Towards a more efficient cooperation within and across borders for the protection of children in migration from trafficking and exploitation

20 February 2020
Children in migration – missing and exposed to abuse

- from 2014 to 2017 more than 30,000 children went missing after their arrival in Europe

- According to Europol, children in migration are at higher risk of trafficking and exploitation and that they are likely to be increasingly targeted by traffickers in the future

- In the United Kingdom, 1 in 4 trafficked children and 1 in 6 unaccompanied children placed in care are reported missing

- unaccompanied children as young as 13 have been identified in Italy as child victims recruited into sexual exploitation and child labour
Children in migration – missing and exposed to abuse

Reasons for going missing:

- Poor reception conditions
- Lack of information
- Length & complexity of procedures
- Interest to apply for protection in another country
- Fear of being sent back to another EU country/country of origin
- Lack of coordination at national and cross border level
- Victim of trafficking or other forms of exploitation

Only 1 to 2% of the cases reported to hotlines until 2015
Now, around 5% of the whole caseload
The INTERACT Project

✓ improve the day-to-day practice
✓ improve the national and international procedures on prevention and response
✓ To raise awareness on the gaps and needs in transnational cooperation
The INTERACT Project

An innovative methodology:
• 2 fictive cases
• Simulations
• 6 countries (BE, UK, EL, FR, IT, SW)
• 54 organisations & agencies
• 88 participants
# The partnership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Civil Society Partner</th>
<th>Governmental Partner</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Child Focus</td>
<td>Belgian Migration Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Telefono Azzurro</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>The Smile of the Child</td>
<td>Office of the Rapporteur on Human Trafficking</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>ECPAT UK</td>
<td>The Home Office Modern Slavery Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>ECPAT France</td>
<td>La Sprene</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>The Child Rights Bureau</td>
<td>The County Administrative Board of Stockholm</td>
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The cases

Abena – 14 years old

from Eritrea to Italy, France and Sweden
The cases

Quiro – 15 years old

From Iraq to Greece, Belgium and the United Kingdom
Outcome of the simulations

→ INTERACT Simulations report
→ INTERACT Handbook
→ A cross-border network of key stakeholders (including child protection authorities, civil society, law enforcement and agencies such as Europol, Interpol and Eurojust)
→ Training & Policy event
Current barriers to cross border cooperation

- Lack of clear procedures within and between Member States
- Legal and procedural gaps in protecting the child’s information when cooperating across borders
- Guardians: a key actor and prevention measure that is not always available
- Lacking legal provisions and multi-agency cooperation in finding a durable solution for the child
- Insufficient training for frontline professionals
RECOMMENDATIONS – 10 key steps

- A qualified, trained and independent guardian for all unaccompanied children
- Strengthen best interest assessment in all Dublin procedures
- Ensure a continuum of non-discriminatory care and protection along the journey
- Collect and exchange data on missing children in migration in a harmonized and systematic way
- A firewall between immigration enforcement, child protection and other services when handling data of children in migration
RECOMMENDATIONS – 10 key steps

1. Support children to move safely from one country to another when it is in their best interests.
2. Develop cross-border case management services and information sharing.
3. Formalise the cooperation nationally and across borders.
4. Support access to funding for the national civil society organisations that are part of cross-border networks.
5. Develop and raise awareness on existing initiatives, tools, standard operating procedures and joint investigations.
The Interact Handbook: purpose and target

Practical guidance on preventing and responding to trafficking and disappearances of children in migration
Practical toolkit

- Contact booklet
- Flowchart of standardized processes in-country
- Clarification of roles and responsibilities
### Prevention

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Housing facilities and social workers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Build trust with the child and respond to immediate needs, including the provision of adequate housing</td>
<td>Safeguard the child’s best interests</td>
<td>Inform the child of their rights</td>
<td>Provide child friendly information on services available across the 116 000 network</td>
<td>Inform partners of known risks, specific target groups related to trafficking and/or smuggling rights operating in the country</td>
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<tr>
<td>Act as link between the child and others</td>
<td>Promote the child’s safety and wellbeing, as well as their participation</td>
<td>Liaise with the guardian and/or legal representative to assist the child in the asylum procedure or in the court proceedings related to the recognition of the status of victim of trafficking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collect information on the child &gt; see template for collection of information about a child page 39</td>
<td>Inform the child of their rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assess risk of child going missing &gt; see checklist page 55</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide information on procedures in age and gender appropriate and culturally sensitive ways &gt; see checklist information to unaccompanied children as means to prevent disappearance page 54</td>
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<td>Support the child in maintaining family links, when in their best interests</td>
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<td>Discuss alternatives to unsafe migration, including the proposal to discuss risks for unsafe migration with the child’s family</td>
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<td>Highlight that other children have gone through similar experiences and establish the contact</td>
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<td>Assist in identifying a durable solution in the child’s best interest</td>
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<td>Foresee provision of healthcare, education and training</td>
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<td>Specific cases in preparing the child to pass from childhood to adulthood</td>
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<td>Draft an individual care plan</td>
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Spotlight: risks assessment

### Promising practice – Safeguarding Children who May have been Trafficked

The Glasgow Child Protection Committee (CPC) developed a Child Trafficking & Exploitation Inter Agency Guidance for practitioners in Scotland who may come into contact with child victims, which includes the safeguarding toolkit matrix of child trafficking indicators for practitioners conducting an assessment.

**CHILD TRAFFICKING MATRIX**
(from NRM referral form for children in Scotland)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exploitation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Claims to have been exploited through sexual exploitation, criminality,</td>
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<td>labour exploitation or domestic servitude by another person</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical symptoms of exploitative abuse (For example sexual or physical)</td>
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<td>Underage marriage</td>
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<td>Physical indications of working (For example overly tired in school,</td>
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<td>indications of manual labour – condition of hands/skin, backaches)</td>
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- **Assessing the risk of disappearance and trafficking** (p.54)
- **Actions to be taken when the child is at risk** (p.62 & 73)
But also...

