



**Missing
Children
Europe**

PRESS RELEASE

Missing Children Europe Urges Full Operational Implementation of 116 000 European Hotline for Missing Children

Brussels, 25 May 2010 - Europe's 116 000 hotline number is a highly useful tool for reporting child disappearances. Although 116 000 calls have helped bring many missing children home safely, the number remains unavailable in many Member States.

"Europe is abolishing internal borders to create a better world for its children. But this also creates new risks. We cannot let missing children remain incommunicado," said Sir Francis Jacobs, KCMG, QC, President of Missing Children Europe.

On May 25th, **International Missing Children's Day**, Missing Children Europe and its national member organisations, will be organising a series of awareness raising actions in Brussels and across the wider EU. This year MCE - the European federation of NGOs dealing with missing and sexually exploited children - will seek to raise politicians' attention on the urgent need to push forward the single 116 000 hotline number for the safety of all European children. To celebrate the launch of the awareness raising campaign, Sir Francis Jacobs and Margarida Sousa Uva Barroso, Independent Administrator of Missing Children Europe, were invited to Ring the Bell at Euronext.

More than three years after the **European Commission Decision (2007/116/EEC)** creating the number, the **service is still only available in 11 EU Member States**. While the UK and Spain will be launching their 116 000 hotlines shortly, parents and children are left to face the nightmare of disappearance without a simple common European number for immediate access to specialised help in 14 remaining EU Member States. Why?

Funding is often lacking; even where there are NGOs willing and able to do the job - most of them MCE members - the service may still not be provided, due to a lack of resources to run the number and pay the connections.

Where the number does exist, it cannot always be offered as a 24/7 service; due to budget constraints a caller trying urgently to, for instance, report a missing child or share essential information will be unable to do so outside of certain restricted working hours. Likewise, prohibitive roaming costs may prevent free hotlines from accepting calls coming in from parents or children using a foreign mobile phone. Such obstacles are unacceptable and MCE urges the EU to accelerate progress toward a true single market for emergency numbers and mobile telephone services.

A year from now, by May 25, 2011, Member States are supposed to have made "*every effort to ensure that citizens have access to*" and adequately promoted the 116 000 number under the **amended Universal Service Directive**.

Missing Children Europe and its members call upon EU institutions and Member States, National Regulatory Authorities and Telecommunications Operators to mark International Missing Children's Day by pledging concrete steps toward full operational implementation of the 116 000 EU hotline for missing children.



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Missing Children Europe is the European Federation for Missing and Sexually Exploited Children, which represents 24 non-governmental organisations from 16 EU Member States + Switzerland. These grassroots organisations are active at national and local level to prevent and support victims in cases of disappearance and sexual exploitation of children.

While MCE has achieved a great deal in recent years (for which it was voted the European Voice Charity of the Year in 2008), much remains to be done. The following initiatives are crucial to the work of MCE during the 2009-2014 legislative period:

1. Ensuring the adoption and full implementation of Directives on sexual exploitation and abuse of children and trafficking in human beings;
2. Implementing widespread use of "116 000" the European telephone number for missing children;
3. Furthering the work of the European Financial Coalition against online commercial sexual exploitation of children;
4. Developing interconnected National Child Alert Systems;
5. Establishing a Europe-wide database to enable a better understanding and develop evidence-based policies;
6. Securing sufficient funding to ensure that MCE can continue and expand its work.

On 17 and 18 November 2010, Missing Children Europe will be organising an Expert Conference at the Royal Palace in Brussels, Belgium, on the specific problems of runaways and on the protection of the most vulnerable children from online sexual abuse. This Expert Conference will be organised jointly with MCE's Belgian member Child Focus as well as with the Belgian Presidency of the EU.

More information at www.missingchildreneurope.eu

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International Missing Children's Day campaign 2010

International Missing Children's Day has been commemorated by organisations across Europe and beyond since 2002, using the 'forget me not' flower as its symbol. Campaigning for more awareness on the problem of missing children, following actions are undertaken by Missing Children Europe and its members for the 2010 edition:

- **Facebook campaign:** As from the 25th of May 2010 people can show their support to Missing Children Europe and its members by temporarily 'disappearing' from Facebook. Developed by 10.be, the campaign aims to reach out across communities, asking for more attention for the problem of missing children.
<http://apps.facebook.com/virtually-disappear/>
- **Ring the Bell at Euronext:** On 25 May 2010, Missing Children Europe's President, Sir Francis Jacobs, KCMGn, QC and Margarida Sousa Uva Barroso, Independent Administrator of Missing Children Europe, were invited to Ring the Bell at Euronext, Brussels. Sir Francis drew the attention to the impact of the financial crisis on NGOs. Particular emphasis was put on the situation in Greece,



where amendments to tax legislation aim to impose 5% and 10% taxation respectively on property and monetary donations made to non-governmental organisations.

- **Exhibition of “Dancing Forget me Not’s” at the Berlaymont, Brussels:** On 25 and 26 May, a field of dancing solar Forget me Not flowers conceived by the artist ‘Dang’ will be exhibited at the European Commission, Berlaymont building.
- **Annual Report:** As every year, Missing Children Europe is issuing its Annual Report on the occasion of International Missing Children’s Day. The report provides an overview of MCE’s activities in 2009 and can be downloaded from its website at www.missingchildreneurope.eu (library section).

At national level, MCE members are commemorating International Missing Children’s Day by organising conferences, workshops, press conferences, poster campaigns and more.

European telephone number for missing children

The establishment of a single number that can be dialed anywhere in the EU has been at the top of the agenda of Missing Children Europe since 2005 for several reasons:

- The need for immediate intervention to find the child;
- The (increasing) cross-border nature of child disappearances;
- The need to be able to communicate about a missing child / report testimonies beyond national borders.

National 116 000 hotlines take calls regarding different types of child disappearances, including runaways, parental abductions, missing unaccompanied migrant minors, criminal abductions, lost, injured or otherwise missing children.

The European telephone number 116 000 was reserved for hotlines for missing children in 2007 by the European Commission in a **Decision on the 116 numbering range**¹. Three years after the Decision, the number is operational in 11 Member States, being Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, the Netherlands, It is expected to be operational shortly in the UK and Spain. The 14 EU Member States where the number is not yet operational are: Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Slovenia and Sweden.

Recent amendments to the **Universal Services Directive**² include obligations to the Member States to make every effort to ensure that citizens have access to the 116 000. With paragraph 4 of Article 27a of the amended Universal Services Directive, the Commission also confirms that the legislators “*accord special status to the 116 000 Missing children Hotline, thereby distinguishing it from the other 116 numbers, and imposing a greater duty on Member States to act to ensure availability of this service that is the case for other 116 numbers.*”³ “*While this paragraph falls short of imposing an absolute duty on member States to ensure the provision of a service, it clearly requires Member States to take specific and directed action to achieve the objective.*” The deadline for implementation of these amendments coincides with International Missing Children’s Day 2011.

¹ Commission Decision 2007/116/EEC of 15 February 2007 on reserving the national numbering range beginning with ‘116’ for harmonised numbers for harmonised services of social value

² Directive 2002/22/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 March 2002 on universal service and users’ rights relating to electronic communications and services (Universal Service Directive), OJ L 108/51 of 24.4.2002

³ COCOM 10-06 Communications Committee Working Document on « 116 » numbers-implementation of article 27a of the Universal Services Directive and review if the functioning of Decision 2007/116/EC



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More information at www.hotline116000.eu