate; etc.)?
- Other details?

4. Contact Details Of The Caller

Be sure you can get clear information about the person who is contacting the hotline, upon her/his agreement:

- Name and surname
- Contact details (address, phone number, mobile number)
- What is the relationship with the child? (Person with legal custody, family, third person, etc.)



European Model Protocol of Cooperation between Law Enforcement and Civil Society Organisations in Cases of Missing Children²³

Preamble

Chapter I - General Provisions

Chapter II - Description of responsibilities

Chapter III - Exchange of data and Protection of personal data

Chapter III - Other forms of cooperation

Chapter IV - Final Provisions

Preamble

[*name of the civil society organisation*] represented by [*name of the legal representative of the organisation*]

and

[*name of the law enforcement unit*] represented by [*name of the legal representative of law enforcement*]

Hereinafter referred to as 'the Parties',

Aware of the increasing number of cases of missing children,

Aware of the need for an efficient cooperation between them in order to enhance the fight against the phenomenon of missing children,

Deeming it useful to be able to share their expertise and experience in the field of missing children,

Considering the Council Resolution on the contribution of civil society in finding missing or sexually exploited children (2001/C 283/01),

Bearing in mind the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union²⁴,

The mission(s) of [*name of the civil society organisation*] being [*description of missions*]
HAVE AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

Note: these provisions are suggested as guidelines and may be changed substantially to the wishes of the Parties concerned.

23. "Cooperation between civil society organisations and law enforcement services in the area of missing and sexually exploited children: possibilities and limits from a European legal perspective", G. Vermeulen and H. De Pauw (Ed.); Maklu 2004, pp 90-95.

24. This reference may not be operational in the UK and in Poland



Chapter I – General provisions

Article 1

The Parties hereby establish an agreement of cooperation in cases of missing children.
Note: one or more types of missing children depending on the activities of each Party may replace the term missing children.

Article 2

In general, the Parties shall respect human rights and the rights of the child in particular. Pursuant to article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and to Article 24 (2) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union²⁵ the Parties shall act exclusively in the best interest of the child.

Article 3

For the purpose of this agreement “missing children” includes cases of:

- runaways
- criminal abduction of children
- parental abduction
- lost, injured or otherwise missing
- missing unaccompanied migrant children

Note: The Parties may add the definition of each type of missing children according to the national legislation.

Article 4

1. [name of the civil society organisation] shall ensure that all members of their staff working with victims have the required qualifications and licences.
2. [name of the civil society organisation] shall take all possible steps to screen their staff in order to prevent persons convicted of sexual abuse or exploitation or abduction of children from working in their organisation.

Article 5

To achieve these goals, privileged contacts will be established between both Parties, which will be based on mutual respect between the Parties and their members.

Article 6

1. Efficient cooperation requires knowledge of and respect for the specificity of the tasks and responsibilities of the respective Parties. A clear distinction must be made between the investigative and compliance tasks of law enforcement and the preventive, assistance and support tasks of civil society organisations. The respective tasks and responsibilities of each Party in cases of missing children must be determined and defined in a clear and transparent way and outlined in a written document.
2. Criminal investigations shall be the exclusive competence of the law enforcement authorities.

25. Same remark as under footnote 2.



Article 7

Each Party shall take note of and respect the codes of conduct and the rules of confidentiality of the other Party, as defined in the documents attached (*please attach relevant documents*).

Article 8

1. Parties shall give sufficient and appropriate attention to each case of missing children, regardless of the specific circumstances and taking into consideration the very vulnerable position of the missing child and his family. Each Party shall undertake immediate action following a request for help by the other Party.
2. Both Parties shall ensure that the activities and services offered by them are not contrary to domestic law.

Article 9

In order to prevent uncoordinated activities, which might harm the common aim each Party shall consult the other Party before taking action.

Note: these provisions are suggested as guidelines and may be changed according to the wishes of each Party and according to the national legislation.

Chapter II – Description of responsibilities

Article 10

Taking into account article 6.1 of this agreement, [*name of the civil society organisation*] shall [*description of specific responsibilities and tasks of the organisation in cases of missing children*]

Article 11

Taking into account article 6.1 of this agreement, [*name of law enforcement unit*] shall [*description of specific responsibilities and tasks of law enforcement in cases of missing children*]

Chapter III – Information-related cooperation

Article 12

The Parties shall respect the data protection principles and in particular the provisions of the Recommendation No R (87) 15 of the Council of Europe regulating the use of personal data in the police sector, the Council of Europe Convention of 28 January 1981 for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data, Article 8 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Article 16 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and Council Framework Decision 2008/977/JHA of 27 November 2008 on the protection of personal data processed in the framework of police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters.



