European Commission

European Migration Network

HOW DO EU MEMBER STATES TREAT CASES OF MISSING UNACCOMPANIED MINORS?[1]

EMN INFORM 2020

1. KEY FINDINGS

The phenomenon of migrant children going missing has recently received increased attention from the media in several Member States and the European Parliament. The debate focusses on unaccompanied minors who go missing. There is concern that the disappearance of unaccompanied minors is not addressed yet in an effective manner, as reflected in several recent publications by international organisations[2] and European NGOs.[3]

In response to this concern, the EMN, at the request of the European Commission, has mapped how cases of unaccompanied children going missing are being treated in the Member States, and respectively, how data on missing children is collected. NGOs have been asked to reflect on the outcomes of this mapping exercise. This has resulted in the following key findings:

1. It is not possible to accurately quantify the phenomenon of missing unaccompanied children in the EU due to **lack of comparable data**. Many Member States do not have reliable or complete data on missing unaccompanied minors, and the existing data is not comparable. Bearing in mind the shortcomings mentioned above, based on the data provided, the majority of missing unaccompanied children reported over the period 2017-2019 were over the age of 15, and the vast majority were males. The three most frequently cited countries of nationality of missing unaccompanied children were Afghanistan, Morocco and Algeria.

2. Almost all Member States and Norway reported **elaborate procedures** in place for dealing with unaccompanied minors going missing, which are often **identical and/or similar to the procedures for the national/EU children who disappear**. These included: procedures and rules for determining when an unaccompanied minor should be reported as missing, rules on who is responsible for reporting the disappearance and for issuing alerts (nationally and cross-border), and rules on who is responsible for following up on the disappearances (generally, the Police).

   At the same time several NGOs noted that, in their experience, there are **discrepancies between existing frameworks in place and the practice**. For example, Save the Children and Missing Children Europe noted that in practice the registration of a disappearance may not always be followed up by the police, as in the case of missing national children.[4] According to them, the problem is sometimes one of **insufficient cooperation between various authorities**: police, asylum, social and child protection authorities do not always have protocols and safeguards in place to work together in case a child goes missing, preventing a proper and swift response once this happens. Missing Children Europe also notes the problem of insufficient training of all professionals involved on issues related to the disappearance of migrant children[5].

3. The authorities responsible for dealing with cases of missing unaccompanied minors make an assessment of the **urgency of the case**. Often this includes an assessment of whether there are **worrying circumstances** surrounding the disappearance. The fact that it concerns an unaccompanied minor is not explicitly mentioned as a factor that is in itself considered sufficient to classify the case as 'worrisome'. Save the Children and Missing Children Europe note that **risk assessments** are crucial in this respect, but that in their opinion in practice such assessments vary in quality.

4. There is **no uniform mechanism for cross-border cooperation**. Nevertheless, missing person alerts in the Schengen Information System (SIS)[6] and the exchange of supplementary information on these alerts amongst the SIRENE[7] Bureau[8] are widespread. However, Save the Children and Missing Children Europe (based on testing through case simulations in 6 Member States) points out that in their experience the formal procedures may not always be followed in practice.[9]

1 This Inform also covers Norway and the United Kingdom
2 International Organisation for Migration, Fatal Journeys Volume 4: Missing Migrant Children, 2018, https://publications.iom.int/books/fatal-journeys-volume-4-missing-migrant-children
3 Missing Children Europe, "Working together to protect children from disappearances - from European priorities to local realities", 2018 http://www.lostinmigration.eu/MSE-Lost%20in%20Migration%20II-Report.pdf. and "Summit Report: Best practices and key challenges on interagency cooperation to safeguard unaccompanied children from going missing." http://missingchildreneurope.eu/Portals/0/Docs/Best%20practices%20and%20key%20challenges%20for%20interagency%20cooperation%20to%20safeguard%20unaccompanied%20migrant%20children%20from%20going%20missing.pdf
4 Missing Children Europe INTERACT: Report on multi-agency practical simulations on fictional cases in Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, the United Kingdom and Sweden (2019), available at https://missingchildreneurope.eu/What-we-do/Disappearance-of-children-in-migration/INTERACT; Missing Children Europe, Best practice and key challenges for interagency cooperation to safeguard unaccompanied migrant children from going missing (2016), available at https://missingchildreneurope.eu/summit
5 For example, identification and management of cases of abuse, trafficking and exploitation and related measures; risks assessment.
6 The largest security information system used in all EU member states (except Ireland and Cyprus) and also in the UK, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Iceland. All national law enforcement authorities use SIS along national systems.
7 Supplementary Information Request at the National Entries
8 Each Member State operating SIS has a national SIRENE Bureau, operational 24/7, that is responsible for any supplementary information exchange and coordination of activities connected to SIS alerts
9 Europe INTERACT: Report on multi-agency practical simulations on fictional cases in Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, the United Kingdom and Sweden (2019) & How better cross-border cooperation will prevent trafficking of children in migration (2019), available at https://missingchildreneurope.eu/What-we-do/Disappearance-of-children-in-migration/

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Save the Children

5. Countries participating in the research have implemented systems to ensure that data is kept up to date and to avoid duplication; however, some **gaps and weaknesses** were identified in the collection and updating of the data.

6. Some **good practices** in the **collection of data** on missing children have been detected such as collection of data at centralized level on missing children, either at the reception centres level or by using a dedicated database on missing children.

2. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of migrant children going missing after their arrival in Europe was identified by the Commission Communication on the protection of migrant children of April 2017[10] as a significant concern. Unaccompanied migrant children are particularly vulnerable and further exposed to risks of violence, exploitation and trafficking. The Communication recommended that Member States, with the support of the Commission and EU agencies where appropriate, must work, on the one hand, to collect and exchange comparable data to facilitate the cross-border tracing of missing children, and on the other hand, to put in place the necessary procedures and protocols to systematically report and respond to all instances of unaccompanied children going missing.

The information for elaborating this EMN Inform was collected through three EMN Ad-Hoc Queries[11] focusing on how the cases of unaccompanied children going missing are being treated in the Member States, and respectively, on how data on missing children is collected. Member States provided information on their official policies, procedures and legislative frameworks relevant for the treatment of disappearances of unaccompanied minors.

Given the importance of the topic, and in order to obtain a global picture of the phenomenon, the EMN has closely collaborated for the elaboration of this Inform with international organisations (IOM, UNHCR and UNICEF), EU Agencies (EASO, FRA and Frontex) and EU (Missing Children Europe, PICUM[12]) and international (Save the Children) NGOs to draw on their practical expertise in this area. The information received from UN organisations and NGOs that is presented in this Inform has not been verified by the National Contact Points of the EMN. The EMN Inform was elaborated under the coordination of EMN Luxembourg and with the collaboration of EMN Netherlands, and the European Commission (DG HOME and DG JUST).

2.1. REASONS WHY CHILDREN IN MIGRATION GO MISSING

There are many reasons why children in migration go missing. Missing Children Europe[13] and Save the Children[14] note that children sometimes left centres because they became discouraged by the length and complexity of asylum or family reunification procedures, or because they feared being sent home or back to the country where they first arrived in the EU. Children sometimes felt compelled to leave because the conditions offered were (for them) inappropriate, and they were hoping to find better and safer housing elsewhere. Missing Children Europe also reported that in many cases, children were forced or pushed to leave because they were victims or had become victims of trafficking, including for labour and sexual exploitation, forced begging and drug smuggling. Other research[15] suggests that unaccompanied migrant children went missing because they were continuing their journey to a chosen country of destination, because they had a network of family, friends and acquaintances, or an irregular work network, outside the centre; or were refused protection in administration procedures.

Case from the NGO "The Smile of the Child", Greece

The "Smile of the Child", managing the 116 000 hotline in Greece, received an anonymous call from a citizen as well as messages on its social media about two videos depicting the abuse of a 3-year-old boy of Syrian origin in the accommodation area for migrants and refugees in Souda of Chios. The specialised staff of the organisation immediately informed the Greek Cyber Crime Unit, the Police Department of Chios and the Sub-division of Security of Chios transmitting all the evidence collected as well as audio-visual material. Soon, the hotline was informed by the Security Department of Chios that the 3-year-old boy had been relocated and transferred to a safe environment, while the alleged father of the boy was also located and was under arrest.

2.2. DEFINITION OF A MISSING UNACCOMPANIED MINOR

There is no common definition of a missing unaccompanied child across the Member States and Norway. Nevertheless, the definitions used by Member States do not vary substantially. The common elements include:

- Missing from the reception facility;
- Their whereabouts are unknown;
- They are suddenly unreachable;
- The disappearance is out-of-character.

In principle, the Member States' procedural frameworks treat the disappearance of a third-country national unaccompanied minor in the same way as the disappearance of their own minor nationals or EU citizens.

INTERACT

10 COM(2017) 211 final of 12.4.2017, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52017DC0211&from=EN

11 The first ad-hoc query on the state of play of missing unaccompanied minors in the European Union was answered by AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, HR, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU, IE, IT, LV,LT, LU, NL, PL, SK, SI, SE, UK and NO. The second ad-hoc query was answered by AT, BE, BG, CZ, FR, DE, EL, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, NL, PT, SK, SI, SE, UK and NO. The third ad-hoc query was answered by AT, BE,BG, CY, CZ, FI, FR, DE, EE, EL, ES, HR, HU, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, NL, PL, PT, SK, SI and SE. Even though the UK is not a Member State any longer this publication was part of the 2019-2020 EMN Work Programme and therefore "includes contributions from the United Kingdom as an EU Member State up to 31 January 2020."

