Missing children
in the European Union
Mapping, data collection and statistics

Justice

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Executive summary

Introduction

The "Study on missing children: mapping, data collection and statistics on missing children in the European Union" was conducted by Ecorys on behalf of DG Justice from July 2012 to June 2013 and had two main objectives:

- To collect and analyse data and to develop the basis to improve the mechanisms involved when children go missing in the 27 EU Member States.
- To use and to build on existing data and indicators to obtain sustainable, comparable data and indicators on missing children in all 27 Member States covering the period 2008-2010 (and 2011 where available).

It was carried out in four phases: an inception phase for fine-tuning the methodology and workplan, a mapping phase where detailed information was collected on current definitions, responses and potential data sources in all Member States, a data collection phase where actual data where gathered from official and non-official sources (with a focus on the former), and a finalisation phase in which recommendations were developed.

Definitions

The mapping of definitions used in the context of handling missing children cases in the 27 EU Member States revealed a complex and diverse picture that leaves many opportunities for improving coherence and comparability. To start with, most countries define missing persons in the context of police regulations that prescribe the responsibilities and procedures to be followed in cases where a person goes missing, and only three Member States (Estonia, Hungary, Ireland) actually have a legal definition of the phenomenon of missing persons. Most countries build their – legal or operational - definition around the criteria of lack of information on whereabouts, but significant variation exists as to further elements included in the definitions. Some countries differentiate in terms of risk levels, some look at the cause of disappearance, while others define specific categories for cases where there is an indication of crime, or where no information on the actual identity of the person involved is available, e.g. through loss of memory.

A child is defined in almost all countries as a person under 18 years of age (or else, the category "minor" is used, which includes all those up to 18 years of age), thus this does not create the comparability issues originally expected in the study. An exception can be made for data collected in the context of the Hague Convention on International Parental Abductions, which applies to those aged under 16. This is consistent across EU Member States and therefore not an issue in terms of data collection.

Missing children are rarely referred to in national legislation, although they often exist as a subset in the general description and typology of missing persons used in police regulations. Their definition is often derived from the definition of a child in combination with that of a missing person. In practice this implies that missing children are considered as those aged under 18, for whom no information can be found on their whereabouts, in conjunction with all other conditions that may apply to the national definition of a missing child.
Many variations also exist in terms of how the different types of missing children are recorded in the Member States. In several countries, no specific categorisation is used. Other countries have categories that do not necessarily match the classification proposed by Missing Children Europe[1]

[1] 2.3 Specific categories of missing children p. 18.

(that is so far the only one developed for an EU-wide use). The category of "runaways" is the one most often distinguished as a separate category, by more than half of all Member States.

The most complex and difficult distinctions were found in the categories of "abduction by a third person" and "international parental abduction". A number of countries do not differentiate parental abduction from abduction by third parties, others do not distinguish domestic from international abductions.

Finally, the categories of "missing unaccompanied migrant children" and "lost, injured or otherwise missing children" are differentiated in only a handful of Member States within general missing persons records. Some Member States have further specific categories like missing children with mental health issues, or suspects wanted in relation to criminal offences.

Responses

In slightly less than half of the Member States (n=12), the timescales for the preliminary investigations are at the discretion of the local authorities (usually the police) in the absence of any specific intelligence indicating criminal activity.

All Member States report arrangements to respond immediately in the event of known criminal activity or in where the child is thought to be in imminent danger. This usually includes suspected abduction cases. However, fifteen Member States also undertake an immediate investigation as routine practice when children go missing in general. For these countries, there is usually a principle of taking immediate action in the interest of the child's safety. Cases are automatically given a higher level of priority, because the 'child' status is equated with vulnerability under national legislation.

There is a rather contrasting approach to the response for missing unaccompanied migrant children. Whereas in Estonia these cases are investigated immediately by local police (which issues a search alert), they receive a *lower* priority than general cases in Denmark, and Belgium, where there is a fixed 'no action' period before the start of local police investigations. Furthermore, in Slovenia the police will work with the asylum home to establish the circumstances of any unaccompanied migrant children who have disappeared. However, if the child has not returned in three days, their application for asylum is considered as 'withdrawn'. No further investigative action is taken in this situation.

In the majority of Member States, the initial case is taken forward by the local police force where the child was first reported as missing. Typically, local police are responsible for undertaking background checks, in liaison with other organisations (e.g. child welfare, emergency services). The case is then investigated up to the point at which criminal proceedings are identified or there are other criteria for raising the level of priority, at which stage the case is passed to the national police. In a smaller number of countries, any investigative procedures must first be mandated by the public prosecutor, who will then direct local police during the search.
Most countries have devised mechanisms of some kind to coordinate internally across different national, regional and local administrative boundaries. This internal coordination can be particularly challenging for Federal States, where the jurisdictional boundaries are often more complex.

The nature of the investigation often takes on a different dimension where the lead is transferred to the public prosecutor. One of the reported advantages is that prosecutors can manage the case as a pre-trial investigation and therefore have a number of additional coercive measures at their disposal, which include issuing warrants and checking mobile phone records if this is allowed for the type of presumed crime.

Parental abduction cases are amongst the most legally complex. Depending on the nature of the case, there might be a) actions taken by the police to trace the missing child in the framework of a missing persons search; b) criminal proceedings led by the public prosecutor (e.g. prosecution for abduction under Section 195 of the Austrian Criminal Code if applicable), and c) a private law procedure involving a national custody trial or an application based on the Hague Convention.

Public communications form an important aspect of the national response when children go missing. Nearly all countries have a mechanism of some kind for alerts to the general public in the event that a child is thought to be at immediate risk of harm (e.g. kidnapping or trafficking). The arrangements are more varied for other missing child cases. It is not uncommon for Member States to require prior consent from a legal guardian before authorising a press release or issuing personal information such as names or photographs of children to the media.

In many countries there are specific written cooperation protocols connecting several actors involved in the search for missing children. Usually this type of agreement involves police forces, judiciary authorities and an organisation working on missing children issues at a national level. Such protocols aim at establishing networks, enhancing cooperation between relevant stakeholders, pooling of search capacity and harmonising the exchange of information and data.

In the countries where the 116000 hotline is in place (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and the UK)[2], people can either report a missing child by declaring the disappearance to the police directly, or by contacting the 116000 hotline. In most of these countries, there is established collaboration between the police and the organisation managing the hotline.

Data availability and potential EU indicators

The main sources of data on the overall number of missing children are police databases. We collected figures on the overall number of missing children by using several types of indicators: number of child disappearances recorded within one year, and secondarily; number of children still to be found by the police at the end of the year. On the first indicator, we asked for breakdowns by sex, age and nationality. We also asked for data on the outcomes of investigations/search actions in terms of time elapsed until the child was found, and who found the child.

Figures on the annual number of disappearance cases were made available by authorities from 25 Member States. A first look at the overall figures revealed inconsistencies that are still unexplained based on what we were able to establish regarding definitions and collection methods during the mapping phase.

For instance, three countries with similar population sizes – France, Italy and the United Kingdom - provide very different figures: for 2012, France reports 50,326 cases, Italy only 5513 and in the United Kingdom figures from just two thirds of the local police forces already arrive at a total of 96341 cases. In Italy, cases are recorded in the central database directly by local police officers, therefore no further selection threshold is applied that could justify lower numbers.

Taking account of these inconsistencies, we calculated the number of cases of missing children per 100.000 children. This indicator varies per country: the highest values are in Hungary and Ireland (852 and 557 for 2011 respectively); the lowest value is found for the Netherlands, Greece, Spain and Cyprus, where it ranges between 6 and 35 reports per 100.000 children. In the majority of Member States, there appears to be an upward trend within the period 2008-2012.

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[2] Status on 15th June 2013.

The majority of countries providing figures could break down disappearances by sex for at least the last available year and could provide separate numbers for the age brackets 0-12 and 0-14, but there are still a few countries which cannot obtain these basic figures. By contrast, breakdowns by nationality are rarely available in Member States.

Although Member States may include information on cause and context for disappearance in the individual case files, none of them are able to extract this information to produce corresponding aggregate national statistics.

Statistics on whether legal proceedings were started as a result of a child's disappearance are generally not available in the police databases. Some initial information exists on the involvement of the prosecutor in abduction cases but not so much on the following steps. Statistical information on who found the child is available in only one quarter of countries, and in slightly different formats. Information on the type of abuse children were subject to during disappearance is only available in individual investigation files and is not the subject of statistics.

Only some countries utilise the type of disappearance to break down overall statistics of missing children from a single dataset (thereby allowing some estimate of the "share" of missing children cases represented by each type of disappearance).Other countries do have data on all or some of the types of disappearance, but in separate and usually non-comparable datasets. Countries which use type of disappearance to classify missing children cases from a single dataset are Bulgaria, France, Greece, Italy, and Poland.

Runaways are recognised as a separate category by more than half of all Member States.

Only nine Member States could provide separate statistics on runaways. Certain Member States (Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Ireland and Slovenia) distinguish runaways from home and from care facilities. A key issue for data recording is that repeated runaways are usually recorded every time as one event, potentially leading to figures that imply more individual runaway children than is the case, if not correctly understood. For runaways from care institutions, it is clear that the institutional makeup itself affects reporting.

Data on international parental child abductions was collected through the Central Authorities and is characterised by a high degree of completeness and robustness. 24 Member states provided data on applications for returning a child under the Hague Convention in 2008-2011 and 19 countries also covered 2012. In most cases it was possible to obtain separate figures for incoming and outgoing cases as well as EU and non-EU signatory countries. Comparing figures on the number of applications that were calculated per 100.000 children aged less than 16, those appear to be consistently low in the large Member States France, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom and Italy with 1-2 outgoing applications for every 100.000 children. The highest numbers were registered in 2011 for Belgium and Slovakia that both dealt with 6.4 outgoing applications for international parental abductions per 100.000 children aged less than 16. Statistics of convictions for child abduction according the respective relevant criminal code articles could be collected from 16 Member States, however the term "conviction" was not unequivocally understood and in several cases the existing figures are considered unreliable by authorities themselves.

While most EU Member States (n= 21) have specific and consistent legal provisions that define an unaccompanied migrant child, only a minority of countries report to have legal or procedural regulations on missing unaccompanied migrant children. Figures are available on the numbers of missing unaccompanied migrant children for 12 Member States (number of open cases of missing migrant children s at the end of a year), mainly from specialised institutional sources. Reporting arrangements for such cases differ substantially, with some countries setting a 24-hour waiting period before declaring an unaccompanied migrant child missing.

Recommendations on minimum common standards and good practices

One purpose of the study was to suggest a provisional set of common EU-wide indicators on missing children that can be used for comparative analysis. Based on the findings of the data gathering exercise, and talking into consideration aspects of feasibility and sustainability, we have proposed a set of indicators including, among others: the number of cases of children reported missing per 100.000 children, the proportion of females and of children aged 0-12 and 0-14 in the total number of cases; the number of applications to the central authorities for the Hague Convention per 100.000 children; and the proportion of runaways in the total number of missing children cases.

We propose a number of good practices, drawing upon the evidence gathered and focusing primarily on recommendations concerning data collection and reporting. The recommendations have been grouped into three themes: data recording practices; operational rules and definitions; and awareness-raising and information. In many cases, the recommendations principally concern the police within individual Member States. However, ideally a much wider range of agencies should be involved to maximise the completeness and usefulness of the data, including 116 000 hotlines, child welfare organisations and other administrative authorities.

As regards recommendations on data recording practices, the most important suggestions are to always record the year of birth, sex, nationality and migration status of the child. This information is usually relatively straightforward to obtain and would substantially deepen the knowledge on the phenomenon. Furthermore, we propose that Member States develop a suitable system of categories in order to record the type of disappearance, distinguishing runaways as a minimum. Further recommendations include recording the setting of disappearance, the organisations involved in the search, as well as the outcome and the follow-up of the cases.
In terms of operational rules and definitions we strongly suggest that if it does exist, any minimum waiting period (24h, 48h) for recording disappearances should be abolished. Maintaining a database and consolidating locally collected data at national level, as well as defining internationally agreed procedures for entering Article 32 alerts[3] in the SIS II Schengen system database and linking up national databases to SIS II are also among our recommendations. In the database, parental and third party abductions should be distinguished from each other, just as attempts from actual abductions and runaways from other cases of missing children.

Finally, regarding awareness-raising and information, we believe that, among others, organising communication campaigns on the importance of timely reporting any case of missing children, as well as on the 116 000 hotlines are of key importance. Making missing children statistics publicly available through annual reports is another suggested practice.

[3] Previously Art 97 under SIS I, now Art. 32 SIS II (2007/533).

Introduction

Study aims and methodology

This report contains the results of the Study on missing children, which Ecorys has implemented on behalf of the European Commission – DG Justice (service contract n. JUST/2011/CHIL/PR/0131/A4).

The study has two main objectives:

- To collect and analyse data and to develop the basis to improve the mechanisms involved when children go missing in the 27 EU Member States.
- To use and to build on existing data and indicators to obtain sustainable, comparable data and indicators on missing children in all 27 Member States covering the three-year period 2008-2010 (and 2011 where available) (p. 9, section 1.2 terms of reference).

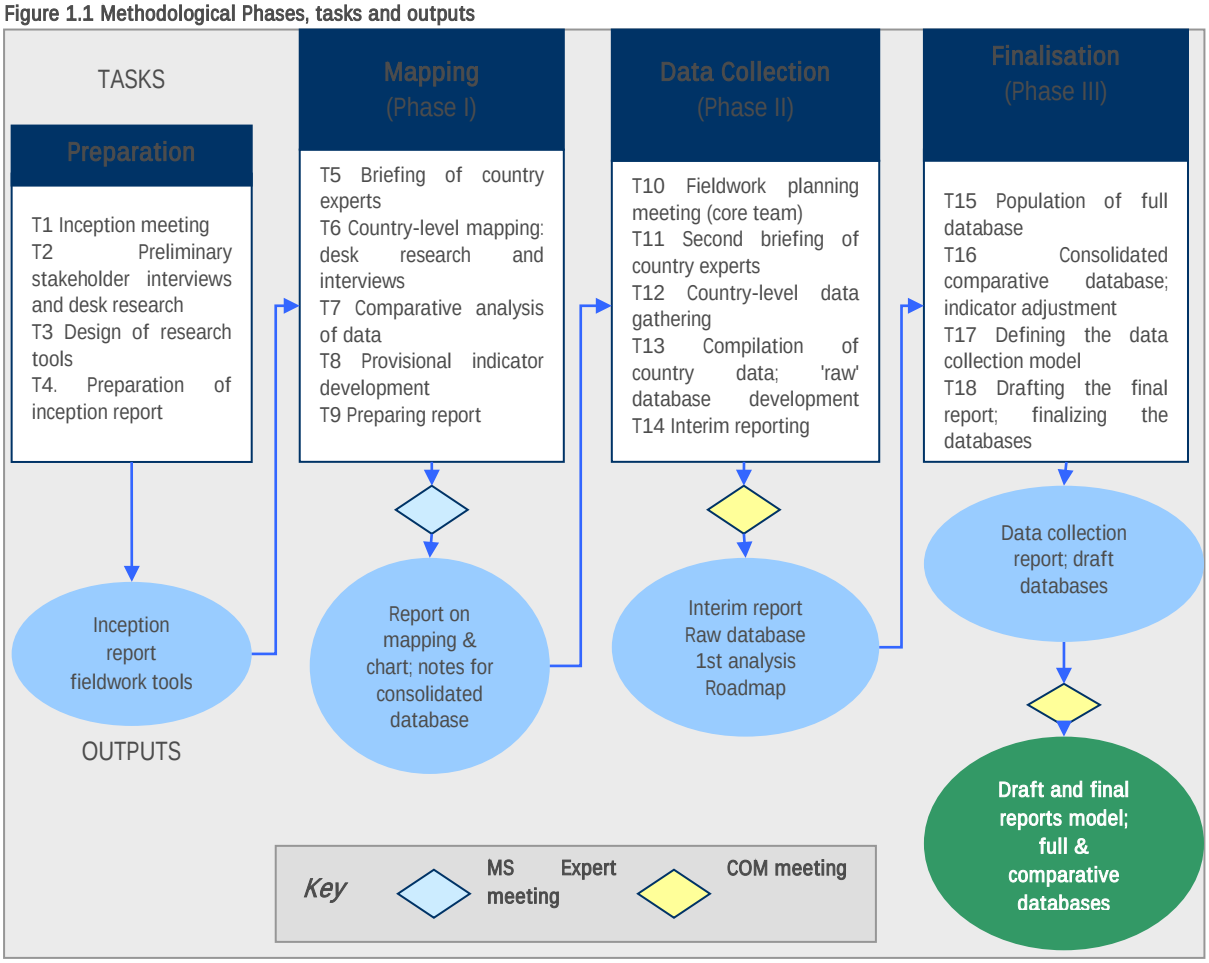
The geographical scope of the study is the European Union, while the time span of the data to be collected is 2008-2010 (with data from 2011 collected whenever possible).

The study aims at improving existing methods and helps creating a model for convergence towards a comparable and coherent collection of data across the EU, based on minimum standards and feasible common approaches. The operational objectives of the study were therefore as follows:

1. To collect and analyse statistical data from EU Member States on missing children, together with clear information on the definition according to which they are collected, the circumstances in which data are collected, by whom and from whom.
2. To identify and compile from the above data, or with the help of reliable extrapolations and well-founded estimates (but only as a last resort), equivalent EU-wide comparative data.
3. To define, based on the above comparative data, selected representative key indicators to monitor the phenomenon of missing children EU-wide, which can be measured in a sustained and feasible manner.
4. To propose a feasible model for the regular collection of (comparative) data by Member States, based on best practice examples.
5. To develop recommendations on how to improve data collection procedures throughout the EU.

The methodology for the study was structured around three core 'Phases', namely Phase I: Mapping, Phase II: Data Collection and Phase III: Full Database and Consolidated Database (Figure 1.1: Methodological Phases, tasks and outputs).

Figure 1.1 Methodological Phases, tasks and outputs



Activities carried out

Inception phase

The Inception phase lasted from 13 July to 24 August and involved the fine-tuning of the methodology and work plan as well as the confirmation of the participation of country experts.

Mapping phase

The Mapping phase lasted from 25 August to 31 October 2012 and included the following activities:

25 August – 14 September:	Briefing of country experts
1 September – 15 October:	Country level mapping
8 - 19 October:	Comparative analysis of country information
22 - 26 October:	Provisional indicator development
27 - 31 October:	Reporting on the mapping phase

The Mapping phase represented the first main phase of the study. Its aim was to undertake the initial mapping of definitions, mechanisms, measures, protocols and procedures related to the disappearance of a child across the EU27. During this phase practices of Member States were recorded regarding data recording, analysis and sharing when a child goes missing; including with regard to the operation of missing child hotlines, modes of inter-agency communication, and support measures for families.

The mapping was also aimed at establishing the availability of data, the sources and methods used in Member States and the explanations and justifications for missing data. It aimed to identify the points at which these data are recorded, with an indication of any potential data gaps, and

suggestions for any alternative sources and the likely time and cost associated with gathering them (e.g. from regional authorities). Information on whether recorded data are also computerised, consolidated, processed, analysed by the competent authorities, and a provisional indication of their likely usefulness to the study was made, so as to prioritise the data collection at Phase II.

The mapping phase was undertaken within each country by the appointed national experts using a combination of: a) desk research on country-level documents and studies and b) interviews with key stakeholders. It resulted in the completion of separate country fiches based on a pre-defined template elaborated by the Core Team. In preparation of the field work, the country experts were divided into different country clusters, each of which was managed by a member of the Core Team. The country experts were carefully briefed, and regular updates on progress were organised on one-on-one basis within a set of country clusters.

After submission of the first version of the country fiches, those were reviewed by the Core Team and, if necessary, returned with specific clarification requests to the country experts, who then prepared a final version. Upon collection of the fiches, a comparative analysis of the information was carried out by the Core Team with the aim of assessing the relative comparability of the different types of data (e.g. relating to legal definitions, standards, and mechanisms) between individual countries, and the provisional development of key indicators for responding to missing children.

The initial plan of the study was to collect statistical data on a long list of topics corresponding to the various steps of a missing child case. In the mapping phase, it quickly became apparent that data on some of those topics were not available in Member States. Sometimes the information is indeed available in the individual case files, but would not be ready for statistical processing, at least in the time frame of this project.

Data Collection Phase

The data collection phase lasted from 15 December to 15 March according to the following timetable:

- *15 – 18 December*: development of data collection fiche and a briefing note for country experts;*18 December*: core team conference call for planning briefing with country experts and monitoring arrangements during the fieldwork; set up of monitoring log;
- *19 December – 7 January*: briefings with 27 country experts via Skype or telephone;
- *8 January – 28 February*: fieldwork;
- *18 February – 1 March*: quality check and revision of data fiches (on a rolling basis on incoming fiches);
- *2-6 March*: development of raw database and overview tables;
- *7-15 March*: revision of overview tables and writing the interim report.

The data collection fiche for this phase was designed as an Excel workbook, with separate sheets for the key indicators that were identified in the mapping phase and additional worksheets for other data coming from official sources, 116 000 hotlines and other unofficial sources.

During the fieldwork, the 27 country experts were closely monitored by country cluster managers, who received weekly updates on their progress. Country cluster managers and the project manager discussed weekly the most relevant issues and difficulties encountered in the various countries. The project manager liaised with the EC to take joint initiatives when helpful to speed up the data gathering process.

Despite the completion of all country briefings by the end of Christmas holidays and the close monitoring by the team, in several countries the fieldwork lasted beyond the planned deadline of 9 February. This was mainly due to delayed responses by the competent authorities because of their high workload levels. In some cases, the level of detail for the provided data was less than expected

because it would have required police staff time that was not available in the project time frame. This was the case for Bulgaria, Spain and Cyprus for breakdowns by sex of missing children involved in a case. For Bulgaria, Germany, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia this was also the case concerning the requested age brackets, that were different from those already in use in the country. Furthermore, for all those countries that did not provide data on the time elapsed until the child was found: the date of opening and closing the case were normally known, but summarising this data in terms of time frames would require ad hoc processing and few countries were able to undertake it in the project time frame.

This lack of detail must be seen in the context in which the data is gathered, as most data sources for these studies are operational databases, which are not primarily created to produce statistics. All in all, it can be remarked that all countries provided the bulk of data and several countries delivered detailed data, as it will appear from the following sections.

Finalisation phase

The finalisation phase lasted from 16 March to 12 June and involved several activities:

- *16 March – 16 April*: Revising the draft interim report;
- Cleaning up the raw database and transforming it into a final full database;
- *1-15 May*: Building up a comparative database with a selection of the most comparable indicators then carrying out the comparative analysis with trends from the data obtained;
- *16 April --31 May*: Developing and validating recommendations for minimum common standards and good practices: a survey with police experts and an EU experts meeting in Brussels;
- *1-12 June*: Writing the final report.

Definitions

Introduction

The way in which statistics on missing children are produced in the Member States depends on the specific definitions used in relation to the phenomenon. The understanding on what constitutes a missing child in terms of age, causes of disappearance, and levels of risk, is one of the crucial aspects for assessing comparability of data across Member States. Therefore, the different definitions of 'child' and 'missing person", as well as - any existing- "missing child" definitions had to be examined in detail.

Particularly important issues to be captured are the criteria to be met for a person to be declared missing, such as the circumstances of disappearance and intervention thresholds (e.g. the required time delay for a person to be declared missing), the age brackets that determine whether the missing person is a child, and the implications age has for setting intervention thresholds and recording cases statistically. The relevant legal and policy framework, including supporting national policy directives and standards, as well as the common practice as understood by key national stakeholders were examined for this purpose.

The approach to this issue in the study has been pragmatic and aimed at highlighting formalised as well as implicit, operational definitions used e.g. to establish intervention thresholds. The findings of this mapping exercise are described in the following sections.

Missing person, child and missing child

The first and overarching term that needs to be explored is that of a **missing person**, since it can be expected that missing children will be defined in relation to this encompassing category. Overall, **the majority of Member States do not seem to have binding legal definitions of what constitutes a missing person**. Notable exceptions are Estonia, Hungary and Ireland, where a definition of a missing person is provided in civil law, or Italy, where a law on missing persons was recently approved. Often however, relatively precise definitions exist in ministerial or police regulations. This is not surprising, given that the police are the first and main counterpart in cases of missing persons, and need clear guidance on how to respond to such cases. Belgium, Latvia and Slovakia all make use of definitions that are provided in police or ministerial regulations of the Ministry of Interior, while the Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice has included the definition in its information policy on actions related to missing persons. A further ten Member States make use of police regulations in order to define what constitutes a missing person. At the same time, many countries, including Cyprus, Denmark, France, Greece, Spain, do not provide any official definition of a missing person, so that it is effectively up to police authorities to decide whether and under what circumstances a certain case should be counted as missing person or not.

In countries where there is a definition (a legal or an operational one), the level of detail included varies substantially. Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary and Latvia all have developed a definition that identifies several categories of missing persons, based on the type of disappearance and/or the level of risk connected with the occurrence. While the most common (and often single) constitutive element of the definition is the lack of information on the whereabouts on a certain person, a number of Member States, such as Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, also include further factors or characteristics that identify specific subsets of cases within the definition. This includes indicators such as that for crime or endangerment exist, or persons who are found but cannot provide identification or proof of their identity (Estonia, Hungary, Latvia). The latter sub-sets may also include cases of individuals who are found deceased (Estonia and Hungary).

Belgium, Luxembourg, Ireland and Poland all have some provisions included in their definition of missing persons that determine the level of risk associated with the disappearance. Belgium and Luxembourg differentiate between alarming and non-alarming cases, while Poland has an elaborate system that sees three levels of risk. At the first level there are all those cases where lack of information on whereabouts, paired with serious indications of crime or endangerment can be established. The second category captures missing person cases where no serious concerns for endangerment can be deduced, and who can be assumed to have left their common surroundings voluntarily. The third risk category focuses on runaway children, as well as on persons that have left from some form of residential care facility. Ireland also has a similar three-stage risk level categorisation for missing persons aged 18 and above included in the relevant police regulations.

The Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Germany and Finland all employ a definition of a missing person that explicitly includes the condition that a written report has to be drawn up with the police in order to consider someone missing. This means that a phone call is not sufficient. Another condition though is relevant for the German police: an adult person is only considered missing if a threat to life and limb can be assumed[4]).

Table 2.1 provides an overview of the different arrangements observed with regard to the definition of missing persons in the 27 EU Member States. We distinguish between the conditions that have to be met for a person to be declared missing and the further elements that define specific subsets within missing persons.

Table 2.1 Availability of a definition for "missing person" and for specific subsets of missing persons in Member States

Definition	Country		Conditions and Sub-sets	Country
Legal definition	EE (Civil Code), HU (Law on issuing a warrant), IE (Civil Law), IT (law on missing persons)		Constitutive element: No information on whereabouts	BE, CZ, DE, EE, HU, IE, LT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK, SL, SE, UK
Definition in policy/ ministerial regulation	BE, LT, SK, NL		Constitutive element: Reported missing at the police	CZ, BG, DE, FI
Definition in law or regulation establishing police tasks	AT, BG, CZ, DE, FI, LU, PL, PT, SK, SL, UK (upcoming)			
Categorisation by cause of disappearance	AT, BE, BG, CZ, EE, HU, LT		Further element: Indications for crime or endangerment	AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, PL, UK
Categorisation by levels of risk	BE, LU, PL		Further element: in need of identification	DE, EE, HU, LT
Operational definition only, or no written definition at all	CY, DK, FR, GR, IT,MT, ES, SE		Further element: differentiation of missing minors in the definition	AT, BG, CZ, DE, IE, LT, LU

As regards the definitions of **child,** those seem to be much more coherent, and should be seen in conjunction with numerous international conventions that have been ratified by Member States. Those include the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the European Convention on the Exercise of the Children's Rights (ratified by 16 Member States), the Council of Europe Convention on the protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, the European Convention on the Adoption of Children and the Luxembourg Convention of the Children. Of those,

[4] The BKA (Federal criminal police) considers that adults, who are in full possession of their mental and physical powers, have the right to freely choose their place of residence and withhold this information from relatives or friends. Unless there is a danger to life or limb no investigation will be carried out. This does not apply to children.

only the last one places the threshold for children at 16 years[5]. All other conventions stipulate that a child is a person that has not reached 18 years of age.

Consequently, all Member States follow the usual convention that a child is any person below the age of 18. In addition, most countries have further specifications for children in different age brackets, which are usually connected to their criminal liability, as well as to their right to exercise certain rights. In some countries, there is a distinction between children aged 0-14 and children aged 15 and above. In other Member States, such as Bulgaria and Slovenia additional distinctions exist (e.g. children aged 16-18 enjoy certain rights in Bulgaria and are referred to as "not yet adolescent"), and Finland, the Czech Republic, Poland and Sweden set a threshold at 15 years. In Portugal, a distinction between the age brackets 0-12 and 13-18 is made.

Few countries mention explicitly "**missing children**" as a category and give a legal definition of it. In general, the definition is derived from the definition of "missing person", in conjunction with that of "child". In Bulgaria, missing children are recognised in the Child Protection Law, in that it stipulates that in such cases immediate actions must follow. This is in practice reflected in the absence of a 24 hour waiting period before declaring a child missing. In Malta, missing children are implicitly defined through provisions in the Civil Code, which regulate the relationship between a child and its parents and define the right of the parents to ask for police assistance whenever their child leaves home without parental consent.

Some Member States differentiate, usually in police or ministerial regulations, the disappearance of children as a special case/ category of missing persons. Those are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg and Spain. Most of those countries list being a child/a minor as one of the characteristics that indicate an alarming, high-risk case of a missing person.

In hardly any of the Member States does the distinction between the age brackets 0-14 and 15-18 (or similar subdivisions) matter for the recording of the case as a case involving a child. Yet a shared principle emerging from country analyses is that the younger a missing child is, the higher is the level of risk attributed to the case (e.g. Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Luxemburg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Sweden). Therefore, younger children are usually declared missing right away and such cases are prioritised in order to secure capacity for immediate actions from the authorities.

Specific categories of missing children

Members of Missing Children Europe (MCE) identify the following categories of missing children:

- **Runaways** (National / International) – Children 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 children by anyone other than the parents or persons with parental authority;
- **International 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 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 persons, under the age of 18 who have been

[5] Also the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, which has been ratified by EU Member States, applies to children until the age of 16.

separated from both parents and are not being cared for by an adult, who by law is responsible for doing so;

- **Lost, injured or otherwise missing children -** Disappearances for no apparent reasons of children who have got lost (e.g. young 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[6].

In practice, both legal and operational definitions of the different categories of missing children have shown to vary considerably across Member States.

The first category of **runaways** is recognised as a separate category by more than half of all Member States. A legal definition on what constitutes a runaway is however provided in only few countries. In Malta, runaways are understood in the context of the Civil Law provisions that stipulate the obligation of a child to remain with its parents and the right of the latter to report a child missing if it runs away from home without their consent. In Belgium, the Youth Protection Law of April 8th, 1965 implies that children (<18 years old) are under the legal authority of their parents, therefore running away is considered to be status delinquency.

Of those countries that recognise (legally or not) runaways as a separate category of missing children, six Member States also define those in broadly consistent terms with the MCE definition. An emphasis on the voluntary nature of the act of leaving home is visible in some of those Member States. Another seven countries apply definitions that are partially similar to the MCE definition. Among those, Austria and Germany focus on repeated runaways. Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Ireland and Slovenia break down the MCE into separate categories of children missing from home, and such that have fled from a care facility. Finally, Denmark and France do implicitly differentiate runaways as a category, but place those in broad terms together with all cases of worrying, at-risk disappearances.

[6] MCE (European Federation for Missing and Sexually Exploited Children), 116 000: The European hotline number for missing children. A practical guide for hotline operators.

Table 2.2 Definitions of categories of missing children in Member States

Definition	Recognized as separate category of missing children	Broadly consistent with MCE definition	Partially consistent with MCE definition	Not consistent with MCE definition	Not existing as separate category	Legal definition*
Runaway	AT, BE, BG, DE, FI, FR, IE, HU, IT, PT, RO, ES, SL, UK	BE, FI, PT, RO, ES, UK	AT, BG, DE, IE, IT, SL, PL	DK, FR	CY, CZ, EE, GR, LT, LU, NL, SK	BE, MT
Abduction by a third person	, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, FI, FR, GR, HU, IE, LT, MT, PT	BE, BG, CY, DE, EE, FI, IE), LT, LU, MT, PT, RO, ES, SL, SE	DK, GR, HU	AT, CZ, IT	AT[7], CZ, IT, NL, FI, SK, UK	AT[8], BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, FR, GR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, MT, PT, ES, SL, SE
International parental abduction	BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, FR,IE, HU, MT, NL, RO, UK	BE, CY, CZ, DK, EE, FR, HU, IE, IT, MT, NL, SE, UK	DE, FI, LT, LU, ES	AT, BG, CZ, MT, PT, SL	AT[9]	BE, CY, DE, DKEE, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, ES, SK, SL, SE, UK
Missing unaccompanied migrant children	AT, FI, IE, RO	AT, FI, FR, RO	DE		most	DE
Lost, injured or otherwise missing children	AT, BG, DE, RO, UK	DE	AT	BG, RO, UK	most	none

In the case of international parental abduction, only existing national legislation besides the ratification the Hague Convention is considered. In the case of unaccompanied migrant minors, only legislation that specifically refers to missing unaccompanied migrant minors is considered. In the case of lost, injured or otherwise missing children, only countries that specifically differentiate such category have been mentioned.

In the MCE definition, **child abduction by a third person** refers to cases of criminal kidnapping, and excludes involvement of a parent or legal custodian. This understanding appears to be broadly consistent with legislation and provisions found in the majority of the Member States. A legal definition on what constitutes child abduction by a third person can be found in the criminal codes of most Member States.

From those countries that do provide a legal definition, most have one that is broadly consistent with MCE's understanding that it refers to an abduction of a child by any person other than those who have parental authority or legal custody. Within this group, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia and Ireland all set an age limit for the crime of abduction of children by a third person. Namely, Belgium differentiates in terms of penalties for abduction of children above and below 12 years of age. Cyprus defines abduction as the separation of a child under the age of 14 from its legal parents or guardian, but sets a higher boundary for abduction of girls at 16 years. Ireland sets a general threshold at 16 years, while in Estonia it is 14 years.

Austria defines a crime of child abduction (and child abduction under 14 years for sexual abuse purposes), without distinguishing third party and parental abductions. A similar situation is encountered in the Czech Republic and Italy (that has however differentiated punishment provisions for abduction perpetrated by a parent).

Denmark and Hungary both define child abduction by a third person in the context of provisions on trafficking and exploitation. In Greece there is a definition of abduction by a third party for the purpose of marriage or with a sexual connection which distinguishes consensual and non-consensual abduction.

7 No distinction between abduction by third persons and parental abduction.

8 Only for abduction (without distinctions).

9 No distinction between abduction by third persons and parental abduction.

As regards **international parental abductions**, all EU Member States have signed and ratified the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction and therefore consent to the legal definition included there, which in its turn overlaps with the MCE understanding. Signatory countries have designated Central Authorities that handle cases connected to cross-border parental abductions in the context of the Hague Convention. These offices may be attached to the Ministry of Justice (Bulgaria, Estonia, the Netherlands), to Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (Czech Republic), or Foreign Affairs (Denmark). Nevertheless, substantial differences exist in national legislation, in particular as regards the distinction between domestic and international parental abduction, and the treatment of such cases by the authorities.

In a number of Member States, the national legislation does not differentiate parental abduction from abduction by third parties. Among these are Austria, where the only condition for a case to classify as an abduction is withdrawal (of a child below the age of 16) from the legal guardian. This effectively means that children withdrawn by one parent who still has legal custody are not considered abducted. Slovenia applies the same understanding. The Czech Republic, Malta and Portugal also do not separate parental abduction (domestic or international) from abduction by a third party in their national legislation. In some countries (e.g. Romania), recent changes to the Civil Code introduced shared custody as a general rule. Shared custody decreases the possibility of a parent taking the child without the consent of the other parent as being considered abduction (of course it can be considered violation of the rules of shared custody).

Among the Member States that do have specific national legislative provisions that regulate parental abductions, Germany, Finland, Latvia, Luxemburg and Spain do not explicitly distinguish domestic from international parental abduction although they all apply the provisions of the Hague Convention as regards parental abductions with an international character. In France, international parental abduction is not a separate offence, but an aggravation of the offence of removal of the child from a person having parental authority over the child.

The Member States display differences in the provisions and the level of detail included in their national legislation on parental abduction. Belgium and Denmark for instance both include regulations concerning both children taken out of and brought into the country. Cyprus, Hungary and France all have developed very detailed national legislation on parental abduction that regulates legal consequences for different situations in terms of parental custody.

As regards age, the general practice among Member States is to follow the standards of the Hague Convention that prescribes 16 as the threshold age, under which international parental abductions are considered such. In Italy, if the victim is under the age of 14 punishment is tougher (prison from 1 year to 4 years, vs. prison from 6 months to 3 years for minors of14 and above).

Missing unaccompanied migrant children form a fourth category in the MCE classifications of missing children. Some Member States do not have a legal definition of what constitutes an unaccompanied migrant child, namely Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. The rest do have specific and consistent legal provisions that define an unaccompanied migrant child in a similar way as the MCE definition.

However, only a handful of countries report to have legal or procedural regulations on missing unaccompanied migrant children. Those are Austria, Finland, Ireland and Romania.

At the same time, since in most countries these children are being taken into special care facilities, in a number of Member States specific regulations apply for reporting the disappearance of such children. In Belgium, disappearance of an unaccompanied migrant child from the “observation and research centre” is only reported to the police when it is considered alarming. In Denmark, missing unaccompanied migrant children have to be reported within 24 hours if they are younger than 15, while for those aged above 15 there is a 24hour intervention threshold set. Finland also sets a

24hour waiting period before declaring a migrant child missing, while Hungary makes a distinction between children that do and do not seek asylum, noting that it is a usual practice for children from the latter category to disappear within 24-48 hours. Based on these findings, for the rest of the Member States, an educated guess can be made that the treatment of missing unaccompanied migrant children is no different than those considered as runaways from institutional facilities. However, it should be noted that EU legislation only requires legal guardianship to be assigned to these children if they apply for asylum. The lower guardianship status of irregular migrant children is therefore of a potential concern with regard to their vulnerability in the event of going 'missing'.

Lost, injured or otherwise missing children is the last category defined by MCE and refers to those missing children who have gone missing for no apparent reason or who have been injured and cannot be found immediately. In practice, for most Member States this category is not residual as understood by MCE but rather provisional (the reason has not been identified). Most countries would include in cases of "disappearance for no other apparent reason", either a criminal abduction or an accident, and put these together in one category without differentiation, or until the cause has been determined.

Some exceptions from this general picture exist. Bulgaria and Romania both have a similar category to that of the MCE ("disappeared without a trace" in Bulgaria) and report cases of "false alarm" (e.g. when the child has been found soon after, or has not been missing at all), and those when it is known that the child is a victim of an accident but no body has yet been found. In the UK, a specific category exists, for such persons, including children, who were "lost at sea".

Finally, further categories of missing children, not consistent with the MCE classification, can be found across Member States. Bulgaria also distinguishes children who have disappeared and are wanted in connection with a criminal offence. Ireland has a specific category of "lost children of Ireland" that refers to children who were adopted abroad (US and Australia) in the 40s, 50s and 60s and often claimed to be orphans while in fact their families were still alive. Italy classifies in a separate category missing persons with "possible psychological disturbances" and children may also be included, although the category mainly refers to Alzheimer disease cases; a similar approach is also noted in Estonia, where similar cases are referred to as "children in danger" and Romania, where the term used is "disappearance in alarming circumstances". Lithuania has specific category of "bought or sold children". The UK uses the category "unauthorised absence" that applies to children in care when their whereabouts are known or thought to be known but unconfirmed.

Responses

Introduction

To understand the meaning and value of existing data on missing children, we do not only need to clarify the underlying definitions; we also need to know the operational context in which such data are gathered. In this chapter, we provide an overview of the steps that are in place at national level across the EU 27 for responding when children go missing. We compare and contrast the different trigger points, investigative procedures and by whom they are implemented, and the timescales that are involved (where these are known). We also briefly identify the types of data that are gathered at each stage. The chapter aims as far as possible to delineate the main differences that exist for responding to different categories of missing children, and their relative prioritisation.

Finally, we give examples of potential good practice with regard to processes and procedures when children go missing, including the work of 116 000 hotlines and child welfare organisations. Where possible, we give supporting examples of how cases were effectively handled.

Timescales for investigation

A first important consideration is the timescales for missing child cases. Table 3.1 (overleaf) provides a summary, based on the information mapped during Phase 1:

- The first part of the table identifies whether there are any national guidelines on the commencement of a **preliminary investigation**, including whether the policy is one of an immediate search, a pre-defined waiting period, or a more variable approach based entirely on the individual circumstances of the case. We also identify any 'exceptions' for specific categories of missing child cases. The term 'general cases' should be understood as those cases presented to local police forces or hotlines without specific intelligence about criminal activity at the time of reporting;
- The second part of the table identifies the main criteria resulting in a **secondary investigation** stage. This typically refers to the escalation from a local police matter to one for the national police. Three principal categories could be identified from the Phase 1 country data, which are explained further below.

It should be noted that information about investigative stages was of variable quality on a country basis.

Preliminary investigation

In slightly under half of the Member States (n=12), the timescales for the preliminary investigation are at the discretion of the local authorities (usually the police) in the absence of any specific intelligence indicating criminal activity. In Estonia, the local police will undertake initial checks with family, friends and persons from the child's immediate surrounding like teachers, peers etc. before determining whether to start searching for the child immediately or to wait until further inquiries have been made. An immediate search is unlikely in the case of children who have run away on multiple occasions, but first time runaways or young children would be prioritized. Similar arrangements are reported in Austria, Denmark, Finland, Greece and Italy, where there are no prescribed national guidelines for the timing of the initial search.

Table 3.1 Timescales for investigative procedures

	Preliminary investigation	Secondary investigation (escalation of case)

Child reported as missing	Search commences immediately	Waiting period	Variable response / undefined	Evidence of criminal activity	Child age or vulnerability	Expiry of preliminary investigation period
General cases	BE[10], BG, CZ, FR, IE[11], HU[12], IT, LU[13], MT[14], PL, RO, SI[15], ES[16], LV, DE[17]		AT[18], CY, DK, EE[19], FI, GR, LT, NL, PO, SK, SE, UK	AT, BE, BG, CY,CZ, DK, FI, FR, IT, LU, NL, PL, PO, RO, DE, SI, IE, UK, LV[20]	BE[21], ES, PL[22], CZ[23]	EE[24], BE[25], BG[26], PL[27] SE[28]
Child abductions*	BE, BG, CZ, FR, IE, HU, IT, LU, MT, PL, RO, SI, ES, LV, DE **FI, EE**		AT, CY, DK, GR, LT, NL, PO, SK, SE, UK	As above	As above	As above
Unaccompanied Migrant Children	BG, CZ, FR, IE, HU, IT, LU, MT, PL, RO, SI, ES, LV, **EE**	**DE**[29], **BE**[30]	AT, CY, DK, FI, GR, LT, NL, PO, SK, SE, UK	As above	As above	As above

* *Criminal* abductions are always investigated immediately.

All Member States report arrangements to respond immediately in the event of *known* criminal activity or when the child is thought to be in imminent danger. This usually includes suspected abduction cases. However, fifteen Member States also undertake an immediate investigation as routine practice when children go missing in general. For these countries, there is usually a principle of taking immediate action in the interests of the child's safety. Thus, cases automatically achieve a higher level of priority, because the 'child' status is equated with vulnerability under national legislation.

This is the situation in Ireland, where child cases are always 'High Risk' under the Garda Code (national police code of practice); Luxembourg, where every disappearance of a child (under the age of 18 years) is classified as a 'worrying' according to national law; Malta, where all child cases (also

10 The national policy is to start searches within the first 24 hours, although police will use their discretion based on individual circumstances.

11 Although there is no legal definition of a 'missing child', child cases will always be investigated immediately because they fall under Category 'A' (High Risk) under the Garda (Police) Code.

12 For children over the age of 14 there is a waiting period of 24 hours before the case is recorded, while for children younger than 14 years, or children with a disability, the case is recorded immediately. Search is started independently from recording.

13 All child disappearances are classed as 'worrying' under national law, and must be immediately reported to the public prosecutor.

14 All child cases (under 18 years) are treated as "Top Priority" and are investigated immediately.

15 An investigation is started immediately when there is the suspicion that the missing child is the victim of a criminal offence.

16 The disappearance of a person aged less than 18 years, except runaway children from public child care settings, will be always considered a "high risk situation". The Police Unit that receives the report should immediately inform the Central Unit of the Judicial Police.

17 The police are obliged to take immediate action in cases of missing children, because a" threat to life and limb" is always assumed.

18 No fixed policy on timescales. Public prosecutor or court authorisation is needed prior to some criminal investigations.

19 The preliminary search usually starts immediately, but in the case of runaways police can exercise discretion depending on the circumstances of the child going missing.

20 If preliminary search suggests that it is not a runaway case, then the State Police will commence an investigation.

21 Reported to Federal Police if the case is 'alarming' (under Belgian Ministerial guidance this includes a missing person under the age of 13, either with / without grounds to suspect criminal activity).

22 Cases where a child aged under 15 years has disappeared for the first time are assigned Category 1 status (top priority).

23 The National Coordination Mechanism is activated if the child is under 15 years of age and their life or health are thought to be at risk, in addition to cases where there is a known abduction, and where the child has a disability.

24 The standard procedure is a primary search of a missing child, which lasts for 10 days, after which the case is passed to the Criminal Police.

25 If children are not found within 30 days, the case is re-classified as 'alarming' and passed to the Federal Police.

26 The local search lasts up to 15 days before being escalated to National Police, but can be escalated earlier.

27 After 30 days cases are raised to a higher risk category if the child is not found.

28 When a person has been reported missing for more than 90 days, the case is passed to the National Police.

29 UAMs are reported missing to the local police after 12 hours (under the age of 15) or 24 hours (15 to 18 years of age).

30 No action is taken for the first 24 hours, unless the case is classified as 'alarming' under Ministerial guidelines, in which case the Federal Police are informed.

under 18 years) are treated as 'Top Priority', and Slovenia where the initial search is mobilised on the assumption that the child *could* have been the victim of a criminal offence until established otherwise. The subsequent investigative steps depend on whether or not the initial search uncovers any actual evidence of criminal wrongdoing.

In other specific circumstances, a waiting period is not prescribed but can occur as a consequence of the different understanding of what is a missing child. In Germany, a parental abduction is not classified as a 'missing person' case under national law unless the whereabouts of the child are totally unknown (i.e. not just if he/she is known to be with the other parent). In Denmark, there is no formal acknowledgement of the phenomenon of missing children and such cases are filed under 'other investigation' by local police with no specific guidelines for undertaking any further search procedures. Cases can only be identified as a 'missing child' in the event of suspected criminal activity, at which point they are passed to the National Police and a National Criminal Record (NCR) is created. It must be stressed, however, that the absence of a prescribed 'immediate response' should not be taken to assume that there is no effort to search for the child. These distinctions apply specifically to how and when a formal police or judicial investigation is initiated.

There is a **rather contrasting approach to the response for missing unaccompanied migrant children**. In Estonia these cases are investigated immediately by local police (who issue a search alert), they receive a *lower* priority than general cases. In Denmark, and Belgium, there is a fixed 'no action' period before the commencement of local police investigations for unaccompanied migrant children. In Slovenia the police will work with the asylum home to establish the circumstances of any unaccompanied migrant children who have disappeared. However, if the child has not returned in three days, their application for asylum is considered as 'withdrawn'. No further investigative action is taken in this situation.

Procedures for civil handling of international abductions are considerably more standardised across the Member States in comparison to the domestic cases. If the country where the child is abducted has endorsed the Hague Convention of 1980 or is concerned by EC Regulation 2201/2003, the case is reported to the Central Authority of the Convention (the Ministry of Justice or equivalent). The authority assumes the lead for the case and liaises both with the parents and with the corresponding foreign authority. Countries within the Schengen area routinely make use of the Schengen Information System (SIS) as a mechanism to report details of missing child cases, and as an early alert mechanism to notify other Member States within the system.

Escalation of cases

Most countries have a set of criteria in place for escalating the level of priority afforded to cases, in response to new evidence. The main 'trigger' for raising the profile of cases is the identification of criminal activities, or reasonable grounds for suspecting criminality, for which two thirds of Member States (n=17) issue some kind of protocol to involve wider agencies. Often this is the criteria for referring local cases to a national investigative unit of some kind (see also below).

In Belgium, cases are always passed directly to the Federal Police if the case is 'alarming'. This includes all missing persons under the age of 13, either with / without grounds to suspect criminal activity), whilst in Portugal children aged less than15 years disappearing for the first time are afforded Category 1 status.

A few countries; namely Estonia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Poland and Sweden operate a system whereby child cases automatically escalate from low to high priority after a fixed period of time, even if there has been no new evidence of crime during this period. The timescales for the automatic transfer from primary search to criminal investigation are 10 days in Estonia, 30 days in Bulgaria, 30 days in

Belgium and Poland, and 90 days in Sweden. The principle is one of growing concern for the child's wellbeing as a result of non-communication, requiring a higher level of response.

Other countries *do not* have such time-bound procedures for escalating cases. In the Czech Republic, cases that do not qualify as a "child in danger" are overseen by the local police (district level), where the missing person report was first received. These cases include children running away from care, and cases of missing 15-18 year olds with no evidence of criminal activity. There are no timescales for raising the level of priority for these cases, which remain low priority for an indefinite period unless new evidence is found warranting a change in status.

Responsible authorities

In the majority of Member States, the initial case is taken by the local police force where the child was first reported as missing. This is the case in the UK, Sweden, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Hungary, Greece, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Portugal. Typically, local police are responsible for undertaking background checks, in liaison with other organisations (e.g. child welfare, emergency services). The case is then investigated up to the point at which criminal proceedings are identified or there are other criteria for raising the level of priority, at which stage the case is passed to the national police. In a smaller number of countries, any investigative procedures must first be mandated by the public prosecutor, who will then direct local police during the search. This is the case in France, Luxembourg, Slovenia, and Italy where the police must notify the judiciary as soon as a missing person case is reported. In Austria and Finland the public prosecutor will only take the lead for abduction cases or those with a criminal law angle, which are then carried out as a pre-trial investigation. This ensures that there are additional coercive measures at the disposal of the police (such as issuing arrest warrants, accessing mobile phones, and gaining access to premises). In Spain the authorisation from the judiciary is needed when individual rights might be compromised.

In Estonia, Denmark, Belgium and the Czech Republic, certain categories of cases are immediately passed to a national police unit. In Belgium, for example, all 'alarming' cases are reported to 'The Cell' – the missing people arm of the Federal Police. The Cell acts in a directive role, authorising action as necessary: a helicopter search, a water search, or liaising with international contacts, but the local police maintains an operational role. In Malta, the Vice Squad coordinates local district teams, and assumes direct responsibility for coordinating missing child operations. A slightly different model again operates in Ireland, whereby local police undertakes the investigation, but under the central coordination of a specialist national unit. All missing child cases are reported to the national Missing People's Bureau (MPB), which is located within the national police (Garda Síochána). The MPB places all information about missing person incidents on its PULSE information system. The PULSE reports are reviewed on a daily basis, with relevant information communicated directly back to local police units. In Italy, the police and the judiciary can also cooperate with the administrative authorities (the *Prefetti*). The special Commissioner for Missing Persons has recently developed guidelines for the *Prefetti* to better organise the search of missing persons by coordinating the relevant state and voluntary corps and devising provincial Plans. This is based on the key distinction between the missing person investigation (police, judiciary) and search aimed at saving lives (administrative authorities).