Article 13

[name of the civil society organisation] shall take any steps needed to ensure an adequate level of data protection

Article 14

[name of the civil society organisation] expresses its willingness to [description of each way of cooperation with [name of law enforcement unit] in concrete cases of missing children aimed at]

Note: the content of this article 14 can be inspired and determined on the basis of the practical checklist available on the Childscope website at [http://www.childscope.net/2006/httpdocs/documents/Practical checklist.pdf](http://www.childscope.net/2006/httpdocs/documents/Practical%20checklist.pdf). It is recommended to subdivide the aforementioned article depending on the kind of cooperation in view. It has to be noted that national legislation needs to be taken into account

Article 15

[name of law enforcement unit] expresses its willingness to [description of each way of cooperation with [name of civil society organisation] in concrete cases of missing children aimed at]

Note: the content of this article 15 can be inspired and determined on the basis of the practical checklist. It is recommended to subdivide the aforementioned article depending on the kind of cooperation in view. It has to be noted that national legislation needs to be taken into account.

Chapter IV – Operational cooperation

Article 16

The Parties shall respect the privacy of the persons concerned in accordance with the provisions of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the Council of Europe Convention of 28 January 1981 for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data, Article 7 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and Council Framework Decision 2008/977/JHA of 27 November 2008 on the protection of personal data processed in the framework of police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters.

Article 17

[name of the civil society organisation] expresses its willingness to [description of each way of cooperation with [name of law enforcement unit] in concrete cases of missing children aimed at]

Note: the content of this article 17 can be inspired and determined on the basis of the practical checklist. It is recommended to subdivide the aforementioned article depending on the kind of cooperation in view. It has to be noted that national legislation needs to be taken into account.

Article 18

[name of law enforcement unit] expresses its willingness to [description of each way of cooperation with [name of civil society organisation] in concrete cases of missing children aimed at]

Note: the content of this article 18 can be inspired and determined on the basis of the practical checklist. It is recommended to subdivide the aforementioned article depending on the kind of cooperation in view. It has to be noted that national legislation needs to be taken into account.



Chapter V – Final Provisions

Article 19

The present Protocol of cooperation shall enter into force upon signature by the duly authorised representatives of the Parties.

Article 20

The present Protocol may only be amended with mutual consent expressed in written agreement of both Parties.

Article 21

Any disputes or disagreements between the Parties with respect to the interpretation or implementation of this Protocol shall be resolved by good faith negotiations between the Parties.

Article 22

The Parties are prepared to evaluate the implementation of this Protocol 1 year after its entry into force and from that moment on every 2 years.

Article 23

Either Party may terminate this Protocol by delivering a written request for termination to the other Party. The termination shall be effective 6 weeks after the delivery to the receiving Party.

2. Cross-border procedures: cooperation amongst 116 000 hotlines

2.1 Introduction

Research shows that the majority of the NGOs running a 116 000 hotline do not systematically cooperate with fellow 116 000 organisations. On the contrary, collaboration occurs only on an ad hoc basis. At the same time, there is evidence proving that the cases of missing children presenting a cross-border element are rather common, and are likely to continue increasing due to the freedom of movement which characterises the European Union and, in particular, the Schengen area. It is therefore of the utmost importance that all NGOs running a 116 000 hotline work together in the framework of a well-established cooperation, especially when dealing with cases presenting some cross-border elements (a child abducted in a country and brought to a foreign one; a child going missing in a country different from her/his country of origin, etc.).

This section presents recommendations on international cooperation among NGOs in charge of the 116 000 service, as well as on how to proceed with cross-border cases. A paragraph is dedicated to the case of international parental abductions.

2.2 Basic communication requirements

1. **Debrief colleagues on main information and actions points discussed during an MCE or other international meetings**

Knowing about the work of Missing Children Europe as a Federation as well as about other national members of MCE / the 116 000 network is a major prerequisite for cross-border cooperation. Today, activity regarding MCE is often dealt with by the senior management of the national organisations, while frontline operators and case managers remain unaware of the work of MCE and its members. In order to ensure well-functioning international cooperation, a good communication policy within every organisation has to be implemented: information on MCE has to be shared along both a top-down and a bottom-up perspective.

2. **Inform counterparts abroad about a case of a missing child**

– **When to inform?**

There is no need to keep all 116 000 hotlines informed about every case of missing children you are dealing with. However, 116 000 hotlines are requested to share information about a case in the following circumstances:

A. If the case involves a national from another country (in this case: contact the organisation operating the 116 000 hotline in the country concerned);

B. When there is clear indication that there is an added value in informing counterparts abroad²⁶.

In both cases, the information will be passed on after consultation with and approval from competent national authorities, in accordance to your cooperation agreement.

– **Who to inform?**

In the majority of the cases you will need to contact and inform the organisations operating the 116 000 hotlines from neighbouring countries. However, there might be cases with clear indications that the child has gone beyond the area of bordering States (e. g. a parental abduction from a national of a third non-bordering country). You will find the contact details from all the 116 000 hotlines in the MCE contact booklet and emergency list. It is important that all information exchange is sent also to the following address: 116000@missingchildreneurope.eu, especially created for the MCE General Secretariat and the Board Member in charge of the 116 000 so that they will be aware of the cross-border cooperation going on among NGOs, and will be able to function as a mediator.

– **How to inform?**

Any information exchange should occur in a systematic and standardised way, according to a well-defined and clear procedure. In this way, information will be better understood, and the cooperation among organisations will be easier and more effective. Use the cross-border cooperation template included at the end of this chapter (p. 40-41).