12 https://picum.org/mission-vision-working-principles/.

13 https://missingchildreneurope.eu/Missingchildreninmigration

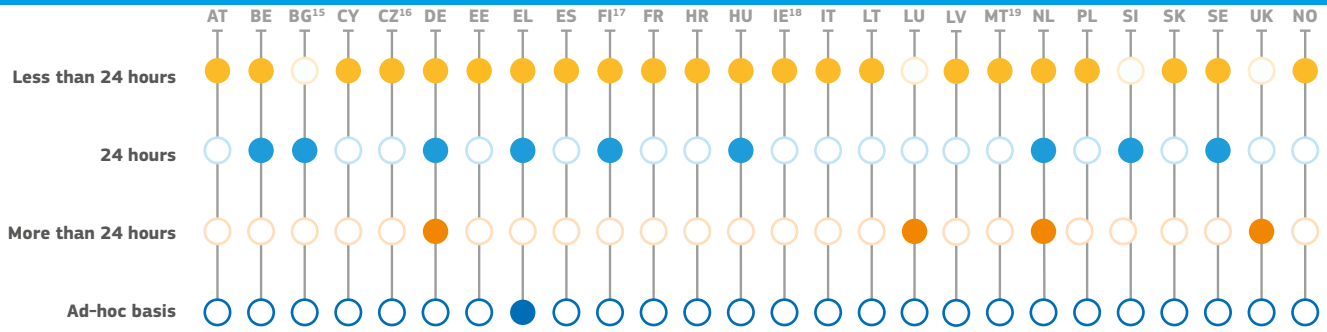
14 'Slow asylum processing procedures are driving children underground and forcing them to undertake dangerous journeys at the hands of smugglers.' https://www.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/KEEPING%20CHILDREN%20AT%20THE%20CENTRE%202017_%20DEF_%20LOW_%202__.pdf p.5

15 Disappearing, departing, running away: A surfeit of children in Europe. Terre des Hommes 2009.

2.3. WHEN DO MEMBER STATES CONSIDER AN UNACCOMPANIED MINOR TO BE (REPORTED) MISSING?

Member States report the disappearance of an unaccompanied minor in the asylum procedure after: a) less than 24 hours; b) 24 hours; and c) more than 24 hours. There is a fourth category, with no specific time limit, where an ad-hoc timeframe applies to missing children outside of the asylum procedure.

FIGURE 1 TIMEFRAME TO REPORT A DISAPPEARANCE OF AN UNACCOMPANIED MINOR FROM THE TIME IT WAS DETECTED



Source: EMN NCPs

The policy in most Member States is to accept that a report is filed in less than 24 hours taking into consideration that minors are a vulnerable group. However, there are Member States[21] which foresee a different 'no action' period based on the child's profile and the circumstances of the disappearance.

- In **Belgium**, an unaccompanied minor is considered missing by the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil) if the minor has not been seen in the reception facility for over 24 hours or if s/he did not return to the reception facility within the 24 hours following the expiration of her/his leave permission (permission to be absent overnight from the reception facility). For those unaccompanied minors who are considered particularly vulnerable,[22] the 24-hours delay does not apply and they are immediately considered missing when they are not present in the reception facility and their whereabouts are unknown.
- In **Germany**, the lapse of time before reporting a missing unaccompanied minor varies from immediate to two or more days. The majority of institutions report minors missing at the latest by the end of the day of disappearance or at 0:00 the next day if no contact has been with the minor. Only a few institutions report minors missing only after two or more days.[23]
- In **Greece**, authorities differentiate between unaccompanied minors outside of the asylum procedure and those in the asylum procedure. In the first case, it is reported on an ad-hoc basis within a maximum duration of 24 hours when the minor has been reported disappeared and, in the latter, it has to be reported within a maximum duration of 24 hours after the disappearance.
- In **Hungary**, as in Belgium, the length of time that has to lapse before reporting the missing unaccompanied minor varies depending on the vulnerability of the child. In the event of the unauthorised departure of a child, the care provider, in cooperation with the child protection guardian, immediately attempts to find his/her whereabouts. If the minor is under 14 years of age or is unable to provide for him/herself due to illness or disability, the care provider will immediately (within 24 hours) contact the competent police department to find the child. As a general rule, however, a child leaving his/her place of care without authorisation is considered "missing" from the moment of unauthorised departure.
- **Greece**[24] and **Poland**[25] conduct regular head counts at their reception facilities, which allow them to detect and report the disappearance within 24 hours.

2.4. CATEGORIES OF MISSING UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

Most Member States acknowledge that some missing unaccompanied minors are more at risk than others. This risk analysis is based on a variation of factors such as age, gender, nationality and residence status. Accordingly, the reporting and

16 In Bulgaria a person is considered to be missing after 24 hours. However, when it comes to children, each case is managed on an ad-hoc basis.
17 In the Czech Republic, he director of the Facility for Children-foreigners is obliged to report the disappearance immediately after the disappearance of the child.
18 In Finland and Norway, an unaccompanied minor asylum seeker is considered to be missing immediately if the reception centre staff notice that the child has packed all his/her personal belongings, clothes, etc. from the room and there is reason to suspect that the child has left.
19 In Ireland, reporting is often linked to individual risk rather than a specific timeframe and wholly irrespective of engagement with the asylum procedure.
20 A UAM is considered as missing as soon as he/she fails to return to the reception centre after curfew time.
21 BE, DE, EL and HU.
22 Minor who are 13 years old or younger, girls, minors with medical or psychological issues, suspected victims of human trafficking, etc.
23 This situation was described through a survey of youth welfare offices and institutions where unaccompanied minors live. Deutscher Bundestag (2018): Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung. Bericht über die Situation unbegleiteter ausländischer Minderjähriger in Deutschland. Drucksache 19/4517. Berlin: Deutscher Bundestag.
24 EL conducts the regular head count once per day.
25 PL does it twice a day: morning and evening.

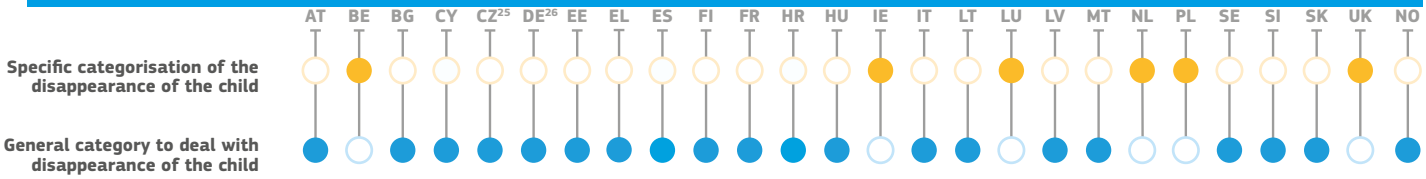
search methods are adapted (e.g. Greece distinguishes between missing unaccompanied minors in the asylum procedure and those who are not).

Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and **Poland** are the only Member States that reported to have specific categories in order to report the search for the missing unaccompanied minors. This is also the case in the **United Kingdom.**

In **Italy**, the police officer that receives the report of the disappearance of a child uploads the case immediately in the "Inter-Forces Database - SDI", according to a categorisation distinguishing parental abductions, runaways, runaways from institutions / protection centres, presumed victims of crime, children presumably affected by psychological disorders, otherwise missing.

In **the Netherlands**, the police will decide on the category on the basis of the details given when reported. This categorisation is used for the cases of all missing persons, not only for unaccompanied minors.

FIGURE 2 CATEGORISATION OF MISSING UNACCOMPANIED MINORS BY MEMBER STATES



Source: EMN NCPs

The categories that these Member States use can be divided into three major groups: Level of vulnerability; repeated disappearances by the child; other categories.

2.4.1. LEVEL OF VULNERABILITY

Case reported within the framework of the INTERACT Project, coordinated by Missing Children Europe

"A Vietnamese boy was brought to the United Kingdom by traffickers after a long journey into exploitation. He had to leave Vietnam because of the debts of his dead father who was addicted to gambling. Traffickers, taking advantage of his fear, put him on a plane from Hanoi to Russia, where he spent two days as a house cleaner. He was then taken to Hungary, where he was arrested and placed in a detention centre for a while. When he got out, traffickers took him to the Czech Republic, where he worked in a factory. Afterwards, he was taken to Calais, in France, where he lived in the forest until the traffickers finally managed to take him to the United Kingdom. Once there, he was exploited in a cannabis factory. He was abused there for months before the police found him[28]

The police arrested the boy and interviewed him "under caution", meaning as a person suspected of having committed an offence, rather than as a victim of exploitation. He was fingerprinted under Eurodac, age assessed and then placed in foster care, without a proper identification of him as a victim of trafficking, without information about his rights as a victim of trafficking, without an analysis of his needs and thus without being provided with the best care plan according to his background. After a few days, the boy left foster care, and his fate is unknown."

Several Member States use the term 'worrying disappearance' based on the fact that the minor is particularly vulnerable and his/her life, welfare or health are at risk, and/or if the minor is the victim of a crime (i.e. kidnapping or victim of human trafficking).

