



## Guidance note

### for reporting missing refugee and migrant children in Greece

*25 May 2020 – International Missing Children's Day*

- The disappearance of a child must be reported **immediately** to the competent authority. When a child goes missing, any person<sup>1</sup> who is aware of the case must report the incident of the child's disappearance without delay at the nearest police station at any time, day or night. In all cases, the submission of the photo of the child is necessary for the investigation when reporting the disappearance; the photo of the child should be recent, if possible (most preferably taken within the last 6 months). A copy of the International Protection Applicant's card should also be submitted by the reporting person, if available.
- Any information provided to the competent authority for the child is useful and helpful. The reporting person should, where possible, provide information on name of the guardian of the child and provide all possible information relevant to the disappearance of the child, including but not limited to, the following:

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<sup>1</sup> The reporting person may be:

- i) the parents of the missing refugee or migrant child;
- ii) any person who holds the Public Prosecutor for Minors' or the locally competent First Instance Public Prosecutor's authorisation for the care of the child: authorised representative, guardian of the child, or the director of the care arrangement;
- iii) any person who is close to the child: staff of the care arrangement (social worker, psychologist, etc.), relatives of the child such as siblings, uncle, aunt, friends, neighbors, etc.

- i) basic characteristics of the child: physical appearance: hair color, eye color, height, weight, etc.; ii) specific characteristics: clothes he/she was last seen wearing, if the child wears glasses, has a tattoo, birth mark, etc.;
- family environment: the family history of the child, if he/she has relatives in Greece, if he/she is in contact with relatives abroad and if he/she has recently contacted them;
- where and at what time he/she was seen for the last time;
- information on possible location/place of disappearance;
- information on the reasons of disappearance;
- with whom he/she has been regularly in contact;
- information related to his/her friends;
- any previous incident of disappearance: if he/she has gone missing in the past or if he/she has expressed the desire to leave the care arrangement or location;
- if he/ she faces health issues (physical and/or mental health) and if he/she is using medication (what type of medication and what consequences it has for the child);
- spoken languages: if he/she speaks, apart from their native language, also Greek and/or any other language;
- if he/she has an account in social media (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, etc.);
- if he/she has a mobile phone, money, travel documents and/or any other things with him/her.

*The child protection actors providing shelter to the unaccompanied children are requested, with the approval of the competent Public Prosecutor, to keep in their archives recent photos of the hosted children.*

- **It is important that the disappearance is reported to the competent authority even when and if the reporting person has minimal information. The lack of any of the above-listed information should not prohibit the reporting person from going to the nearest police station to report the disappearance instantly. Reporting the disappearance of a child immediately and with no delay is the absolute first step that has to be taken.**
- The minimum information required to be provided to the police station for the disappearance to be recorded in the National databases as well as the Schengen Information System (SIS II) is the full name of the missing child, date of birth and nationality. In parallel, the reporting person (if he/she does not have the custody of the missing child) must, if possible, inform the parents of the child or the person who is authorized<sup>2</sup> to care for the child by the Public Prosecutor for Minors or the locally competent First Instance Public Prosecutor. The competent Public Prosecutor for Minors or the locally competent First Instance Public Prosecutor, if acting as guardian of the child, has to be informed by the reporting person about the disappearance of the child (at the office or on the phone and by sending a fax, *if* immediate contact cannot be accomplished).
- If it is not possible for the reporting person or the child protection actors to inform the Public Prosecutor immediately, the Police officer must inform the Prosecutor via telephone, without delay. The Hellenic Police immediately informs the Public Prosecutor for Minors or the locally competent First Instance Public Prosecutor, acting as the guardian of the child, about the disappearance when the parent(s) or the person who has the custody of the child are not present or found.

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<sup>2</sup> The authorised representative, guardian of the child, or the director of the care arrangement.

- The Police officer will submit an internal notice of disappearance («σήμα εξαφάνισης») according to which all the police stations across Greece and the Hellenic Coast Guard will be informed centrally. The central service of the Hellenic Police, the Sub-Division of Fugitives and Missing Persons, Civilians' Files and Identification Cards Management, is responsible for recording missing persons and disappearances both in the National Database and the Schengen Information system (SIS II). The Hellenic Police informs the International Police Criminal Organisation accordingly, who then sends an international notice to other countries' police services.
- The competent Public Prosecutor has to provide his/her consent for the publication of the photo, or the Activation of an Amber Alert and the reporting person needs to provide the photo and necessary information. The personal data and the photo of the missing child will be published on the website of the Hellenic Police [www.astynomia.gr](http://www.astynomia.gr).<sup>3</sup>
- The reporting person contacts "The Smile of the Child" at the European Hotline for Missing Children 116000 (24 hours a day, 365 days year, free) and reports the disappearance of a child. "The Smile of the Child" does not substitute the Hellenic Police although it cooperates closely with the Police and serves as an interlocutor and facilitator of the entire process. The reporting person should address "The Smile of the Child" if there is a difficulty or challenge in the process of reporting the disappearance for guidance and assistance. It should be noted that only through the process of reporting the disappearance of the child to the Hellenic Police, the child will be registered and recorded as missing in the National Database and the Schengen Information System (SIS II).