Geographical coordination for missing children cases

Most countries have devised mechanisms of some kind to coordinate internally across different national, regional and local administrative boundaries. This internal coordination can be particularly challenging for Federal States, where the jurisdictional boundaries are often more complex. In Germany, the local police will alert the LKA (Regional Criminal Office) and other police offices if there are signs that the child has moved out of the area. The police have different options to request

additional resources, including from other federal states or the border protection, local rescue services and the Red Cross.

In France, for instance, a 'concentric' approach is taken to widen the reach of the initial search quickly in the event that the child might no longer be within the area where they first disappeared. Following an initial local police search coordinated by the public prosecutor, the case can be communicated to other local forces within two hours, and relayed to the National Police. This is done by using the nation-wide « Sarbacane » communications system or other types of broadcasting at local, regional and interregional level, to be launched at the discretion of regional services of judiciary police. The National Police have the further options of issuing an SIS communication within the Schengen area, and a Yellow Note (*Notice Jaune*) with Interpol, for missing persons moving outside of Schengen area.

Specific investigative procedures followed

For more general missing children cases, a 'preliminary search' typically involves police speaking with relatives, friends and acquaintances of the missing child to determine their whereabouts when they were last seen and to establish whether the pattern of behaviour might suggest a greater or lower risk (e.g. where a child has runaway on previous occasions). In the event of an accident or a child going missing in a remote or dangerous area, the search procedure can involve two parallel aspects: investigative police work and a "tracing" exercise by emergency services.

In the case of unaccompanied migrant children, the asylum centre has a duty to report in the event that a child goes missing from their care. These cases are usually led by the police, working with asylum centres and youth welfare organisations, and potentially the border authorities if the search points towards an international case. This is the arrangement in Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany and the Netherlands. The arrangements differ in Bulgaria, where the Ministry of Justice and Child Protection Agency are the responsible investigating agencies, and in Portugal where it is the Foreigners and Border Service (Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras, SEF) that oversees these cases.
The nature of the investigation often takes on a different dimension where the lead is transferred to the public prosecutor. One of the reported advantages is that prosecutors can manage the case as a pre-trial investigation and therefore have a number of additional coercive measures at their disposal, which include issuing warrants and checking mobile phone records if this is allowed for the type of presumed crime.

Parental abduction cases are amongst the most legally complex. In some countries the powers of intervention for police are severely restricted, unless the abductor is a stranger to the child and a kidnapping case can be constituted. In Austria, for example, abduction cases can implicate three different legal procedures/activities of law enforcement and courts running in parallel. Depending on the nature of the case, there might be a) actions taken by the police to trace the missing child in the framework of a missing persons search; b) criminal proceedings lead by the public prosecutor (e.g. prosecution for abduction under Section 195 of the Austrian Criminal Code if applicable), and c) a civil law procedure involving a national custody trial or an application based on the Hague Convention.

Public communications

Public communications form an important aspect of the national response when children go missing. Nearly all countries have a system of some kind for alerting the general public in the event that a child is thought to be at immediate risk of harm (e.g. kidnapping or trafficking). Currently, the child alert system is in place in 11 EU countries: Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece,

Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, and the United Kingdom. In Spain a special "Monitoring Cell" can be set-up for complex cases where media involvement is required. A designated spokesperson acts as an intermediary between media and police and controls the release of information.

The arrangements are more varied for other missing child cases. It is not uncommon for Member States to require prior consent from a legal guardian before authorising a press release or issuing personal information such as names or photographs of children to the media. This is the case in Slovakia, Romania the United Kingdom and Ireland. In certain countries including Italy and Austria, authorisation is also required from the public prosecutor if they are leading the preliminary investigation, or by the police in other cases. In contrast, the authorisation rests with the lead officer conducting the investigation in other Member States including Latvia, Finland, Portugal and Lithuania, where a direct protocol can be issued. In the main, the policy is one of restraint and the decision about whether to communicate with the public is made on a case-by-case basis. The use of media alerts is often avoided if possible in the case of runaways, in the interests of preserving the child's anonymity and as a safeguarding procedure.

Resolution of cases

Luxembourg was the only Member State where information could be obtained on the resolution mechanisms in cases of missing children. There, the public prosecutor plays a role when the child is found, as well as coordinating the investigation. It has a competence in terms of judicial protection of youth, and can provide social, psychological and moral support to the child and their family. If the prosecutor decides to take measures in the interest of the child, the file is transferred to the Juvenile Court. Through this approach, a strong legal basis to the case is assured even at the point of resolution with the family.

Mechanisms and support structures

Specific mechanisms

In all Member States, the **police** are the first instance to be alerted when a child goes missing, either at local/regional level, or at national level (e.g. in case of suspicion of crime or offence, and international abduction). In several Member-States, there are also specific mechanisms and support structures to deal with missing children.

In the countries where the **116000 hotline** is in place (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and the UK), people can either report a missing child by declaring the disappearance to the police directly, or by contacting the 116000 hotline.

In all cases the hotline respondent, when contacted, directly informs or requests the person calling to inform the police about the disappearance. The 116000 hotline can either provide direct and on-going support to the person calling during the whole duration of the disappearance (e.g. CFPE Enfants Disparus in France or Hope for Children UNCRC Policy Centre in Cyprus who, in cooperation with the Association for the Prevention of Family Violence, provides psychological support to parents and children), or can direct parents and relatives towards other organisations providing support, e.g. psychological service provider, child care centres, children's ombudspersons, etc. (e.g. Rat auf Draht in Austria).

In most of the countries where the hotline is in operation, there is an established collaboration between the police and the organisation managing the hotline. Most of the time, it takes the form of a formal agreement. This is the case for instance in:

- Bulgaria, where a cooperation agreement between Centre Nadia and the police lays down the process in which the hotline operator acts when receiving a signal for a missing child;
- The Czech Republic, where the Ministry of the Interior monitors the operation of the 116000 hotline, which is managed by the association Ztracené dítě (Lost Child);
- France, where a framework agreement was signed in April 2012 by the Ministry of Solidarity and Social Cohesion, the Ministry of Justice, National Police, National Gendarmerie and the two organisations managing the hotline (CFPE Enfants Disparus and INAVEM);
- Hungary, where the national and Budapest Police have a cooperation agreement with the operator of the 116000 hotline;
- Italy, where an agreement protocol defines the relations between Telefono Azzurro On.Lu.S. and the Ministry of Interior for the management of the 116000 hotline;
- Luxembourg, where telephone calls to the 116000 are generally managed by the National Office for Children, and by the police outside working hours, during week-ends and holidays;
- Poland, where there is a formal agreement between police and the Itaka Foundation, which manages the 116000 hotline. Both parties cooperate with Border Guards, Fire Department, Mountain Volunteer Search and Rescue, Water Volunteer Search and Rescue in specific cases;
- Portugal, where IAC has a written protocol with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, signed on May 25th 2004 (the helpline for missing children was launched on that day with the number 1410, following the Belgium example, and the 116 000 number was assigned to IAC later by the Ministry of Home Affairs by dispatch number 20340/2007);
- Spain, where the Ministry of Interior and the hotline operator (Fundación ANAR) have a written cooperation agreement with a protocol concerning the 116000 hotline.

The guide for 116 000 hotline providers goes a step further and recommends specific features of a written cooperation agreement that should be considered 'good practice[31]'. It recommends that any such agreement should be based on the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, and that it should take the child's best interests into account (p.34). Also stipulated as part of a good example of such an agreement are that: there should be a common definition of 'missing children' and different types of cases; a clear reference person should be identified in the police and hotline operator respectively as a first point of contact; there should be a mutual respect for confidentiality and working practices, and that the jurisdiction of the police and other judicial authorities should be recognised (with the hotline operator complementing rather than duplicating this role).

The cooperation can also take a more ad hoc form, however, meaning that the police and the hotline operator cooperate on a case-by-case basis. This is for example the case in Portugal, Slovakia, and Spain. In these countries, hotline operators and police have their own internal cooperation protocols, but no official public documents on it. In Cyprus, the protocol for cooperation is being prepared.

The study also found examples of clearly defined partnerships. Indeed some of the country respondents emphasised that a coordinated and multi-agency effort is needed to provide the best possible response when children go missing (including 116000 hotline operators, police, judicial services, child welfare associations, NGOs and citizens). The cooperation with other types of services (e.g. train and metro stations, Internet providers, social media, shopping centres, etc.) was also reported to be important for publishing the picture of the missing child, hence reaching a broader public.

In some countries, a **dedicated child alert system** has been put in place, under the impetus of the European Commission. The objective of this mechanism is to rescue an abducted child through the mobilisation of exceptional means in a limited time. This alert system differs between countries, but is based on common characteristics:

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[31] Missing Children Europe (2011) 116 000 The European hotline number for missing children: A practical guide for hotline operators. Available online: http://www.hotline116000.eu/pdf/practical_guide_for_hotline_operators.pdf.

- Involvement of the country's population in the search;
- Collection of testimonies from the general public;
- Broadcasting of information about the missing child through diverse channels (TV, radio, websites, social media – e.g. Facebook, Twitter, train stations, highways, etc.) and with the support of a variety of partners (police, judicial authorities, NGOs, 116000 operators, etc.);
- Necessity of the occurrence of a minimum set of criteria to launch the alert: the victim must be a child; the police must suspect a crime (abduction, kidnapping); the life of the abducted child must be in danger; the police must possess sufficient information to identify the victim and the perpetrator; there should be an agreement of the highest judicial institutions, such as prosecutor of the Republic or Minister of the Interior, to launch the alert.

The child alert system must be launched a few hours after the disappearance of a child, so that the chances to retrieve him/her are very high. It is launched only in exceptional cases, in order to keep its specificity and a high level of interest from the population.

This alert system exists in **Belgium** (Plan Alerte Enlevement), **Czech Republic** (National Coordination Mechanism of Search for Missing Children – NKM), **France** (Plan Alerte Enlevement), **Greece** (AMBER Alert Hellas), **Ireland** (The Child Rescue Ireland Alert), the **Netherlands** (Amber Alert), **Romania** (Alertă Răpire Copil) and **the UK** (Child Rescue Alert). An alert system also exists in **Hungary** (Riasztási Lánc), but this has not yet been used, and cases are still recorded in the alternative HERMON system. According to Amber Alert Europe[32] there have been so far 12 alerts in France, 23 in Greece, 17 in the Netherlands, 1 in the United Kingdom and 1 in Belgium (data for other countries were not available to the organisation at the time of the study).

In France, the broadcasting of the child alert system has been enlarged to include the social media provider Facebook. On October 4, 2011, a specific convention was signed between the Facebook group and the Ministry of Justice.

A similar system has been designed in **Cyprus** (Amber Alert), **Italy**, **Portugal** (*Sistema Alerta Rapto*) and **Luxembourg** (Alert Abduction System), which has not been implemented yet. In **Poland**, the child alert system is at the preparation stage, and should start in 2013. In **Spain**, the alert system (*Alerta Menor Desaparecido*), which establishes a coordination mechanism between the Secretary of State for Security and various organisations (e.g. NGOs, the Media, etc.) is being finalised by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The **Italian** child alert system is fully designed but not yet implemented as funding is not available at the moment.

In the countries where it has been set up and tested, the child alert system proved successful in mobilising maximum of resources in a minimum amount of time to find a missing child. As mentioned above, a few enabling factors are necessary to ensure the success of this mechanism (e.g. quickness of the launch, involvement of the general public, collection of information and leads, etc.).

Asylum centres play a major role in managing cases of unaccompanied migrant children, sometimes assisted by the Red Cross (e.g. in **Austria**, **Denmark**). These organisations usually provide services of coordination between different actors, rehabilitation, family tracing, family reunification procedures and repatriation of children.

Support measures

As far as support measures provided to families are concerned, two types of situations can be found in the majority of the countries:

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[32] http://www.amberalert.eu/.

- On the one hand, support can be provided by the organisation directly managing the 116000 hotline. This is the case in Poland, where mediation between parents or between parents and children is provided by ITAKA Foundation; this is also the case in France, where the CFPE Enfants disparus (co-managing the hotline with INAVEM) provides services of monitoring and social, administrative, legal, judicial and psychological support to families; this is also the case in Slovakia, where the 116000 hotline (*Linka Detskej Istoty*), operated by UNICEF, provides follow-up services including ambulatory emergency centre for children and families, parenting skills education centre and asylum facility "Emergency centre Duha". In Portugal, IAC has provided the support measures to victims and families since 2004 through a network of NGO called “Building together”, reaching out to the entire country;
- In other countries, support measures are provided by NGOs and dedicated associations working on social- and children-related issues. This is the case in Finland (NGOs Kadonneiden omaisetry and Kaapatut lapset - Finnish Association for Abducted Children), Lithuania (Missing Persons' Families Support Centre), Malta (Social Services - Aġenzija Appoġġ). These organisations propose different types of support activities to the relatives of missing persons: psycho-social support; advice, support and guidance for the parents of victims; legal and technical assistance; support to cooperate with other organisations; etc. In some countries, the support is provided by another telephone hotline (e.g. Missing Persons Hotline in the Netherlands).

In Italy, family support measures are provided by the association running the 116000 hotline (Telefono Azzurro), missing persons in general (Penelope) and the psychologist association Psicologi dei Popoli.

The Missing Children guide for 116 000 hotline operators indicates that ‘good practice’ or providing additional support should include a combination of both first hand / hotline support; legal support, administrative support and emotional support. The study would seem to suggest that not all Member States offer this full spectrum of support as yet. The hotline guidance particularly underlines the importance of follow-up home visits following the child’s return; to help with ‘reorientation’ and to ensure that psychological support and counselling is available where this is needed. One working example of this is in **Denmark**. Here, a “System of Victim Counselling" has been established, whereby each of the 12 police entities in Denmark can refer to professionals (e.g. psychologists), who can assist families when something happens.

The provision of training

Dedicated training on how to handle sensitive cases is typically provided by organisations with technical expertise and/or associations and NGOs working on missing children issues. In **Belgium** for instance, the *Missing People Cell*, which is specialised in alarming disappearances, delivers technical support to local police services. Through these training activities, stakeholders who deal directly with children or their families regarding a disappearance learn how to interact adequately with these types of people and situations. In **France**, CFPE Enfants Disparus organises training for police forces to explain how to deal with cases of disappearance, from a legal, psychological and moral point of view. The organisation is regularly consulted by different institutions and participates in working groups related to its thematic activities (disappearances, problematic separations, prevention measures, etc. One of the chargé de dossiers of the organisation, doctor in law, organises training for police officers on the legal aspects of all types of child disappearances.

Co-operation between key stakeholders

In many countries there are **specific written cooperation protocols** connecting several actors involved in the search for missing children. Usually this type of agreement involves police forces, judiciary authorities and an organisation working on missing children issues at national level. Such

protocols aim at establishing networks, enhancing cooperation between relevant stakeholders, putting research means in common and harmonising the exchange of information and data.

Various forms of cooperation can be found in the EU-27 Member States, either between police forces at different levels, or between the police and other organisations working on missing children issues. The different forms of cooperation are listed below, with a few examples of the most representative forms.

Cooperation between police forces at national and regional level

In many countries there are cooperation mechanisms in place between national police and regional police.

On the one hand, for runaways or non-worrying disappearances, the cases are mostly handled at regional and/or local level, by the appropriate police services. In those cases, the national police do not have to be informed, but can provide support and advice to local police officers if needed. In the Netherlands for instance, the National Missing Persons Bureau (national police) supports the Dutch regional police departments with their criminal investigations, and offers support to local law enforcement agencies to help them locate missing persons. A missing persons' coordinator was appointed in each of the 25 regional police departments, as the contact point for the regional coordinators[33].

On the other hand, for cases relating to worrying disappearances, kidnapping or international abductions, national police are informed by regional police services then they handle those cases. They decide, in cooperation with the judicial authorities, whether the child alert mechanism must be launched, for the most worrying cases. In Spain for instance, the disappearance of a child (except runaways from the public centre for children) will always be considered as a "high risk situation", and must be transmitted immediately by the local police unit that received the report to the central unit of the judicial police. Moreover, if a police unit receives a report of a missing child, they should inform the judge, so that he can authorise the investigation. In these cases, the instruction is carried out by the police.

Cooperation between the police and other organisations

Cooperation between organisations at regional level and the central authority coordinating them is generally effective. Child protection services from local departments can be trained by specialised organisations working on crimes committed against children at national level. This is the case for the Criminal Police Departments of each four prefectures of the Police and Border Guard in Estonia, or the police forces trained on the legal aspects of child disappearances by CFPE Enfants Disparus in France. One emblematic example can be found in Bulgaria, where the newly established 'Multi-stakeholder Coordination Group on Missing Children' includes representatives from:

- Ministry of Interior (Criminal Police);
- General Directorate for Fight Against Organized Crime (Units of Trafficking, Migration);
- Border Control Police;
- National Commission for Fight Against Trafficking in Human Beings;
- Child Protection Agency;
- 116-000 hotline provider;
- Bulgarian Red Cross;
- State Agency for Refugees;
- 112 emergency line operators.

[33] *Nota Bene*: in the new police organisation as from 01/01/2013, there will be a shift from 25 to 10 regional police departments, including 10 specialists in missing persons' cases, with a minimum of 2 coordinators per unit who can assist the missing persons specialists.

On many occasions, local level organisations provide useful support in the initial stages of a search. They can assist the local police in the initial investigations, provide support to relatives of the missing child, or link up with care services for children. In Portugal for instance, 'CPCJ' (Local Commission for the Protection of Children and Young People at Risk) organisations are used for the initial interviews and a first diagnostic of the situation. They are allowed to help in the investigation process if they have a good previous knowledge of the situation of the individual child, and the parents and the child agree to their intervention and to the measures of support proposed by the CPCJ.

This cooperation between police and other organisations can be defined in a protocol, which defines the roles and responsibilities of each partner. In Belgium for instance, a protocol aims at harmonising the cooperation between police (Cell for missing People) and justice (Prosecutors and examining magistrates) services, Child Focus and private organisations, regarding investigations. In Ireland, a Joint Protocol regarding children in care was signed between the Garda (police) and the Health Service Executive. It sets out the roles and responsibilities of both agencies, and establishes a Garda liaison role with the HSE care placements at local level. The local liaison role includes a mechanism to identify children in care who are reported missing frequently and to escalate the responsibility for them to an appropriate level of authority in both organisations. It was extended to involve the National Immigrant Bureau and enhance the cooperation when its target group is concerned. In the Netherlands, there is no specific protocol on the cooperation between the police and NGOs; much of the collaboration is based on informal and personal contacts, guided by the national laws and regulations, The *Missing Persons Handbook*, published by the National Missing Persons Bureau, is more used as a best practices manual with guidelines, tips and advice, rather than as a protocol.

Cooperation in handling cases

Cooperation between the police and other organisations happens at each stage of a child going missing:

- **Reporting** of a missing child: As mentioned above, the disappearance must be declared to the police. Depending on the type of situations, various institutions may be involved in reporting a missing child. In Germany for instance, children in care placements for missing unaccompanied migrant children are reported by the shelter they have gone missing from to the legal custodian and the relevant office for youth welfare. 116000 hotline operators and other associations working on missing children issues also liaise with the police if a disappearance is reported to them. In Denmark, there is an overall agreement between the Danish Red Cross and the national authorities (Department of Migration) on how to handle unaccompanied children in the centres. There is also a local cooperation between asylum centres and the local police and municipalities on how to report missing unaccompanied children;
- **Initial response by the authorities:** At this stage, the police obviously play a central role. Still, collaboration between several actors is necessary, all the more in decentralised or federal States. In Germany for instance, the police and Weißer Ring e.V. (member of MCE), Initiative Vermisste Kinder e.V. and International Social Service as well as the federal network of street work organisations (Bündnis für Straßenkinder e.V.) all cooperate to a certain extent in missing children cases;
- **Public communications:** Communicating as much precise information as possible on the missing child is crucial to capture the attention of the general public and collect useful information. In this respect, police cooperate with national, regional and local media (TV and radio stations, newspapers, online websites) to reach the wider public or a more targeted group, depending on the cases. In Poland, emergency cases are presented in the weekly TV show "Kotokwiek widział, ktokolwiek wie" (Whoever saw, Whoever knows) on public television, while in the Netherlands, the television and online alert programme on missing persons, "Tros Vermist", is used quite often when children disappear. In specific circumstances, a dedicated official spokesperson is designated as link between the population, the media and the police. This is the case in Spain, where this person is responsible for requesting the activation of the "Alert System for the High Risk Disappearance" (SADAR);

- **Investigations:** when the police conduct investigations, they can request the support of local level associations to relay and disseminate information through their websites, contact the media, launch a poster campaign, etc. In Hungary, the police cooperate with neighbourhood watch associations, associations with search dogs and search and rescue skills in case a small child goes missing. Other types of support, such as legal advice or moral and psychological support can be provided by local associations, since it is not the primary role of the police. The APEV association in France provides moral support to the parents and families of child victims, for the whole duration of the investigation, and beyond if needed;
- **Outcomes and follow-up:** Once a child is found, most of the time various forms of support must be provided to the victim and its relatives: psychological and moral support, social diagnosis and assistance, protection measures (e.g. in foster homes), family monitoring, etc. These tasks are usually set up by dedicated organisations, under the authority of youth protection services or a children's judge. In Greece, the Smile of the Child staff provides psychological support to children and family members once the child is found. They also offer follow-up services in order to prevent another disappearance (mainly in the cases of runaways). It aims at addressing any existing family problems, which have led to the disappearance of the child. In the cases of house visits and provision of psychological support to the child, the Smile of the Child always requests the parents to sign the necessary consent forms.

As mentioned above, the cooperation between police and associations also concerns **prevention measures and mechanisms**. Since it is not the primary role of the police to prevent children from running away or following strangers in the street, associations and NGOs play this role in parallel to the investigations led by the police. Besides the Smile of the Child in Greece, another example concerns the APEV association in France, which develops prevention and information books, as well as awareness-raising documents for children, in association with schools and county councils. They also train investigators from the police on how to handle victims and their families, in order to sensitise them to those practices.

Cooperation in collecting and exchanging data

Cooperation also occurs in the collection, exchange and sharing of data between institutions, 116000 hotline operators and NGOs. As a matter of fact, many databases exist, and one of the ways to improve the management of missing children cases is to better correlate the information contained in those databases. By knowing exactly how many runaways, worrying disappearances or abductions take place in a given timeframe or region, authorities can deploy more appropriate mechanisms and measures to prevent children from going missing. Therefore, harmonising the multiple existing databases is vital. In France for instance, when the Brigade of Protection of Minors of Paris is informed of a disappearance, they always store the information in two files, namely their own database (SIDEM software) and the national Missing Persons File, where all missing persons (including children) in France are reported. It enables the officers from the BPM to link with other police officers in France, as the Missing Persons File is a national database where all police officers have access.

Usually each organisation working on missing children issues, whether it is a hotline operator, a support structure for families or an association working with migrants, works with its **own database**: when a disappearance is reported, a new file is opened in the database, and sometimes a number is associated with each child; if a child is found, his/her file is very often removed from the database. Each organisation develops **statistics** based on its own database. The reporting is done on a yearly basis in the majority of the cases. It can be done biannually or even monthly in some countries (e.g. Luxembourg and Belgium). Most of the time, statistics are shared between those organisations. In Malta for instance, data is shared with authorities and collaborating agencies (*Aġenzija Appoġġ*, Social Services). Appoġġ has a close working relationship and an agreement of collaboration with the police forces for which the Commissioner of the police does not have to issue permission. In Ireland, the 'yellow database', maintained by the police of missing children, is shared with other police services. For more unofficial databases, the data collected is for internal use only (e.g. the APEV

association supporting parents of victims in France), or even unprocessed (e.g. Call Logs and Hermes databases in the UK).

Sometimes, data confidentiality can create issues in sharing and publishing information. This is notably the case in Bulgaria, where the police have very strict regulations on data confidentiality and also do not publish any regular reports or statistics on their work.

Cross-border cooperation

Cases of international abductions are regulated by the **Hague Abduction Convention**. All EU27 Member-States have ratified this Convention. This Convention provides a prompt method to return a child internationally abducted by a parent from one country to another. It ensures the rapid return of children who have been abducted from their country of habitual residence or wrongfully retained in a contracting state not their country of habitual residence. Within the EU27 Member-States, there are cases where there is cooperation within one country to liaise with foreign authorities. This is for example the case in **Italy**, where there is a taskforce on disputed minors with Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior and Justice. In **Belgium**, a protocol links the Central Authority, the Contact Centre in the Federal Justice Agency, the Federal Agency for Foreign Affairs, judicial services and Child Focus regarding international child abductions. In **Finland**, the national level Multi-Professional Committee on cases of abducted children is an ad-hoc working group where authorities and representatives of the ministries can discuss cases and problems and exchange information to find solutions and repatriate the child.

There are also examples of cross-regional cooperation in cases of international abduction. In Hungary, the police have established relations with their Austrian, Slovak and Slovenian counterparts for information exchange. They also set up the International Criminal Cooperation Centre, which contacts its counterparts in any other country to which the child is known to have been abducted, and initiates the process of establishing the return of the child to its habitual residence. In Latvia, there is an agreement between the Government and the Council of the countries around the Baltic States on international investigations and prevention of child abduction.

Data availability and potential EU indicators

Missing children: overall numbers

The main sources of data on the overall number of missing children are police databases. We collected figures on the overall number of missing children by using several types of indicators: number of child disappearances recorded within one year, and secondarily; number of children still to be found by the police at the end of the year. It is important to note that such data refer to the number of cases of missing children, which may not necessarily correspond to the specific number of individual children involved, as for instance a child may try to run away from home several times during one year. On the first indicator, we asked for breakdowns by sex, age and nationality. We also asked for data on the outcomes of investigations/search actions in terms of time elapsed until the child was found, and who found the child.

