

Timely risk assessment of missing children saves lives

Law enforcement agencies should be able to make a quick assessment to qualify or disqualify risk for the life or well-being of the missing child.

When an injured child is being rushed into the emergency room a quick intake assessment will take place. This enables medical staff to quickly identify risk and potentially save a child's life.

When a child goes missing and the child's life or health is at serious risk of harm, a similar process is critical

250 000 children are reported missing in the EU each year.¹ Sometimes, the life of a missing child is in imminent danger. In these cases, every minute counts and immediate action is required. Extensive research shows that in 76% of abduction cases where a child was killed, the child was killed within three hours after the abduction.^{2,3}

AMBER Alert Europe's law enforcement experts recommend risk assessment for missing children

Law enforcement agencies should be able to make a quick assessment to qualify or disqualify risk for the life or well-being of the missing child. Following this risk assessment, protocols and tools should support the investigative strategy. For example, systems and protocols to quickly involve the public in the search for missing children^{4/5}. Or to disseminate information across borders to both law enforcement and the public.⁵

Understanding and managing risk: every missing child matters

Understanding and managing risk enables law enforcement to maximise the chances of safely recovering missing children at risk. It also leads to increased awareness on the appropriate investigative strategy for every missing child.

Cross border cooperation to save missing children

Immediate mandatory insertion of endangered missing children in SIS II^{5/6/7} is essential to further strengthen international cooperation in finding missing persons. It is also important to use the European police network on missing persons as initiated by the NL Presidency⁸.

Cautionary use of (social) media for missing children

Whether or not to involve citizens in the search for missing children should be part of the investigative strategy⁹.

1. 'Missing children in the European Union, Mapping, data collection and statistics', research conducted by Ecorys for the European Commission, 2013

2. Case Management for Missing Children Homicide Investigation', Washington State Office of the Attorney General & US Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, May 2006 – research based on large numbers of real cases

3. Information from the CATCHEM database (Centralized analytical team collating homicide expertise and management). CEOP, United Kingdom - research based on large numbers of real cases

4. 'Rapid Emergency Child Alert System Framework', International Center for Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC) and AMBER Alert Europe, 2016 http://ftp.amberalert.eu/framework/child_alert.pdf

5. AMBER Alert Europe's [5 key recommendations](#) to save the lives of endangered missing children. Supported by European Parliament [WD 7/2016](#)

6. Categorization of missing minors alerts in SIS II – Replies from Member States, Presidency.

Brussels, 16 June 2014, www.statewatch.org/news/2014/jul/eu-council-sis-ii-missing-minors-alerts-6015-add1-rev2-14.pdf

7. Summary of discussions, Working Party for Schengen Matters (SIS/SIRENE/Mixed Committee EU Iceland/Norway and Switzerland/Liechtenstein). Brussels, 16 February 2014, <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6658-2016-INIT/en/pdf>

8. On May 25 2016, the NL Presidency announced a European police network on missing persons and non-binding guidelines on the cross border use of citizens' assistance. <https://www.government.nl/latest/news/2016/05/25/the-netherlands-initiates-the-establishment-of-european-cooperation-to-solve-missing-persons-cases-sooner>

9. "Social media changed missing child searches", AMBER Alert Europe: www.amberalert.eu/social-media-changed-missing-child-searches/