Belgium uses the term **'**worrying disappearance'[29] when dealing with a missing unaccompanied child based on the following criteria:

- They are younger than 13 years of age;
- They have a physical or mental disability or lacks the necessary self-reliance;
- They are dependent on medication or medical treatment (i.e. diabetes);
- They may be in a life-threatening situation;
- They may be in the company of third parties who may threaten their welfare or they may be the victim of a crime;
- The absence is in complete contrast to the young person's normal behaviour.

Under these circumstances the staff of the reception centre signals the disappearance of the unaccompanied minor to the local police and gives its own assessment of the disappearance. However, besides the objective criteria mentioned above, the reception centre also applies a 'subjective' criterion to consider a disappearance worrying and provides this information to the police. The assessment of the nature of the disappearance is, in the first instance, done by the contacted officer on duty of the Judicial Police, who may, if deemed necessary, get the support of the Missing Persons Unit of the Federal Police. If, after the initial investigation, uncertainty remains about the alarming nature of the disappearance, immediate contact is made with the public prosecutor on duty. The public prosecutor decides in the last instance whether the disappearances should be regarded as worrying or not. In the case that the disappearance is considered "worrying" the lapse of time of 24 hours to start the search does not apply.

26 However, in every case the concrete circumstances are assessed and according to them the appropriate measures are taken.
27 However, Germany reports that there are great differences between the federal Länder: "While some [federal] Länder seem to equate escaped or missing UMs - as in Thuringia, for example - in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania a distinction is made between a 'missing person's report' [Vermisstenmeldung] and a 'Disappearance report' [Abgängigkeitsmeldung].
28 For more information about these cases: The Independent, Children as young as seven being used by 'county lines' drug gangs", available at https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/county-lines-drug-dealing-gangs-children-uk-exploitation-a8988916.html
29 See COL 12/2014: Ministerial Directive concerning the tracing of missing persons (adapted version of 26 April 2014). See also COL 15/2016: Vade mecum with regard to the interdisciplinary taking charge of unaccompanied foreign minors.

In **Ireland**, under the Joint Protocol on missing children[30] each child in care has an Absence Management Plan. The Joint Protocol on missing children foresees two categories of absence: 1) absent without permission and 2) absent and at risk. The first category of absence foresees "where the carers are generally aware of the activity or whereabouts of the child and these do not give rise to undue concern". These absences may be due to lateness; or attending activities without permission and may be due to the child testing boundaries.[31] Absences under the second category are defined as "where the absence is without permission and in circumstances where it gives rise to concern for the safety of the child." Such absences are risk assessed in accordance with all the circumstances of the case and the identified risk factors relevant to the individual child.

Luxembourg also uses the concept 'worrying disappearance' when the disappearance of a minor is considered to be of concern due to substantial indications that the minor is at risk of being harmed and/or is in immediate danger, and prompt action is required. The police, on the basis of a decision by the State Prosecutor, may decide to inform the citizens of the disappearance by issuing an alert.

The Netherlands uses the term 'urgent' when there are 'substantial indications' that the missing child[32] is in danger. Substantial indications mean the absence is completely opposed to the child's usual behaviour and/or that there are reports that the absence of the child can be associated with a criminal offence. Moreover, it can appear from indications that the missing person poses a danger to the safety of others/society or to the missing person him/herself.

Poland has three levels of search based on the degree of danger to the missing person's life, health or freedom. The levels determined the prioritisation of the search. Level I is implemented in relation to a minor up to 10 years old and a minor from age 11 to 13 missing for the first time. Level II is implemented for a missing minor aged 14 to 18 missing for the first time. In turn, level III applies to, among others, minors aged 11 to 13, who have previously gone missing.

In the **United Kingdom**, once the disappearance has been reported to the police, the threats to the child's safety and wellbeing are risk assessed in order to generate the right level of response to find the child. The police will use intelligence to prioritise all incidents of children as 'missing' from home or care as medium or high risk. It would be considered as 'medium risk' where the risk posed is likely to place the child in danger or where they are a threat to themselves or others. This category requires an active and measured response by police and other agencies in order to trace the missing child and support the person reporting. This will involve a proactive investigation and search in accordance with the circumstances to locate the missing child as soon as possible. Determination of the 'high risk' category requires the immediate deployment of police resources.

2.4.2. REPEATED DISAPPEARANCES BY THE CHILD

Some Member States provide a framework to take into consideration the behaviour of a child when assessing the situation once the disappearance is reported. **Poland**, specifically mentioned repeated disappearances (Level III, as mentioned above). In **Ireland**, previous disappearances form part of the risk assessment. In addition, the frequency of missing episodes forms part of the Management Prevention Strategy under the Joint Protocol.

2.4.3. OTHER CATEGORIES

Of the Member States that reported categorisations when reporting and prioritising the search for missing unaccompanied minors, only three Member States have used categories other than levels of vulnerability and repeated disappearances by the child.

Ireland uses the term **'Absent without permission'** described above.

Luxembourg has another two categories[33] of missing unaccompanied minor cases:

- **'*Jeunes en errances*'** (itinerant young people who have often been present in other European countries before arriving in Luxembourg). This also applies to minors who are in transit and who want to reach another country because they may have acquaintances or family members there.
- **'false minors'** (young adults declaring themselves as minors before the authorities and where there is a doubt on their age).

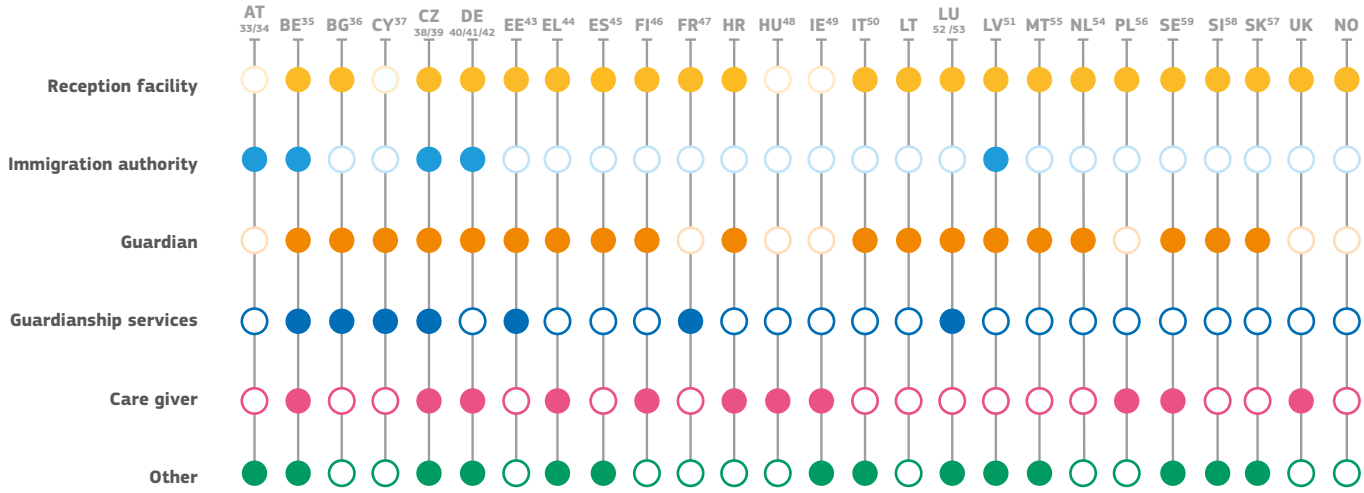
The **Netherlands** uses the term **'Other'** to refer to cases that are not categorised as **'urgent'**.

3. WHO IS IN CHARGE OF REPORTING THE DISAPPEARANCE OF A MISSING UNACCOMPANIED MINOR?

When the disappearance is reported, in almost all Member States, the United Kingdom and Norway, it is the last person/institution that had contact with the minor who reports the disappearance to the police. In principle, in most Member States, it means that the staff of the reception facilities/care placement or the guardian are the ones who file the report for the missing child (see Figure 3).

30 In 2009, the Health Service Executive and An Garda Síochána (the Irish police force) signed this protocol which sets out the roles and responsibilities of both agencies in relation to children missing from State care, including unaccompanied minors. This Protocol applies to all children who go missing from State care.
31 Short absences risk assessed as such do not always warrant referral to An Garda Síochána.
32 These criteria do count for all missing persons, including unaccompanied minors.
33 In Luxembourg, when an unaccompanied minor applies for international protection an ad-hoc administrator is appointed to represent him/her during the procedure. Nevertheless, a guardian is appointed for handling the affairs of the minor in everyday life. Caritas and Luxembourgish Red Cross reported that in all these cases, there have often been indications of the child's willingness to leave prior to his/her disappearance from the reception facilities. This is also the reason why generally the organisations managing the reception facilities delay their decision to request the designation of the guardianship until the minor has lodged his/her application at the Directorate of Immigration.

FIGURE 3 PERSONS/INSTITUTIONS WHO ARE IN CHARGE OF REPORTING THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE CHILD TO THE POLICE



Source: EMN NCPs

4. ACTORS/ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN HANDLING THE DISAPPEARANCE

Once the report on the disappearance of the missing child has been filed, the main actor in most Member States involved in handling the disappearance is the police.