Number of child disappearances reported to the police

Definitions

The number of child disappearances should be a relatively simple and unequivocally defined indicator, as it refers to the number of reports filed by the police. However, there are differences with regard to this indicator:

- In certain countries the available national figures come from a second-level source, normally a specialised bureau for missing persons (for instance, Belgium, France, Ireland, The Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom), therefore they refer to disappearances that have been escalated to this bureau. As a result, figures for these countries might not include cases that are solved rapidly, in addition there may be risk thresholds (for instance in the Netherlands only urgent cases are reported to the central office);
- In certain countries, the total number of missing children cases has to be reconstructed by adding up separate figures, and the sum does not completely exclude duplications: for instance, the figures for the three police forces in Portugal, or the figures recorded under the two journal codes “investigations of missing persons” and “persons missing from institutions” in Denmark could overlap in some cases;
- Parental abductions may not always be considered as missing children cases, therefore they are not always included in figures; this may also happen for criminal abductions (for instance in the United Kingdom);
- Runaways are usually included, but occasionally they are recorded separately (Luxembourg) or only in cases that are considered “urgent” (the Netherlands).

Data availability

Figures on the annual number of disappearances were made available by authorities from 25 Member States (see table 1.1. in Annex 1). Austria could not provide data because records are deleted from the police database once cases are solved, which is more understandable if one considers that it is an operational database, not a statistical database. Sweden does not distinguish adult and children in the national police database, therefore separate statistics cannot be obtained[34].

Caveats also need to be made for countries which did provide data. Belgium‘s figures are not yet complete because of technical reasons regarding data extraction, which require a longer processing time. In the meantime only partial figures on the closed cases have been provided. In the United Kingdom, data comes from only some of the 46 local police forces – from 24 in 2008 to 30 in

[34] Local data were retrieved from the police in the Vastra Gotland area, therefore with more time and effort the aggregation of statistics from individual regions could lead to a national picture.

2012[35]. These inconsistencies can be partly explained by the variations in data processing software that are used by local police forces, some of which make it more difficult to process an ad hoc request than others, and from the response that the Missing Persons Bureau managed to obtain (in fact, it is not compulsory for local forces to deliver this data to the MPB).

Gaps, issues and inconsistencies

A first look at the overall figures for child disappearances revealed inconsistencies that are still unexplained based on what we were able to establish regarding definitions and collection methods during the mapping phase. These inconsistencies will need to be explored further with the relevant authorities.

For instance, three countries with similar population sizes – France, Italy and the United Kingdom - provided very different figures: for 2012, France reports 50,326 cases, Italy only 5,513 and in the United Kingdom figures from just two thirds of the local police forces already arrive at a total of 96,341 cases. In Italy, cases are recorded in the central database directly by local police officers, therefore no further selection threshold is applied that could justify the lower numbers. Potential explanations to explore include:

- the relative size of the irregular immigrant population and of transit migration[36];
- the different capacity of care institutions from which children potentially run away;
- the effectiveness of preventative measures and their implementation[37];
- different procedures for reporting runaways from care institutions.

Years

All countries provided figures for the years 2008-2012, except for Hungary that does not yet have figures for 2012, Cyprus that does not have them for 2008 and 2012 and Finland that could not provide figures for 2008, 2009 and 2010.

Sex

The majority of countries providing figures could break down disappearances by sex for at least the last available year (see table 1.1.). Exceptions are Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, and Slovenia.

Age

We asked authorities to isolate the younger groups of children from the overall number of disappearances. As a result, all countries except Germany, Finland, France, Hungary and Romania could provide numbers for the age bracket 0-12, and all except Belgium, Germany, and Hungary could provide figures for the age bracket 0-14 (table 1.2.).

Nationality

Breakdowns by nationality are rarely available in Member States. Finland, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, and the United Kingdom are the only countries that could provide figures distinguishing nationals, non-nationals from the EU and non-EU nationals (Finland can only distinguish EU from non-EU nationals).

Cause and context of disappearance

Although Member States may include information on cause and context in the individual case files, none of them are able to extract this information to produce aggregate national statistics on the causes and context of disappearances.

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35 Police forces which responded with figures for 2012 serve 69,2% of the child population of the United Kingdom.

36 Unaccompanied migrant children that are not eligible for asylum and that are only in transit are less likely to be detected by authorities and therefore to be declared missing.

37 For example, a study conducted by one local UK police force estimated that, by improving preventative measures in those care homes / hospitals with the highest numbers of missing children cases, it would be possible to achieve a net 30% to 40% reduction in total missing child cases, resulting in an estimated cost saving of around £1.8 million.

Outcome – time elapsed when the child was found

Further to sex, age, and nationality of missing children, we asked authorities to provide us with two data items on the outcomes of the search/investigation. The first data item is the number of disappearance cases where the child was found within certain time frames – 8 hours, 2 days, 2 weeks, and 2 months. There was a rather mixed picture with regard to data availability:

- Hungary, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands could isolate cases of children found within 2 days, 1 week and 2 months;
- Italy could provide figures of children found within 8 hours, 2 days and one week;
- The United Kingdom could provide figures for all the time frames, even if only for the police forces where data were collected;
- Also Germany provided figures, but according to different time frames (3 days or less, 1 week or less, and 3 months or less).

Our assessment is that this data item requires ad hoc data processing and therefore could perhaps be obtained more uniformly across Member States, with more time for the police to process data and in a longer time frame. However, the first interval (8 hours) is problematic in many countries as such short duration cases could even not be recorded by the local police, or not be escalated to the central national office for missing persons (in countries where this is the only national data source).

Outcome – who found the child

The second outcome data item we requested from authorities concerns the question of who found the child, including whether this was a parent or a relative, an NGO, the police, or whether the child returned by him or herself. This information is available in only one quarter of countries, and in slightly different formats:

- Estonia could provide only the number of children who returned by themselves for 2012;
- Greece, the Netherlands and Romania reported the number of children found by the police and those who returned by themselves, but not the other categories;
- Hungary specified for the 2011 data whether children returned by themselves, were found by the police or by a parent or relative;
- Only Malta and the United Kingdom could distinguish all these circumstances (Malta just for 2012).

Outcome - Type of abuse children were subject to during disappearance

This information is only available in individual investigation files and is not the subject of statistics. In the United Kingdom, there was some thought to include harm data in the quarterly report of police forces to the Missing Persons Bureau (why, how long, how far, who with, what harm), however it was dropped as this detail is too onerous for police forces to find and collate.

Emerging trends

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned inconsistencies in overall figures on missing children, we undertook a simple exercise in order to arrive at comparable figures across EU countries. For that, Eurostat population data on the total number of children per Member State aged 0-17 was collected in the respective year of the timeframe 2008-2012. Consequently, the number of cases of missing children per 100,000 children of the population reported for this year was calculated. While a systematic grouping or analysis of countries based on these figures is complicated by the lack of explanation on differences in the volume of reporting, the following trends emerge from the data:

- considering the countries where it was possible to calculate such an indicator, the highest number of cases of missing children per total number of children are in Hungary and Ireland (852 and 557 for 2011 respectively)[38];

[38] Data on missing children in UK only covered about half of the counties. Corresponding population statistics on the number of children in those counties could not be extracted, therefore no comparative data could be derived for the UK.

- France, the Czech Republic, Luxemburg, Malta and Denmark all report around 300-350 missing children cases per 100,000 children;
- Around 150-200 cases of missing children per every 100,000 children are reported annually in Slovakia, Lithuania and Portugal;
- In Latvia, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Estonia, Romania, between 81 and 112 children are reported missing;
- In Denmark, Finland, Poland and Italy, between 50 and 75 reports on missing children are filed each year per 100,000 children;
- The lowest share of missing children cases in those aged 17 or less is found in Netherlands, Greece, Spain and Cyprus, where it ranges between 6 and 35 reports per 100,000 children;
- With some exceptions (Estonia, Spain, Lithuania), the annual figures were consistent and no major breaks in the data (missing data or inexplicably high/ low jumps in values) could be detected. In the majority of the Member States, there appears to be an upward trend within the period towards more cases of missing children being reported per 100,000 children;
- No consistent pattern could be identified with respect to sex. Looking at 2012 data, the proportion of reported cases involving missing girls varies between 42% in Slovakia, and 67% in the Netherlands;
- Similarly, the proportion of 0-14 year olds in the total number of cases of missing children for 2012 varied between 15% in Germany and 36% and France and Romania. Malta reported an even higher figure of 46%. The majority of the children aged above 14 that are reported missing can be attributed to the phenomenon of runaways. As regards the younger children aged under 14, a higher proportion of those in the total number of reported missing children cases may indicate either that in such countries younger children could be more at risk, or that there is a tendency to contact authorities more quickly when the child's whereabouts are not known;
- Of the Member States that could provide some data on outcome, Estonia, Italy, Germany and Malta reported that annually between 55% and 82% of all cases of missing children were solved within 1 week or less; while for Luxembourg and the Netherlands this figure was lower at 27% and 42% respectively. However, those figures are not an indicator of performance, since the outcome is also related to the type of the cases- for instance, runaway cases may take much longer to solve.

Number of children still to be found by the police

Another indicator whereby the number of missing children can be quantified is the number of open cases at a certain date. We asked authorities to provide us with this data item taking as a reference the dates of 31.12.2011 and 31.12.2012.

A large majority of countries – 19 – could provide data on open cases on both dates (excepting Hungary who provided only data for 31.12.2011) (table 2.1.). The source is in most cases a police database, either a general one or a specialised one for missing persons. Finland provided figures from the Schengen database, which relates to children who might have been sent abroad, as such these figures do not provide an exhaustive quantification of open cases of missing children.
Even where they come from the same type of general police database, the usefulness of open case statistics for comparison is limited, as each country has a different starting time from which open cases are recorded. The number of open cases has however an important operational value for each country as it represents the backlog of cases that still need to be solved[39]. Latvia provided additional figures regarding the time periods involved: less than 6 months, 6-12 months,1-3 years, 3-5 years, more than 5 years, and probably many more countries could do so (this information item was not explicitly requested).

[39] A concrete example of this is Italy, with twice as many open cases as disappearances per year (in 2011: 10 232 open cases, 5396 children gone missing); this backlog can be overestimated and this is why a "cleaning up" effort has been under way in the last years to make sure that solved cases are taken out.

Emerging trends

Given the different timeframes for recording data on the number of children still to be found, they cannot be analysed in a comparative way.

Type and number of legal proceedings triggered by disappearance

Statistics on whether legal proceedings were started as a result of a child disappearance are generally not available from police databases. Legal proceedings do not often occur in cases involving runaways (although for instance in Belgium some of them are “prosecuted”, mostly in terms of abuse or neglect by parents). Some initial information exists on the involvement of the prosecutor in abduction cases but not so much on the following steps. In Finland, for instance, the police system indicates if the case has been sent to a prosecutor for consideration of charges but the decisions of the prosecutor are not included in the police system. In Bulgaria some information is kept in police records on proceedings started in connection with trafficked children and Bulgarian unaccompanied migrant children found abroad. Also in Estonia some information on started proceedings is kept in the police database.

The situation for international child abduction cases is different as they are brought to the attention of civil justice authorities and several countries do record whether legal proceedings were started following a dispute about a child. These cases initially “start” within the judiciary and legal proceedings are therefore better monitored.

Number of convictions resulting from disappearance/outcomes of proceedings

Although the information from the mapping exercise was not explicit on this subject, it is possible to get figures in most countries on convictions for crimes that are by definition related to a child disappearance, for instance child abduction. More difficult or virtually impossible is to isolate the convictions resulting from disappearances in wider statistics, for instance child abuse statistics, or to isolate child victims within statistics on crimes also involving adults, like for instance kidnapping (statistics tend to isolate children as perpetrators, not so often as victims). This is because there is no single data file which traces individual disappearance cases from the disappearance until the judiciary outcome of legal proceedings – the ‘audit trail’ is separated institutionally between the police, judiciary and child welfare organisations.

Type and frequency of follow-up support provided (by whom, in what form)

Statistical data on type and frequency of follow-up support provided to families of missing children and to children found after having gone missing are not available from official sources in any country. Several countries indicate that this information is recorded qualitatively in individual case files but there are no general guidelines that would ensure such information is substantial or even there. Sporadically we came across information on cases where authorities provided special assistance to families, for instance in Italy cases of international abduction assisted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are counted. The cases where youth welfare agencies were involved are obtainable by welfare service statistics in Germany.

Type and frequency of provision of "child friendly" measures

Child-friendly measures within the police system and the judiciary system have not been identified in any country as a subject of specific statistics, although most countries mention the involvement of trained personnel and some police forces do have sections specialised in dealing with children. Our assessment is that the development of child-friendly approaches is not yet such to enable to

identify and "count" the application of specific measures. This evidence would need to be gathered more qualitatively by other means.

Number of cases reported to 116 000 hotlines

Definitions

The data gathered by the 116 000 hotline providers offers a supplementary source to the official statistics, and a potential mechanism for 'checking' the official missing children statistics. The unit used for recording is the disappearance complaint, which can involve more than one child (and therefore the number of cases does not necessarily correspond to the number of children involved)[40].

Data availability

Data on missing children are collected by NGOs and associations working on missing children issues at the very beginning of a case, namely immediately when the disappearance of a child is reported. 116000 hotline operators also collect data for each reporting of a disappearance, on both the missing child and the person calling the hotline.

In the majority of the cases, basic characteristics are initially collected on the missing child including: name, age, sex, region of origin, nationality and ethnicity. Sometimes a physical description is also collected (height, weight, colour of the skin, eyes, hair, clothes, etc.). If known, the characteristics of the disappearance are also noted: date, time, location, etc. More specific information may also be collected: whether the child possesses a mobile phone; whether he/she has money; and whether there are any potential risks associated with the child (e.g. disease, suicidal tendencies).

In 13 countries the 116 000 Hotlines were able to provide figures on the number of disappearance complaints recorded by their services in recent years (table 1.3). In the other countries the hotlines have not been operational for long enough to provide retrospective data. In only one case – Germany – we did not receive any response to our repeated requests for data to the local 116 000 hotline service provider.

Gaps, issues and inconsistencies

In the 116 000 hotlines figures on missing children we can find similar issues to those highlighted for official data. Figures for countries with similar population sizes are quite different – e.g. in 2011 there were 79 cases in Italy, compared to 445 for INAVEM and 661 for CFPE Enfants Disparus (which also includes email alerts) in France. The fact that the difference between France and Italy is consistent across the two sources (authorities and hotline data) could suggest that it depends at least in part on a different pattern of the phenomenon and reporting behaviours by parents.

Years

Years for which data are available vary depending on the year when the hotline became operational. Data for 2008-2012 (or 2011) are available only from Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, and Romania. Denmark has data since 2010, and Estonia, Netherlands, and Spain since 2011. Slovenia's hotline only started working – and recording cases - in 2012.

Sex

When available, 116 000 hotline data can always be broken down by sex (table 2.1.).

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[40] However in the United Kingdom, where the Hotline started to work only in 2012, the figures provided are related to calls. French INAVEM hotline added to the main figures some figures on calls and their provenience, and the percentage of callers that had reported already to the police before to call amounting to 64-58%.

Age

All countries where 116 000 hotlines provided data (except for Belgium and France-CFPE who could not process the data on time), also provided data according to the requested age brackets. This made it possible to identify how many children up to 12, 14 and 16 years were involved.

Nationality

Almost all countries with 116 000 hotline data, namely Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom, could break down their figures into cases of nationals, EU foreigners and non-EU foreigners.

Outcome – time elapsed when the child was found

A number of countries where the 116 000 hotline operates – Belgium, Estonia, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, and Romania – could also provide figures on the timeframe in which children were found. On this subject 116 000 hotline data can be incomplete, as hotlines may not always be aware of the outcome of police investigations. Authorities remain the most reliable data source on this issue. Certain 116 000 hotlines have their own tracking system to follow cases, for instance in Italy the 116 000 database counts the number of sightings, findings and updates related to the cases handled; the Greek Hotline can provide figures for children found and still missing at the end of the year.

Outcome – who found the child

116 000 Hotlines from Cyprus, Estonia, the Netherlands, and Portugal could indicate if the child was found by a parent or relative, the police or returned by themselves, in the cases that were successfully solved.

Emerging trends

Hotline data appear difficult to analyse in a comparative way, in particular given the different starting points of operation in the Member States, the varying degree of promotion and awareness within the public, as well as cultural differences that may influence reporting behaviour. Under those limitations, the ratio of calls to the 116 000 hotlines to the total number of cases of missing children reported to the police was examined for those countries where data on both indicators was available. They are of course totally different indicators: one refers to calls to hotlines, the other one to police reports. The reason for comparing is to get an idea of the current ability of hotlines to intercept a significant part of the missing children phenomenon. For 2012, this ratio was highest in Greece (29%). We can also assume a high ratio for Belgium, although the lack of complete police records there (we received data on alarming cases only)[41] distort the calculation so that reports to the 116000 hotline are on average 4-5 times higher than those to the police on alarming cases. For the rest of the Member States, the ratio of calls recorded by the 116 000 to the police-recorded number of cases of missing children varies between 0.3% in Estonia and 5.2% in Romania. This suggests that there is still potential to further promote and expand the coverage of 116 000 hotlines.

Missing children: specific categories

Missing children include a wide range of situations that span from runaways, to abduction by parents or by third parties, and to missing unaccompanied migrant children or otherwise missing, lost and injured children. Missing Children Europe has identified these five types of disappearance and suggests in its guidance to 116 000 hotlines that are members of its network to record cases accordingly, although this was only started recently. In our mapping of practice in Member States we

[41] 'Alarming disappearances' are considered to be all children 12 years old or younger, and in the age category 13-17 disappearances that are considered 'alarming' are those where there are additional risk criterion (e.g. disability, uncharacteristic behaviour, threatening circumstances).

found that official authorities sometimes use slightly different categories from those of MCE, or do not use any categorisation at all. We had to conclude that no reliable estimate of the proportion of each type of disappearance can be obtained across Member States[42].

Only some countries use the type of disappearance to break down overall statistics of missing children from a single dataset (thereby allowing some estimate of the proportion of missing children cases represented by each type of disappearance). Other countries do have data on all or some of the types of disappearance, but in separate datasets, therefore they cannot be summed up.

Countries which use the type of disappearance to classify missing children cases from a single dataset are Bulgaria, France, Greece, Italy, and Poland.

The categories used are however often different from those used by MCE. In the following table we compare the MCE categories with the categories used to break down data in the relevant countries finding the *approximate* equivalences when possible.

Table 4.1 Categories used to break down data on missing children in some Member States

MCE category	Bulgaria	France	Greece	Italy	Poland
Runaway	Child runaways from home (but including parental abductions) Child-runaways from institutional care	Runaway	Disappearance	Voluntary Runaway Runaway from Institution or community	Runaway
Abduction by a third person	Disappearances without a trace	Worrying disappearance (including possible victims of crime and injured or otherwise missing (e.g. suicidal) children)	Consensual abduction Non-consensual abduction	Possible victim of crime	Possible victim of crime
Parental abduction	Parental abductions (but mixed with child runaways from home)	Parental abduction – domestic Parental abduction - international	Parental abduction	Abduction by spouse or other family member	Parental abduction
Missing unaccompanied migrant child	NA (often included in child-runaways from institutional care)	-	-	NA (often included in runaways from Institution/Community)	-
Lost, injured or otherwise missing	Disappearances without a trace	-	-	Possible psychological disturbances	Other

[42] The only country where a clear breakdown of cases by type of disappearance was provided was Italy, where it is obligatory to record this information. Cases are classified as: runaways, runaways from institute or residential community, parental abduction, possible victim of crime, possible psychological troubles.

MCE category	Bulgaria	France	Greece	Italy	Poland
child	Children searched for in relation to criminal proceedings				

In general, Member States distinguish between runaways, "criminal" abductions and parental abductions, but specific definitions are slightly different and sometimes further distinctions are made within one category. However, missing unaccompanied migrant children are usually not a separate category in the general police datasets. Residual "otherwise" or "unknown" categories do exist in some countries (e.g. Poland), but not in others. For instance in Italy it has been possible since 2007 to choose alongside one of the motives, an additional one named "possible psychological disturbances" which is primarily targeted to adult Alzheimer disease holders but can also be applied to minors.

It was clear from the discussions at the meeting with Member States experts of 11 December 2012 that runaways represent a large share of the overall number of missing children incidents recorded by the police. Therefore, we systematically asked Member state authorities for runaway figures as a subset of the missing child cases recorded in police datasets (and we did the same for 116 000 hotlines). The fact that runaways are recorded per event and not per child has a huge influence on the statistics, as runaways tend to reappear in the data over time[43]. We therefore asked for the actual number of children involved whenever this indicator is available, but unfortunately this is very seldom the case. When recorded, we also asked for figures for the subset of runaways from care institutions – this data item could come either from the police or from welfare institutions. We discuss these figures in the following section 3.1.

Furthermore, the mapping had already revealed that data on missing unaccompanied migrant children can be obtained in some Member States from different sources, such as migration government departments and care institutions in official agreement with the government. We therefore looked for such data systematically and the result of this exercise is discussed in section 4.2.4.

Runaways

Definitions

Runaways are recognised as a separate category by more than half of all Member States in the wider context of missing children. A legal definition on what constitutes a runaway is however, only provided in a few countries. In Malta, runaways are understood in the context of the Civil Law provisions that stipulate the obligation of a child to remain with its parents and the right of the latter to report a child missing if it runs away from home without their consent. In Belgium, the Youth Protection Law of April 8th, 1965 implies that children (<18 years old) are under the legal authority of their parents, therefore running away is considered to be a delinquency status.

Of those countries that recognise (legally or not) runaways as a separate category of missing children, six Member States also define those in broadly consistent terms with the MCE definition. An emphasis on the voluntary nature of the act of leaving home is visible in some of those Member States. Another seven countries apply definitions that are partially similar to the MCE definition. Among those, Austria and Germany focus on repeated runaways. Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Ireland and Slovenia break down the MCE categories into separate categories of children missing from home, and others that have fled from a care facility. Finally, Denmark and France do implicitly differentiate

[43] Indeed, the feedback at the expert meeting on 11th December 2012 suggested that, based on the experiences of individual national police forces, persistent runaways can potentially account for upwards of 30 or 40 'events' per year.

runaways as a category, but place those in broad terms together with all cases of worrying, at-risk disappearances.

For the purposes of this study, the mapping and data collection exercise that feeds into this report has looked at:

- The number of runaways reported to the police;
- The number of runaways reported to the 116000 hotline;
- The number of runaways reported by care institutions.

These categories do not imply differences in the actual understanding of what a runaway is, but rather relate to the way in which the incident is reported.

Data availability

Despite a relatively high number of Member States having a clear notion of runaways, separate data on the number of runaways reported to the police was only available for 9 countries: Bulgaria; Cyprus; France; Finland; Italy; Latvia; Luxembourg; Poland; and Slovenia (table 4.1.).

Overall figures for runaways were made available for 11 Member States of the 14 where hotlines have been active for at least all of 2012: Austria, Cyprus, Estonia, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and the United Kingdom.

Overall figures for the numbers of runaways from care institutions were available for 12 Member States: Bulgaria; the Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Slovenia, and the United Kingdom (table 6).

Gaps, issues and inconsistencies

As already pointed out for overall statistics for missing children, there appears to be an imbalance in the number of runaway cases reported when data for countries with a similar population size are compared. France, for example, recorded between 46,000 and 52,000 runaways reported to police per year in the period covered by the study. Italian figures for the same period are dramatically lower – between 2,900 and 4,700 per year.

A key issue regarding runaway figures is that repeated runaways are usually recorded every time as one event. This happens in most countries. Therefore, if an individual goes missing numerous times, each incident is recorded afresh potentially leading to figures that imply more individual runaway children than is the case, if not correctly understood.

Looking at the specific residential care institution runaway, it is clear that the institutional makeup itself affects reporting. The requirements for care institutions to report and their liability for runaways vary across countries. This affects the level of reporting of runaways, and statistics, as a consequence. In Italy for instance, runaways from institutions are recorded as such in the police database, but they are not necessarily reported *by* these institutions.

There is also a clear imbalance in the way that figures relating to runaways are reported and monitored. Only a very small minority of countries recording runaways reported to the police had any available breakdown of data – be it by sex, age or nationality. Perhaps reflecting the different and perhaps more specialised departments and agencies dealing with care institutions, there was however, a significantly better breakdown of data available on runaways from care institutions.

In some instances data is kept internal and is not released for external analysis, for example, in Ireland. This is justifiable in the context of legislation and national practice, where there is concern that releasing figures could potentially lead to the identification of individuals, especially when the number of children in care and the number of institutions is small.

Years

Data relating to runaways reported to the police was available for all years for the countries reporting data. 116000 data was more uneven as would be expected, due to differing start times for the hotlines (table 5). The United Kingdom provided 2012 figures, Estonia 2011 and 2012, Hungary 2010, 2011 and 2012. Other Member states could provide data covering the entire study period.

All countries able to report figures for runways from care institutions could give data for the entire period, except Malta, which only gave 2012 figures.

Sex

Sex-disaggregated data on runaways reported to the police was reported in full by only four Member States: France; Finland; Italy and Luxembourg (table 4.1.). There is no sex breakdown for Bulgaria, Poland, Slovenia and Latvia, whilst Cyprus has incomplete breakdown figures.

For 116000 related runaways, sex was recorded in Austria; Cyprus; Estonia; France; Italy; Portugal; Romania and the UK. Sex was recorded in Poland but figures were only broken down up until 2010. A breakdown by sex was available in Hungary for 2012 only. No breakdown was available for Greece.

In total only five Member States broke the numbers of runaways from care institutions down by sex: Czech Republic; Germany; France; Hungary and Italy.

Age

Data relating to the age profile of runaways reported to the police was only available in three Member States – France, Italy and Luxembourg (table 4.2.). As with other indicators, the differences in age classifications were also apparent for runaways. Due to lack of time some police authorities provided their existing statistics instead of the age brackets we had asked for.

Age profiles were available for 116000 runaways for seven Member States: Austria; Estonia; France; Italy; Poland; Portugal; Romania. However, Austrian figures only related to the age group 0-14 so there is no comparable data for the older age groups in this case.

Five Member States gave age breakdowns for runaways from care institutions. Czech Republic; France; Hungary; Italy and Malta.