- Tips for detecting, identifying and referring the child
- Appointing a guardian
- Hearing and informing the child
- Family tracing
- Multi agency and cross border cooperation in prevention activities
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing facilities and social workers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immediately alert law enforcement and provide information on the child – see template for reporting a disappearance, page 96</td>
<td>Provide information on the child to the police, hotline, and guardian in the best interests of the child and in view of safeguarding the child</td>
<td>Provide legal and administrative support to reception centre operators and guardians</td>
<td>Identify who is missing, what is the profile of the missing child, and what are circumstances of the disappearance</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request that the case is entered in SIS II and if applicable, interpa yellow notice if the child is suspected to have left the country, in line with the child’s best interests and with the condition of a strict applicable firewall – see section on information sharing, page 81</td>
<td>Act as contact point between careers who reported the disappearance and agencies involved in the missing child’s case, such as police, social services and prosecution</td>
<td>Assess the extent to which the disappearance should be considered as worrying. Do not take lack of information as a sign that there is no harm</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inform hotline for missing children 116 000</td>
<td>Provide advice to relatives on procedures related to missing children’s cases</td>
<td>Assess investigative procedures to be triggered, including the need for SIS II alert, inspect yellow notice</td>
<td>If the child has been previously exploited, ensure ongoing missing is seen as a strong indicator of re-trafficking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consistently request updates</td>
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**If not done before, gather information from other EU countries the child is known to have moved through in line with their best interest, by contacting guardians and social workers across borders – see section on information sharing, page 81**

| Consider informing members of the EGN network in countries concerned with the case of the child if the child is assumed to have left the country | Activate the network of hotlines for missing children. If appropriate, refer via Cross-border cooperation template, page 114 | Initiate search actions | |
| Collect data for further analysis | Collect testimonies if appropriate and relevant | | |
| Manage public appeals if appropriate and relevant | | | |
| Support efforts in family tracing or searching for separated children, in cooperation with ICRC, if appropriate – in line with the best interests of the child and in liaison with the guardian and/or social worker, see page 111 | Periodically inform partners of the development of the investigation | | |
| Provide emotional and psychological support to families in cases of separated children, where possible in coordination with the SCOPE member active in the country | Reject culture of professional misconceptions, reinstatement of risk and disbelief | | |
| Monitor the advancement of the investigation and use of rules and procedures for missing children in | | | |

**Response**
Spotlight: multi-agency and cross border cooperation

- Making use of the existing networks and tools
- Preliminary identification of roles and responsibilities — the importance of formalised cooperation
- Cooperating proactively and keeping the communication channels open

European network of 116,000 hotlines for missing children

Cross-border cooperation template

This document is the tool that a hotline for missing children will use in the event of a cross-border disappearance, to send key information about the missing child to another NGO running the hotline in a foreign country, and if necessary ask for action. A copy of the template is sent to the Missing Children Europe Secretariat.

**Requesting organisation:**

- Country: _______________________
- Date: _______________________

**Contact details responsible case manager:**

- Name: _______________________
- Direct phone: _______________________
- Email address: _______________________

**Purpose of contact:**

**To – contacted organisation:**

- Country: _______________________
- Date: _______________________

[Logo: Missing Children Europe]
## Aftercare

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immediately identify who is responsible for the child’s protection and care and inform hotline</td>
<td>Inform the child of their rights</td>
<td>If the child is found in another country, maintain an open line and exchange of information on the child’s case with hotlines from other country concerned</td>
<td>Share relevant information with guardians and carers in charge of the case, to make sure elements of risks receive due consideration in new care arrangements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify who was responsible for the child previously and inform them of the situation</td>
<td>Liaise with the guardian and/or legal representative to assist the child in the asylum procedure or in the court proceedings related to the recognition of the status of victim of trafficking</td>
<td>Ensure a return interview is conducted within 72 hours and, if not possible, as soon as possible, in a child friendly way and by a specialist trained professional in trafficking and migration issues</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify support services and best way forward</td>
<td>Assess the child’s physical and medical needs</td>
<td>Ensure relevant information on the child is shared with those in charge of their care</td>
<td>If necessary, undertake investigative action regarding trafficking or smuggling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assess the child’s psychological needs</td>
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**Contributions**

- Contributes to providing appropriate follow up to prevent the child’s repeat disappearance (back to beginning; prevention of disappearance)
Spotlight: return home interviews

• Attention points
• Introduction/rapport
• Free narrative
• Clarification
• Closing

Promising practice for return home interview with runaways – also to be considered for missing children in migration

The Department for Education (DfE) describes return home interviews as in depth discussions with the purpose to ‘identify and deal with any harm the child has suffered… understand and try to address the reasons why the child or young person ran away, help the child feel safe and understand that they have options to prevent repeat instances of them running away [and] provide them with information on how to stay safe if they run away again, including helpline numbers’ (DfE, 2014:15). Local authorities are responsible for ensuring protocols are in place to enable return interviews to be undertaken, and the guidance states that it is advantageous for these to be conducted by an ‘independent person’; that is, someone not directly involved in the care of the child or young person.

› When: Return interviews should take place within 72 hours of a child or young person being found or returning from running away or going missing, according to statutory guidance (DfE, 2014:14).

› Who: statutory guidance suggests that it is advantageous for an independent person (that is, someone who is not involved in caring for the child or young person) to conduct the return interview (DfE, 2014:14).

Source: Missing People Information Sheet: Return Interviews
Thank you!

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