– **Inform MCE members when a Child Alert is launched²⁷**

If a Child Alert System is in place in your country, it is of the utmost importance that you inform 116 000 hotlines and MCE members when an alert is launched. Whether you inform all members or only NGOs operating in the neighbouring countries, depends on the scope of the case. Also in this case, use the MCE cross-border cooperation template (p. 40-41).

26. Examples of circumstances in which there is a clear added value in informing counterparts abroad may be, inter alia, the following: when the child disappears close to (up to 100 km) a border within the Schengen area; when one of the parents of the missing child has a different nationality; when there are well established contacts of the family with another EU country; etc.

27. For a definition of Child Alert, see footnote n. 21 on p. 12.

2.3 Steps for effective cooperation

Sometimes it might be sufficient to inform your counterparts abroad about a case of a missing child. However, it may occur that you need the active cooperation of other NGOs, for instance when you have to establish a contact with the national police in a foreign country, when the parent(s) of a child who has disappeared in your country are nationals of a foreign EU Member State, or when the child is likely to be in another Member State. In this case, the person responsible for the case should contact her/his colleagues abroad through the details provided in the MCE contact booklet. In order to avoid confusion and duplication of work, it is vital to respect the rule of appointing one person per organisation as single contact point for each case.

Upon appropriate contact by another 116 000 organisation, all 116 000 organisations agree to undertake appropriate and timely support actions, in line with the services offered by the organisation and in cooperation with the relevant national authorities, and to proactively communicate these actions with other relevant 116 000 organisations.

– How to proceed?

For the cooperation among 116 000 hotlines to be as smooth and as effective as possible, MCE developed a template for cross-border cooperation (p. 40-41).

1. If you merely want to inform your counterpart of on-going action: fill-in the *information exchange box* in the MCE cross-border cooperation template
2. If you need your counterpart to undertake action: fill-in the *request for action box* in the MCE cross-border cooperation template
3. In the latter case, always make sure to establish a telephone contact and go over the following **check-list of actions**:

- A. Discuss the situation and come to a **common ground of understanding** and **common action plan**;
- B. **Agree on responsibilities**: who does what?;
- C. Keep each other **regularly informed** on the progress of the case to ensure you are on the same line. Agree on how to remain in contact;
- D. Organise a **feedback session** after a case is closed. Also in this case, it is essential that this phase of cooperation is dealt with in a systematic and standardised manner. Use the template for feedback proposed by MCE, and included in this guide on pages 42-43.

If your request is not being answered, contact the MCE Secretariat who will function as intermediary.

2.4 Cooperation in cases of international parental abduction

International parental abductions are, by definition, of cross-border nature. In order to be able to provide efficient and timely help it is extremely important that the NGO offering help to one parent understands the possible dimensions of parental abduction, and is fully aware of the existing international legislation on this issue. Less informed attempts to help can put the client at a serious disadvantage and damage the chances of the child involved to keeping active contacts with both parents.

Missing Children Europe's website provides, under its publication page, information on the phenomenon of international parental abduction²⁸. This section is intended to be continuously developed and expanded with the recent publications/studies of MCE members.

It is worth specifying that in most European countries parental abduction is not a criminal offence. In the countries where it is considered a crime, the police intervene by playing an active role. On the other hand, in those countries where parental abduction falls under civil law, the police involvement is limited²⁹. Therefore, you must be aware that it is not always possible, nor always advisable, to involve the police in such cases.

The information you receive from a parent asking for help is normally one-sided. It is important to keep in mind that there is always another side to the story, and that there can be procedures already going on in other countries, without the parent approaching you knowing or informing you. When helping the family, however, the number one priority is to establish and act for the best interest of the child.

Here are some **general considerations to bear in mind** when dealing with cases of international parental abduction:

- A. The main objective of the service is to serve the best interest of the child.
- B. When involving a foreign partner, keep the parent informed about the consequences this entails and obtain the parent's consent beforehand at each new step in writing (confirmation by e-mail is also an option).
- C. Do not promise anything to a parent in the name of another organisation.
- D. Maintain regular contact with the foreign partner to exchange updated information and adjust the joint strategy on how to handle the case.
- E. International parental abduction cases can make you feel like taking sides. For obvious reasons this is not advisable.
- F. If you cannot establish a common basis for your work, you should involve a third party (another 116 000 counterpart or the MCE General Secretariat) to get a view of someone not personally involved.