Nationality

Nationality breakdowns are not commonplace for data related to runaways. Only two Member States provided information on the nationality of runaways reported to the police: Italy and Luxembourg. Similarly only Italy and Malta breakdown data for runaways from care institutions by nationality, whilst Finland records non-EU cases. Nationality breakdown was however, available for 116000 data for five Member States – Estonia; Hungary; Italy; Poland and Portugal.

Outcome – time elapsed when the child was found

Only France and Luxembourg detailed the time in which runaways reported to the police were returned. The French data is recorded according to cases of less than 8 days, between 1 month and 6 months, between 6 months and 12 months, and more than a year. Luxembourg data could be disaggregated according to the timescales used for this study and figures were available for 2 days or less, 1 week or less, and 2 months or less.

Time-related outcome data for 116000 cases was only available for Estonia; Poland and Portugal. For runaways from care institutions, data was available only from France and Italy. The usefulness of such data is questionable for 116000 hotlines though as the police are the most important avenue for finding children and we cannot be sure of how systematically police data on found children is shared with hotline operators, nor how regularly these figures are updated.

Outcome – who found the child

France was the only Member State to provide information of who found the child regarding runaways reported to the police – however, even in this instance only the instances where the police found the child were recorded, giving no information on the other ways to return.

Details of who found the child was available, with relation to 116000 cases, in five Member States - Estonia; France; Poland; Portugal and Romania. France could only provide data related to children returning themselves, whereas Romania provided details of those returning themselves or found by the police.

Only Malta and Hungary breakdown details of who found the child in cases of runaways from care institutions.

Emerging trends

In order to estimate the importance of runaways in the overall number of missing children, for those countries where data on both indicators was available, we calculated the share of runaways in the total number of cases. As suspected, for 2012, in five out of the seven Member States, the share of cases of runaways in the total number of reported cases over the year was over 50%, with France, Bulgaria and Italy all reporting a share of over 80%. In contrast, in Slovenia and Latvia the share was significantly lower at about 30%. As regards runaways from care institutions, in line with the findings above that institutional makeup and reporting requirements influence the statistics, the share of cases of runaways from care institutions in the total number of reported missing children case varies greatly between Member States that can differentiate this specific category within the same data source. For 2012, the Netherlands saw only 2.7% of all missing children cases to be related to children from institutional care; in Bulgaria this figure was 13.5%, while for Italy, Malta and France it was between 42% and 61%[44]. These high figures could refer to specific problems with institutional care in these countries, but they may also be the result of underreporting of other runaways.

International abductions: applications under the Hague Convention of 1980

Definitions

In the classification of Missing Children Europe, child abductions are distinguished into parental abductions and abductions by third parties. Some countries do not distinguish explicitly in their legal definition – and therefore in crime data - abductions by parents and abductions by third parties. Instead they have a general article in the criminal code punishing abduction of children or other persons without legal capacity, without further criminal intent, with sometimes specifications regarding the case in which the perpetrator is a parent.

However we understood that these articles mostly referred to parental abductions. In fact, in most cases when a third party is involved, a more serious crime regarding liberty deprivation, like kidnapping or trafficking is suspected. Statistics for this type of crime frequently include both children and adults and the child component cannot always be isolated[45]. We therefore focused on statistics for convictions for abductions of children or other incapable persons, according to relevant articles of the criminal code[46].

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[44] Reported figures for Czech Republic and Denmark were even higher, with the share of runaways from residential care in the total number of cases exceeding 80%. However, suspicions that these figures refer to the share of all runaways, and not only to those that ran away from care institutions, albeit not confirmed by official sources, are substantial.

[45] An exception is Sweden, where data on reported and solved cases of human trafficking involving children under 18 are available.

[46] E.g. Austria: art 195; art. 101; Belgium: Article 428, Art 431; Cyprus: Article 185; Czech Republic: Article 216; Finland: Chapter 25, Section 5 and 5a [7]; Germany § 235 StGB; Denmark: § 215; Estonia: § 172; France Article 227-7, Article 227-8; Greece Article 324; Ireland Section 17 of the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997; Italy: Articles 574 and 574bis; Luxembourg: Articles 368 to 371-1; Malta: Chapter 410, Laws of Malta, "Child Abduction and Custody Act", Article 2(1); the Netherlands: Articles 279 and 280; Portugal: Article 249; Slovakia: Sections 209 and 210; Slovenia: Article 190 (1) Sweden: Chapter 7, Section 4.

Furthermore, international abductions are often distinguished from domestic abductions. Regarding international abductions, all EU Member States signed the Hague Convention[47] and therefore applications under the Convention are submitted to Central Authorities. These produce yearly statistics that represent a systematic and relatively consistent source across the EU. In several countries (e.g. Ireland, Germany) applications under the Hague Convention 1980 and the Brussels IIA Regulation are not distinguished also because some of them are filed under the two instruments. For the purpose of this study this does not represent a problem, once it is clarified that all return applications no matter what the instrument are considered. It has to be noted that one application can involve more than one child.

Data availability

Central Authorities of 24 Member States provided figures of applications for returning a child under the Hague Convention in 2008-2011 and 19 countries also covered 2012 (table 3.1.). Of those that did not provide figures, Greece does not have electronically processed files, Latvia did not specify the reason for not providing figures, and Portugal could not process data within the fieldwork deadline. It is our opinion that with small additional effort *all* Central Authorities could provide figures.

Gaps, issues and inconsistencies

Potential inconsistencies in the collected data could stem from the fact that some countries distinguish applications under the Hague Convention and under the Brussels IIA, while others do not. Likewise, we noted that certain countries also record applications for returning child from/to non-signatory countries. Whenever we realised this, we asked the authorities to take out the non-signatory country cases. Furthermore, consultations with the expert group for the study highlighted a possible issue of double-counting, in situations where cases are reported both to the national police and to the central authority under the Hague Convention.

Years

In a number of countries (Germany, Finland, Ireland, The Netherlands, Slovakia and the United Kingdom) data for 2012 were not yet ready at the time of writing. In Cyprus detailed breakdowns for 2008 are not available because applications were not classified by country and as incoming/outgoing at that time.

(EU and non-EU) Countries

In most cases it was possible to obtain separate figures for incoming and outgoing cases as well as EU and non-EU signatory countries. However two Member States did not provide the country breakdown: Denmark sent data from the Ministry of Social Affairs where no distinction regarding countries is made, although it is estimated that most cases (both to and from Denmark) are connected with Sweden, USA, Norway, Germany and Poland; Sweden does not record countries either.

Emerging trends

Given the relative robustness and comparability of data reported by Central Authorities on cases of international parental child abduction, a calculation of the share of outgoing cases[48] reported over the year per 100,000 children in the country aged under 16[49]. The following trends emerged from this data:

- Looking at figures for 2011, which were more complete than those for 2012, Belgium and Slovakia both dealt with 6.4 outgoing applications for international parental abductions per 100,000 children aged less than 16;

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47 Convention of 25 October 1980 on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.

48 Outgoing cases refer to children that had their habitual residence in the country where applications was made, thus they can be compared to the total underage population. Incoming and total applications would include children from different nationalities and thus can not be calculated in a comparable way.

49 The 1980 Hague Convention only applies for children aged under 16.

- 2012 data reveals an increase of outgoing cases in Estonia (from 3.2 applications per 100,000 children in 2011 to 7.8 in 2012) and Cyprus (from 5.2 to 12.9). Such an increase may also have other explanations such as an increased efficiency of the Central Authority;
- Figures are consistently low in the larger Member States France, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom and Italy with 1-2 outgoing applications for every 100,000 children aged less than 16;
- Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, the Netherlands all deal on average with around 3 outgoing applications per 100,000 children.

Child abduction convictions

Data availability

Statistics of convictions for child abduction could be collected from 16 Member States (table 8). In our request we asked for figures concerning crimes under the relevant criminal code article of each country. Besides convictions, Austria and Belgium provided figures on complaints to the police. Austria also provided data on investigated suspects and solved cases of child abduction with breakdowns by age and sex of victims.

Certain countries have a category called "potential victim of crime" for third party abductions and provided the related data: Bulgaria, Italy; Bulgaria's definition is however "potential victim of crime or accident" which also includes non-criminal cases.

Gaps, issues and inconsistencies

It was a result of the data collection exercise that such judicial statistics are not always available in Member States. Furthermore, in several cases the existing figures are considered unreliable by authorities themselves. For instance in Belgium, where the law has been changed in 2000, combining all abduction-related offences into article 428 of the penal code, the Service for Criminal Policy kept registering crimes under the old categories. In Austria figures are judged incomplete by the source. In Italy figures only refer to domestic abductions (article 574) from 2010 onwards.

In addition to the figures reported in the table, 4 cases of international abduction (article 574bis) were recorded since a new article relating to cross-border cases was added to the penal code. The term "conviction" was not unequivocally understood across Member States. The data provided by Slovakia refers to the number of criminal offences that have been taken up by the police and not to the number of convictions. Data from France include both offences and convictions. In Lithuania, the figures were provided by the police and not by the ministry of justice like in most other countries, and they refer to the number of people suspected of committing the crime against the child. Finally, Danish statistics only include the cases in which the offender has been found guilty.

Emerging trends

In line with the findings of the section above, data was found to be too incomplete and difficult to compare, therefore no comparative trends were analysed.

Unaccompanied migrant children

Definitions

MCE classifies missing unaccompanied migrant children as being disappearances of nationals of a country with which there is no free movement of persons agreement, 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.

As we established during Phase I, six Member States do not have a legal definition of what constitutes an unaccompanied migrant child. These are: Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. The rest have specific and consistent legal provisions that define an

unaccompanied migrant children in a similar way as the MCE definition. Nonetheless, only a minority of countries report to have legal or procedural regulations on missing migrant children. Those are Austria, Finland, Ireland and Romania.

Data availability

Figures are available on the numbers of missing unaccompanied migrant children for 12 Member States (table 7.). Importantly, the data requested referred to the number of people missing at the end of a year as opposed to the number of cases occurring within the year. Reflecting the fact that many migrant children are institutionalised, the data specifically deals with those who were missing from a care institution (or a detention centre). Finally, the request was only made for 2011 an 2012. The countries able to provide data are: Belgium; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; Estonia; Finland; Italy; Luxembourg; Slovakia; Slovenia; Spain and Sweden.

There is no single type of data source, with some Member States using police or interior ministries to collect information, and others having immigration services deal with this data. In many countries data is simply not available for this type of missing child, but in the United Kingdom the issue is that although data exists, it is not collated at a national level.

Potential sources were located within five countries (Austria, Germany, Denmark, Netherlands and Slovenia). The most promising of these sources are records of asylum seeking children going missing from residential units, where these data are collated by a central agency. In Denmark, it is the work of the Danish Red Cross to maintain these records on behalf of individual asylum / recipient centres. The processed data area transferred to the IBS system of the Department of Migration. In the Netherlands, The Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) holds computerised data on “incidents or crisis situations” in asylum centres, which includes cases of disappearances. In Slovenia, an NGO (Slovenska Filantropija) recorded until 2011 numbers of incidences of children going missing from asylum homes, where these incidents are reported by individual centres (now competence on UAMs has been taken over by Centres for Social Services). The resulting data is held within a restricted access spread sheet, but is not processed. Of course, it is important to find out more about how reliably and systematically these incidents are recorded, but they might be of use for providing fairly robust estimates.

Gaps, issues and inconsistencies

Because in most countries these children are taken into special care facilities, a number of Member States apply specific rules to the reporting of disappearance of these children. Most notably:

- In Belgium, the disappearance from the “observation and research centre” is only reported to the police when it is considered alarming;
- In Denmark, missing migrant children have to be reported immediately if they are younger than 15 years, while for those aged above 15 a 24hour intervention threshold is set;
- Finland also sets a 24hour waiting period before declaring a child missing, while;
- Hungary makes a distinction between children that do and do not seek asylum. It is noted that, whilst asylum seeking children rarely go missing, non-asylum seeking children often disappear within the first 24-48 hours, so they are not usually recorded until after this time has elapsed.
- In Slovenia the police will work with the asylum home to establish the circumstances of any unaccompanied migrant children who have disappeared. However, if the child has not returned in three days, their application for asylum is considered as ‘withdrawn’. No further investigative action is taken in this situation.

The result is a limited comparability between data sets due to operational and definitional differences that could be reflected in the figures.

For the rest of the Member States, it appears, that the treatment of missing unaccompanied migrant children is no different than those considered as runaways from (other) institutional facilities, on the basis of the information gathered during Phase I, but not made explicitly clear through data sources.

There are clear and significant variations in the numbers of open cases at the end of each year, pointing to either reporting differences or more systemic social and political factors. Five countries reported no more than ten open cases at the end of each year in question. A second grouping, comprising Belgium, Slovakia, and Sweden all reported over 100 open cases for at least one year. This variation is acceptable. However, Italy reported 1791 children missing at the end of 2011 and 1754 at the end of 2012, whereas Spain reported 1251 children missing at the end of 2012. This is a significant difference to other Member States and cannot easily be explained. Factors contributing to this include differences in definitions (with most countries applying more restrictive definitions, for instance limited to asylum seekers[50] and not including irregular migrants, or just collecting data from specific care institutions), or differences in the length of time that cases remain on record.

Years

Nine of the Member States able to provide data gave both 2011 and 2012 figures. However, Belgium and Spain only provided 2011 figures, whilst Luxembourg data was limited to 2012.

Sex

Although not explicitly requested, Swedish figures include sex breakdowns from 2008 to 2012 included.

Emerging trends

In line with the findings of the section above, data was found to be too incomplete and uneven (also due to different data sources) to enable comparison. Obtaining reliable data on this target group would be important to properly assess the weight of this component in the overall missing children phenomenon.

Potential comparative EU indicators

One purpose of the study was to suggest a provisional set of common EU-wide indicators on missing children that can be used for comparative analysis. The gaps and inconsistencies in data availability suggested a prudent approach to developing such indicators.

The onus was put on **feasibility** - the indicators must draw upon datasets that can be readily accessed, without placing an unreasonable burden on the authorities concerned. If data exists in textual format only then it will not be possible to include this within the framework. If data exists but is not computerised (e.g. local police files) it will also not be possible to include within the framework. However, the level of digitisation permitting, it should be possible to approach competent authorities to request ad hoc counts for the purpose of compiling statistics for the study.

The issue of **sustainability** was also addressed - whilst we can undertake ad hoc counts in preparing the study report, it is not desirable to set in place a complex system of equivalences as a long-term solution to the data 'problem' for Member States. In the short term, the priority is to develop guidelines for making the most effective use of the existing data. In the medium term, we can recommend steps that need to be set in motion to move towards greater convergence, but as these will have implications for MS they are likely to take longer to set in place.

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[50] According to the Mid-term report on the implementation of the Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors, "Data collection continues to be one of the key challenges. The fact that unaccompanied minors are not a homogeneous group, and are looked after by different authorities, means that not all unaccompanied minors are part of the regular collection of data by Member States. Whereas there are reliable statistical data on unaccompanied children seeking asylum, there are fewer statistics on those who migrated irregularly or were trafficked" (COM(2012) 554 final, p.3).

Based on the above, the following indicators have been developed and measured to build a comparative database. They are composite indicators; therefore we provide information on the numerator, denominator and comments on their meaning and interpretation.

Nr. of cases of children reported missing per 100,000 children

Numerator: Cases of missing children reported over one year to the police and recorded in the general police database of complaints;
Approximation: Cases of missing children included over one year in a dedicated missing persons database;
Denominator: population aged 0-17;
Comments: this indicator provides the most simple and overall measure of the extension of the missing children phenomenon.

Proportion of females in total number of missing children

Numerator: Cases of missing children reported over one year to the police – involving females;
Denominator: Cases of missing children reported over one year to the police –- involving either sex;
Comments: this indicator shows whether a gender pattern exists in the level of incidence of child disappearances, or in the level of reporting.

Proportion of 0-12 year olds in total number of missing children

Numerator: Cases of missing children reported over one year to the police – involving 0-12 year old children;
Denominator: Cases of missing children reported over one year to the police –- involving 0-18 year old children;
Comments: this indicator shows to what extent child disappearances involve younger children, the most vulnerable group.

Proportion of 0-14 year olds in total number of missing children

Numerator: Cases of missing children reported over one year to the police – involving 0-12 year old children
Denominator: Cases of missing children reported over one year to the police –- involving 0-18 year old children
Comments: this indicator shows to what extent child disappearances involve children who are not yet adolescents.

Proportion of missing children found in 1 week or less in total or of children gone missing over one year

Numerator: Cases of missing children reported over one year to the police that were found within one week;
Denominator: Cases of missing children reported over one year to the police;
Comments: this indicator shows both the performance of police action and the level of "seriousness" of handled cases. It highlights the real importance of the number of more complex cases (the remaining ones).

Ratio of reports to 116 000 hotline to cases reported to police

Numerator: Cases of missing children reported over one year to the 116 000 hotline;
Denominator: Cases of missing children reported over one year to the police;
Comments: this indicator provides a very rough measure of the extent to which 116 000 hotlines contribute to identify and report missing children cases. It has however to be taken cautiously as is much influenced by the level of awareness of 116 000 in the country – it is recommended to use it only as an internal working indicator for the EC.

Outgoing cases of child abduction reported to the Hague authority per 100,000 children

Numerator: number of applications to the Central Authority for returning a child under the Hague Convention and the Brussels II A Regulation – outgoing cases;
Denominator: population aged 0-15 (the Hague convention applies only to children aged under 16, source: Eurostat);
Comments: this indicator provides a measure of the extent and trend of international child abductions although it depends on the level of awareness of potential applicants on the available provisions for ensuring the return of a child.

Proportion of runaways in total number of missing children in %

Numerator: Cases of missing children reported over one year to the police classified as "runaways" in countries where recording the type of disappearance is obligatory;
Denominator: Cases of missing children reported over one year to the police;
Comments: this indicator provides a measure of the relative importance of runaways in the overall number of missing children. As runaways are often children that repeatedly run a way, this bears consequence on the estimate of the number of children involved (i.e., the higher the share of runaways, the higher the difference between the number of cases and the number of children involved). It also shows the extent to which prevention measures targeting adolescents running away from home are needed.

Proportion of runaways from care institutions in total number of missing children in %

Numerator: Cases of missing children reported over one year to the police classified as "runaways from care institutions" in countries where this category of disappearance can be identified;
Denominator: Cases of missing children reported over one year to the police;
Comments: this indicator provides a measure of the extent to which most vulnerable children, like those who are in care institutions are subject to the tendency to run away, which can be an indicator for deficiencies in the functioning of care and protection mechanisms or a reflection of the overall proportion of children in care.

Recommendations on minimum common standards and good practices

Introduction

In this chapter we set out a number of proposed good practices for reporting and recording missing child cases, drawing upon the evidence gathered in the study. We have focussed primarily on recommendations concerning data collection and reporting, given that this is the core focus of the study. We have refrained from making unrealistic recommendations that would involve wholesale changes to national legislation or police search procedures within Member States.

The recommendations have undergone three assessment processes:

- an EU expert meeting held on 16 May 2013, with a number of NGOs and researchers;
- a Standard-Setting Questionnaire whereby 14 national experts (i.e. police and other relevant authorities) provided feedback on the proposed standards and appraised their relevance and feasibility from the perspective of individual Member States;
- a discussion with the Commission after delivering the final draft report.

The recommendations are grouped into three themes: data recording practices; operational rules and definitions; awareness-raising and information. In each case, we have provided a description of the good practice to justify why it is important for understanding the phenomenon of missing children and / or improving the performance of investigative procedures and cooperation between different authorities. We have also included a brief example where a precedent has been set for the good practice within individual Member States. In many cases, the recommendations in large part concern the police within individual Member States. However, it is clear that a much wider range of agencies must also be involved to maximise the completeness and usefulness of the data, including 116 000 hotlines, child welfare organisations and other administrative authorities. Moreover, child protection authorities should have an important role in promoting the application of all the suggested recommendations.

Finally, we report the results of the assessment undertaken with the help of experts, in terms of:

- relevance – importance of the standard for improving the handling of missing children cases;
- feasibility – immediate, gradual or difficult applicability of the standard;
- acceptance – agreement of national experts on the introduction of the standard.

In the final section, we present the feedback from the police and make further considerations on actions that can enable the implementation of recommendations.

Data recording practices

The following recommendations are principally directed to law enforcement agencies which receive signals of child disappearances. However some of them are also directed to 116 000 hotlines and some would be more effectively implemented in the context of a multi-agency coordination effort – this is specified under the relevant recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Always record the year of birth of the child

Context:

- Socio-demographic data is potentially very useful to identify those categories of children who are at the greatest risk of going missing, and to establish any trends on the basis of age, sex or circumstances. The study highlighted limited availability of these data within existing national

police statistics. Capturing better quality data with regard to age in particular appears to be a priority.

Description:

- As age-brackets are differently identified by police forces in the different countries, the best would be to indicate the year of birth of the child so that the information item can be processed according to any age bracket categorisation and be stable in the future. This recommendation also applies to 116 000 hotlines.

Examples:

- In most countries police forces record the year of birth.

Recommendation 2: Always record the sex of the child

Context:

- Girls and boys can be differently exposed to risks depending on expectations of parents and society and intentions of perpetrators of crimes. Knowing if there is any gender pattern in child disappearances may be useful to better target prevention policies. At the moment, it happens in some cases that the sex of a missing child is not recorded. Having data disaggregated by sex is a general requirement and useful to identify patterns.

Description:

- Recording the sex of the child should be straightforward. In cases of a disappearance involving more than one child, it could be advisable to record information for each child separately.

Examples:

- Most countries do record the sex of missing children; it is a matter of making this systematic and disaggregate information in cases involving more than one child.

Recommendation 3: Always record the nationality and migration status of the child

Context:

- Data of unaccompanied migrant children are insufficiently recorded EU-wide, especially as regards irregular migration. It is not known how many unaccompanied children arrive irregularly in the EU through green or blue borders without claiming asylum. It seems that this information is not collected consistently and regularly by Member States' border-control authorities. Furthermore, inland detections of irregular migrants who are children are made by the police or criminal squads, which do not necessarily inform border-control authorities of these cases[51]. Recording missing unaccompanied migrant children could contribute to the overall monitoring of the phenomenon. Knowing if the child who is missing is of foreign nationality could also be useful to detect vulnerability situations; including for example where a child is a potential victim of trafficking. Recording nationality should never be done to the detriment of the child, whose best interest should be protected no matter the nationality and migrant status.

Description:

- Police reports should specify if the child involved is a foreign child, and an unaccompanied migrant child. The same should be done by 116 000 hotline in recording their cases (they do it for unaccompanied migrant children already, nationality should be also systematically recorded).

Examples:

- Italy and Spain governments produce yearly statistics of unaccompanied migrant children that are still missing at the end of each year;

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[51] FRONTEX, Unaccompanied Minors in the Migration Process, Warsaw, December 2010.

- The 116 000 hotlines following the guidelines of Missing Children Europe record separately unaccompanied migrant children.

Recommendation 4: Record the type of disappearance through a suitable system of categories

Context:

- Knowing the type and circumstances of disappearances is important for ensuring an effective response. The study found that individual countries record this information to a varying extent, and that categories are not always consistent (reflecting differences in national legislation). To some extent, missing children cases are perhaps better understood as a number of distinct phenomena, and finding clearer ways to isolate them within the statistics is a worthwhile exercise;
- For certain categories of missing children, such as unaccompanied migrant children, inconsistent or partial definitions are more problematic. Whilst centralised data are gathered on children seeking asylum, this is less often the case for children with 'irregular' migration status and for child victims of trafficking[52]. In these instances, the use of more effective categories has a clear operational purpose.

Description:

- Police should apply a system of categories to identify the type of disappearance, and make it compulsory to complete this data field. As a minimum, runaways should be distinguished from third party and parental abductions. Police and hotlines in each Member State should use mutually compatible categorisations to facilitate data exchange.

Examples:

- Countries which use type of disappearance to classify cases of missing children from a single dataset are Bulgaria, France, Greece, Italy, and Poland.

Recommendation 5: Make it possible to identify the number of children involved besides the number of disappearances

Context:

- An estimate of numbers of missing children is more problematic where recording is based on numbers of events rather than numbers of children who go missing. This presents a data problem for all categories of missing children, but especially for runaways (see also above). It also presents a potential barrier to safeguarding practices, given that repeat runaways are by definition 'higher risk' and therefore warranting of a more targeted intervention / follow-up. Difficulties also arise where more than one child is involved in a single event (e.g. a parental abduction).

Description:

- Law enforcement agencies recording missing children incidents and hotlines receiving calls should specify when a runaway or an abduction does not happen for the first time for a particular child so that numbers of children can be identified in addition to numbers of incidents;
- They should also record separately each child involved in a disappearance involving more than one child to further improve the accuracy of the counting process.

Examples:

- In Romania, the 116 000 hotline marks relapse runaways so that it is finally possible to count the number of children involved.

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[52] As concluded within the *Mid-term report on the Implementation of the Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors* (COM 2012, 554).

Recommendation 6: Always record the setting of the disappearance

Context:

- Knowing the settings where children disappear can be useful for prevention purposes; especially when used in conjunction with information about the potential cause of disappearance. This information which is kept in individual files is almost never processed in statistics (the only exception being residential care).

Description:

- Distinguish between disappearances from home, school, public places, a residential care institution. Use pre-defined categories to make statistics possible. Clearly indicate if the child is kept in under the custody of a care institution and what type of institution it is.

Examples:

- In Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Slovenia police statistics distinguish runaways from care institutions from other runaways.

Recommendation 7: Always record the relation to the child of the person reporting the disappearance to the police

Context:

- Recording the nature of the relationship of the person who reports the disappearance of the child is not usual practice at the moment. Doing so would help knowing which target groups should be reached and prioritised in with awareness-raising campaigns on the importance of reporting child disappearances. In particular, it would allow knowing if there are more gaps at the level of care institutions or at the level of parents/individual families.

