



**Missing
Children
Europe**



Lost in Migration 2021 Conference Recommendations

On 9-10 December 2021, over 70 participants gathered for the fifth edition of the Lost in Migration Conference: 'A Seat at the Table - Young Newcomers Driving Discussions on Going Missing in Migration'. For the first time, the conference was shaped and led by young refugees and migrants with the support of Missing Children Europe, the Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society and local partners.

In the course of November, in-person 'local hubs' across European cities connected young people and key stakeholders to discuss the challenges faced by children in migration (at risk of) going missing and potential solutions. The final online conference brought together high-level European and national policy makers, civil society organisations and young newcomers. They discussed the challenges raised by young people in the local hubs (see also the [local hubs outcomes report](#)) and recommendations for the future. The final conference report is available [here](#). The recommendations outlined below are based on the discussions.

EU institutions and Member States, including local authorities, should:

1. Ensure that children in migration are provided with opportunities to share their experiences and that these are translated into policy and legislative responses, including through the upcoming child participation platform.
2. Ensure equal and non-discriminative access to services, including community-based reception, in line with the provisions of Reception Conditions Directive and the EU Charter on Fundamental Rights.
3. Stop unlawfully preventing displaced individuals from entering the European Union and forcibly returning them to neighbouring or third countries, in violation of the right to asylum and the principle of non-refoulement.
4. Ensure that children in migration are not subject to abuse and violence by law enforcement and border authorities.
5. Ensure access to child-friendly information in line with language needs of children in migration, including by developing digital tools and training professionals.
6. Ensure smooth transition to adulthood for children in migration, with a particular focus on access to services (i.e., care leavers services) and financial support, irrespective of residence status.
7. Resolve insecure residence status for children in migration.
8. Ensure that EU and national funds are not used to violate human rights.





9. Ensure that children are never placed in detention.
10. Provide all necessary means to protect children in migration from trafficking, sexual and labour exploitation and other criminal activities.
11. Collect data on children in migration going missing.
12. Develop cross-border case management services and information sharing between national child protection systems.

EU institutions should:

13. Update the EU legal framework to ensure children in migration have access to a legal guardian and free legal assistance.
14. Develop a transparent operational framework for transnational procedures at EU level, including family reunion and relocation.
15. Appoint an EU relocation coordinator to facilitate relocations across the EU.

Contact:

Louise Bonneau, Senior Policy and Advocacy Officer, Missing Children Europe
Email: louise.bonneau@missingchildreneurope.eu

Syed Hasnain, Project Officer Children in Migration, Missing Children Europe
Email: syed.hasnain@missingchildreneurope.eu





BACKGROUND

About children in migration (at risk of) going missing

Across the continent, thousands of children in migration go missing every year. Migrant children are considered missing when they are registered with state authorities and go missing from the reception/accommodation centres provided for them. Data provided by [Lost in Europe](#) estimates that at least 18,292 refugee children have disappeared from asylum seekers' centres in Europe between 2018 and 2020. Unfortunately, the actual figure is probably much higher. Too often, the disappearance of children in migration is overlooked because seen as a voluntary act of the child, with little or no assessment of the reasons why the child decided/was pushed to leave, the possibility that the child was abducted and the risks to which the individual child is exposed.

About Lost in Migration conference 2021

Lost in Migration (LIM) is an annual conference where young newcomers, professionals and European policy makers meet to discuss migration-related issues that affect children and young people and that lead them to go missing. In 2021, for the first time, the Lost in Migration conference was shaped and led by young refugees and migrants with the support of Missing Children Europe, the Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society and local partners. In the course of November in-person 'local hubs' across European cities connected young people and key stakeholders to discuss the challenges faced by children in migration (at risk of) going missing and potential solutions. Drawing upon the [outcomes of these local hubs](#), the final online conference brought together high-level European and national policy makers and young newcomers to discuss policy responses to the challenges they face. The aim was to inform the future of the EU's migration policy. In total, the fifth edition of the Lost in Migration conference brought together 179 participated in the Lost in Migration conference (109 in local hubs and about 70 in the final event).

About Missing Children Europe

Missing Children Europe is the European federation for missing and sexually exploited children, representing 31 organisations from 27 European countries. We provide the link between research, policies and organisations on the ground to protect children from any kind of violence, abuse or neglect that is caused by or results from them going missing.

About the Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society

The Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society is a non-governmental organisation located in Malta, focusing on social research, community consultation, and project work. The Foundation was established on 25 June 2014 by HE Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, during her term as the 9th President of Malta.