116 000 hotlines, if approached by clients involved in international parental abduction cases, need to:

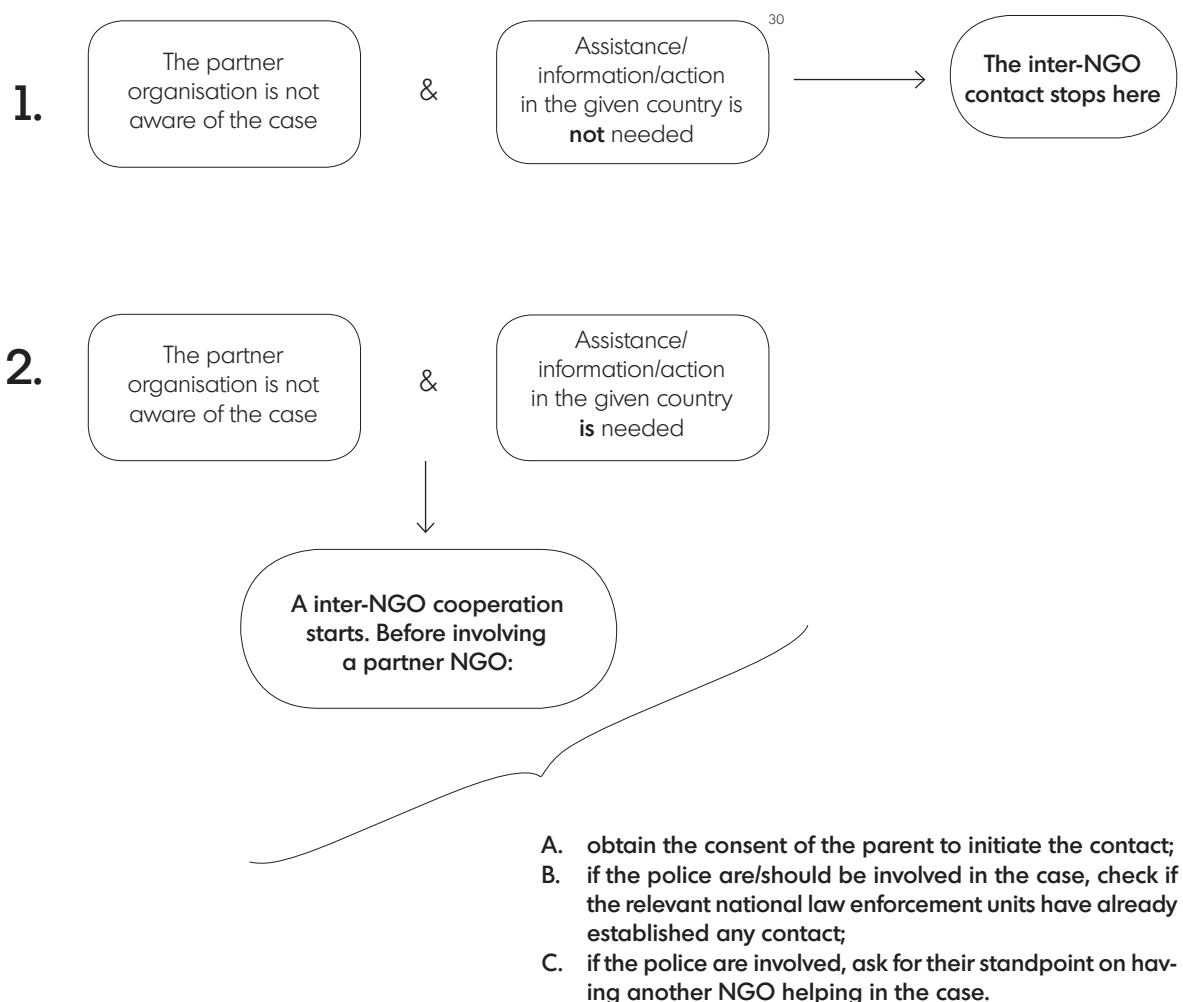
- A. inform the relevant 116 000 organisation on having been approached with a case involving a citizen/resident of the partner organisation's country;
- B. request information if the same case is known to the partner.

When dealing with an international parental abduction, you might be confronted with different circumstances. Here are 4 examples of cases that you may encounter – and the explanation of the relative procedures to follow. Remember that MCE has developed some cross-border tools that you should use when contacting a counterpart abroad (cross-border: information exchange & request for action; feedback template).