Description:

- Law enforcement agencies should record if the person making the report is a parent, a guardian or an institution, or the case has been referred by the116 000 hotline. Fixed categories/definitions should be used to make statistics possible, preferably similar ones across Member States. As awareness raising campaigns could be the task of different agencies than the police, this practice is more effectively and more easily implemented through multi-agency cooperation.

Examples:

- Examples of such a practice haven't been found in any EU Member State.

Recommendation 8: Record the type of abuse the child incurred during the disappearance, if any

Context:

- In the worst cases of disappearance children undergo physical, sexual and psychological abuse. To correctly picture the phenomenon and prosecute perpetrators of crimes it is important to record such circumstances when they arise. While this is done in individual case files for operational purposes, some retrospective analysis of the incidence of abuse in missing children cases could be important to plan for better support measures.

Description:

- As soon as this information becomes available during the investigation process, law enforcement agencies should record in the case file information on abuse by using pre-defined categories (e.g. physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, etc.) so that statistics can be subsequently produced.

Examples:

- In Bulgaria, the type of abuse undergone by the child while missing is recorded, broken down into physical, psychological, sexual.

Recommendation 9: Record the organisations involved in the search

Context:

- The search for a missing person is something broader than the criminal police investigation. Other organisations are often involved and coordination is key. There is merit in recording in each case which organisations were involved and keep a statistic thereof. This could be used as a starting point for intensifying and improving cooperation. It could also form a basis for identifying potential under-representation of key agencies[53].

Description:

- Law enforcement departments entrusted with investigation could record in each case file which other organisations were involved in the search, notably: administrative authorities, special rescue corps, public or private welfare agencies, volunteers, and 116 000 hotlines, etc. This information should be recorded by using pre-defined categories so that statistics can be produced subsequently. This practice would be more easily implemented in the context of multi-agency cooperation. In a transition phase, care agencies or hotlines could be entrusted to make retrospective surveys on closed cases, transforming information existing in individual case file into statistics. This information could be used to fine tune the organisation of rescue and search.

Examples:

- Examples of such a practice have not been found in any EU Member State.

Recommendation 10: Record the duration of the case

Context:

- The duration of each case may vary according to its unique circumstances, but overall statistics on the average duration could provide insights into the effectiveness of the combined efforts of the actors involved in finding a child and/or the nature of the case itself.

Description:

- By recording the date of reporting and the date when the child was found, make it possible to obtain the duration of the case. Even better, by recording the date of disappearance and the date when the child was found, make it possible to obtain the actual duration of the disappearance from the child's perspective (the day of reporting is not always the same as the day of disappearance).

Examples:

- Most countries can theoretically obtain this information as law enforcement agencies record the day of opening and closing of the case, but statistics are not often produced. Germany, Estonia, Italy, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom could provide statistics on the number of children found within certain time intervals for this study.

Recommendation 11: Record who found the child

Context:

- As previously mentioned, various agencies as well as the family of the child may be involved in the search, besides the police, or may happen to be the ones to find the child, especially if an alert has been disseminated. In other cases, children return by themselves. It is currently not possible to know in which proportion of cases this happened.

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[53] Although of course knowing how and when cooperation takes place is also a priority, to facilitate peer learning with regard to potential good practices in multi-agency working. This is about more than a simple recording of which agencies are involved.

Description:

- For each closed case, law enforcement agencies should record whether it was the police, an NGO, a parent or guardian to find the child, or the child returned by itself. They should make use of fixed categories/definitions across the Member State to make statistics possible.

Examples:

- Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, the United Kingdom could provide statistics on children returned by themselves or found by the police. Malta and the United Kingdom also have statistics on involvement of family members or NGOs.

Recommendation 12: Record positive/negative outcomes

Context:

- As well as information on abuse undergone during disappearance, it is important to record the health conditions in which the child was found.

Description:

- Record if the child was found alive and in good health. Use fixed categories/definitions across the Member State to make statistics possible.

Examples:

- This information is present in individual files in most countries, but statistics are not produced.

Recommendation 13: Record support measures provided after the child is found

Context:

- Children that are found after having gone missing require support. For an integrated management of cases it would be helpful to record when such support is provided, although agencies other than the police (e.g. 116 000 hotlines and child welfare organisations) might be the best placed to capture this information.

Description:

- Record if any follow-up was undertaken to support the child and / or family, e.g. by child welfare organisations or NGOs, and type of support (e.g. psycho-social support; advice, support and guidance for the parents of victims; legal and technical assistance, or signposting to other organisations). Fixed categories/definitions should be used to make statistics possible. This practice would be more easily implemented in the context of multi-agency cooperation. In a transition phase, care agencies or hotlines could be entrusted to make retrospective surveys on closed cases, transforming the information available in individual case files into statistics;
- For unaccompanied migrant children, asylum centres will often be the best placed to record any follow-up actions that are taken; given their role in rehabilitation, family tracing, and family reunification.

Examples:

- Statistical data on type and frequency of follow-up support provided to families of missing children and to children found after having gone missing are not available from official sources in any country.

Operational rules and definitions

The following recommendations are in part directed at law enforcement agencies and in part targeted at overarching ministries (justice and home affairs) and/or child protection authorities.

For some recommendations, 116 000 Hotlines and other care agencies are also asked to cooperate.

Recommendation 14: No minimum duration (24h, 48h) of disappearance, below which a disappearance is not recorded

Context:

- The study found that some national police forces apply a waiting period before recording certain types of missing child cases. This usually occurs where further evidence is needed to establish whether a crime has taken place, or affects specific categories of children (e.g. unaccompanied migrant minors). The use of a waiting period presents a higher risk of cases going unreported, and can have the consequence of applying a threshold, whereby lower risk or short duration cases are not documented.

Description:

- Instruct local and national police forces on a 'prima facie' approach to the recording of crime, so that missing child cases are recorded for all children at the point when the disappearance is identified. This principle should be applied irrespective of the legal status of the child;
- Avoid a time delay in recording cases of children who go missing from other settings (e.g. detention centres or care homes), even if the actual reporting to police is subject to a waiting period.

Examples:

- In Malta the Civil Code requires instant recording and processing of missing child cases, due to the right of parents to request police help if a child leaves home without parental consent. Similarly in Bulgaria, missing children are recognised under Child Protection Law. The effect is to ensure that cases are recorded and reported without any kind of waiting period.

Recommendation 15: Clean-up the database periodically and actively follow-up solved cases to closure

Context:

- To maintain the accuracy of missing child data, it is important to update the status of cases when further information becomes available. Active management of databases is therefore important.

Description:

- Periodically clean up the database and make sure closed cases are recorded as such; this makes the database of open cases more reliable, and provides a clearer view of the stock and flow of cases over time.

Examples:

- Bulgarian and Romanian police include a category for 'false alarm', when the child has been found soon after the disappearance is reported, or has not been missing at all. This approach helps to maintain the accuracy of the data, and helps to avoid over-reporting of cases.

Recommendation 16: Consolidate local data nationally so that no further threshold is applied

Context:

- The study found that difficulties arise in knowing the scale of missing children cases, where:
  - data is held locally but remains unprocessed;
  - is recorded in a non-standardised way by local police forces;
  - and / or is not routinely collated.

  Some countries use special national databases for missing persons, but they are unlikely to provide a reliable estimate of total numbers if used in isolation, as they rely on systematic reporting by local police forces. Furthermore, thresholds are sometimes applied (e.g. only cases where children have been missing for x days, or where there is a high risk of harm).

Description:

- Ensure that all reports are periodically counted and transmitted to a common database, overseen by the national police, without any pre-selection process. This should also include cases solved within the period before transmission, to consolidate historical data;
- Develop agreements between police forces if necessary, to underpin this process;
- Where a more specialist database is already being used, ensure that this is harmonised with existing police databases, to avoid gaps or inconsistencies in recording (see examples 2 and 3 below);
- Excellent practice might be to designate a post with responsibility for coordinating administrations involved in all the search of missing persons, to assist with a clearer understanding and recording of administrative actions (see example 1 below).

Examples:

- In Italy, cases are recorded in the central database directly by local officers of any police force, therefore no further selection threshold is applied that could account for under-reporting. A Special Commissioner of Government for Missing Persons ensures the coordination of all relevant technical structures and monitoring support, investigation and international activities of all agencies;
- In Ireland, the national Missing People's Bureau (MPB) places all information about missing person incidents on its PULSE information system. The PULSE reports are reviewed on a daily basis, with relevant information communicated directly back to local police units;
- In France, when the Brigade of Protection of Minors of Paris is informed of a disappearance, they always store the information in two files, namely their own database (SIDEM software) and the national Missing Persons File, where all the missing person cases are recorded.

Recommendation 17: Define internationally agreed procedures for entering Article 32 alerts in the SIS II Schengen system database

Context:

- Missing children are an increasingly transnational phenomenon. Abduction cases often have a cross-border dimension, and the situation of unaccompanied migrant minors and trafficked children also involves the movement of people between national borders. Furthermore, the Schengen area has introduced far greater cross-border mobility within Europe, spanning 22 out of 27 Member States. Having reliable and common definitions is helpful operationally for dealing with such cases, as well as facilitating a greater understanding of the prevalence of different types of missing person cases across the EU;
- The SIS Schengen database provides a potential transnational source of data about cross-border cases, particularly as far as Article 32 alerts are concerned. Article 32 alerts may be divided into two subjects of alerts: 1) on missing persons; 2) on persons who, in the interest of their own protection (for example to protect their health when a person cannot take care of her-/himself) or in order to prevent threats, need to be placed provisionally in a place of safety at the request of the competent authority or the competent judicial authority of the reporting Party. In case a minor is unlawfully removed by one of the parents or by a third party from the care of the persons awarded custody, an alert will be also entered in the SIS pursuant to Article 97. The required action is to communicate to the alerting authority the whereabouts of the person or to place the person in a place of safety for the purposes of preventing him from continuing his journey (if so authorized by national legislation) [54];
- An Inspection in 2009 on the application of Article 32 alerts tried to investigate why there are huge differences between the number of alerts inserted by countries. The inspection did not reveal why in some states the number of alerts are high where other states have considerable

[54] Article 97 Inspection Report of the Schengen Joint Supervisory Authority on an inspection on the use of Article 97 alerts in the Schengen Information System, Brussels, 13 October 2009, p.2.

lower numbers of alerts. The JSA assumed that this is related to specific national views and practices relating to the subjects of Article 32 alerts. Indeed it was found that Member States have different procedures concerning the launch of a SIS Article 32 alert. In certain countries a national alert on a missing person must exist before sending an international alert. Some states have detailed procedures (Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Poland); others have no specific legislation or procedures and the police officer assesses whether conditions set in Article 32 apply (Italy). According to the information received, in most of the Schengen States the same procedure as concerning the issuing of the alert on a missing person of age pursuant to Article 32 applies to the entering of an alert on a minor. However some differences exist. In Belgium, Germany, Estonia and the Slovak Republic, children are automatically inserted in the SIS – the consent of the police service that circulated information concerning the person in question is not necessary. A request submitted by a competent authority serves as the basis for entry the information. In Finland an alert of an underage person temporarily to be placed under police protection is made when the authority in charge of social welfare asks executive assistance on the basis of an official decision concerning taking into custody. The answers also indicated that specific safeguards are taken into account to protect children and greater care is taken in handling alerts concerning children. In Greece, the Department of Public Security applies a specific filter, a so called "third filter", ensuring a thorough examining of the case of a missing child. In Slovenia, the procedure for issuing an Article 32 alert on a child is that a child is placed into care of the responsible care services (social services) and alerting should be done in the shortest possible time55. On the basis of the inspection results JSA recommended, inter alia, that:

- In all Schengen States formal written procedures should be in place for all authorities involved with entering Article 32 alerts;
- In case various authorities are involved with entering Article 32 alerts, the procedures should be consistent and applied in a uniform manner;
- Data on minors should always be controlled by automatic means and formal procedures in order to prevent that they remain alerted after the minor becomes of age[56].

· In general, more consistency would be needed to transform the SIS database into a reliable data source.

Description:

· Ensure that clear guidelines are in place for launching Article 32 alerts for minors, and they are consistently understood by police and other concerned personnel.

Examples:

· Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Poland have detailed procedures on launching SIS alerts on missing persons;
· In Belgium, Germany, Estonia, Slovak Republic children are automatically inserted in the SIS – the consent of the police service that circulated information concerning the person in question is not necessary.

Recommendation 18: Link up national police databases to SIS II to ensure that missing children are properly searched for in the whole Schengen area

Context:

· As it is not possible to exclude a priori that one child could cross the border, according to the European Commission discretion in decisions regarding the insertion of national missing child alerts in the SIS II system should be eliminated;

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55 Ibidem, pp. 6-8.

56 Ibidem, pp. 13-14.

- Implementing this in all missing child alert cases could on the other hand become a burden if additional actions are needed from the police to activate Article 32 alerts. This could be avoided through appropriate technical solutions.

Description:

- To support consistent and rapid transmission of missing child information to the SIS II system, links should be created between the national police system missing person alerts and SIS II to allow for automatic CUD functionality (create, update, delete) so that records are synchronised in both, whenever a child goes missing.

Examples:

- Similar examples are not currently available to the team but could be perhaps searched in other police cooperation fields.

Recommendation 19: Agree data reporting protocols between police and 116 000 hotline service providers

Context:

- 116 000 hotlines are a precious source of data about the circumstances and profile of missing children, beyond the level of data that can be easily obtained from police databases. The study found that all but one of the hotlines could provide 2012 figures on their recorded cases of disappearance; breakdowns by sex and age brackets are available and often also by nationality.

Description:

- Police and hotline providers should ensure that data reporting forms part of any protocols for communication and partnership working, so that there is transparency and consistency in how cases are logged.

Examples:

- In Belgium, a protocol aims at harmonising the cooperation between police (Cell for missing People) and justice (Prosecutors and examining magistrates) services, hotline provider Child Focus and private organisations regarding investigations. This is thought to have worked well in harmonising data recording and reporting, and clearly demarcating the roles of different organisations.

Recommendation 20: Adopt operational definitions of missing persons and children

Context:

- Understanding how and when a person is considered 'missing', and the appropriate definitions of a child are fundamental for ensuring that police and other agencies undertake accurate recording. The study found that, whilst a 'missing person' is rarely defined within national legislation, a clear operational understanding can be achieved. Member States sometimes apply specific age limits for 'minors' or 'children', but with the exception of international abductions (age limit of 16 years), an age limit of 18 years is the most consistent with international law (based upon UNCRC).

Description:

- If not already available, front-offices of the police should have at hand manuals with clear operational definitions of when a child has to be reported as missing, and how the circumstances should be recorded so as to ensure consistency and transparency;
- As a minimum the definitions should be set out within ministerial and police regulations, given that police are usually the first line of response. However, they should also hold a common currency across different sectors; including the judiciary, border agencies, care institutions and child welfare organisations;

- Excellent practice would be to provide a legally binding definition of a missing person in Civil Law regulations, as is the case in Estonia, Hungary and Ireland.

Examples:

- In France, CFPE Enfants Disparus organises training for police forces to explain how to deal with cases of disappearance, from a legal, psychological and moral point of view. It helps to better link legal principles and daily practices in handling (and recording) those cases.

Recommendation 21: Distinguish parental and third party abductions, and attempted from actual abductions

Context:

- The study found that abduction cases are not uniformly categorised within national datasets. Some countries do not distinguish explicitly in their legal definition – and therefore in crime data – abductions by parents and abductions by third parties. They have a general article punishing abduction of minors or incapable persons without further criminal purpose, with sometimes specifications regarding the case in which the perpetrator is a parent. In most cases where a third party is involved, they are likely to escalate to suspecting a more serious crime regarding liberty deprivation, trafficking, exploitation etc. – but then statistics for this crime involve both children and adults. Finally, studies on crime statistics[57] point to the issue of attempts that are as a rule recorded besides actually committed crimes but representing a variable share of the overall offences. This issue could also apply to abductions.

Description:

- Parental and third party abductions should be clearly distinguished in police records, to improve the quality of data for understanding the scale and circumstances of abduction cases. International abductions could be distinguished from domestic abductions;
- Attempted abductions should be distinguished from actual incidences, so that information is not lost but does not confuse statistics of children who have gone missing. In practice, this might mean that cases are assigned the status of 'suspected' abduction in the first instance, and 'actual' or 'attempted' status confirmed at the point of updating the file[58].

Examples:

- Italian and Polish police record the type of disappearance and distinguish between "parental abduction" or "abduction by spouse or other family member" and "possible victim of crime".

Recommendation 22: Make it possible to distinguish runaways from other missing children cases

Context:

- It was clear from the discussions with Member State experts that runaways represent a large share of the overall numbers of incidents of missing children recorded by the police. A key issue is that repeated runaways are usually recorded every time as one event, which can indicate a higher number of children than might actually be the case. Furthermore, runaways cannot always be isolated within national police statistics. This presents a problem for providing reliable estimates.

Description:

- Law enforcement agencies should create a category of 'runaway ' in their missing children records. A broad definition, based on the wilful act of leaving home or institutional settings would be sufficient to isolate runaways within national data with a reasonable degree of accuracy.

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[57] European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics, Den Haag, WODC 2006, p. 19.

[58] Discussions with the expert group for the study indicated that the 'risk' of abduction (i.e. where one parent expresses a concern that there is an abduction risk by the other parent) is also a key indicator. Missing Children Europe have identified that preventative cases represent one third of all investigated abduction cases.

Such a definition would need to avoid trivialising the act of running away, given that for some children this is a necessary action to escape from situations of violence or crisis. Child protection agencies could play a strong role in promoting that this recommendation is implemented by raising awareness of law enforcement and other agencies on the serious risks for children entailed by runaways.

Examples:

- Belgium, Cyprus, France, Finland, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Latvia and Slovakia record runaways as such in their police database.

Recommendation 23: Isolate cases where children are victims in crime statistics

Context:

- A key consideration for understanding the contexts in which children go missing is to identify the type and extent of any criminal wrongdoing, including whether a conviction is secured[59]. In many countries it is not possible to isolate minors as victims within statistics on crimes involving also adults (e.g. kidnapping), or in situations other than disappearances (e.g. abuse).

Description:

- Police and judiciary authorities should clearly mark cases that involve children as victims (under the age of 18, following the UNCRC definition). Statistical offices responsible for criminal statistics should produce distinct figures for children who are victims of kidnapping, trafficking or abuse. This should be promoted by child protection authorities that are aware of the importance of a thorough knowledge of children's victimisation patterns.

Examples:

- In Sweden, it is possible to isolate reported cases of human trafficking involving children as victims.

Recommendation 24: Adopt mechanisms for linking police and judicial records

Context:

- Statistics on whether legal proceedings were started as a result of a child disappearance are generally not available for what concerns police databases. Some initial information exists on the involvement of the prosecutor in abduction cases but not so much on the following steps;
- The main reason why it is not possible to obtain statistics on outcomes of judiciary proceedings triggered by missing children cases – apart from child abductions – is that there is no file which traces individual disappearance cases from the disappearance until the judiciary outcome of legal proceedings – the 'audit trail' is separated institutionally between the police, judiciary and child welfare organisations.

Description:

- Under the impulse of child protection authorities, and through institutional cooperation between relevant ministries, potential mechanisms should be explored for linking / matching police and judicial records, so that missing children cases can be tracked beyond the stage of police investigation to court action and subsequent conviction or acquittal (for criminal cases). This might include the use of unique identifiers, so that missing child cases can be isolated within judicial statistics.

Examples:

- Examples of such a practice haven't been found in any EU Member State.

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[59] Convictions data is potentially less useful for understanding the phenomenon of domestic abductions, due to differences in how and when such cases are classified as 'criminal' or 'civil' under national law.

Awareness-raising and information

Awareness-raising and information is a precondition for effective prevention of and response to child disappearances. Underreporting should be prevented; services should be provided to make reporting easier, and information should be collected to check whether underreporting takes place. Child protection authorities should have a primary responsibility in this and constantly look for help and cooperation of all concerned agencies. 116 000 hotlines could play an important role as well.

Recommendation 25: Organise communication campaigns on the importance of timely reporting any case of missing children

Context:

- Problems of under-reporting can arise if parents and institutions do not have a common understanding of the importance of timely reporting, or lack awareness of how or when to do so.

Description:

- Campaigns should maximise the availability of multiple information channels (TV, radio, websites and more recently the social media), which have been increasingly important in handling missing children cases. They should be supported with factual information about the risks for children who go missing, and indeed of the range of circumstances in which a child might be considered 'missing', above-and-beyond more common public associations with high-profile kidnapping or trafficking cases;
- Campaigns should not only be directed to parents and families, but also to care institutions, social workers and other professionals with a duty of care for children. This will require targeted awareness-raising alongside mass-media approaches.

Examples:

- In France, the APEV association develops prevention and information books, as well as awareness-raising documents for children, in association with schools and county councils. They also train investigators from the police on how to handle victims and their families, in order to sensitise them to those practices and to raise awareness of effective prevention measures.

Recommendation 26: Establish rules and protocols for reporting by care institutions

Context:

- Children who go missing from care are a distinct sub-group within the wider phenomenon of missing children. However, national data collection systems do not always distinguish between children who go missing from home and those who go missing from care institutions. Furthermore, the obligations for residential care institutions to report and their liability for missing children vary across countries. This affects the level of reporting, and statistics as a consequence. It is likely to be a factor that helps explain the discrepancies between police and local authority statistics.

Description:

Child protection authorities should:

- Ensure that there is systematic recording for all children at the point when they are discovered to have gone missing from care, regardless of their nationality or residency status, and establish agreements and protocols with care institutions to this purpose;
- Agree with detention centres and special care facilities the reporting of all cases of unaccompanied migrant minors going missing, so that the statistics are gathered in the same way as for children who go missing from other institutional facilities;
- Support closer working relationships between the police, local authorities and care institutions, to pool knowledge about children who go missing, and to develop more comprehensive

preventative strategies. Police should undertake targeted work with those local authorities or institutions that account for the highest proportions of cases;

- Seek to identify the barriers to reporting by local authorities and care institutions (e.g. regulatory or funding-related), and consider how they might be eased or removed. Consider the use of obligatory reporting if necessary.

Examples:

- In Ireland, a Joint Protocol regarding children in care was signed between the Garda (police) and Health Service Executive. It sets out the roles and responsibilities of both agencies, and includes a mechanism to identify children in care who are reported missing frequently and to escalate the responsibility for them to an appropriate level of authority;
- Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy and Slovenia also differentiate runaway cases according to whether the child went missing from home or from a care institution. This level of breakdown is invaluable for understanding risk factors for children going missing.

Recommendation 27: Provide 116 000 hotline services for more confidential and psychologically aware communication with parents and children

Context:

- 116 000 hotlines provide a channel whereby cases of disappearance can be reported and handled by professionally trained operators. The use of this communication channel potentially helps reducing the area of underreporting. In the EU, 22 countries have hotlines up and running, and a good practice manual has been produced with support from the EU funding under the DAPHNE programme. The current study has shown that 116 000 hotlines potentially have a more prominent role to play in the future, in gathering data about the phenomenon of missing children and championing preventative and follow-up work that extends beyond the remit of individual police forces.

Description:

- Member States that have not done so should establish a 116 000 hotline to supplement official action by the police for handling missing children cases, through awareness-raising; advocacy; data recording and analysis, and the provision of social and psychological support in situations where children have gone missing. Agreements with suitable social work organisations should be established to this purpose, as already done in some Member States;
- Further evidence should be gathered by the European Commission as to the operational effectiveness of 116 000 hotlines across Europe, to understand the extent to which different operating models are more strongly associated with positive outcomes for children, and to understand how the investment in the 116 000 infrastructure can be targeted to add the maximum value to law enforcement within Member States. A pan-EU evaluation of 116 000 hotlines might be considered, to gather this evidence in an independent and objective manner.

Examples:

- In Greece a National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children established by the non-governmental organization The Smile of the Child operates the 116 000 hotline since 2008. Its contribution to handling missing children cases includes a wide range of services: providing psychological support to the parents and relatives; assisting and consulting with the Police and other relevant stakeholders; activating the Amber Alert when the Hellenic Police have reasons to believe that the child might be in danger; communicating with the media and publishing the picture of the child; activating the rescue team; providing psychological support and counselling to children after being found.

Recommendation n 28: Raise awareness of existing 116 000 hotlines among children, families and social workers based on a thorough evaluation of the hotlines' strengths, weaknesses and untapped potential

Context:

- Data on numbers of cases handled by 116 000 hotline reveal that there is still untapped potential regarding the use of this channel in most countries where hotlines are active. The awareness of the service should be raised. This requires a thorough understanding of the strengths, weaknesses and potential of the hotlines to complement ordinary police activity.

Description:

- Member States should review the added value of their 116,000 hotlines and consider the actual and potential ways in which they can reach the public and support the investigative work of the police. The benefits of the service should be maximised for all children and families as well as social workers at a national level. An independent evaluation of 116 000 hotlines might prove the most effective way to establish the value of the 116 000 hotline services. The evaluation might include consultations with families, children and authorities, alongside the ad hoc processing of a sample of contextual information gathered by hotline operators, to inform the development of more reliable categorisations. It could be conducted at EU level to allow for comparisons and benchmarking;
- Strong partnerships between a variety of actors working on child missing issues (116 000 hotline operators, police forces, judicial services, associations, NGOs and even citizens) constitute a precondition to raise awareness. However, this might be further supported by national missing children information days to raise public awareness (possibly on the occasion of 25 May International Day for Missing Children). It would also be beneficial to raise awareness of hotlines amongst children, using child friendly formats. These efforts should be promoted by child protection authorities in close cooperation with other relevant ministries and agencies.

Examples:

- In Italy the local provider of 116 000 hotline services Telefono Azzurro has organised on 25 May 2013 a press campaign to publicise the service.

Recommendation 29: Make missing children statistics publicly available through yearly reports

Context:

- Transparency is important to ensure a good level of public awareness of the scale and circumstances of missing children cases, and to avoid over-reliance on media portrayals of high profile cases. Annual reporting of statistics is also a mechanism to help ensure accountability of the agencies involved, and to monitor trends in the phenomenon over time.

