



EDWARD M^CMILLAN-SCOTT
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT VICE-PRESIDENT
Yorkshire & Humber, UK (Liberal Democrat)

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Tamara twins: new UK missing kids scheme failed, says senior MEP

The UK is still relying on a patchwork of police forces and charities to trace missing children, as abductor Tamara Dyson and her 'at-risk' four-year-old twins Billy and Vixen are still missing after five days and may have been taken abroad, despite today's pledge by the police that a US-style Amber Alert had been set up.

To mark International Missing Children's Day [May 25], the UK police announced an ['Amber Alert'](#) system to trace missing children, but it is only a first step towards the French and US models, claimed leading [children's rights campaigner](#) Edward McMillan-Scott MEP (Yorkshire & The Humber). The European Parliament Vice-President got €1 million seed money from Brussels last year to set up a Europe-wide system after a joint 2008 appeal with Kate and Gerry McCann led to a majority of MEPs supporting a Europe-wide scheme:

"It is essential that missing children alerts are operated by governments on the same basis as Severe Weather Warnings, in cooperation with the media and other agencies. Sometimes, when another country may be involved, we need a Europe-wide network," said McMillan-Scott.

Meanwhile, the European network of some 24 NGOs involved in child alerts [issued a call](#) for all EU countries to apply the Missing Child 116 000 emergency number; only eleven have so far done so.

The missing child number in the UK is 0300 2000 333. How the UK's Child Rescue Alert is to be integrated with alerts already in place in countries, such as France which has had a government-organised [Alerte Enlevement](#) since 2006 - is yet to be made public by the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA), which is in charge of the functioning of the Alert. The French and the US Amber Alert are the only governmental schemes: in the USA, more than [500 children](#) have been recovered since 2005. The French system has a 100 per cent success rate.

The NPIA and news outlets have reported that the Child Rescue Alert will [establish a connection](#) between the police, the media and the public and will integrate with other systems across [Europe](#). However this is not yet operational, claims McMillan-Scott. Despite a judge stating that she considers the two children to be "[at serious risk of harm](#)" - the NPIA's own criteria - the abduction was not released to the public and media until a crucial four days after the abduction, and even then did not appear on the UK's official Amber Alert websites.

The UK's NPIA and its French, Belgian and Dutch counterparts won a [European Commission grant](#) of some 149,964 last year: Ireland's two applications for a total of 213,243 were declined by the Commission due to incomplete submissions.

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