



**Missing  
Children  
Europe**



## **Runaways and Parental abduction make up over 85% of missing children cases, Missing Children Europe data reveals**

Brussels, 2 June 2014 - New data provided by Missing Children Europe at the “When every minute counts” conference for International Missing Children’s day (25 May) held today in Athens shows that runaways make up 50% of missing children cases recorded by 116 000 missing children hotlines across Europe followed by parental abductions with 36% and unaccompanied migrant minors with 2%. Criminal abductions by third parties that are often given more publicity by media make up only 2% of missing children cases.


Data was also collected from 116 000 missing children hotlines in Europe that responded to 250.012 calls in 2013 and dealt with over 5000 cases of missing children. 116 000 hotlines are now operational in 27 out of 28 EU member states as well as Serbia and Albania. Lack of financial resources, lack of support from the government and lack of awareness of the service were reported as the key challenges faced by 116 000 hotlines in 2013. This data is also supported by the fact that 59% of hotline workers are volunteers and that 36% of survey respondents from countries where a 116 000 missing children hotline was available did not know which number they would call if a child went missing<sup>1</sup>.


In an effort to raise awareness of the 3 most overlooked groups of missing children, Missing Children Europe will be unveiling a photo exhibition aptly called “Missing Children: Out of Focus” as part of the event in Greece today. The exhibition will feature artistic images of 3 real stories of missing children cases representing runaways, parental abductions and unaccompanied migrant minors. The conference will also raise awareness on the tools available to support missing children and their families, with a specific focus on cooperation between national stakeholders involved in Child alert systems across Europe.

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Speaking about the conference, Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, President of Missing Children Europe and UN Special Rapporteur on Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography said, "Luckily, many missing children are found within the first 3 days after the disappearance. But this doesn't mean that the problem is solved. Once returned to the place from which they have run away, they may again be confronted with the same situation of conflict, abuse or neglect and run away again. The more often they run, the higher the risks they take to survive. In other cases however, the children are never found, or found too late. US statistics tell us that, when children are murdered following an abduction, they are murdered within the first hours after the disappearance. In those rare cases, every minute, every second counts".

About a dozen European countries have set up national Child alert systems to be able to rapidly alert the general public in extreme cases of missing children. However cross border cooperation can be very limited. The "When every minute counts" conference aims at sharing existing best practice on setting up Child alert systems and promoting better cooperation between cross border cases of missing children.

1. [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_367\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_367_en.pdf) (Published in 2011)

For more information on missing children, check out [www.missingchildreneurope.eu](http://www.missingchildreneurope.eu) or read the annual report [here](#).

### "When every minute counts"

The "When every minute counts" conference is being held at the Technopolis in Athens, Greece on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June in support of International Missing Children's day (25<sup>th</sup> May). It has been organised by Missing Children Europe, the European federation for missing and exploited children; The Smile of the Child, the Greek NGO working with the 116 000 missing children hotlines and with the support of the Greek Presidency of the Council of the EU.

The conference will be followed by a photo exhibition "Missing Children: Out of Focus" which will present a series of artistic images representing 3 real cases of missing children representing runaways, parental abduction and unaccompanied migrant minors. Natalie Hill ([www.nataliehillphotography.com](http://www.nataliehillphotography.com)) was the talented photographer and the creator of the concept that features blurry or out of focus shots of children in different situations leading to and followed by their disappearance to raise awareness of why children go missing and what happens when they do.



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## Missing Children Europe

Missing Children Europe is the European federation for missing and sexually exploited children, representing 30 organisations in 25 countries. Our mission is to protect children from any kind of violence, abuse or neglect that is caused by or results from them going missing.

### For further questions please contact:

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