Description:

- Either authorities in charge of dealing with missing persons or child protection authorities should make official and reliable data available through a national report every year, and disseminate the key statistics through suitable channels (e.g. television and radio).

Examples:

- Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland publish statistics on missing children.

Recommendation 30: Organise annual incidence surveys

Context:

- Available administrative data or hotline data are based on reporting. Cases that are not reported to the police or to other agencies are missed by these statistics. In criminology, victimisation and other surveys are often used to gain a complementary and broader picture of the diffusion of certain crimes. This could apply also to missing children.

Description:

- Child protection authorities should organise annual surveys of parents and guardians, children, law enforcement and care agencies, regarding child abductions, runaways and other missing children incidents. 116 000 hotlines could play an important role as well in promoting or supporting this initiative. National statistical offices could be involved for including specific modules on this subject in household surveys.

Examples:

- In the United States, National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrown away Children (NISMART) provide national estimates of missing children based on surveys of households, juvenile residential facilities, and law enforcement agencies. They also provide statistical profiles of these children, including their demographic characteristics and the circumstances of their disappearance[60].

Feedback of law enforcement experts

To gain better insights on the relevance, acceptability and feasibility of recommendations, we conducted a survey among police experts from Member States who cooperated in the data collection. Based on the assessment of the police experts, we attributed scores to the answers to the standard-setting questionnaire, and each recommendation received an average score on a scale 1-4. We then ranked recommendations according to their score on three dimensions: relevance, feasibility and acceptance. We did so for all recommendations; however we considered their input especially relevant for the recommendations that directly concern the police: those on data recording practices and those on definitions and rules. The result of police experts' assessment is reported in Table 5.1 .

Based on ranking, we identified the top group, middle group and bottom group of recommendations on each of the three dimensions and we combined them in three groups:

- *High priority* – recommendations that are considered relevant, are widely accepted, and highly feasible;
- *Low priority* – recommendations that had a relatively lower level of acceptance, relevance and/or feasibility;
- *Medium priority* – all other recommendations.

The result of the ranking exercise gives us a possible priority order in introducing such recommendations. Priority here must not be understood as importance, but rather as a mix of relevance and feasibility. This corresponds to the pragmatic approach of this study. Despite their different position in the classification, all the suggested recommendations are, in our view, worth being considered and introduced as they emerge from an assessment of acute needs and gaps.

Table 5.1 Assessment of police experts on recommendations relevant to law enforcement agencies

Recommendation	Relevance	Feasibility	Acceptance
High Priority			
1. Always record the year of birth of the child	High	High	High
2. Always record the sex of the child	High	High	High
3. Always record the nationality and migration status of the child	Medium	High	High
4. Record the type of disappearance through a suitable system of categories	High	High	High
6. Always record the setting of the disappearance	High	High	High

[60] A. J. Sedlak, D. Finkelhor, H. Hammer, and D. J. Schultz, National Estimates of Missing Children: An Overview, NISMART, October 2002.

14. No minimum duration (24h, 48h) of disappearance, below which a disappearance is not recorded	Medium	High	High
17. Define internationally agreed criteria procedures for entering Article 32 alerts in the SIS Schengen system database [61]	High	High	High
20: Adopt operational definitions of missing persons and children	Medium	High	High
21. Distinguish parental and third party abductions, and attempted from actual abductions	High	High	High
Medium priority			
5. Make it possible to identify the number of children involved (as opposed to incidents) both in historical and in open cases statistics besides the number of disappearances	High	Medium	High
7. Always record the relation to the child of the person reporting the disappearance to the police	High	High	Medium
8. Record the type of abuse the child incurred during the disappearance, if any	High	Medium	High
9. Record the organisations involved in the search	High	Medium	Medium
10. Record the duration of the case	Medium	High	Medium
11. Record who found the child	High	High	Medium
12. Record positive/negative outcomes	Medium	High	Medium
15. Clean-up the database periodically and actively follow-up solved cases to closure	Medium	Medium	Medium
19: Agree data reporting protocols between police and 116 000 hotline service providers	High	Medium	Medium
Low Priority			
22. Make it possible to distinguish runaways from other missing children cases	Medium	Low	Medium
13. Record support measures provided after the child is found	Low	Low	Low

The results of this ranking exercise mainly reflect the point of view of police practitioners. It is possible that recommendations that are low priority for them, or would not prove feasible to implement routinely alongside their existing duties could be taken forward by other agencies.

It should be noted however that most recommendations (including those not directly applicable to the police) were considered feasible, although some would need to be introduced gradually (25 recommendations received an average score above 3 in a 1-4 scale). Most of them were also considered relevant (26 out of 29 scoring 3 and above). We are therefore considering thee as having a lower level of priority in relative terms.

Furthermore, we can highlight two recommendations that are rated sufficiently important and acceptable by police officers to warrant moving them from medium to high priority if difficulties affecting feasibility were overcome:

[61] Recommendation n. 18 is not included as it was added after the survey following discussions with the Commission.

- 5. Make it possible to identify the number of children (as opposed to incidents) both in historical and in open cases statistics;
- 8. Record the type of abuse the child incurred, if any.

This leads us to potential "enabling actions" to make more feasible what today seems unfeasible.

Identifying enabling actions

When asked about feasibility, MS police experts mentioned that certain recommendations could be implemented only with difficulty. The principal difficulties in this respect were thought to include: lack of staff capacity, lack of equipment, legal issues or administrative rules, insufficient staff skills. Of these, staff capacity is the most often mentioned obstacle (13 times), followed by legal issues or administrative rules (10 times). More rarely the lack of proper equipment (5 times) and adequate skills of staff were mentioned (2 times).

Staff capacity and legal or administrative rules-related issues seem indeed more structural and difficult to overcome than, say, skill gaps that could be filled via training, or the acquisition of equipment.

It has to be noted however that difficulties were mentioned by no more than 2-4 respondents out of 14 for each individual recommendation, and in almost all cases more than one reason was mentioned.

One avenue to be explored to overcome the constraints of staff capacity is to **entrust 116 000 hotlines with the tasks related to more thorough collection and in-depth analysis of missing children data owned by the police**. 116 000 Hotlines in fact have a specialised mission regarding missing children and do not have to handle a lot of other everyday tasks as is the case for police forces. This solution of course implies strengthening trust and cooperation agreements between official authorities and hotlines – a recommended line of action in general. A more thorough evaluation of the 116 000 action could explore the existing potential in this field.

This cooperation, besides allowing for better data gathering on missing children, could be considered as a part of a more general, **multi-agency and holistic approach** to the issue, whereby care agencies (including 116 000 hotlines, but involving also more specialised organisations dealing with vulnerable children) and law enforcement agencies join forces to secure protection to all missing children, no matter the age, sex or nationality. The cooperation received by different organisations for this study has demonstrated that there is a huge potential for strengthening this approach and we hope that our findings will make a small contribution to that.

It is also clear that all recommendations related to awareness-raising and information are directed to child protection authorities, 116 000 hotlines and care agencies. Child protection authorities, moreover, should be the main supporters of all recommendations and initiators of any action towards better recording and handling of information of missing children as they have a clear mandate to defend the best interest of the child.

Annex I – Overview tables

The following "Overview tables" are a consolidation of the raw database set up for this study, only including categories (and countries) with sufficient and sufficiently comparable data.

List of Overview Tables	
Table 1.1:	Indicator 1 (sex): Nr. of cases of children gone missing
Table 1.2:	Indicator 1 (age): Nr. of cases of children gone missing
Table 1.3:	Indicator 1 (outcome): Nr. of cases of children gone missing
Table 1.4:	Indicator 1 bis (sex): Nr. of cases of children gone missing 116000
Table 2.1:	Indicator 2: Number of open cases
Table 3.1:	Indicator 3: Nr. of cases of international abduction
Table 4.1:	Indicator 4 (sex): Runaways
Table 4.2:	Indicator 4 (age): Runaways
Table 4.3:	Indicator 4 (outcome): Runaways
Table 4.4:	Indicator 4 bis (sex): 116 000 Runaways
Table 6.1:	Indicator 6 (sex): Runaways from care institutions
Table 7.1:	Indicator 7: Number of missing unidentified migrant children
Table 8.1:	Indicator 8: Conviction abduction

Table AI1 Indicator 1 (sex): Nr. of cases of children gone missing

		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Source	Notes
BE	**Total**	**462**	**388**	**334**	**420**	**315**	Police database (Cell for Missing People)	Closed files only.
	Male	169	160	146	166	110		
	Female	293	228	188	254	205		
BG	**Total**	**1270**	**1175**	**1247**	**1230**	**1276**	Police database	Sum of all cases of runaways, runaways from care institutions and children that have been categorised as 'disappeared without a trace'.
	Male							
	Female							
CZ	**Total**	**7937**	**7490**	**6715**	**6547**	**5564**	Police database (PATROS)	
	Male	5127	4724	4211	4091	3457		
	Female	2810	2766	2504	2456	2107		
DK	**Total**	**1102**	**1135**	**1006**	**911**	**1039**	National Police journal codes	Derived from a system of journal codes on investigations of missing persons or persons missing from institutions.
	Male							
	Female							
DE	**Total**	**35249**	**34889**	**36732**	**39708**	**42943**	Federal Criminal Police Office: Statistics on Missing Minors 2008, 2009, 2010	May omit cases solved within 12 hours (overnight). In some cases sex was not recorded.
	Male	13924	13795	14455	15848	17239		
	Female	21267	21086	22272	23846	25692		
EE	**Total**	**13**	**31**	**197**	**228**	**1038**	Police database	Include runaways, lost, abducted children. Data before November 2009 may omit cases solved in the first days.
	Male	4	8	71	92	601		
	Female	9	23	126	136	437		
IE	**Total**		**5614**	**6141**	**6360**	**6615**	Police database (Missing Persons Bureau)	
	Male		2599	2766	3175	3633		
	Female		3015	3375	3185	2982		
EL	**Total**	**399**	**396**	**322**	**374**	**383**	Police database	
	Male	127	104	88	141	160		
	Female	272	292	234	233	223		
ES	**Total**	**2**	**5**	**1665**	**4581**	**13006**	Ministry of Interior Affairs database (PDyRH)	Ministry of Interior Data is the only one recognized as official data. Figures from Police Statistics are higher.
	Male							
	Female							
FR	**Total**	**47910**	**47491**	**48202**	**52742**	**50326**	National police (File for Missing Persons)	
	Male	23235	23297	23753	25651	24729		
	Female	24675	24194	24449	26192	25596		
IT	**Total**	**4752**	**3817**	**3645**	**5396**	**5513**	Police database (SDI)	
	Male	2501	1948	1694	2953	2792		
	Female	2251	1869	1951	2243	2721		
CY	**Total**	:	**68**	**92**	**62**	:	Police database	No data recorded for 2008, 2012 data not yet available.
	Male							
	Female							
LV	**Total**	**571**	**495**	**361**	**404**	**427**		

		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Source	Notes
	Male	247	240	170	212	215		
	Female	325	255	191	192	212		
LT	**Total**	**90**	**866**	**929**	**1152**	**1288**	Police database	
	Male	44	420	421	534	612		
	Female	46	446	508	618	676		
LU	**Total**	**272**	**411**	**503**	**325**	**429**	Internal Police	Figures do not include runaways.
	Male	142	238	273	204	215		
	Female	130	173	230	121	214		
HU	**Total**	**11901**	**11876**	**12053**	**14419**		Police database	
	Male			4995	6131			
	Female			7055	8288			
MT	**Total**	**222**	**187**	**226**	**233**	**198**	Police database	Data includes all cases, incl. runaways.
	Male	124	70	78	83	93		
	Female	98	117	148	150	105		
NL	**Total**	**89**	**104**	**160**	**202**	**261**	National Police - Missing Persons Unit (LBVP). Year figures KLPD - Dienst IPOL 2011	Runaways are not per se excluded, especially the cases that were considered urgent, and then turned out to be runaways. Some of the figures on runaways from institutions are extracted from these files. Police estimates that actual numbers are considerably higher.
	Male	16	30	43	57	86		
	Female	73	74	117	145	175		
PL	**Total**	**4168**	**3625**	**3471**	**4351**	**6453**	Police database	0-17 years old.
	Male	1713	1410	1369	1665	2753		
	Female	2455	2215	2102	2686	3700		
PT	**Total**	**2904**	**3087**	**3552**	**3120**	**2973**	Police database (PSP)	In 256 cases no annual information onsex.
	Male	961	1125	1344	1187	1116		
	Female	1903	1921	2164	1880	1779		
RO	**Total**	**3362**	**3243**	**3124**	**3182**	**3199**	Police database	Includes all cases.
	Male	1407	1225	1197	1329	1218		
	Female	1955	2018	1927	1853	1981		
SI	**Total**	**305**	**372**	**422**	**340**	**469**	Police database	
	Male							
	Female							
SK	**Total**	**1554**	**1456**	**1476**	**2139**	**1821**	Police database (PATROS)	
	Male	732	748	873	1334	1080		
	Female	822	708	603	805	741		
FI	**Total**				**672**	**574**	Police database (PolStat)	Only data for 2011 and 2012 can be extracted automatically. Include domestic and international parental abduction cases.
	Male							
	Female							
UK	**Total**	**66188**	**83483**	**100189**	**91230**	**96341**	Police local forces databases	Includes data of approximately 30 out of 54 police forces. Numbers of responses to each year: 2008 (24), 2009 (27), 2010 (28), 2011 (29), 2012 (30).
	Male	25865	32910	42591	41842	43496		
	Female	31827	39602	48069	47091	49063		

Table AI.2 Indicator 1 (age): Nr. of cases of children gone missing

		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Source	Notes
BE	Total	462	388	334	420	315	Police database (Cell for Missing People)	Closed files only.
	0-12	151	116	118	166	94		
	0-14							
DE	Total	35249	34889	36732	39708	42943	Federal Criminal Police Office: Statistics on Missing Minors 2008, 2009, 2010	May omit cases solved within 12 hours (overnight).
	0-12	1125	1086	1144	1165	1042		
	0-14	5766	5532	5729	6387	6378		
EE	Total	13	31	197	228	1038		
	0-12		2	33	26	86	Police database	
	0-14	7	13	94	100	308		
IE	Total		5614	6141	6360	6615	Police database (Missing Persons Bureau)	
	0-12		426	368	384	385		
	0-14		1334	1267	1443	1336		
EL	Total	399	396	322	374	383		
	0-12	55	43	50	64	57	Police database	
	0-14	158	155	149	161	139		
FR	Total	47910	47491	48202	52742	50326	National police (File for Missing Persons)	
	0-12							
	0-14	13685	13799	14727	16314	15319		
IT	Total	4752	3817	3645	5396	5513	Police database (SDI)	
	0-12	658	425	387	498	513		
	0-14	1297	900	846	1188	1204		
LV	Total	571	495	361	404	427		
	0-12	53	53	31	35	34	Police database	
	0-14	170	142	112	121	111		
LU	Total	272	411	503	325	429		
	0-12	10	6	18	7	11	Internal Police	Figures do not include runaways.
	0-14	45	32	48	41	32		
HU	Total	11901	11876	12053	14419			
	0-12	2041		2149	2361		Police database	
	0-14							
MT	Total	222	187	226	233	198		
	0-12	25	32	44	36	38	Police database	Figures include runaways.
	0-14	72	82	78	95	91		
NL	Total	89	104	160	202	261		
	0-12	15	8	8	12	11		
	0-14	22	16	19	32	36	National Police Missing Persons Unit (LBVP). Year figures KLPD - Dienst IPOL 2011.	Runaways are not per se excluded, especially the cases that were considered urgent, and then turned out to be runaways. Some of the figures on runaways from institutions are extracted from these files. Police estimates that actual numbers are considerably higher.
RO	Total	3362	3243	3124	3182	3199	Police database	Includes all cases.

		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Source	Notes
	0-12							
	0-14	1319	1264	1131	1213	1177		
FI	**Total**				672	574	Police database (PolStat)	Only data for 2011 and 2012 can be extracted automatically. Include domestic and international parental abduction cases.
	0-12							
	0-14				282	242		
UK	**Total**	**66188**	**83483**	**100189**	**91230**	**96341**	Police	Includes data of approximately 30 out of 54 police forces. Numbers of responses to each year: 2008 (24), 2009 (27), 2010 (28), 2011 (29), 2012 (30).

Table AI.3 Indicator 1 (time elapsed when child was found) Nr. of cases of children gone missing

		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Source:	Notes
DE	**Total**	**35249**	**34889**	**36732**	**39708**	**42943**	Federal Police	In Germany there are different subcategories by duration of disappearance: 1-3 days, 3 days-1 week, 1 -2 weeks, 2 weeks-1 month, 1-3 months, 3-6 months, 6 months-1 year, 1 year and more. As reported cases are first entered into the database "missing persons/unknown dead persons", and at night transferred to the statistical database, all cases that are solved before one night passes, are not counted in the statistic.
	Of which found in 8 hours or less	:	:	:	:	:		
	Of which found in 3* days or less*	:	:	7934	11186	12771		
	Of which found in 1 Week or less*	:	:	24768	28563	30753		
	Of which found in 3* months or less*	:	:	33429	36706	39690		
EE	**Total**	**13**	**31**	**197**	**228**	**1038**	Police database	
	Of which found in 8 hours or less	2	4	27	35	176		
	Of which found in 2 days or less*	6	12	74	96	420		
	Of which found in 1 Week or less*	12	17	118	154	572		
	Of which found in 2 months or less*	13	25	166	198	857		
IT	**Total**	**4752**	**3817**	**3645**	**5396**	**5513**	Police database (SDI)	
	Of which found in 8 hours or less	1334	1015	1119	1660	1844		
	Of which found in 2 days or less*	1870	1469	1599	2358	2569		
	Of which found in 1 Week or less*	2542	2058	2226	3164	3409		
	Of which found in 2 months or less*	:	:	:	:	:		
LU	**Total**	**272**	**411**	**503**	**325**	**429**	Police database	
	Of which found in 8 hours or less	:	:	:	:	:		
	Of which found in 2 days or less*	72	84	90	80	98		
	Of which found in 1 Week or less*	88	108	114	100	117		
	Of which found in 2 months or less*	102	131	126	106	129		
HU	**Total**	**11901**	**11876**	**12053**	**14419**	**:**	Police database	*changed category to 1 day instead of 2 and 1 month instead of 2.
	Of which found in 8 hours or less	:	:	:	0	:		
	Of which found in 1* day or less*	:	:	:	4024	:		
	Of which found in 1 Week or less*	:	:	:	9255	:		

		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Source:	Notes
	Of which found in 1* month or less*	:	:	:	14016	:		
MT	**Total**	**222**	**187**	**226**	**233**	**198**	Police database	2008, 2009, 2010 & 2011 databases do not provide this level of detail.
	Of which found in 8 hours or less	:	:	:	:	10		
	Of which found in 2 days or less*	199	151	180	175	143		
	Of which found in 1 Week or less*	207	166	199	190	163		
	Of which found in 2 months or less*	213	171	209	207	166		
NL	**Total**	**89**	**104**	**160**	**202**	**261**	National Police Missing Persons Unit (LBVP)	
	Of which found in 8 hours or less	:	:	:	:	:		
	Of which found in 2 days or less*	14	10	21	42	66		
	Of which found in 1 Week or less*	30	19	49	83	111		
	Of which found in 2 months or less*	38	25	60	97	121		
UK	**Total**	**66188**	**83483**	**100189**	**91230**	**96341**	Police	These were often incomplete datasets with many cases where time missing was unknown.
	Of which found in 8 hours or less	13071	18666	20435	20085	18655		
	Of which found in 2 days or less*	26675	34994	40458	36975	34434		
	Of which found in 1 Week or less*	30860	39482	45668	41759	39214		
	Of which found in 2 months or less*	31731	40508	46890	42975	40583		

Table AI.4 Indicator 1 bis (sex): Nr. of cases of children gone missing 116000

		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Source:	Notes
BE	**Total**	**1897**	**1830**	**1873**	**1794**	**1727**	116 000 hotline database (Child Focus)	This total is higher than the numbers in 'all', because some files have more children. Also there are some children whose sex was not recorded: 29 for 2009 and 3 for 2010.
	Male	897	816	831	856			
	Female	1192	1174	1154	1138			
DK	**Total**			**1**	**2**		116 000 hotline database (THORA Centre)	
	Male			1	1			
	Female				1			
EE	**Total**				**6**	**3**	116 000 hotline database	
	Male				6	3		
	Female							
EL	**Total**	**108**	**245**	**130**	**116**	**109**	116 000 hotline database (The Smile of the Child)	
	Male	40	75	50	44	41		
	Female	68	170	80	72	68		
ES	**Total**				**192**	**167**	116000 hotline database (ANAR)	116000 started working in 2011 only.
	Male				58	71		
	Female				132	95		
FR (INAVEM)	**Total**	**608**	**553**	**514**	**445**	:	116 000 hotline database (Enfants Disparus – INAVEM)	The difference between the two datasets relies in the fact that CFPE data is the result of the INAVEM data + a recently inaugurated e-mail alert system managed by CFPE. Numbers are therefore higher in the CFPE as they also comprise all the cases signalled by e-mail. CFPE is therefore more complete.
	Male	340	246	277	258			
	Female	268	307	237	187			
FR (CFPE)	**Total**	**608**	**607**	**641**	**661**	**577**	116 000 hotline database (Enfants Disparus – CFPE)	
	Male	268	228	280	247	278		
	Female	340	379	361	414	399		
IT	**Total**		**90**	**83**	**79**	**102**	116000 hotline database	
	Male	NA	37	42	42	47		
	Female	NA	53	41	37	54		
NL	**Total**				**6**	**15**	116 000 hotline database	The number became active in 2011.
	Male				3	7		
	Female				3	4		
PL	**Total**	**1**	**1**	**13**	**35**	**31**	116000 hotline database (ITAKA Foundation)	
	Male			4	9	12		
	Female	1	1	9	26	19		
PT	**Total**	**76**	**88**	**41**	**39**	**53**	116000 hotline database (IAC)	
	Male	24	32	10	11	17		
	Female	52	56	31	28	36		
RO	**Total**	**347**	**508**	**537**	**350**	**165**	116 000 hotline database (Focus)	
	Male	153	175	198	118	48		
	Female	194	333	339	232	117		
SI	**Total**					**2**	116000 hotline database (Zavod 116)	Hotline became operational in 2012.
	Male					2		

		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Source:	Notes
	Female							
UK	**Total**	**246**	**200**	**164**	**188**	**255**	Missing Children Hermes Database	In 2011 and 2012 sex not recorded in a few cases.
	Male	98	67	69	68	103		
	Female	148	132	95	115	151		

Table AI.5 Indicator 2: Number of open cases

	2011	2012	Source	Notes
BG	59	51	Police database	Includes all open cases (incl. runaways) dating up to 20 years back.
CZ	20	213	Police database (PATROS)	
EE	20	35	Police database	
IE	9	16	Police database (Missing Persons Bureau)	No indication of time period.
EL	88	134	Police Database	The number 134 may include cases of children found, but not reported back to the Police.
FR	13316	13390	National police (File for Missing Persons)	No indication of time period.
IT	10232	11840	Police database (SDI)	Includes all open cases since 1974.
LV	9	16	Police database	
LT	73	71	Register of Wanted Persons, Missing Persons, Unrecognised bodies and Unknown Helpless Persons	
HU	167	0	Police database	
MT	7	16	Police database	
NL	10	15	National police missing children unit (KLPD - Dienst IPOL)	
AT	302	276*	Police database	2012 number refers to date 15.2.2013 as due to technical changes in 2012 no data for 31.12.2012 available.
PL	238	542	Police database	
RO	142	180	Police database	Includes all cases.
SI	4	5	Police database - Ministry of Interior Affairs	
SK	78	72	Police database (PATROS)	
FI	15	16	Schengen Information System (SIS art 97) and Interpol I24/7	Figures should include all children who are supposed to have been sent abroad, also migrant children.

	2011	2012	Source	Notes
UK	1750	1623	Police	Not including data from the Metropolitan police whose records are not automatically recorded into the MPB database. Includes numbers of children who were under 18 years when they went missing but may be older than 18 years on 31st December.