In the Czech Republic, generally, the disappearance is reported to the Police by organisations/persons, to whom the child has been placed in custody by a court decision. The Facility for Children-foreigners contacts the police after the disappearance of the child and also sends a report to the Social and Legal Child Protection Authority (OSPOD), court and Ministry of the Interior. The evaluation of disappearances is done by the public prosecutor and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is also informed.

In **Estonia**, the personnel of the accommodation facility or guardianship care are responsible for the missing child and in charge of informing the Police and Border Guard Board about the missing minor.

34 Department V/9 (Basic Care) of the Federal Minister of Interior.
35 Department V/9 (Basic Care) of the Federal Minister of Interior.
36 In Belgium, anyone can report a disappearance of an UAM to the police
37 Municipal child welfare.
38 Social Welfare Services, Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance
39 Director of the Facility for Children-foreigners (ZDC)
40 Any Centre within Refugee Facilities Administration of the Ministry of the Interior that encounters disappearance of minor before his/her transfer to other institution, would immediately inform the Police. Also any person who is aware of the disappearance of an unaccompanied minor can report the disappearance to the police.
41 In Germany, unaccompanied minors are not accommodated in a reception facility, but in residential youth welfare institutions or unaccompanied minors' foster families. Only in a few individual cases, unaccompanied minors are also accommodated in reception centres with family members or those adults with whom they fled. In those cases, the minors also have a guardian who is responsible for them, and informs of the disappearance.
42 The immigration authority can report but in practice the youth welfare office might be informed earlier of the disappearance than the immigration authority.
43 Foster parents.
44 In case the unaccompanied minor has applied for the international protection, the minor may be accommodated trough the alternative care services or in case the minor is at least 16 years old, it is possible to accommodate him/her into accommodation/reception centre of applicants for international protection.
45 Foster parents.
46 Non-state actors
47 Family group home or other accommodation unit for minor residence permit holders.
48 As soon as the director of an accommodation facility notices a proven unauthorised absence, s/he first informs the gendarmerie or the police by phone and confirms the absence by fax or e-mail. The alert is accompanied by a file with the child's identity, description of clothing and the places where the minor is likely to go.
49 Children's home for unaccompanied minors.
50 Social Worker. In Ireland, the allocated social worker acting in loco parentis occupies the role filled by the "guardian" in other MS.
51 Social worker or anyone who becomes aware of an unaccompanied minor's disappearance can report the fact to the National Police Force or to the local police if he/she believes that the minor could be in danger in accordance with Law 203/2012.
52 Any other authority or institution that is aware of the disappearance of the minor.
53 Guardian and/or ad-hoc administrator.
54 NGOs.
55 When there are signs that the absence is linked with a criminal offense and a crime has to be reported, the guardian will report the crime, as part of his responsibilities as the legal representative of the unaccompanied minor.
56 In Malta the social worker can do the report. Also, non-state actors inform the Agency of the Welfare Asylum Seekers if there is a disappearance of an unaccompanied minor .
57 Care facility (education institution or a regional care and therapeutic institution where a minor was staying.
58 Social worker.
59 Any person who knows about the disappearance.
60 Social services, foster home parents and staff of the school.

In **Malta**, if a minor does not return to the centre, the Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers (AWAS)[61] management, the coordinator of the centre and the minor's social worker are alerted. The police is also informed[62] to allow for a search to be conducted.

In **Latvia**, law enforcement authorities (the State Border Guard and the State Police) perform search activities with the support of other institutions. In **Poland**, in addition to the police, the border guard conducts its own search activities in parallel. **Portugal** also requires that in addition to the police, the Public Security Police (PSP) be informed.

In **the Netherlands,** the police is the main actor, but the mentor from the reception centre and the guardian will keep trying to contact the missing unaccompanied minor.

In some Member States (e.g. **Belgium**) the public prosecutor's office is in charge of the disappearance file. All useful information on the disappearance must be passed to the public prosecutor via the police. The public prosecutor's office will decide then which investigation measures must be taken.

In other Member States (e.g. **Finland and Lithuania**[63]), other actors, such as the municipal/social welfare office, social workers, care staff and the guardian, must be informed, but are not involved in the handling of the disappearance. In **Ireland**, social workers have primary responsibility and coordinate the response to the disappearance.

In **Italy**, the Special Government Commissioner for Missing Persons has general coordination powers in this area.[64] The police office, which received a complaint of disappearance, informs the Prefect[65] and, if the missing person is a minor, the Public Prosecutor at the Juvenile Court. The Prefects have adopted "Provincial Plans for the search of missing persons" (following guidelines widespread by the Special Commissioner for Missing Persons) that define operational procedures and all actors involved (police forces, local authorities, fire brigades, civil protection, emergency healthcare, voluntary associations, etc.). The Prefect informs the Special Commissioner for Missing Persons of the cases of disappearance. The Commissioner's Office is the point of reference for all issues relating to missing persons, including children.

Belgium provides a good example of structural cooperation between different services involved in the disappearances of unaccompanied minors, namely the Collaboration Protocol in the first reception phase for unaccompanied minors (Orientation and Observation Centres).[66] The protocol determines the cooperation between the signatories both before and after the disappearance, as well as after the minor has been localised.

Case reported by ECPAT UK

"Faridun was born and raised in the Logar province in Afghanistan. At age 12, his compound was taken by the Taliban and he and his brothers were forced to begin training as well as cook and clean for the elder Taliban members. He managed to escape, but he endured a horrific journey through Europe and faced different forms of abuse. He finally managed to cross into England and was taken into Local Authority care. He was placed in a foster placement where he felt safe and supported. However, he had four different social workers in this period of time and they were not keeping appropriate track of Faridun's case in the asylum system. He went to his substantive interview by himself and had trouble understanding the Home Office interpreter. In the meantime, an older man started to put pressure on Faridun to accept a job in his restaurant, despite his interest in finishing his studies.
Faridun waited for two years, and finally his asylum decision was refused because the Government thought Faridun was lying during the interview, even though he tried to explain that he couldn't understand the interpreter. Following this decision, Faridun became very depressed and worried, and he went missing. His foster carer was very concerned with his fate, but she felt that Faridun's case was not given any follow up, as he was perceived to have gone missing deliberately as an 'immigration absconder'. After five months, no progress had been made on the missing investigation.

One day the foster carer received a phone call from an unknown number. It was Faridun and he was crying, he wanted to come home but was scared. He disclosed to his foster carer that he had taken the job at the restaurant but the owner had never paid him, he was working night and day cooking and cleaning and was sharing a room with ten other older men who had 'been bad' to him. He didn't say anything further and hung up the phone. Faridun is still a missing person."

61 It should be noted that AWAS has procedures in place and a checklist regarding such occurrences.
62 The police and, specifically, the Vice Squad is also alerted and a photo and description of the child is provided, together with other details such as the minor's mobile phone number (when available).
63 In Lithuania, the Reception Centre immediately reports the disappearance to the Police, as well as, the Migration Department under the Ministry of Interior, State Border Guard Service, State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Agency and its local unit.
64 Law No. 203/2012 established the responsibilities of the Prefect for the research, with no prejudice to the powers of the Prosecutor. The Special Government Commissioner for Missing Persons ensures stable and operational coordination between the state administrations responsible in various ways in the matter, taking care of the connection with the technical organisations;
Monitors the activity of institutions and other actors committed to fight the phenomenon in various ways;
Supports the cross-checking of national information on missing persons and unidentified remains. Analyses information about the phenomenon, including international information, for a comparative study on the matter;
Reports the results of its activities half-yearly to the President of the Council of Ministers
Maintains a relationship with the relatives of the missing persons and with the most representative associations at national level which may be dealing with the matter in various ways.
65 Law No. 203/2012 established the responsibilities of the Prefect to take initiatives for the researches, without prejudice to the powers of the judicial authority.
66 The signatories to the protocol are the public prosecutor's office at the Brussels Court of Appeal; the public prosecutor's office at the Brussels Court of First Instance, the Immigration Office, the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil), the Brussels Capital - Ixelles police (police zone 5339) and the police Kampenhout-Steenokkerzeel-Zemst (police zone 5412 KASTZE), the Guardianship Service and Child Focus.

5. WHAT ARE THE PROCEDURAL STEPS TAKEN BY AUTHORITIES ONCE AN UNACCOMPANIED MINOR IS DETERMINED AS MISSING FROM ACCOMMODATION FACILITIES AND / OR GUARDIANSHIP CARE?

Several Member States (**BE,**[67] **CZ, DE,**[68] **EE,**[69] **EL, FR,**[70] **IE, IT,**[71] **LT,**[72] **PL**[73]) plus **Norway** and the **United Kingdom**[74] use structured systems for missing children based on the law,[75] rules and guidelines, while other Member States use the general procedures for finding missing persons (e.g. **AT, CY, ES, HR, LV,**[76] **NL**[77]), or established police practice (e.g. **LU, SK, SI, SE**). **Belgium** has structured systems for missing children based on the law, rules and guidelines. Belgium also uses the general procedures for finding missing persons[78] and guidelines specifically for unaccompanied minors going missing.[79]

In most Member States the procedure is standardised and includes different phases as set out below:

5.1. DETECTION OF THE MISSING CHILDREN:

In order to file the report, some Member States[80] require that once the detection of the missing child is made, the reception facilities conduct a risk assessment before filing the disappearance report. In the other Member States, the reporting can be done without this risk assessment. For example, in **France**, as soon as the director of an accommodation facility notices a proven unauthorised absence, they immediately inform the gendarmerie or the police by phone (without conducting a risk assessment).