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<sup>3</sup> The actions of the Hellenic Police regarding the consent to publicly disclose the personal data of a missing child on the Internet are reflected in Articles 12 and 12A of the regulatory order ΚΔ 2/1985.

- The approval for the specific publication of the personal data on the Internet or the Activation of Amber Alert Hellas is provided by the Public Prosecutor in coordination with the Hellenic Police station locally or the Sub-Division of Fugitives and Missing Persons, Civilians' Files and Identification Cards Management of the Hellenic Police, who is responsible for the investigation, taking into consideration the specific circumstances of the case so that the child's life is not put at risk.
- "The Smile of the Child" proceeds with the necessary actions (publicity of the photo, activation of Amber Alert Hellas, mobilisation of Search and Rescue Team "Thanasis Makris"), according to the Prosecutor's order, and in cooperation with the Police Authorities<sup>4</sup>.
- If the child returns to the care arrangement where he/she was previously hosted, then the director of the care arrangement has to inform the Hellenic Police station where the disappearance was reported, the competent Public Prosecutor, as well as the "The Smile of the Child" at the European Hotline for Missing Children 116000 (24 hours a day, 365 days a year, free). The child will be deleted from the National Database and the Schengen Information system (SIS II) and no longer considered as missing only if it is reported as found to the Police authority where the disappearance was initially reported. **Therefore, the reporting person has to return to the relevant Police authority and report the recovery of the missing child.**
- Upon recovery and return of the child to the care arrangement where he/she is hosted, counselling and specialised support has to be provided by the child protection actor in charge. "The Smile of the Child" also provides counselling to the family of the child upon his/her return.

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<sup>4</sup> "The Smile of the Child's" 's actions regarding the publicity of the missing child's photo and the activation of the Amber Alert Hellas' mechanism are reflected in the Hellenic Police order No. 3003/13/48-e' since 29/10/2007 and in the Memorandum of Cooperation between "The Smile of the Child" and the Ministry of Citizen's Protection.

*Each time that you face a problem during the process of reporting a missing refugee or migrant child, please contact:*

- *The Sub-Division of Fugitives and Missing Persons, Civilians' Files and Identification Cards Management of the Hellenic Police: 210 6476280, and/or*
- *"The Smile of the Child" at the European Hotline for Missing Children: 116000.*

## ANNEX

***“The Smile of the Child’s actions in the field of missing children”, including information on the European Hotline for Missing Children 116000 and the Amber Alert Hellas***



The ***National Center for Missing and Exploited Children*** of “The Smile of the Child” oversees the *Centers of Direct Social and Medical Intervention* (CDSMIs) across Greece (Athens, Thessaloniki, Patras, Larissa, Chania, Herakleion, Korinthos, Halkida, Kavala, Kerkyra, Tripoli) in order to mobilise and coordinate all actions and services to assist children in need and/or at risk. The Centers are staffed primarily by social workers and psychologists (approximately 50 in total), but also rescuers. Within Greece, “The Smile of the Child” works on the issue of missing children in close collaboration with the Hellenic Police, the General Attorney’s Office for Minors and the First Instance Courts, as well as law-enforcement forces from all over the world such as Interpol and Europol. Coordination and collaboration is extended to UN agencies such as IOM and UNHCR, to other national and international bodies, as well as several groups of volunteers that work in the field of child protection and children’s rights. In addition, “The Smile of the Child” established its cooperation with Facebook on missing children public alerts (Amber Alert), enhancing mutual cooperation in crucial areas such as child safety and suicide prevention. On the institutional level, a strong and formal collaboration (MoUs) on the prevention of children’s disappearances is built among others with the Ministry of Citizen’s Protection, the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy and the Ministry of National Defense.

The main operation of the CDSMIs includes three (3) Hot/Helplines: 1) the National Helpline for Children SOS 1056, 2) the European Hotline for Missing Children 116000 and 3) the European Helpline for Children and Adolescents 116111.