Table AI.6 Indicator 3: Nr. of cases of international abduction

		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Source	Notes
BE	Incoming cases - all countries.	51	56	43	39	29	Federal Government Agency of Justice	
	Incoming cases – EU.	:	47	35	31	:		
	Outgoing cases - all countries.	94	95	93	127	123		
	Outgoing cases – EU.	:	65	61	70	:		
BG	Incoming cases - all countries.	24	16	15	13	27	Ministry of Justice	
	Incoming cases - EU	18	13	11	11	21		
	Outgoing cases - all countries	9	19	15	8	8		
	Outgoing cases - EU	8	12	12	6	6		
CZ	Incoming cases - all countries	15	13	17	19	10	Statistics of Office for Int. Social-Legal protection of Children	
	Incoming cases - EU	:	:	13	13	7		
	Outgoing cases - all countries	23	28	27	24	27		
	Outgoing cases - EU	:	:	19	17	18		
DK	Incoming cases - all countries	17	16	14	16	14	Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration	No distinction regarding nationalities; however it is assessed that most cases (both to and from) are connected with Sweden, USA, Norway, Germany and Poland.
	Incoming cases - EU	:	:	:	:	:		
	Outgoing cases - all countries	18	18	27	29	27		
	Outgoing cases - EU	:	:	:	:	:		
DE	Incoming cases - all countries	325	310	287	332		Federal Office for Justice - Activity Reports 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011	In Germany cases are differentiated between applications for the return of the child (Rückführung) and the right of access to the child (Umgangsrecht).
	Incoming cases - EU	117	133	119	146			
	Outgoing cases - all countries	76	86	80	101			
	Outgoing cases - EU	208	177	168	186			
EE	Incoming cases - all countries	4	1	7	4	8	International child abduction database	
	Incoming cases - EU	2	1	5	4	8		
	Outgoing cases - all countries	8	8	10	7	17		
	Outgoing cases - EU	6	8	9	5	14		
IE	Incoming cases - all countries		61	64	53		Central Authority for Child Abduction	
	Incoming cases - EU							
	Outgoing cases - all countries		75	76	89			
	Outgoing cases - EU							
ES	Incoming cases - all countries	113	86	91	99	78	Ministry of Justice - Database of Deputy	

		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Source	Notes
	Incoming cases - EU	54	52	47	50	42	Director General of International Cooperation	
	Outgoing cases - all countries	95	97	123	136	125		
	Outgoing cases - EU	52	45	60	54	57		
FR	Incoming cases - all countries	85	89	104	114	124	Ministry of Justice - Direction for civil affairs, Bureau for international civil and commercial mutual assistance	
	Incoming cases - EU							
	Outgoing cases - all countries	141	168	176	135	160		
	Outgoing cases - EU							
IT	Incoming cases - all countries	53	62	48	44	57	Central Authority database	
	Incoming cases - EU	38	42	29	32	17		
	Outgoing cases - all countries	144	118	113	111	119		
	Outgoing cases - EU	92	71	74	72	68		
CY	Incoming cases - all countries	21	11	10	7	4	Ministry of Justice - International Legal Cooperation Department	Before 2009 data were not classified by country.
	Incoming cases - EU		9	9	6	4		
	Outgoing cases - all countries		10	14	8	20		
	Outgoing cases - EU		8	8	7	14		
LT	Incoming cases - all countries	4	5	1	4	9	Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service	
	Incoming cases - EU	4	5	1	4	9		
	Outgoing cases - all countries	17	5	16	22	29		
	Outgoing cases - EU	17	5	12	17	24		
LU	Incoming cases - all countries						Ombudscommittee for the Rights of the Child Annual Reports 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012	
	Incoming cases - EU				7	9		
	Outgoing cases - all countries			4	2	3		
	Outgoing cases - EU			13	8	10		
HU	Incoming cases - all countries	28	28	35	47	37	Ministry of Public Administration and Justice	
	Incoming cases - EU	20	18	23	27	31		
	Outgoing cases - all countries	69	81	92	99	117		
	Outgoing cases - EU	47	57	65	59	80		
MT	Incoming cases - all countries		3	3	3	2	Central Authority for the Hague Convention Abduction Database	
	Incoming cases - EU		3	2	2	2		

		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Source	Notes
	Outgoing cases - all countries	3	2	2	5	6		
	Outgoing cases - EU	2	2	1	3	6		
NL	Incoming cases - all countries	46	40	55	61		Ministry of Security and Justice - Statistical overview international child abduction 2011	
	Incoming cases - EU	25	25	27	34			
	Outgoing cases - all countries	86	101	95	93			
	Outgoing cases - EU	40	53	46	48			
AT	Incoming cases - all countries	21	19	26	26	32	Ministry of Justice - Electronical file processing (ELAK)	
	Incoming cases - EU	15	14	16	19	23		
	Outgoing cases - all countries	16	27	37	27	38		
	Outgoing cases - EU	10	16	17	15	19		
PL	Incoming cases - all countries	70	87	53	79	76	Ministry of Justice	
	Incoming cases - EU	61	76	49	68	68		
	Outgoing cases - all countries	68	71	56	64	77		
	Outgoing cases - EU	58	63	44	54	63		
RO	Incoming cases - all countries		3	2	3	3	Focus	
	Incoming cases - EU		3	2	3	3		
	Outgoing cases - all countries							
	Outgoing cases - EU							
SI	Incoming cases - all countries	3	0*		2	3	Ministry of Interior Affairs Database	From 2013 onwards the Central Authority for Convention is the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs.
	Incoming cases - EU	:	:	:	:	:		
	Outgoing cases - all countries	3	0*			2		
	Outgoing cases - EU	:	:	:	:	:		
SK	Incoming cases - all countries	52	32	56	41	:	Centre for International legal Protection of Children and Youth	
	Incoming cases - EU	44	27	40	32	:		
	Outgoing cases - all countries	107	61	89	58	:		
	Outgoing cases - EU	85	54	60	48	:		
FI	Incoming cases - all countries	8	6	6	7		Ministry of Justice	
	Incoming cases - EU	6	5	4	4			
	Outgoing cases - all countries	4	12	12	8			

		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Source	Notes
	Outgoing cases - EU	3	7	9	6			
SE	Incoming cases - all countries	28	30	39	45	29	Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction	NB. Cases not number of children.
	Incoming cases - EU							
	Outgoing cases - all countries	34	32	31	37	44		
	Outgoing cases - EU							
UK	Incoming cases - all countries	188	193	229	244		Official Solicitor and Public Trustee - CASPER (case management system from Norwell)	2012 data is unlikely to be available until the end of March 2013.
	Incoming cases - EU	128	131	160	177			
	Outgoing cases - all countries	181	214	150	200			
	Outgoing cases - EU	119	133	101	136			

Table AI.7 Indicator 4 (sex): Runaways

		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Source:	Notes
BG	Total	1223	1128	1219	1186	1231	Police database	All runaways.
	Male							
	Female							
FR	Total	47062	46595	47312	51843	49292	National police (File for Missing Persons)	
	Male	22830	22886	23297	25651	24201		
	Female	24232	23709	24015	26192	25091		
IT	Total	3783	2986	2874	4483	4646	Police database (SDI)	
	Male	2085	1593	1376	2523	2420		
	Female	1698	1593	1498	1960	2226		
CY	Total	:	62	73	48		Police - Analysis and Statistics Office	No other data besides the total numbers of cases are available.
	Male							
	Female							
LV	Total	397	343	249	144	138	Police - Report on juvenile crime, children victims, road traffic and prevention during 12 months of 2011, p 3 (in LV)	
	Male							
	Female							
LU	Total	164	276	369	212	293	Police database	runaways 0-18.
	Male	75	158	202	141	141		
	Female	89	118	167	71	152		
PL	Total	1525	1335	1294	1928	3532	Police database	0-17 years old.
	Male							
	Female							
SI	Total	107	71	81	115	124	Police database	
	Male							
	Female							
FI	Total	5810	7170	7870	9120	7560	112 Emergency Response Centre database	These figures are a sum of 1) Missing or runaway child 2) a person who has left a reform school without a permission. A reform school is an institutional-based residential facility for children with needs for special care.

Table AI.8 Indicator 4 (age): Runaways

		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Source:	Notes
FR	Total	47062	46595	47312	51843	49292	National police (File for Missing Persons)	Available figures only distinguish age brackets "0- 15" and "15+".
	0-14	13119	13189	14108	15702	14585		
	15-17	33943	33406	33204	36141	34707		
IT	Total	3783	2986	2874	4483	4646	Police database (SDI)	
	0-12	326	135	140	163	204		
	0-14	862	518	500	744	802		
LU	Total	164	276	369	212	293	Police database	Runaways 0-18.
	0-12	4	3	3	2	1		
	13-15	32	38	69	27	40		

Table AI.9 Indicator 4 (time elapsed when the child was found): Runaways

		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Source:	Notes
FR	**Total**	**47062**	**46595**	**47312**	**51843**	**49292**	National police (File for Missing Persons)	Categories are the following (categories changed in 2012): * less than 8 days * between 8 days and 1 month * between 1 month and 6 months * between 6 months and 12 months * more than a year
	Of which found in 8 hours or less	:	:	:	:	:		
	Of which found in 2 days or less*	:	:	:	:	18004		
	Of which found in 1 Week or less*	6446	6746	6531	7113	:		
	Of which found in 2 months or less*	7666	7826	7630	8315	35764		
LU	**Total**	**164**	**276**	**369**	**212**	**293**	Police database	
	Of which found in 8 hours or less	:	:	:	:	:		
	Of which found in 2 days or less*	69	120	150	102	128		
	Of which found in 1 Week or less*	92	172	223	144	172		
	Of which found in 2 months or less*	138	250	326	190	245		

Table AI.10 Indicator 4bis (sex): 116 000 Runaways

		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Source:	Notes
BE	Total	1053	997	892	919	:	Mahjoub, S. (2012). Steekkaart weglopers 2011. Brussels: Child Focus	The total refers to the number of reports that can involve more than one child; this is why the sum of male and female sometimes exceeds the total.
	Male	343	310	326	350	:		
	Female	708	687	713	751	:		
EE	Total				3	3	116 000 hotline database	116 000 Helpline works since 2011.
	Male				2	2		
	Female				1	1		
EL	Total	:	63	34	44	50	116 000 hotline database	
	Male							
	Female							
FR	Total	223	211	194	197	205	116 000 hotline database (CFPE Enfants Disparus)	
	Male	66	55	54	43	44		
	Female	157	156	140	154	161		
IT	Total	:	12	16	20	37	116 000 hotline database	The service was activated in 25th May 2009.
	Male	:	1	8	11	13		
	Female	:	11	8	9	24		
HU	Total			17	19	11	116 000 hotline database (Blue Line Foundation)	
	Male							
	Female							
AT	Total	233	211	198	163	122	Rat auf Draht statistics	One case of 2008 and one of 2012: sex not recorded.
	Male	95	63	69	66	61		
	Female	137	148	129	97	60		
PL	Total	1	1	44	114	124	116000 hotline database (ITAKA Foundation)	
	Male			4				
	Female	1	1	9				
PT	Total	46	46	25	19	16	116 000 hotline database (IAC)	
	Male	36	14	3	3	3		
	Female	10	32	22	16	13		
RO	Total	319	472	477	308	141	Focus reports	
	Male	140	160	176	104	41		
	Female	179	312	301	204	100		
UK	Total					535	Missing People Call Log	116000 hotline operational since May 2012. Calls regarding 'young runaways'. Not statistically reliable.

Table AI.11 Indicator 6 (sex): Runaways from care institutions

		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Source:	Notes
BG	Total	196	192	229	161	172	Police database	Police estimates that actual numbers are much higher.
	Male							
	Female							
CZ	Total	5674	5436	4891	4701	3996	Police database (PATROS)	
	Male	4142	3857	3458	3266	2815		
	Female	1532	1579	1433	1435	1181		
DK	Total	845	929	791	743	863	Police	Note that the figures are not only runaways, but all children gone missing from institutions (including e.g. abductions).
	Male							
	Female							
DE	Total	1424	1331	1275	1406		Statistic on the child and youth welfare services	This statistic is only making visible the number of children who ran away from a care institution AND received afterwards preliminary care by the youth welfare. These are no absolute numbers.
	Male	729	688	604	706			
	Female	695	643	671	700			
FR	Total	29205	28860	28824	32123	30794	National police (File for Missing Persons)	
	Male	15208	15314	15364	17184	16147		
	Female	13997	13546	13460	14939	14647		
IT	Total	1935	1491	1353	2314	2362	Police database (SDI)	NB these are runaways from care institutions but not necessarily reported by care institutions.
	Male	1389	1067	807	1627	1490		
	Female	546	424	546	687	872		
HU	Total			9752	11898	:	Police database	
	Male			4254	5300	:		
	Female			5498	6598	:		
MT	Total					109	Police database	
	Male					52		
	Female					57		
NL	Total	15	14	10	3	7	National police - Missing children unit	It is only counted if they were registered as: found back and returned to the institution. Figures of just one region and the disappearances of 2 local institutions are included. It is known that there are many more runaways from institutions.
	Male							
	Female							
SI	Total	305	372	422	340	469	Police database	
	Male							
	Female							
FI	Total	2280	3000	3550	4460	3080	112 Emergency Response Centre database	
	Male							
	Female							
UK	Total	940	890	800	920	1490	Department for Education - SSDA903 return	
	Male							

Table AI.12 Indicator 7: Number of missing unaccompanied migrant children

	2011	2012	Source	Notes
BE	67	:	Federal Agency for shelter for asylum seekers (Fedasil)	
CZ		9	Police	
DK	35	111	Danish Immigration Service	The Danish Immigration Service informs that a significant proportion of the missing unaccompanied migrant children return to the centres by themselves.
DE	2126		Federal Ministry of Migration and Refugee	These numbers just show the number of applications but do not reflect the number of unaccompanied migrant children coming to Germany.
EE		2	Police and Border Guard Board's statistics of asylum seekers	
ES		1251	ADEXTTRA	On 08.02.2013.
IT	1791	1754	Ministry of Labour and Social policy - Foreign Minors Office	
CY		1	Social Welfare Services	
LU	7		Ministry of Justice (Public Prosecutor's department)	
SLO	48	39	Ministry of the Interior	
SK	127	136	Internal statistics of the institutions for unaccompanied migrant minors	
FI	8	7	Ministry of the Interior - Finnish Immigrant Service	
SE	172	:	Migration board	Part of a dataset also including children who are not unaccompanied, also broken down by residence status and citizenship. To be recorded, the person had to be under 18 at the time they went missing.

Table AI.13 Indicator 8: Conviction abduction

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Source	Notes
BE	11	12	15			Service for Criminal Policy - Convictions database	These numbers are not reliable according to the source. The law has been changed in 2000, combining all these offences into article 428 of the penal code. Nonetheless, the Service for Criminal Policy kept registering using the old categories.
CZ	1	6	1			Ministry of Justice	Penal Code article in force since 2010.
DK	15	10	13	30	23	Statistics from Criminal Act	Only cases when the offender has been found guilty.
DE	69	71	75	69		Federal Statistical Office: Administration of justice - Criminal prosecution - Statistical Report	
EE	3	1	2	1	1	Punishment register. Registered offences in Estonia 2003-2012; Homepage of the Ministry of Justice	
IE	3	2	3			Central Statistics Office - Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics	
FR	1173	1167	1201			Ministry of Justice (Civil and commercial international cooperation – Directorate for civil affairs)	Both offence + crime convictions.
IT	68	67	56			National Statistical Institute (ISTAT)	
CY			1		1	Analysis and Statistics Office of the Cyprus Police	
LT	1	2	8	12	5	Police - Minors and Territorial Inspectors Section	The number of people suspected of committing the crime against child.
AT	272	19	9	10		Ministry of Interior - Security report	Numbers incomplete.
PL	30	30	19	39	NA	Ministry of Justice	Abduction convictions.
SI	264	293	302	416	278*	Police	The data provided is the data on the number of criminal offences that have been taken up by the police and NOT the number of convictions.

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Source	Notes
FI	4	5	6	2		Statistics Finland. Statistical Yearbooks of Finland 2008-2011: Convictions in the Circuit Courts	
SE	16	11	15	12		Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention RAR.	
UK	322	269	247	269	284	Crown Prosecution Service	The figures are provisional and subject to change as more information is being recorded by the CPS.

Annex II - Interviewed persons

Name	Title and organisation
AUSTRIA	
	Project Officer, Competence Centre for missing persons (Projekt KAP – Kompetenzzentrum für Abgängige Personen), Federal Ministry of the Interior, Criminal Intelligence Service
	Deputy director of Verein Menschen.Leben
	Project coordinator & expert for UMA (unaccompanied minor asylum seekers), Asylkoordination Österreich
	Leading prosecutor and head of Department I 10 (International Family Law), Federal Ministry of Justice
	Head of Yo!vita, organisation caring for UMA in federal state of Tyrol
	Officer, Department for youth welfare, Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth
	Ombudsperson for children and youth, Vienna Children's and Youth Ombuds-Office (Wiener Kinder- und Jugendanwaltschaft)
	Director of "Rat auf Draht" (national hotline for children and young people; from Oct 1: 116-hotline operator)
	Head of Department 2, International Police Cooperation; Federal Ministry of the Interior, Criminal Intelligence Service
BELGIUM	
	Attaché, Federal Government Agency for Foreign Affairs
	Attaché, Service for Criminal Policy
	Staff member expertise centre, Child Focus
	Researcher, National Institute of Criminalistics and Criminology
	Commissioner, Cell for Missing People of the Federal Police
	Attaché, Flemish Agency for Youth well-being (department of prevention and referral policy)
	Attaché, Federal Government Agency of Justice (incl. contact service for International Parental Abductions, which is the central authority regarding international abductions)
	Coordinator, Observation and Research Centre for Unaccompanied migrant minors
	Manager, Federal Agency for shelter for asylum seekers (Fedasil)
BULGARIA	
	National Police Officer, Criminal Department, Sector "Children and juvenile crime"
	Officer, State Agency for Child Protection
	Ministry of Justice - Sector for International Legal Protection of Minors and International Adoptions
	Nadia Centre, 116 000 hotline operator
	Representative Izcheznali.net foundation
	National Police officer, Section "Department Criminal Police-Sector "Searching for persons and objects"
	Chairman, Council of Ministers Commission for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings
	Representative lipsva.com
CYPRUS	
	Administrative Officer, Ministry of Justice and Public Order of the Republic of Cyprus
	Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, consular department
	Officer, Social Welfare Services, Department of Child
	Administrative Officer, Cyprus Police
	Administrative officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
CZECH REPUBLIC	
	Representative Our Child Foundations, Board member of Missing Children Europe
	Officer, Ministry of Interior
	Officer, Ministry of Social Affairs
	Director, Office for International Legal protection of Children
	Officer, Facility for Children of Foreign Nations under Ministry of Education
	Officer, Safety Line Association
DENMARK	
	Legal Advisor, Office of Children, Ministry for Social Affairs
	Head of Secretariat, Thora Centre
	Head Legal Department, The National Council of Children
	Dep. Chief Inspector, National Danish Police

Name	Title and organisation
	Head of Section, Save the Children Denmark
	Head of Secretariat, Children's welfare
	Head of Secretariat & Henrik Askholdt, Head of Recipient Centre for UAMs, Danish Red Cross
ESTONIA	
	Project manager; LLC Medical Counseling Centre for Families, NGO Children Help
	Adviser, Estonian Ministry of Justice, International Judicial Co-operation Division
	Analyst, Police and Border Guard Board, Citizenship and Migration Department
	Senior officer, Police & Border Guard Board, South prefecture, Department of Civil Security
	Chief specialist, Ministry of Social Affairs, Social Welfare Department
	Chief specialist; Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs, Department of Children and Families
	Senior Officer, Police & Border Guard Board, South prefecture, Criminal Information Department; coordinator of Department of Search
	Advisor; Estonian Ministry of Justice, Criminal Statistics and Analysis Division
	Chief specialist, Police & Border Guard Board, International Protection Office
FINLAND	
	Officer, The Virtual Police of Helsinki
	Ministerial Adviser, Department for Social and Health Service, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
	Detective Superintendent, National Bureau of Investigation (NBI)
	The Children´s Ombudsman, The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
	Legislative Counselor, The Law Drafting Department, Ministry of Justice
	Deputy Ombudsman, The Parliamentary Ombudsman Office
	Senior Adviser, Reception Unit, Finnish Immigrant Service, Ministry of the Interior
	Inspector General of the Police, Ministry of the Interior
FRANCE	
	Coordinator of INAVEM (co-manager of the 116000 hotline; responsible for the management of the phone platform)
	President of APEV (Association to Support Parents of Victim Children)
	Coordinator and Case manager, CFPE Enfants disparus
	Commissaire Divisionnaire, Chef de l'Office Central pour la Répression des Violence aux Personnes (OCRVP) / Chief superintendent, Head of the Central Office for the Repression of Violence to People (judiciary police)
	Chief of Police, Assistant Director of the Bridage of Protection of Minors of Paris
GERMANY	
	Representative, Federal Association for unaccompanied minor refugees/Bundesfachverband Unbegleitete minderjährige Flüchtlinge
	Officer, Initiative Vermisste Kinder e.V.) (additional information was promised but not yet delivered)
	Officer, Notschlafstelle Essen, Raum 58
	Officer, Bundeskriminalamt - Federal Criminal Police Office (documents were provided)
	Officer, BAGLJAE - Federal working group of youth welfare
	Officer, Criminal Investigation Department, LKA NRW
	Lawyer specialised on children rights
	Officer, Ministry for Family Affairs
	Officer, Alliance for Streetkids/Bündnis für Straßenkinder e.V.
	Officer, Deutsche Kinderhilfe e.V./German Child Aid)
	Officer, Ministry of the Interior
	Officer, International Social Service (German Section Internationaler Sozial Dienst (ISD))
	Representative Weisser Ring e.V.
GREECE	
	Social Worker, 116 000 hotline, The Smile of the Child
	Head of Missing People Division, Hellenic Police
	Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
HUNGARY	
	Head of department, Ministry of Human Resources
	Deputy director, National Family and Social Policy Institute
	Officer, Crime Department, National Police (ORFK)
	Officer, European Cooperation Department, Ministry of Interior
	Officer, TEGYESZ (Child Protection Methodology Center)
	Officer, Ombudsman's Office
	Officer, Blue Line Foundation 116 000
IRELAND	

Name	Title and organisation
	Officer, Missing Persons Helpline
	Officer, Missing Irish People (www.missing.ie)
	Police officer - Missing Persons Bureau
	Officer, ISPCC
	Representative, Irish Immigrant Support Service
ITALY	
	Officer, Telefono Azzurro Onlus (managing 116 000 hotline)
	Head Criminal Analysis Service, Central Directorate Criminal Police, Ministry of Interiors
	Head, Inter-police forces Data processing centre, Ministry of Interiors
	Hear Minors Section, Central Operational Service Central Anti-crime Directorate Public Security Dept. Ministry of Interiors
	Chair task force contended minors, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DG Italians Abroad
	Special Commissioner of the Government for Missing Persons
	Officer, Ministry of Justice - Dept. Juvenile Justice
LATVIA	
	Head of Dept. on Missing persons, State Police
	Officer, State Inspectorate on Children's Rights
	Officer, Ministry of Welfare
LITHUANIA	
	Director of Missing Persons' Families Support Centre
	Head of Third Unit of Crime Investigation 1st Department of the National Police Department under the Ministry of Interior (only written contributions available)
	Head of Information Analysis and Statistics Unit of the Information and Communication Department under the Ministry of Interior (only written contributions available)
LUXEMBOURG	
	Federal Police officer (Police Grand-Ducale)
	Deputy Public Prosecutor (Substitut du Procureur d'Etat)
	President of the Ombudscommittee for the Rights of the Child
MALTA	
	Director, The People for Change Foundation
	Representative Children, Young Persons & Support Service Manager, Aġenzija Appoġġ
	Task Manager, Office of the Commissioner for Children
	Director (Social Welfare Standards)
	Research Office, Foundation for Social Welfare Services
	Intake and Protection Services Manager, Aġenzija Appoġġ
	Director (Policy Development), Ministry for Home Affairs
	Superintendent (Vice Head of the Vice Squad), Vice Squad, Police Forces of Malta
	Officer, National Statistics Office
NETHERLANDS	
	Coordinator Missing persons hotline, Red Cross
	Head of the department on missing persons, KLPD, police
	Vice head of the department consular issues, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
	Director and staff member, Centrum Internationale Kinderontvoering/int child abduction
	Board members, Organisation for the ones who stay behind after a disappearance: 'Vereniging Achterblijvers van vermiste personen'
	Officer, the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA)
	Coordinator, Dutch Children's hotline (Phone)
	Officer, Policy department related to the Central authority
POLAND	
	Officer, Research and Supervision Department, Ministry of Interior
	Officer, Exploration and Identification Department, Police Headquarters
	Head of Exploration and Identification Department, Police Headquarters
	Director of the Exploration and Identification Team, ITAKA Foundation
PORTUGAL	
	Head of Department on Missing Persons Investigations from the Criminal Investigation Police (Polícia Judiciária, PJ)
	Major, Head of Department on Special Programs form National Republican Guard Operational Command (GNR)

Name	Title and organisation
	Head of Operational Department from 1st Division Lisbon Public Security Policy (PSP)
	Social worker in one NGO (Chão de Meninos) working with children at risk / in danger (Building Together Network)
	Responsible for 116 000 line in Portugal of the Institute for Children Support (IAC)
ROMANIA	
	Specialised Officer, Pursuit Service, Criminal Investigation Directorate, Ministry of Administration and Interior
	Counsellor, General Direction fir Child Protection, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection
	Chief at Pursuit Service, Criminal Investigation Directorate, General Inspectorate of Romanian Police, Ministry of Administration and Interior
	Under-commissary, the Institute for Research and Prevention of Criminality, General Inspectorate of Romanian Police
	Program Director, Romanian Centre for Missing and Sexually Abused Children - Focus
	Case manager, Service for assistance in cases of abuse, neglect, trafficking and exploitation of children, General Direction for Social Assistance and Protection of Children Rights District 6
SLOVAKIA	
	Officer, Centre for International Legal Protection of Children and Youth
	Officer, Committee for Children and Youth, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
	Officer, Institute for Labour and Family Research
	Officer, Police Presidium
	Officer, Linka detskej istoty, Unicef
	Officer, Department of Social and Legal Protection of Children, Central Bureau of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
SLOVENIA	
	Director, Zavod 116
	Higher Counsellor / višja svetovalka; Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs
	Higher Criminal Officer Specialist/ Criminal Police Department/ Department of Juvenile Crime - General Police Directorate
	Officer, Directorate for Information Society, Ministry of education, science, culture and sport
	Officer, Programme Under-age Migrants and Unaccompanied Minors, Slovene Philanthropy
	Criminal officer, Criminal Police Department/ Department of juvenile crime - General Police Directorate
	Counsellor - Higher Advisor, Strokovna delavka - Višja svetovalka Centre for Social Work Siska
SPAIN	
	Commissioner Central Unit for Strategic Planning and Coordination, National Police
	Officer, Ministry of Health, social affairs and equality
	Officer, Home Affairs Ministry - Jefe de Área de Estadística, Gabinete de Coordinación y Estudios, Secretaría de Estado de Seguridad
	Officer, Red Cross
	Officer, Ministry of work and immigration
	Representative, ANAR Foundation
	Representative, Save the Children
	Officer, Ministry of Justice
	Social Worker, Care children Foundation
SWEDEN	
	Vice president of SBN - Missing Children Network Sweden
	Officers, Migration Board and Central Police Authority)
	Lawyer, ECPAT Sweden
	Deputy Director, Central Authority on the Civil aspects of International Child Abduction Officer, Department for Consular Affairs and Civil Law, Ministry for Foreign Affairs
UNITED KINGDOM	
	Manager, UK Missing Persons Bureau
	Research Manager, Missing People
	Strategic Analyst, UK Missing Persons Bureau

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