



**Missing  
Children  
Europe**

## PRESS RELEASE

### Every 2 Minutes A Child Disappears in Europe - Urgent Call to Action on International Missing Children's Day

**Brussels, 25 May 2023 – Every year, on May 25th, the world comes together to commemorate International Missing Children's Day, a day dedicated to raising awareness about the alarming issue of missing children and offering hope to their families. On this day, Missing Children Europe calls the EU and Member States to action to combat online grooming leading to missing and to ensure the continuity of the 116000 hotlines supporting missing children and their families.**

This year's edition marks the 40<sup>th</sup> celebration of International Missing Children's Day, which began as an observance day and now highlights the efforts of those working to bring our missing children home and the need for continued action and cooperation from individuals, law enforcement agencies, and governments.

The numbers are staggering and demand immediate attention. In Europe, an astonishing 250,000 children are reported missing annually - that's equivalent to one child disappearing every two minutes. In 2022 alone, the 116 000 European hotlines dedicated to missing children received 70,855 points of contact concerning 6668 cases. The majority of these incidents involved children who ran away, accounting for 66% of new cases reported. Additionally, 24% involved parental abductions, while a small yet significant portion, 3%, involved missing children in migration (Figures and Trends 2022 report).

But behind each statistic lies a heart-wrenching story of a missing child, leaving a profound impact on their families and communities. Amidst this challenging landscape, the 116000 hotlines have emerged as a vital lifeline for those in need. These hotlines, operated by member NGOs within the Missing Children Europe network, stand as a beacon of hope, offering crucial support and help to families and children facing the unimaginable. [Available 24/7, the hotlines offer a wide range of services](#), including mental health support, legal advice, and social resources, ensuring that no family or child feels alone on their journey.

One remarkable example of the impact of the 116000 hotlines had this past year, is their role in the context of the war in Ukraine. The hotlines have shown to be essential and effective in locating missing Ukrainian children thanks to their cross-border coordination. Another issue in which Missing Children Europe's network is active is its research and advocacy to combat the growing phenomenon of online grooming, which hotlines report is increasingly becoming a factor in children's disappearance.

Missing Children Europe calls on individuals, organisations, and authorities to join its members in support of the cause of missing children and combat the phenomenon of grooming. We urge Member States and the European Union to take responsibility for guaranteeing children's well-being. This year, we have an extraordinary opportunity to approve EU legislation that can combat [child sexual abuse online](#). On the longer term, consistent funding, including for capacity building and the development of





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online access to hotline services are crucial to enhancing and improving the effectiveness of the 116000 missing children hotlines.

#### **Press enquiries**

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#### **Notes to Editors**

The network of missing children hotlines is operated by national organisations in 32 countries in Europe. Children and families calling the 116 000 European hotline for missing children receive free and immediate emotional, psychological, social, legal, and administrative support 24/7. They also provide a vital central contact and coordination point for cases that are cross-border.

#### **About Missing Children Europe**

[Missing Children Europe](#) represents 32 Non-Governmental Organisations active in 27 countries across Europe for the prevention, protection and support of missing and sexually exploited children and their families. We provide the link between research, policies, and organisations on the ground to protect children from any form of violence, abuse, or neglect that is caused by or results from them going missing. Missing Children Europe coordinates the network of 116000 hotlines for missing children, and the network of cross border family mediators and facilitates coordination of cases that involve cross-border issues, ensuring that vulnerable children receive the help they need no matter where they are in Europe.