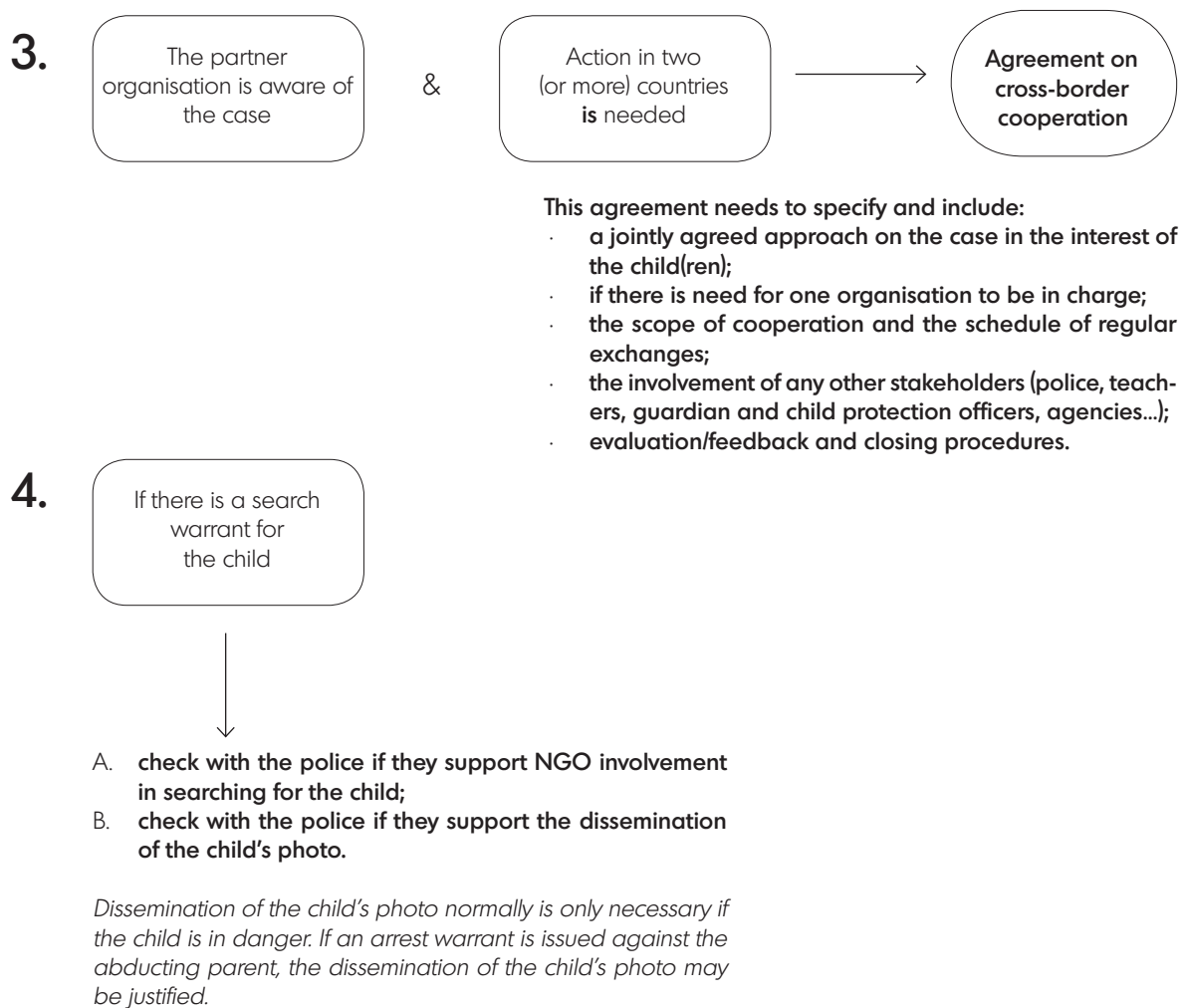
28. http://missingchildreneurope.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=50&Itemid=96

29. For further information on this issue, please refer to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, http://hcch.e-vision.nl/index_en.php?act=conventions.text&cid=24.

Examples of possible cases & procedures to follow



30. Whether assistance is needed or not should be ideally agreed upon by the two parties together.





2.5 “Cross-border procedures” Tools

1. Cross-border cooperation template
2. Feedback template



Cross-border cooperation template

This document is the tool you will use in case of a cross-border disappearance to send key information about the missing child to another NGO running the hotline in a foreign country, and if necessary ask for action.

Remember to copy the Secretariat and the Board Member in charge of the 116 000 in all the email exchange you have about a cross-border case, through the following address: 116000@missingchildreurope.eu, which was created to best serve this purpose.

Requesting organisation: Country: Date: Contact details responsible case manager: Name: Direct phone: E-mail address:	To - contacted organisation: Country: Date:
---	--

Purpose of contact:

Information exchange: please tick the relevant box <input type="checkbox"/> the case involves a national from the country of the contacted organisation <input type="checkbox"/> there is a clear indication for added value in informing the counterpart abroad ³¹ <input type="checkbox"/> following the launch of a Child Alert <input type="checkbox"/> other, please specify
You are submitting this information after consultation with and approval from competent national authorities <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
You are submitting this information after consultation with and approval from person with parental authority <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
Request for action: several options are possible <input type="checkbox"/> establish a contact with national police <input type="checkbox"/> establish a contact with other relevant authorities <input type="checkbox"/> establish a contact with parent/family of the child living in the country <input type="checkbox"/> help with translation/interpretation <input type="checkbox"/> other, please specify

31. Examples of circumstances in which there is a clear added value in informing counterparts abroad may be, inter alia, the following: when the child disappears close to (up to 100 km) a border within the Schengen area; when one of the parents of the missing child has a different nationality; when there are well established contacts of the family with another EU country; etc.