In **Ireland**, a risk assessment is conducted by care staff in order to determine whether the child is missing from care in accordance with the defined categories. Care staff must determine that the child is actually missing by quickly searching the care location and local environs and making other enquiries, in advance of making a report under the 'Missing Child from Care Report form' to An Garda Síochána (Ireland's National Police Force). Once this form is received by An Garda Síochána, the case is treated as a High Risk Missing Person Incident, and An Garda Síochána has primacy in respect of the investigation.

In the **Czech Republic**, before leaving the Facility for Children-foreigners, children are advised on the safety rules in place, *inter alia*, if they are late returning, they should contact the facility immediately (by phone, social media, email etc. In case the children are late, they are contacted in the same way (using all possible means) by an employee of the Facility. If contact is not successful, the employee is obliged to report the disappearance to the Police. If the children do return to the Facility, then the Police are immediately contacted and the child's details are deleted from the search database.

In **Luxembourg,**[81] the Red Cross tries to reach the minor by phone, text message, Whatsapp, or by contacting known friends of the minor for information. If the minor cannot be reached, the Red Cross makes an internal evaluation of risk. If the risk is high (e.g. the disappearance is unusual, there are indications of risk, threats by others, or a sudden disappearance after school) the Red Cross informs immediately the police for an AMBER alert. If the risk is not deemed high, the Red Cross declares to the authorities that the minor is missing at the latest three days after their disappearance. Caritas Luxembourg also tries to reach minors who have not returned to their Reception Centre, by trying to contact them by phone; if they do not answer, Caritas will contact their friends. Where no answer is obtained, the police will then be contacted, sometimes even one day after the minor's absence from the reception centre is detected.

In **Poland,** the search for minors from the age of 14 who are missing from a care facility is conducted in the form of a care search. Searches are conducted by the staff to determine the whereabouts of a minor. These searches are normally done before filing a report to the police.

5.2. REPORTING

All Member States' first step in handling a missing child's case is to report it to the local police or the border guard (see Figure 3). In **Italy** and **the Netherlands** the reporting can be made by telephone; In **Italy,** even in the absence of a formal report, the police force receiving the missing person report (e.g. on the emergency number 113 or 112 NUE) enter the information in the *Interforce Data Base*, indicating the essential data of the person to be traced. The report remains active for 72 hours, within which time the report must be formalised, under penalty of automatic cancellation. The "116000 - *Direct telephone line for missing children*" Service, active since 2009, makes it possible to report cases of missing children, in difficulty or in need of help, to a multilingual switchboard, involving, if necessary, the Territorial Offices of the Police Forces. In **the Netherlands**, reporting can also be done through an internet portal.

In **France**, the director of the reception facility that has identified the proven, unauthorised absence of a minor, informs the

67 COL.12/2014 Ministerial Directive concerning the tracing of missing persons (adapted version of 26 April 2014). See https://www.om-mp.be/nl/meer-weten/omzendbrieven in Dutch and on https://www.om-mp.be/fr/savoir-plus/circulaires in French.
68 See Deutscher Bundestag (2016): Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Luise Amtsberg, Beate Walter-Rosenheimer, Dr. Franziska Brantner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN. Drucksache 18/7916. Verschwundene geflüchtete Minderjährige. Drucksache 18/8087, Berlin: Deutscher Bundestag.
69 The guideline how to refer the unaccompanied minors to a replacement care service.
70 Within the Judicial Protection of Juveniles and the framework of the care arrangement for minors an "Instruction note of May 4 2015, on unauthorised absences of a minor placed in a public sector or approved NGOs by the Judicial Protection of Juveniles", provides a framework for runaways and unauthorized absences.
71 Law n° 203/2012.
72 Description of the Procedure for Assessment of the Age of Non-asylum Seeking Unaccompanied Minor Aliens Identified in the Republic of Lithuania, Accommodation and Taking of Other Procedural Actions in Respect Thereof and Provision of Services Thereto approved by Order No A1-229/1V-289/V-491 of the Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania, the Minister of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania and the Minister of Health of the Republic of Lithuania of 23 April 2014.
73 Police Headquarter regulation.
74 s20 and s22 of the children Act 1989.
75 Which also applies to unaccompanied minors.
76 In Latvia, the general procedure for finding missing persons defined in national legislation is applied to missing UAM.
77 Process Description for Missing Persons, which is used by the Dutch national police for all missing persons, including unaccompanied minors. This process was revised in 2019 and is currently being made operational.
78 See: COL.12/2014 Ministerial Directive concerning the tracing of missing persons (adapted version of 26 April 2014
79 Collaboration protocol in the first reception phase for unaccompanied minors
80 BE, CY, EL, HR, HU, IE, LU, NL, PL, SK and SE, and the UK
81 In Luxembourg the Red Cross and Caritas managed the reception facilities that host unaccompanied minors based on an agreement with the Luxembourgish State

gendarmerie or the police by telephone and confirms the absence by fax or e-mail. However, in order for the child to be entered in the wanted persons file it is necessary for staff to go directly to the police station or gendarmerie.[82]

In **Spain**, the reporting can be done by fax or e-mail.

A distinction can be made between those Member States that involve only the police[83] and those where the disappearance is reported to other actors besides the police. Norway simultaneously reports to the police, the Child Welfare authorities and the reception center.

In the **Czech Republic,** in case the child escaped from Facility for Children-foreigners, besides the police, the public prosecutor, the Social and Legal Child Protection Authority (OSPOD), the court, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports are also informed. In **Malta**, the police and, specifically, the Vice Squad is alerted and a photo and description of the child is provided, together with other details such as the minor's mobile phone number (when available). The members of the Children and Young Persons Advisory Board as well as the social worker of the minor are also informed and updated on developments.

The second most common actor that is informed is the child welfare services[84] (**BE,[85] BG,[86] CZ,[87] DE, EE,[88] EL,[89] FI,[90] HR, IE,[91] IT, LT,[92] LU, SI,[93] SK, SE and NO**).

In **Belgium** any disappearance of an unaccompanied minor from a Fedasil reception facility is reported by e-mail with a completed template attached, detailing the minor's identity, characteristics and vulnerabilities, as well as any relevant information regarding his/her disappearance. A photo of the minor is also annexed to the e-mail, which is sent to the following services:

- The local police of the municipality or city where the reception facility is situated;
- The Guardianship Service of the Federal Public Service (FPS) of Justice;
- The guardian of the unaccompanied minor (if one was assigned already by the Guardianship Service);
- Child Focus[94] if the disappearance is considered 'worrying';
- The Unaccompanied Minors Policy Unit of Fedasil.

The guardian should then inform the other stakeholders: the Immigration Office, the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, the Youth Protection Services (*Comité voor bijzondere jeugdzorg* (CBJ) or the *Service d'aide à la jeunesse* (SAJ)),

In some Member States the public prosecutor is informed or contacted to obtain search warrants (e.g. **EL**). In **Hungary,** the Immigration Authority is contacted to issue a warrant, whereas in **Italy, Luxembourg, Poland** and **Portugal**, the Youth courts are contacted. In **Finland, Italy,[95] Luxembourg** and **Portugal** the Immigration Services are contacted. **The Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland** and **Sweden** further require that the child's representative is also contacted. In **Norway** the lawyer in charge of the minor's file needs to be contacted. In addition, **Italy** requires that the disappearance is reported to the Mission Structure for the unaccompanied minors of the Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration. Finally, **Luxembourg** requires that the report is also communicated to the National Reception Office (ONA) and to the National Childhood Office (ONE).

Case reported within the framework of the INTERACT Project, coordinated by Missing Children Europe.

"In January 2017, the Italian hotline 116 000, run by Telefono Azzurro, received a notification via e-mail regarding the case of several missing unaccompanied minors who went missing from the hosting institution where they had been placed, and whose fate afterwards was unknown to the competent law enforcement agency. The disappearance had been reported to the law enforcement agency by the responsible social worker. However, the communication reached the hotlines' service only a month after the disappearance was first reported. The list included also eight accompanied minors aged from 0 to 6 years old, who were probably the children of the missing unaccompanied minors. The fate of these children remains unknown."

In all Member States, when reporting a disappearance, the police will try to obtain as much information as possible with regard to the minor's profile (i.e. name, age, sex, nationality, personal features, clothes, mobile phone number), the circumstances of his/her disappearance (i.e. location) and will try to access the social network of the minor.

In **Belgium**, the police will collect elements via foster homes or reception centres, acquaintances, friends, school, country of origin to orient the search. It also will contact the asylum authority to obtain photos, fingerprints, state of the asylum procedure, etc. The police will carry out a general check contacting other police services, hospitals and trains and bus stations. If there is a suspicion of human trafficking this has to be signalled in the official record.

