AMBER Alert Europe
The European Child Rescue Alert & Police Network on Missing Children

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**To save the lives of endangered missing children in Europe, AMBER Alert Europe suggests the following 5 key points to the European Commission and the European Parliament:**

1. **A bigger, stronger AMBER Alert network**
2. **More flexibility in issuing AMBER Alerts**
3. **Better cross-border information sharing**
4. **Better cross-border law enforcement cooperation**
5. **Improving the identification and protection of children at borders**

AMBER Alert Europe is an international not for profit organisation with 22 members (law enforcement, ministries & NGO's) in 16 countries. Its Police Network consists of 35 experts representing law enforcement from 12 EU countries. The goals of AMBER Alert Europe are backed by 465 Members of the European Parliament: most successful Written Declaration since 2011.

The ultimate goal of AMBER Alert Europe is to save the lives of endangered missing children in Europe.

Dedicated to the protection of endangered missing children, AMBER Alert Europe connects citizens with law enforcement when the police believe the public can help save the child's life. It provides for training and cross-border coordination to law enforcement. As well as providing support in an advisory and knowledge-sharing role to its members and partners, who, together with the network of connected citizens, are on the lookout when a child goes missing across Europe.

In Europe the border is always near, and so very easy to cross. When an endangered missing child crosses a national border the search often comes to a halt. The abduction cases of Madeleine McCann (UK, missing in Portugal), Mirco Schlitter (Germany) and Livia and Alessia Schepp (Switzerland) clearly demonstrate the need for better cross-border law enforcement cooperation and a AMBER Alert system in every EU member state.

**Please help us bringing these 5 points forward and join AMBER Alert Europe in its mission to protect endangered missing children in Europe.**

**For more information or questions please contact:**

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**To save the lives of endangered missing children in Europe, AMBER Alert Europe suggests the following 5 key points to the European Commission and the European Parliament:**

**1. A bigger, stronger AMBER Alert network**

AMBER Alert Europe's ultimate goal is to improve the protection of endangered missing children in Europe and support the EU recommendation for all member states to have child alert systems that can interoperate with other member states. Currently 17 countries have alert systems in place of which 8 have been used at least once. These systems are currently not interoperable with other European AMBER Alert systems.

**CALL FOR ACTION**

We are actively working with member states to assist with the development of alerts systems but call on the EU to encourage more member states to develop EU child alerts systems.

**CALL FOR ACTION**

It is important to build awareness that the AMBER Alert platform can be used for other missing children cases. For example for bringing other endangered missing children to the attention of the public. This would make greater use of the technology and networks but would not be called an AMBER Alert.

**2. More flexibility in issuing AMBER Alerts**

In order to significantly increase the opportunities to save children at risk of immediate serious harm, we would like to amend the criteria for issuing child alerts. Several European Member States have already adopted flexible criteria. In the best interest of the child, countries like the UK, The Netherlands and France have issued AMBER Alerts without evidence for a proven abduction. We would like to remove the need for there to be an abduction and be able to issue an alert when law enforcement specialists have assessed the child's life is in imminent danger.

**CALL FOR ACTION**

We call for amending the current criteria for issuing child alerts by adding the possibility to issue an alert when law enforcement specialists have assessed that the child's life is in imminent danger.

**3. Better cross-border information sharing**

Every endangered missing child deserves an equal chance of being found as quickly as possible and this must not be inhibited by them crossing borders. 37.5% of the EU population lives in border areas, ensuring that information about endangered children is shared across borders is essential. Following the Schengen agreement and the freedom of information, information on endangered missing children should immediately cross internal EU borders.

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**CALL FOR ACTION**

AMBER Alert Europe calls for protocols to ensure that when a child is at risk in a border area or law enforcement suspects that the child may have crossed the border, law enforcement agencies in the other country are informed immediately. When law enforcement decides to inform the media and public about such a case, media and public at the other side of the border should also be immediately informed.

**4. Better cross-border law enforcement cooperation**

We recognise the requirements of the legal process within Member States, and organisations such as Europol, Frontex and Interpol. But it is essential that when a child's life is in danger law enforcement experts must be able to initiate immediate action. As a first step towards this, we are creating a European Police Network on missing children, currently consisting of more than 35 law enforcement specialists from 12 countries, led by Charlie Hedges, a renowned expert in the field of missing children.

These specialists will form a network of law enforcement authorities throughout Europe, to be the first point of contact in critical cases and to enable the sharing of good practice. We will work with all organisations to ensure that the above does not create overlap or conflicts but rather focus on enhancing the rapid response which is vital to safely locating endangered missing children.

**CALL FOR ACTION**

We call for the creation of a formal European network of experts in endangered missing children and child alerts on a national level. The network should be part of the law enforcement response and is to be appointed as such by the relevant authorities in each EU member state. We also call for all organisations, statutory and NGOs to work together for the common purpose of protecting vulnerable children.

**5. Improving the identification and protection of children at borders**

To identify and protect children at risk at EU external borders, European Member States should make a best effort to immediately enter endangered missing children in the Schengen Information System (SIS II). Consequently, border guards should be actively informed about endangered missing children & AMBER Alerts by law enforcement agencies.

Raising awareness and providing practical guidance for border guards is essential to identify and protect children that may be at serious risk of harm such as trafficking, smuggling and abduction. AMBER Alert Europe and Frontex are actively cooperating with border guards on the VEGA children project, a training program and handbook for border guards.

**CALL FOR ACTION**

We call for the mandatory insertion and prioritisation of endangered missing children in SIS II, ensuring that international procedures for entering Article 32 Alerts (Missing Persons) in SISII are

always followed. In order for this to have effect, the passports of children leaving or entering the EU should be swiped and checked against, at the very least, national- and SISII databases.

**CALL FOR ACTION**

We call for actively informing border guards, at the very least, about information on endangered missing children and AMBER Alerts made public by law enforcement agencies. Subsequently, we call for more awareness raising and practical guidance for border guards to identify and protect children at risk in close cooperation with Frontex.