Information about the child:

Name and surname of the child: Nickname (if any): Nationality: Passport number:	Name and surname of parents/legal representatives ³¹ : Mother: Phone n°: Father: Phone n°:
Date of birth: Description (height, weight, eye colour, hair colour, particular signs etc): Need for medical treatment:	Address of residence: Mother: Father:

Information regarding the disappearance:

Date and place: Disappearance reported to the police in requesting organisation's country: <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no Case reference number: Contact police officer in charge: <input type="checkbox"/> no Dossier forwarded to Interpol by the police: <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> not known	Type: <input type="checkbox"/> Runaways <input type="checkbox"/> Parental abduction <input type="checkbox"/> Criminal abduction <input type="checkbox"/> Lost, injured or otherwise missing <input type="checkbox"/> Missing unaccompanied migrant minors <input type="checkbox"/> Not clear
---	--

Description of the situation:

Please refer to the questions of the tools contained in the "Practical guide for hotline operators" in order to give specific information about the disappearance (the guide contains different examples for each kind of disappearance).

Attached:

Picture of the child ☐ yes ☐ no
 Proof of police acknowledgement³³ ☐ yes ☐ no
 Court order ☐ yes ☐ no
 Other, please specify:

32. Please provide details about the child's legal situation if legal rights are not belonging to the natural parents (e.g. the child is placed under a relative's care, in foster care or in an institution). Please specify if the child has been adopted.
 33. A document proving that the case is a real case of disappearance, and that the police are aware of the information exchange.



Feedback template

To establish increasingly effective cross-border cooperation, it is essential to follow up a case with a feedback session, in order to understand whether the cooperation was good, what did work and what did not, whether there are aspects to improve. Here is a document to fill in (the first part is different for requesting/contacted organisation) and to exchange between counterparts every time a cross-border case is closed. Ideally, if you are confronted with a case lasting longer, you should have regular feedback and evaluation sessions with the counterpart throughout the running of the case.

Summary of the case:

Please provide a short summary of the case.

Evaluation of overall cooperation:

Please elaborate on the following points, highlighting the positive & negative aspects of your cooperation

Requesting organisation: please fill this box in if you initiated the contact

What was the purpose of the contact?

Were you satisfied with the way the contacted organisation responded to your contact?

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ if not, please specify:

Did you encounter any problem in:

Establishing the first contact (person not available; not responding to email...)

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ if yes, please specify:

Carrying out the communication

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ if yes, please specify:

The response/reaction you got from the contacted organisation

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ if yes, please specify:

If you encountered any major problem/obstacle, please explain what did you expect instead/how you would have liked the cooperation to proceed:

What worked well/what are the positive elements of this episode of cross-border cooperation?

Any other remark:



Contacted organisation: please fill this box in if you were contacted by another organisation

What was the purpose of the contact?

If you were contacted only to be informed about a case, do you think it was relevant to inform you?

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ if not, please specify:

Did you encounter any problem in:

The way the first contact was established (wrong person; wrong way...)

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ if yes, please specify:

The way the communication on the case was carried out

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ if yes, please specify:

The response/action you were asked to undertake

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ if yes, please specify:

Were you contacted on time, did you have enough time to achieve the request?

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ if not, please specify:

Do you think that you needed further information on the case?

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ if yes, please specify:

Were you asked to do something that you could not do?

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ if yes, please specify:

If you encountered any major problem/obstacle, please explain what did you expect instead/how you would have liked the cooperation to proceed:

What worked well/what are the positive elements of this episode of cross-border cooperation?

Any other remark:

Annexes

1. Annex I. Additional support – examples of reported good practices
2. Annex II. Cooperation with authorities – examples of reported good practices
3. Annex III. Information classification – examples of existing practices

Annex I. Additional support – examples of reported good practices

As indicated in the basic requirements for a 116 000 hotline, it is important that organisations offer additional support to children and their families. Here are some examples of help that can be provided, either directly by the NGO operating the hotline, or by redirecting the person to another organisation/association/institution offering the kind of support needed.

First-hand support/ 116 000 telephone support

- ✓ Provide support and advice to parents, children and other professionals: listening service.
- ✓ Maintain established links with statutory and non-governmental organisations including the police, the health services, and international consulates: gateway service.
- ✓ Provide ongoing support to police investigations, develop and maintain cross-border communication, maintain links with the missing child, provide a confidential support service to missing children.
- ✓ Complete an initial risk assessment of the missing child's situation, e.g. medical needs, assessing other potential dangers.

Legal support

- ✓ Support identifying a relevant legal instrument that the child can be referred to, e.g. the Hague Convention on parental abduction. This includes ongoing support throughout this process, e.g. explaining legal framework and judicial proceedings.
- ✓ Complete a legal assessment of the case and provide advice regarding the next relevant actions that needs to be taken, e.g. referring a parent to a lawyer.
- ✓ Support the family in accessing pro bono counsel/identify or provide a Guardian Ad Litem for the child where necessary.
- ✓ Advocate on behalf of the child in legal proceedings, e.g. advocate for the use of less traumatic interviewing protocols with recording equipment.

Administrative support

- ✓ Offer support regarding procedures such as contacting the police, initiating a court proceeding, etc.
- ✓ Offer support in writing letters (to lawyers, to authorities, to other parties...), complete other paperwork and documentation.
- ✓ Offer support in dealing with the court; accompany family or child to court.

