

Missing Children Europe Launches Ambitious Strategy to Tackle Child Disappearances in Europe

Missing Children Europe launched its new strategy highlighting its priorities for 2014-2017 yesterday morning. As a European Federation with 27 national members, it is poised to tackle the biggest challenges facing the thousands of children who disappear in Europe every year.

According to recent estimates in Europe, one child is reported missing every two minutes. Up to 90% of these cases are runaways, parental abductions and unaccompanied migrant minors. "We cannot accept that children need to leave their homes to be safe, or that too little is done when a child becomes the victim of a parental conflict. Nor can we accept that children arrive in Europe and then just vanish. These three categories of missing children will be the main thematic priorities of our new strategy," said Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, incoming president of MCE.

MCE's new strategy will contribute to the development of effective and embedded child protection systems to prevent children from going missing, support missing children and their families, and protect children from any risk of violence, abuse or neglect that may lead to or result from going missing.

This will be done primarily with an emphasis on high quality services provided by our member organizations working with missing children and their families. The next priority is promoting and facilitating research about why children go missing, what happens when they do, and how their needs are best addressed. Efforts will also increasingly focus on raising awareness on the issues and prevention methods of child disappearances to all parties involved with child protection. Lastly MCE will continue to influence European policies and laws to protect and serve the best interest of the child. Close cooperation and coordination between relevant international partners, both governmental and non-governmental, including ICMEC, is an essential ingredient of the strategy.

The presentation of the strategy also set the stage for the official presidential handover from outgoing president Sir Francis Jacobs to new president Mrs. de Boer-Buquicchio who has just ended her term as the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe after 10 years.

Sir Francis has played a pivotal role in protecting and empowering children in his 6 years as president. Under his guidance both the 116000 hotline and the European Financial Coalition against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children online (EFC), chaired by Europol and coordinated by MCE were launched. The 116000 European hotline for missing children was the first social service number in the history of Europe to be reserved for all EU member states. The hotline is currently active in 25 EU member states. Meanwhile, the EFC held its first conference yesterday between key actors from Law Enforcement, private sector and civil society. The theme "Preventing Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Online" featured talks between Microsoft, Visa Europe, Europol and Mastercard among others.

"I am immensely grateful to Sir Francis for all his accomplishments during his time with MCE, especially considering the solid foundation he is leaving behind for me and am glad that he will continue to work with us through the Patron's Council that was also established due to his efforts", said Mrs. de Boer-Buquicchio.



About Missing Children Europe

Missing Children Europe is the European Federation for Missing and Sexually Exploited Children, which represents 27 non-governmental organisations from 21 EU Member States and Switzerland. These grassroots organisations are active at the national and local levels to prevent and support victims in cases of the disappearance and sexual exploitation of children. They also offer support to families of missing children.



Missing Children Europe is supported by the Daphne Programme of the European Union.

About Maud de Boer-Buquicchio

Maud de Boer-Buquicchio studied French language and literature and later law at Leiden University. She specialized in international law, obtaining her degree in 1969 with a thesis on the equality of treatment between women and men under European Community law.

Mrs. De Boer-Buquicchio joined the Council of Europe in 1969. She worked in a variety of positions starting as legal advisor to the European Commission of Human Rights, member of the private office of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and as Deputy Registrar to the European Court of Human Rights.

In 2002 she was elected as the first woman to the post of Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, a post which she filled for 10 years. Women and children's rights were amongst her top priorities.

She obtained a renewed commitment to children's rights by all Council of Europe States, and was the motor behind 3 Council of Europe flagship conventions: The convention against trafficking in human beings, the convention against sexual exploitation and abuse of children and the convention on the elimination of violence against women and domestic violence. She has championed campaigns against all forms of violence against children including corporal punishment. She is also the inspiration behind the current Council of Europe work on child-friendly justice. She is currently a member of the FRA Executive Board and was elected President of Missing Children Europe, a position she took over from Sir Francis Jacobs on 15 October 2013.

She is fluent in Dutch, English, French, Italian and German.

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