82 Information provided by Missing Children Europe on 2 March 2020.
83 AT, CY, EE, ES, LV, NL, PL, and SE.
84 In Ireland, Tusla: Child and Family Agency, the State's child protection services.
85 Guardianship Service of the Federal Public Service (FPS) of Justice.
86 Social Assistance Directorate.
87 Social and Legal Child Protection Authority.
88 Social Insurance Board Child Protection Department
89 National Centre for Social Solidarity – E.K.K.A).
90 Municipal child welfare.
91 The child's social worker is contacted as part of the reporting process as well as the principal social worker.
92 State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Agency and its local unit.
93 Decree on the implementation of the statutory representation of unaccompanied minors and the method of ensuring adequate accommodation, care and treatment of unaccompanied minors outside the Asylum Centre or a branch thereof (Official Gazette RS, No. 35/17) stipulates that besides Police, legal representative of missing child, Office of the Government of the RS for the Support and Integration of Migrants and Ministry of the Interior are also contacted.
94 Child Focus acts as a bridge between the person requesting assistance, the assistance services, the police services and the judicial authorities. When a disappearance is reported to Child Focus, the case manager who is appointed regularly informs about the state of affairs in the police investigation, s/he makes sure that no information escapes the attention of the investigators and he ensures that the relatives are assisted in a correct manner. There is not only information exchange with the police / public prosecutor, but in the case of unaccompanied minor often also with the guardian, the reception centre, the Immigration Office, and other possible partners who can inform Child Focus about the case.
95 General Directorate for Immigration and Integration Policy of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, which is the competent authority for monitoring and census unaccompanied minors in the national territory.

All Member States and Norway enter all information provided in the report in their respective national information systems (see Figure 6 below). This information usually consists of:

- A set of data for identifying the person or object, subject of the alert (i.e. name, age, nationality, personal features etc);
- A statement of why the person is sought (circumstances of the disappearance); and
- An instruction on the action to be taken when the person has been found.

In addition, any evidence deemed useful will be introduced into the file such as photographs or fingerprints, if they are available.

In most Member States and Norway the same data is introduced in the Schengen Information System (SIS).

In **Cyprus**, the personal data and the photo of minors are published on the official website of Cyprus Police, in the section of missing persons.

Some Member States also register the information on missing unaccompanied children on a warrant list. In **Hungary**, if an unaccompanied minor is missing, the immigration authority issues a warrant. The warrant order shall be reviewed after ninety days and shall be revoked if it is unlikely to bring any results. The warrant order is carried out by the Police. In **Sweden**, missing unaccompanied minors are always registered on a warrant list.

5.3. ISSUANCE OF ALERTS

There are several types of alerts that can be issued once the disappearance has been reported.

5.3.1. PUBLIC ALERTS

This section includes publicity appeals as well as police alerts. Publicity appeals are a general category that includes appeals made through various channels and using various forms, both online and offline, such as websites, social media, posters, TV, radio, billboards, etc. Publicity appeals include child alert systems (also child alert, amber alert or child rescue alert).

In **Ireland**, a national media alert may be issued by An Garda Síochána on the request of Tusla (the Child and Family Agency). Additionally, An Garda Síochána may request approval from Tusla to proceed with a media alert if deemed useful.

In **Germany**, if an unaccompanied minor is reported missing, the local police station will register the missing person in the system and issue an alert. If the person concerned has been listed as a missing person in the INPOL police information system for more than four hours, s/he can be included in the statistics of the joint database for missing and unknown persons maintained by the Federal Criminal Police Office.[96]

In **Malta**, the missing report is entered in the Police Incident Report System (PIRS), the information is stored in the section of SIS titled Pending CUD Alerts. Once it is checked by SIRENE staff and ensured that all requisites are in order, it is then uploaded in SIS.

For cases in which the life of the missing child is not considered to be in direct danger, but there are serious concerns about their well-being, the police in **the Netherlands** can issue a "*Vermist Kind Alert*" (Missing Child Alert). This alert makes use of a more modest range of media than an Amber alert and is sometimes only issued on a regional level.

5.3.2. CHILD ALERTS/ AMBER ALERTS

Child Alert systems aim to reach a large mass of people as quickly as possible, in the event of an extremely worrying case of disappearance. In 2008, the European Commission adopted a working paper on best practices for launching a cross-border child abduction alert, which was welcomed by the JHA Council on 27 and 28 November 2008. It published a call for proposals totalling € 1 million as support for the Member States that had not yet adopted a "Child Alert" type of system. Among other initiatives, AMBER Alert Netherlands was launched in 2008, and inspired the AMBER Alert Europe Foundation, which was launched in 2013, and aims to connect law enforcement with other police experts and with the public across Europe[97].

Most Member States[98] and **the United Kingdom** use child alerts when dealing with missing children.

In **Belgium**, if the missing child's life is assessed as in acute danger, a **Child Alert** can be launched to alert the population and to call for witnesses that can bring light to the disappearance. The decision to launch a Child Alert is in the competence of the prosecutor or the investigating judge (i.e. in cases of kidnapping or trafficking in human beings). Every citizen and organisation can sign up on the Child Alert website to collaborate in the research. This system is managed by Child Focus, in collaboration with the Belgian Federal Police and Federal Public Service Justice. A Child Alert is rarely used and has only been activated three times in the last ten years.

In **Italy**, the implementation of the **Italian Child Abduction Alert System** (ICAAS) was carried out within the Child abduction alert 2008 pilot project. it is managed by the International Police Cooperation Service. The conditions of activation are the minor age of the missing person, the danger to the physical integrity or life of the person, forced removal, the availability of sufficient and reliable information so that the spread of the alarm can contribute to the location of the victim or kidnapper. The message is disseminated with the involvement of the media, following an agreement made in March 2011. The decision to activate the child alert is taken by the prosecutor responsible for the investigation. The State Police has a website dedicated to missing children[99] (see Other forms of cooperation), which allows the use of a rapid alert system for missing children through the FIA - Federation for Internet Alerts (used in the United States for weather alerts), with which it is possible to activate searches for missing children in certain geographical areas of interest, where the missing child report will appear to network users.

Five Member States reported that they are using an child alert (Amber alert) when dealing with missing

96 Missing cases that are resolved within four hours are not reflected in this file.
97 https://www.amberalert.eu/amber-alert-europe/
98 BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK. In the Netherlands, an amber alert can also be used for UAM, when they meet the criteria for such an alert. An amber alert for the disappearance of a minor (national/EU/TCN) is only issued ones or twice a year in the Netherlands. Sweden does not participate entirely in the Amber Alert System. They are with one representative in the informal expert group in the PEM-MP. So far, no need has been found to implement the technical tools that the organisation offer. However, since 2019 there is a project aiming at developing a national methodology support for missing persons and it is possible that this issue will be raised in connection to this process. This based on the observation that some problems occur regarding persons in the asylum procedure since these are handled differently between different regions. This work on improved methodology support might lead to a more developed cooperation with Amber Alert.
99 http://it.globalmissingkids.org

unaccompanied minors.[100] These alerts are only used under certain circumstances, for example:

In **Cyprus**, their Amber alert (Child Alert) is issued in all cases of missing unaccompanied minors.[101]

In **Greece**, following the competent Public Prosecutor's approval, the police might also initiate a child alert (Amber Alert Hellas), taking into consideration a number of risk/protection- related factors, such as the gender, age of the child or whether there are serious concerns that s/he might be in real danger (e.g. suffering health problems, or serious reasons to believe he/she might be a victim of human trafficking or abduction.).

In **Luxembourg** when dealing with worrying disappearance of minors, part of Amber Alert is used to attract citizens' attention. Missing children information can be shared at national level or be sent to specific regions or target groups (e.g. railway or transport staff). AMBER Alert Luxembourg exclusively issues an Amber Alert and information concerning worrying disappearances of children.

Malta reported that when a child goes missing an alert is posted on the Amber Alert Platform.

In **the Slovak Republic,** to enter a missing child's or unaccompanied minor's data in the Amber Alert system, there must be a reasonable suspicion that the minor has been kidnapped[102] and that the child is in immediate danger to life and / or health.

5.3.3. DATA SHARING AND COOPERATION BETWEEN MEMBER STATES

Most Member States[103] aim to introduce an alert in the SIS at the same time as they introduce the information in their national systems.[104] For example, in **the Netherlands**, if a hit in SIS shows that the child has been reported missing in another Member State, an investigation will be triggered immediately. The guardian will contact the Dutch Immigration Services who will contact their foreign counterpart and try to arrange the return of the unaccompanied minor with their help. The same approach is followed by **Norway**.

Only Cyprus[105], Hungary and Ireland[106] reported that they do not introduce alerts in the SIS.