Emotional support

- ✓ Offer dedicated support aimed at empowering families to cope as effectively as possible and to take decisive action.
- ✓ Establish as appropriate a personal contact (face-to face service): home visits, meeting at the office and re-orientating the child and parents to psychological services where necessary.
- ✓ Offer emotional support around family reunification.
- ✓ Follow-up once the case is closed.

Annex II. Cooperation with authorities – examples of reported good practices

Cooperation with law enforcement authorities

Written cooperation agreement

The cooperation between an NGO operating the 116 000 hotline and the law enforcement authorities of its country must be based on a written agreement of cooperation (see example on p. 28-32). This document is meant to define the respective mandates and tasks, in the respect of their complementary roles. It will thus help ensure an easier and more effective cooperation in cases of missing children. You will find below a list of the main elements that often characterise such a cooperation.

General remarks

- The cooperation agreement shall be in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and shall aim at respecting and promoting the best interest of the child.
- The cooperation agreement should define what the parties qualify as “missing children” (e.g. which type of cases).
- A reference person for the NGO and the police shall be identified in order to facilitate contact and cooperation.
- Each party shall respect the procedures, working practices and confidentiality policy of the other party.
- The performance of judicial and police investigation is under the exclusive jurisdiction of the judicial authorities and police units, while the NGO has a complementary area of intervention in both supporting the searching activities of the missing child and providing support to the family members.
- Regular analysis and strategy meetings between NGO and police (Missing Persons Unit) shall be organised to review problematic cases; inform about bilateral activities in the field of missing children; decide on common initiatives.

Prevention and awareness raising

Both the NGO and the police should :

- Jointly organise awareness raising and information campaigns.
- Perform joint programmes of information and training for NGO staff/police officers.
- Conduct joint lobby/advocacy activities.
- Undertake efforts to raise law enforcement authorities’ awareness on the issue of missing unaccompanied migrant minors.

Immediate operational reaction³⁴

- Immediate mutual information upon notification of a new case of a missing child.
- The NGO provides emotional support to the family during the entire investigation period.
- The NGO directs the family of the child to the competent authorities.
- The NGO keeps in touch permanently with the police, and informs them about every new information/event.
- Mutual exchange of data and information (to check the conformity of the information received by NGO and police).

Investigation

- Production and distribution of search messages by the NGO (posters, flyers, message on the website of the NGO, pictures...) with agreement of the police and by the parents of the missing child.
- The appropriateness of distributing search messages, as well as the geographic area concerned, shall be agreed upon by the officer running the investigation, the police department leading the case, and the person responsible for the case in the NGO.
- Importance of uniformity: police and NGO use the same pictures and data of the child in distributing messages to the wider public.
- Mutual information about the sending of a search message to the media.
- During the investigation, the NGO informs the investigation unit about any information (sighting) received.
- The investigation will always be law enforcement led.
- Upon request by the police, the NGO can offer the investigation unit the help of volunteers and the support of existing logistics.
- Upon request, the NGO can produce “age progression” images of children who have gone missing for a long time.

34. Operational cooperation with authorities depends on the case and will be of particular relevance in cases of criminal abductions and lost, injured or otherwise missing children.

Annex III. Information classification – examples of existing practices

International cases

- The NGO shall contact international/national organisations working with missing children in order to seek assistance in some special (cross-border) cases, as agreed with the law enforcement national authorities.

Finding the child

- Obligation of mutual information when a case is closed.

Cooperation with other relevant authorities

Data protection authority

The NGO should undertake all the necessary measures to ensure a proper level of protection of personal data and to observe the right to life, especially in the following circumstances:

- Gathering, processing and exchanging data regarding the missing child.
- Supporting efforts to locate the missing child (recording calls; ensuring anonymity; producing and distributing pictures of the child; use of “aging programmes”; etc).

Social services/social care authorities

- The NGO shall ensure a proper follow up of each case by directing the child and its family to the relevant services/authorities.
- The NGO shall get in contact and share information about missing children with public and private social care authorities which have shelters, in order to verify whether any missing child ended up in those centres.

In order for the service to be managed in an easy and effective way, a specially designed system should be used by all NGOs operating a 116 000 hotline to collect, classify and store information on every case of missing children they deal with. This Annex provides the description of four different systems as examples of practices to be shared among existing and future 116 000 hotlines.

CHILD FOCUS – Belgium

Child Focus’ system is based on the use of two main applications: the Microsoft Client Relationship Management database and the telephone software AgenTel. In April 2009, Child Focus replaced the twelve year old custom-made database with the **Microsoft Client Relationship Management database (CRM)**. This standard CRM-package was customized to Child Focus’ specific needs, and it is still a work in progress. The CRM is a flexible system, which allows for an extensive linking of information and a more efficient management of every case file.

