



**Missing
Children
Europe**



Lost in Migration, 2021 edition

A Seat at the Table – Young Newcomers Driving Discussions on Going Missing in Migration

DRAFT AGENDA

Date: 9-10 December 2021

Location: online – Zoom

> Background

Earlier this year, the European Commission released its first comprehensive EU [Strategy on the Rights of the Child](#) demonstrating that all children without discrimination are high on the internal and external political agenda of the Commission. It also reiterated its commitment to support the implementation of the 2017 [Communication on the protection of children in migration](#).

Yet 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. Not only is the actual figure probably much higher, but recent developments are putting children increasingly at risk. Notably, human rights organisations have [raised concerns](#) about the impact of reform the EU's asylum and migration system, as presented by the European Commission in 2021 in the Pact on Migration, on children.

To ensure the EU puts the best interests of the children and young people that come to Europe at the centre, Missing Children Europe and the Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society have, since 2017, organized the Lost in Migration conference. Last year, Lost in Migration brought together 16 young newcomers from Afghanistan, Iraq, Gambia, Bangladesh, and Venezuela in an online conference, and empowered them to become leaders in the development of the next edition of Lost in Migration. Through a joint reflection on meaningful youth participation in their host societies and personal experiences, young people brainstormed over what could be the most effective ways to engage with other young newcomers and with European decision makers.

> Missing in migration: what do we know about why children go missing

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.

In reality, there are two main ways children in migration might go missing:

1



With financial support from the "Rights, Equality and Citizenship 2014-2020" Programme of the European Union

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- Children in migration might disengage themselves from services provided for them. Reasons for this includes among others inadequate and ill-adapted reception, slow and complex procedures for protection, fear of deportation/return, limited knowledge about their rights and available services, or negative experience with authorities.
- **Some children in migration are victims of (re)trafficking.** Europol has warned that children in migration and unaccompanied minors are at a higher risk of trafficking and exploitation, and that they are likely to be increasingly targeted by traffickers.¹ Numerous factors lead to the trafficking of children in migration, including inadequate and ill-adapted reception, lack of protection from their family, children's lack of trust in authorities, recruitment from criminal networks and trafficking.

› A seat at the table: towards youth-led events connecting local and European levels

During the 2020 conference, young people (50% young men and 50% young women) proposed several ideas for the future of the Lost in Migration initiative (see below), including 'local hubs'. Led by the young people, local hubs are being held prior to the final conference to connect key stakeholders (local, regional and national authorities, researchers as well as local organisations and service providers) to discuss the challenges faced by children in migration, drivers of them going missing, and potential solutions. The local hubs will take place across European cities (e.g. Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, Malta, etc).

Young newcomers discussed several ideas for the 2021 edition of Lost in Migration, to engage their peers and the decision makers in making tangible progress on the protection of children in migration:

- ✓ Create refugee to role models to empower and motivate young people and make them understand the range of possibilities accessible to them.
- ✓ Language exchange with conference participants: from peers to policy makers.
- ✓ Online networking platform to ensure an impactful participation at the next Lost in Migration conference and beyond.
- ✓ Joint communication campaign to positively change the narrative on children in migration.
- ✓ Local hubs for a real hybrid conference

¹ Europol (2018), *Criminal networks involved in the trafficking and exploitation of underage victims in the EU*, Report available at <https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-documents/criminal-networks-involved-in-trafficking-and-exploitation-of-underage-victims-in-eu>





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> **Objective of the final conference**

Building on the outcomes of the 2020 edition, the aim of the 2021 conference is to ensure the experiences of children and young people in migration (with experiences of going missing) are translated to policy recommendations that will contribute to broader European policy discussions. In this way, the conference will empower and support young people to be protagonists and co-designers of a fair protection system that fulfils their rights.

> **Participants**

The conference will bring together young newcomers, high-level decision makers, NGOs working at an International, European and local level, professionals working with national and European Institutions and frontline childcare givers. Participants have the opportunity to listen to the voice of children and young people, exchange expertise and elaborate strategies and recommendations on migration-related issues that affect children and young people and that lead them to go missing.

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> Preliminary conference programme*

Day 1: Thursday 9 December

<u>Time</u>	<u>Session</u>
10.00 – 10.35	Welcome Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca <i>Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society</i> Aagje leven, <i>Secretary General, Missing Children Europe</i>
10.35 – 10.55	Keynote: Why are children in migration going missing? Maud de Boer-Buquicchio <i>President of Missing Children Europe</i>
10.55 – 11.10	Break
11.10 – 12.30	Political panel: Are the voices of children in migration heard? <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 2 young people- Representative of the European Commission- Member of the European Parliament- Local authority- Civil society representative <p><i>This session is dedicated to asking whether the voices of children in migration are heard. Speakers will be invited to reflect on the current state of play.</i></p>
12.30 – 13.30	Lunch
13.30 – 14.00	How many children are going missing? Geesje van Haren, Lost in Europe Adriana Homolova, journalist, Lost in Europe <i>In this session, the scale of children in migration going missing is presented.</i>
14.00 – 15.45	Local hub outcomes: What are the challenges faced by young newcomers? <i>This session is dedicated to present the outcomes of the local hubs. It will be led by the young people themselves.</i>





15.45- 16.00	Break
16.00- 16.45	Outcomes of local hubs and conclusions of the day <i>Aagje Ieven and Syed Hasnain</i> <i>Q&A session to discuss the outcomes of day 1.</i>
16.45 – 17.00	Ending of day one <i>Musical performance</i>

Day 2: Friday 10 December

10.00 – 10.20	Welcome to day 2 Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society	
10.20- 10.30	Introduction to the workshops <i>Drawing upon the local hub outcomes, participants are invited in the thematic workshops to share their expertise. These workshops are divided in two rounds: identifying gaps and discussing solutions.</i>	
10.30 – 11.20	Part 1: Gaps	
	Workshop 1: Access to information	Workshop 2: Relocation and family reunification
	Workshop 3: Reception conditions	Workshop 4: Asylum and the transition to adulthood
11.20- 11.35	Break	
11.30- 12.30	Part 2: Solutions	
	Workshop 1: Access to information	Workshop 2: Relocation and family reunification
	Workshop 3: Reception conditions	Workshop 4: Asylum and the transition to adulthood
12.30 – 13.30	Lunch	





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13.30 – 14.00	Reporting back from workshops
14.00 – 15.00	Looking to the future: Responses from the politicians <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Representative of the European Commission- Representative of the French presidency- EU Anti-trafficking Coordinator (tbc)- Representative of the European Parliament <p><i>In this session, the speakers will be invited to respond to the challenges and policy recommendations raised by young people.</i></p>
15.00 – 15.20	Conclusions <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Missing Children Europe- Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society- Young person
15.20- 15.30	Ending of Conference Musical performance

*All times are in Central European Time