However, during the simulations exercises that Missing Children Europe carried out within the framework of the Interact project conducted in six countries,[107] only Belgium, Sweden and the United Kingdom placed an alert, while France, Greece and Italy did not. None of these countries checked SIS when they found a child in their territory.[108]

FIGURE 4 INTRODUCTION OF THE INFORMATION INTO NATIONAL SYSTEMS AND SIS

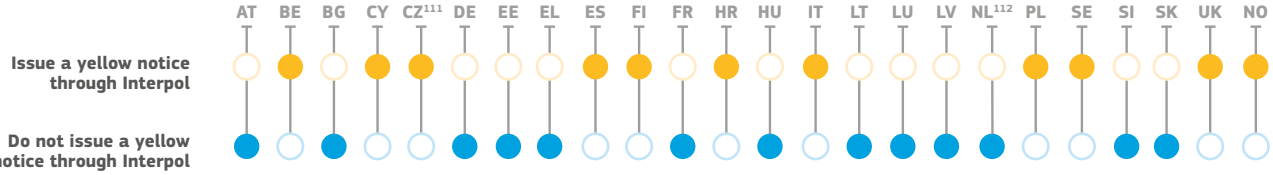
Source: EMN NCPs

5.3.4. INTERPOL

Depending on the level of risk of the disappearance of the missing child, some Member States,[110] Norway and the United Kingdom reported the introduction of a 'Yellow Notice' with Interpol to locate the missing child. Normally, this is published for victims of parental abductions, kidnappings or unexplained disappearances. The "Yellow Notice" provides high international visibility to cases and flags abducted/missing persons to border officials making travel difficult. Countries can request and share critical information linked to the investigation.[111]

100 CY, EL, LU, MT, SK.
101 Missing children Europe indicates that according to their Cyprus member Amber Alerts have not been used yet in the context of unaccompanied minors.
102 Section 209 of the Criminal Code.
103 AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, ES, HR, FI, IT, LV, LU, NL, PL, PT, SK, SI, SE plus NO and UK.
104 Some of the national database of the police: Interforce Database (SDI) and Informatics System for Minors in Italy, National Police Information System in Poland, PATROS in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (search for people and the identity of found corpses), Register for missing persons (ELYS) in Norway, Missing Persons and Unidentified Human Remains (PDyRH) in Spain
105 Cyprus is not yet a full member of Schengen area.
106 Ireland is not yet connected to SIS II. Ireland's connection to SIS II will be in relation to those aspects of the Schengen acquis in which Ireland requested to participate in accordance with Council Decision 2002/192/EC.
107 https://missingchildreneurope.eu/What-we-do/Disappearance-of-children-in-migration/INTERACT
108 Information provided by Missing Children Europe on 28 February 2020.
109 Germany reported that although in theory alerts must be entered into SIS at the same time that into the national search system, it is not possible to judge whether all actors actually always issue a SIS alert.
110 BE, CY, FI, HR, IT, PL, SE
111 https://www.interpol.int/How-we-work/Notices/Yellow-Notices

FIGURE 5 MEMBER STATES ISSUING A YELLOW NOTICE THROUGH INTERPOL FOR MISSING UNACCOMPANIED MINORS



Source: EMN NCPs

5.3.5. EUROPOL

Only **Finland** reported that they **may** contact Europol with regard to the disappearance of an unaccompanied minor, if relevant.

5.3.6. USE OF EURODAC FOR COMPARISON PURPOSES IN CROSS-BORDER INVESTIGATIONS

Some Member States[114] and Norway use Eurodac for fingerprint comparison purposes. The available personal data of missing children shall, as far as possible, be stored in the SIS, along with other identification material (fingerprints, photos, DNA profile[115]). This enables the Member States to carry out comparisons with SIS, and where allowed by the relevant legislation with Eurodac, using biometric data through their national applications.

In **Finland**, when an unaccompanied minor applies for asylum, the police or Border Guard registers the asylum application in the Finnish Immigration Service's electronic case management system (UMA), as well as the Police register (Patja). The UMA system makes an automated check in EURODAC and SIS, to determine if the minor has an asylum claim or is reported missing in another Member State. If the minor is registered in Eurodac, the Finnish Immigration Service requests further information from the other Member State. Even when there is no EURODAC-hit, further information can be requested if there are reasons to believe that the minor has been residing in another Member State.

In **Sweden**, fingerprints are taken of all asylum seekers over 14 years. These are then run via Eurodac to establish if the applicant has been in another country. If the child is to be considered within the Dublin Regulation, the Migration Agency will contact the other state where the child has been registered to exchange information for further processing of the case.

Norway uses Eurodac when an unaccompanied minor is found on Norwegian territory, to investigate whether s/he applied for asylum in any other Member State. If the unaccompanied minor has applied in another Member State, the unaccompanied minor will be returned in accordance with the Dublin Regulation. If the unaccompanied minor has not applied for asylum elsewhere s/he may apply for asylum in Norway and have their case processed there.

5.3.7. OTHER RESOURCES USED DURING THE INVESTIGATIONS

Other databases that are used by Member States include the Automated Fingerprint Identification System, as is the case in Italy. In **France**, the Mission for Unaccompanied Minors checks in its database if the minor is known and if they were entrusted to a child welfare service. If this is the case, it transmits the contact details of the child welfare service to the Red Cross so that the latter can get in touch with them.

Latvia sends an alert on a missing child with detailed information on the minor to neighbouring countries through the National Coordination Centre of the State Border Guard and inform contact points at the borders with Lithuania and Estonia.

Luxembourg uses the Restoring Family Links Network of the International Federation of the Red Cross, which helps people looking for family members of unaccompanied or separated minors and minors (Tracing).

5.4. SEARCHES AND INVESTIGATIONS – ASSISTANCE FROM CIVIL SOCIETY

Searches and investigations start after the report has been filed with the police and are prioritised in accordance with the kind of alert that was issued. In **Bulgaria,** immediately following the introduction of the alert, the unaccompanied minor is declared as a 'searched for' person at national level, and any follow-up data will be added to the information provided in the report. **Croatia** begins the search immediately, and if after 24 hours the child has not appeared, the police activates a plan for the intensive search of the child.

Some Member States have reported involving different actors in the search – notably civil society and guardianship services - who provide additional support to police investigations.

112 Only in justifiable cases.
113 In the Netherlands Yellow Notices are used, but not as a standard. When a case meets the criteria, a Yellow Notice is issued, regardless from nationality or background of the missing person.
114 AT, BE, DE, EL, FI. In Belgium, at the request of the police, the Immigration Office can check the fingerprints of the minor (if they have them) in Eurodac. In Germany, unaccompanied minors can be registered in the Central Register of Foreigners (AZR) upon their entry and thus independently of an asylum application (Section 42a subs. 3a SGB VIII). As of 1 April 2021, the minimum age for taking fingerprints will be reduced from 14 years to 6 years in connection with the Eurodac III Regulation (Section 49 subs. 5, 6, 8 and 9 of the Residence Act).
115 Storage of DNA in SIS will be possible only with new generation of SIS from 2021.

Case reported within the framework of the INTERACT Project, coordinated by Missing Children Europe

In August 2017, a child protection officer from an NGO working for the safeguarding and protection of refugee and migrant children reported the disappearance of six unaccompanied minors at risk of trafficking and who were outside of the protection system in Italy. The caller suspected that the minors were probably on the move to leave Italy and were heading towards France or England. The case was not reported to the competent law enforcement agency because the NGO was about to end its activity due to lack of funding. Anyway, the hotline suggested to report the case to the law enforcement agency, but this was unsuccessful because of lack of proper information and translation. Follow-up on the case was not possible because the NGO closed, and the law enforcement agency did not provide further information.

In **Belgium,** the distribution of notices to the public of missing persons is a task reserved to the Missing Person's Notice Service of the Federal Judicial Police.[116] These missing persons' notices are distributed widely via as many media channels as possible (audio-visual,[117] press, websites, social media, etc.). The notices are only distributed by the police after a request from the public prosecutor or from the court of instruction in charge of the case has been made. In addition, Child Focus develops several actions in regard to the disappearance which include: a) the dissemination of missing persons notices[118] (except the ones issued by the courts); b) the receipt and immediate transmission to the judicial authorities of any information on the disappearance and follow-up of the disappearance information; and c) cooperation by the case manager with the actors responsible for the investigation. It can also proceed to distribute a discrete flyer if the region where the child may be located is known. This is always done in consultation with the police. Investigations of a judicial or police nature which are regulated by the Code of Criminal Procedure and by laws regulating the conduct of the police services, are the exclusive competence of the judicial authorities and the police services. Child Focus cannot conduct a police analysis of the registered data in the context of the handling of a specific file.

Another form of support to police investigations searching for missing unaccompanied minors is the use of national hotlines. **The network of 116 000**[119] **hotlines for missing children operates across borders with the police in cases of missing unaccompanied minors**. It is coordinated by **Missing Children Europe**, a federation of 31 members in 26 countries in Europe working against the issue of child disappearances. The 116 000 hotlines are operational in 27 Member States and also in Albania, Switzerland, Serbia, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. In most countries, hotlines are managed by NGOs e.g. Child Focus in **Belgium**, the Smile of a Child in **Greece**, while in few countries, the hotline is run by a law enforcement (e.g. SOS Alarm[120] in Sweden). 116 000 hotlines regularly collaborate on cross-border cases of missing children, aiding law enforcement investigation, coordinating publicity appeals (if requested), providing information and support to agencies, family members and carers involved and running training on case management and response. 116 000 hotlines also play an important role in preventing disappearances through training, research and awareness-raising campaigns.

In **Latvia**, a helpdesk for the search for missing minors, accepts calls related to missing minors and passes this information to the police, provides advice and support to those responsible for the missing minor and provide support in the investigation. This service operates 24/7 and is provided by the Ministry of the Interior.

In **Estonia** the procedures are the same as in Latvia, but the service is provided by the Social Insurance Board. In addition to phone calls, the service can be accessed via a website, e-mail, chat or Skype.