The process of data storage begins with a call on the emergency line 116 000. The **telephone software AgenTel** is programmed to portray the telephone number of the caller in a screen CRM-window for phone calls. The software is further programmed to make the CRM check in the database for that particular phone number. If the number is recognised (already present in the database), the CRM will portray the name of the person linked to this phone number. This enables the operator of the 116 000 to be welcoming to callers. If the initial phone call is followed by the opening of a case, a case file in the CRM database will be created. All calls to and from Child Focus case manager to parents, police, etc... within a certain case, will subsequently be centralised in the CRM case file. This case file contains all relevant information concerning the child, the date and place of disappearance, the police services involved, possible poster campaigns, witness statements, and any other detail related to that particular case. Allowing for a continuous availability and accessibility of information, this system facilitates the continuing management of the case: when the case manager is sick or on holiday, for instance, the case file is taken over by a colleague who can have a perfect overview of all the case evolution and of the information available. All information stored in the database is subject to the legislation concerning the processing of personal data.

For more information, please contact Adinda Van Poucke:
adinda.vanpoucke@childfocus.org.

ITAKA CENTRE FOR MISSING PERSONS – Poland

ITAKA Foundation uses two database applications: a Missing People Database called BAZA, and a Helpline Call Log Database called REJESTR.

BAZA is a case recording, management and reporting system used at ITAKA Foundation to manage, record, and report all case activities. This database consists of two modules: the internal module and the internet module. The former is used by ITAKA's staff for case management and all related activity. The latter provides case data that can be accessed from internet via the missing people search interface available on ITAKA's website. All opened cases are registered in the internal BAZA module by ITAKA's staff. Every case activity is recorded in the case history. Additional categories and tags can be assigned to every case for reporting and statistical purposes. The public case data (such as the name of the person, the age, the date of disappearance, available photos, etc.) are automatically transferred to the internet module for publication within the website. Every change that occurs in these data entails an automatic update in the internet module case data. The ITAKA staff is also able to generate standard alerts and news automatically and directly from internal BAZA module client.

REJESTR is the call log database system used at ITAKA Foundation to record and report all activities related to the missing people helplines operated by ITAKA. This system is used for both ITAKA's helplines: the general purpose missing people helpline and the missing children European harmonised hotline (116 000). Thanks to this system, ITAKA's staff are able to record statistical data for every call, both received and made. This data is then used for reporting and analysis purposes.

The internal BAZA module and REJESTR are implemented in MacroBASE technology (technology of ITAKA's donor Macrologic SA). MacroBASE is a three-tier solution with relational database system. The clients run on Java technology, the application server and database server run on Windows Server. All database systems are developed internally by ITAKA's IT staff.

For more information on ITAKA's system, please contact ITAKA's IT Specialist Tomasz Nowak: tomasz.nowak@missingpeople.pl

MISSING PEOPLE – United Kingdom

The UK's Missing People's service provision uses two main database systems, Hermes and Call Log.

Hermes is the bespoke case recording, management, workflow and reporting system used at Missing People to manage, record, report on, schedule and, when possible, fulfill and automate its wide-ranging case activities. Cases are registered and services accessed by service users and a variety of protocol partner organisations, mostly in the public sector. Missing People's activities supported by Hermes include tracing and publicity, support for families and professionals e.g. database searches and confidential advice services for runaways and for missing adults. These confidential advice services can be accessed by telephone, email or SMS according to the service user's preference. All helpline staff and volunteers use Hermes constantly when taking calls to input notes of any calls that require action. Helpline staff can quickly access previous notes of an open case if the caller contacts them, to provide continuity for the service users. Comprehensive training is provided for any staff or volunteers who need to use Hermes to ensure all are using the system in a uniform way. Hermes continues to be developed with Badger Software Ltd in the UK to meet the needs defined by Missing People. The Hermes client runs on a Microsoft .NET framework. The database is Microsoft SQL Server.

Call Log is a basic recording and reporting system in which contacts are recorded to enable reporting on helpline activity. It is developed in house at Missing People and uses a Microsoft Excel client running against a Microsoft Access database.

For more information about Missing People's IT systems contact Emma Cummings: emma.cummings@missingpeople.org.uk.

THE SMILE OF THE CHILD – Greece

The Smile of the Child's system is based on the use of two main applications: the Oracle CRM and the Cisco ip phone software.

In October 2008, The Smile of the Child replaced the eleven year old custom-e database with the **Oracle (CRM)**. This program was customized to The Smile of the Child's specific needs.

The process of data storage begins with a call on the emergency line 116 000. The **telephone software Cisco Agent** is programmed to display the telephone number of the caller on a screen CRM window for phone calls. The software is further programmed to make the CRM check in the database for that particular phone number. If the number is recognised (already present in the database), the CRM will display the name of the person linked to this phone number. If the initial phone call is followed by the opening of a case, a case file in the CRM database will be created. This case file contains all relevant information concerning the child, the date and place of disappearance, and the police services involved. If it is decided to give the case publicity or to involve outside agencies, another form is completed by hand and it is stated on the CRM window that more information about the case is given on the specific form.

For more information please contact the IT manager John Paganelis: technical.support@hamogelo.gr.

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Colophon

Text: Valeria Setti, Sophie Biemans, Eva Kerpel

Proofreading: Delphine Moralis, Francis Herbert, Francis Jacobs, Natacha Defeche

Graphic design: Something Els

Cover picture: Francesco Zecchetto

Responsible editor: Francis Herbert, Avenue Houba de Stooper 292, 1020 Brussels