In particular, the **European Hotline for Missing Children 116000** (hereafter referred to as Hotline) was established in 2008 by “The Smile of the Child” in Greece with the purpose of enhancing the timely reporting on alleged disappearances of children. It operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and is toll free from both landlines and mobiles. It is staffed by social workers and psychologists (hotline operators/case managers). There are six call centers, in Athens (2), Patras, Thessaloniki, Herakleion

and Kavala, interconnected as one. In addition, in order to ensure the smooth operation of the Hotline under any circumstances and at all times, “The Smile of the Child” has established an *Emergency Recovery* call-center at the Athens’ International Airport “*El. Venizelos*”, which stands ready to receive emergency calls in case the six call-centers are not functioning for technical reasons. The Hotline is interconnected with the European Emergency Number 112 of the Hellenic General Secretariat for Civil Protection, while it is incorporated under Missing Children Europe (MCE), along with the other organisations operating the 116000 Hotline across Europe.

In cooperation with the competent authorities, “The Smile of the Child” aims through the Hotline to contribute to the prevention of the phenomenon of missing children, assist children found in precarious conditions and support families who have lost their children throughout the investigation process and even after the child has returned home safely. The Hotline targets all categories of missing children, namely, runaways (national/international), parental abductions, criminal abductions, missing unaccompanied migrant children, as well as lost, injured or otherwise missing children.

Furthermore, the Hotline is particularly useful to children, parents and teachers who travel abroad, since call receivers can refer callers to the competent authorities in various countries. It thus provides a safe network, in occasions where parents and children who travel across Europe for holidays or professional reasons, get separated or children go missing under various circumstances.

The fact that the Hotline operates throughout Europe, makes it a valuable tool in the process of providing support to children arriving in Greece as refugees or migrants. This need led “The Smile of the Child” to establish a team of interpreters/mediators in Arabic and Farsi to serve the Hotline. Moreover, in 2017 “The Smile of the Child” established a cooperation with the SAWA Palestinian Organisation, member of the Child Helpline International (CHI) network, linking the telephone helplines for children of both organisations, providing automatic interpretation in Arabic and offering immediate assistance and support to refugee and migrant callers. Leaflets with relevant information on the Hotline are being disseminated at the entry points in the Reception and Identification centres where numerous children arrive, many of them unaccompanied, in collaboration with the Reception and Identification Service and UNHCR.

***The 116000 Hotline meets its aim also through the following means:***

- **AMBER ALERT HELLAS** is the National Programme of Accurate and Immediate Information in cases of missing/ abducted children. The programme was established in Greece in 2007 for the provision of timely and reliable information to public regarding cases of missing or abducted children. The program is based on the cooperation of 61 partners, comprised by local



authorities, national media, corporate actors and volunteers. The Amber Alert Hellas is activated in occasions where there are/ is:

- ✓ Worrying disappearance of a very young child
  - ✓ Indications that the well-being or life of the child is in imminent danger
  - ✓ Suspicion that the child might have been abducted or kidnapped
  - ✓ Availability of information which can be disseminated
  - ✓ Use of AMBER Alert Hellas will assist in locating the child
  - ✓ Police determines if the use of AMBER Alert Hellas will endanger the child's safety
- For the cases that do not meet the criteria for the activation of Amber Alert Hellas "The Smile of the Child" proceeds with the **Publication of a photograph, poster, press release regarding the missing child** on the social media and website of the Organisation, on the GMCN site (<https://find.globalmissingkids.org/>), as well as on mass media (television, sites, etc.). Also, distribution of posters in all publicly accessible areas and distribution of leaflets through the Ministry of Citizen's Protection to all patrol cars in Greece takes place.
  - **Search and Rescue Team "Thanassis Makris"**, a team of volunteers specialised in search and rescue and dog teams accompanied by volunteers certified by the National Search and Rescue Dog Association (NSARDA) of the UK.
  - Activation of the **ECAAS (European Child Alert Automated System)**.
    - The Organisation's **Mobile operational Unit and Mobile Crisis Management Unit**, along with a wide range of **Logistics and Operational tools - Vehicles of Direct Intervention** (jeeps, ATV, motorbikes, ambulances).
    - In addition, the Hotline, in **consultation with law-enforcement agencies** such as the Hellenic Police, Hellenic Coastguard etc., provide **psychological support** to the family of missing children, psychological support and **counselling** to children once they have been found, as well as assistance and expert advice on cross-border cases.