6. POLICE COOPERATION, INVOLVEMENT OF EU AGENCIES AND OTHER CROSS-BORDER NETWORKS

6.1. CROSS BORDER COOPERATION TOOLS

Normally all exchanges of cross-border information are carried out between the law enforcement agencies through the **SIRENE**[121] **Bureau** and the **National Contact Bureau of Interpol.**

Most Member States (AT,[122] **BE, CZ,**[123] **EL, ES, HR, DE, EE, FI, IT, LV, LU, NL, MT, PL,**[124] **SK,**[125] **SI, SE), Norway and the United Kingdom**[126] informed that the information related to missing children reported by them can be consulted by other Members States using the SIS through the SIRENE Bureau.

116 Central Directorate of Operations concerning Judicial Police. This is done in accordance with the Ministerial Directive C-2005/09521 of 01/07/2005.
117 The federal police have concluded a partner agreement with broadcasting companies (television) in Belgium (VRT, RTBF, VTM and RTL-TVI). The missing person's notices are also made available to other media via the Belga press agency. These media are free to copy these notices.
118 Child Focus usually proceed to a public missing person's notice in the case of a very worrying disappearance, because other investigation techniques have been exhausted or because there is a certain track to explore.
119 The 116 000 is the single EU hotline number for missing children, created after the European Commission adopted in 2007 a decision reserving the 116 000 telephone number in all Member States as a hotline for reporting missing children. The hotline service was further reinforced in 2009 through the Universal Service Directive (2009/136/EC) and, more recently, through the European Electronic Communications Code providing that, "Member States should maintain their commitment to ensure that a well-functioning service for reporting missing children is actually available in their territories under the number '116000'". Information provided by Missing Children on 28 February 2020.
120 The SOS operators handle the calls as an emergency call to 112, but ask questions according to a special interview support, before the call is forwarded to the police, who then do a deeper interview.
121 Supplementary Information Request at the National Entries of the Schengen Information System. Each Member State operating SIS has a national SIRENE Bureau, operational 24/7, that is responsible for any supplementary information exchange and coordination of activities connected to SIS alerts.
122 Member States are enabled to also carry out comparisons with Eurodac.
123 The alert is automatically created in the SIS according to the Article 32 of the Council Decision 2007/533/JHA. Data in line with the SIS rules are provided (alphanumeric and biometric data based on availability).
124 Even though other MS do not have access to the National Police Information System, the information included in the system is replicated in the SIS.
125 The Patros system is synchronized with the SIS so the other Member States can consult the information on missing children.
126 The Police database ELYS is synchronized with the SIS.

Seven Member States, (**Belgium**, **Bulgaria**, **France**, **Hungary**[127], **Ireland**, **Italy**[128] and **Lithuania**[129]) and Norway reported that information about missing unaccompanied minors is not registered in systems that can be consulted by other Member States. Therefore, information from national databases is not shared directly. In **Italy**, information about missing minors can be requested from public bodies in charge of unaccompanied minors-related activities. **Malta** reported that the police or the Office of the Refugee Commission will do the follow-up and will inform the Agency of the Welfare of Asylum Seekers of any new developments. If a minor is detected in another Member State, the Vice Squad will be informed immediately.

In cooperation with all Member States and several international organisations, Frontex developed a dedicated publication "VEGA Children at borders", aiming to enhance border guard officers' awareness of children (minors) crossing the external sea border of the EU, unaccompanied or not. It can improve identification of children on the move at risk at EU external borders, while ensuring respect for child rights and enhancing activities against criminal threat to their safety and refer them to the welfare and protection institutions, if required.[130]

Extensive discussions are ongoing on the future role and expansion of the EUROSUR system[131] and the possibility for the system to be better used for the purpose of detecting, preventing and combating irregular immigration and cross-border crime and contributing to ensuring the protection and saving the lives of migrants. But, at this stage, it is cannot be used for the purpose of identifying missing children, as the exchange of this kind of personal data is prohibited.[132]

6.2. OTHER FORMS OF COOPERATION

Another form of cooperation is the **PEN-MP**, the Police Expert Network on Missing Persons, initiated by the AMBER Alert Europe foundation. The PEN-MP was recognised on 18 October 2019 by the European Council with its formal affiliation to the Law Enforcement Working Party (LEWP) as an expert network. The network consists of 50 police law enforcement missing person experts from 21 countries, most of which are EU Member States. It focuses on three areas:

- Enabling its members to quickly contact and consult each other about missing (children) cases;
- Providing training and developing training material for its members and other law enforcement authorities on how to deal with missing persons (children) cases;
- Offering expertise to contribute to the debate on EU policy regarding missing persons (children) through its members.

Currently, the PENMP is chaired by the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Slovenia.

AMBER Alert Europe is primarily responsible for the administrative and logistical support of the PENMP, including its Public Affairs. It facilitates the PENMP's expert training sessions and supports, manages and supervises the EU-funded PENMP projects. These activities are strictly separated from the operational police activities of the PENMP. The exchange of operational police information takes place through the official channels (such as SIS and SIRENE, SIENA, and INTERPOL), also respecting the EU legal framework plus relevant legislation, directives and regulations relating to privacy and data protection.[133]

In **Italy,** the State Police is part of the PEN-MP since the launch of the initiative in 2014. Moreover, in 2018, the Italian State Police joined the international network coordinated by the International **Centre for Missing and Exploited Children - ICMEC,** an American organisation that collaborates with the Department of Justice of the Government of Washington.

The website of the State Police dedicated to missing children (it.globalmissingkids.org), is still part of the "World Network for Missing Children" Global Missing Children Network - GMCN coordinated by ICMEC (which currently includes 30 countries). On this website "posters" of missing children with a wide media impact are published and, for "long-term" cases, age-progressed images are posted. The website has been using an IT platform (GMCNgine created by ICMEC). Since 2018 the website uses artificial intelligence and facial recognition technology to analyse the contents of the web (including the dark-web) to compare images of missing children and identify possible matches, thus providing useful indications for the location of the children themselves.

Every year, the GMCN partners meet in a different country for the annual conference and training. During the last conference in Lisbon (December 2019) issues of interest on missing children were addressed, such as risk assessment criteria and alerts, awareness-raising campaigns related to the International Missing Children Day (25 May), missing children and migration. In 2020, the annual conference will be organised in Rome by the Central Anti-Crime Directorate of the State Police, along with an ad-hoc multi-agency training for police officials**.**

In **Greece**, the Hellenic Police also publishes the data on missing children in cooperation with the Greek NGO "Smile of the Child", whose mission is to provide assistance to missing children or children in difficult situations.

6.3. DETECTION OF A MISSING CHILD IN ANOTHER MEMBER STATE

All Member States with the exception of Belgium reported that they contact the Member State that first issued an alert if they have detected and identified the missing unaccompanied minor on their territory. As mentioned above, the communication is done through the respective SIRENE bureau.[134].

However, Missing Children Europe ran several simulations[135] on cross-border disappearances in several Member States[136] and indicated that cross-border collaboration did not happen in practice in any of these countries.

127 The Warrant Registration System is only accessible to Hungarian authorities.
128 Currently, institutions entitled to access data of "Informatics System for Minors" are: Regions (competent for authorization/accreditation of UAMs' reception facilities); Municipalities; Prefectures - Territorial office of the Government, Police Authorities. However, the Ministry of Labour and Social Politics - within the limits imposed by the national and European regulation on data protection – may communicate data contained in the "Informatics System for Minors" to other public administrations which carry out activities relating UAMs. These public administrations act as a contact point for other Member States interested in data about missing UAMs.
129 However, Migration Department handles the database on unaccompanied minors in LT, receives information on dissapearances and provide information and consultations to the other MS when needed.
130 Information provided by Frontex on 19 February 2020.
131 Regulation (EU) No 1052/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2013 establishing the European Border Surveillance System (Eurosur) included now in Regulation 1896/2019 on the European Border and Coast Guard.
132 Information provided by Frontex on 19 February 2020.
133 https://www.amberalert.eu/police-expert-network/
134 In Cyprus, the communication is done through Interpol.
135 Within the framework of the INTERACT project which was assessing practices in the protection of missing unaccompanied children.
136 BE, EL, FR, IT, SE and UK

6.4. WITHDRAWING ALERTS

All Member States and Norway can withdraw their alerts[137] in the event that a missing unaccompanied minor is found either on their territory or in another Member State. However, in practice, this is not always respected. Germany reported that in certain cases when the minor is found the withdrawal of the alert is not (always) done.

Also, the practices vary between Member States. In some Member States the alert is withdrawn as soon as the unaccompanied minor is detected[138]. **Bulgaria** writes an observation note when withdrawing an alert. In **France**, the alert is withdrawn within 24 hours from the moment the minor is found. In the **Czech Republic** the alert is deleted as soon as the minor is repatriated, or the case is solved.[139]

7. IMMEDIATE PROTECTION MEASURES AND REFERRAL MECHANISMS

All Member States[140] and Norway reported that once the child has been found, internal frameworks provide that protection measures are immediately taken for the child, as the child becomes their responsibility. In this situation the Member State has several options:

1. The minor becomes the responsibility of the State that found him/her and the child is taken care of by the child protection services. In case the residence status of the minor is found to be irregular and the Member State does not have a system in place to place them, the minor will be placed in a reception facility.
2. The minor is returned to the Member State that issued the initial alert. The return can only be made following consultation with the requesting Member State and taking into consideration the best interest of the child.
3. If the unaccompanied minor expresses that s/he wants to return to his/her country of origin and that s/he has living relatives willing to take care of him/her, the minor can be returned to his/her country of origin instead to the requesting Member State, following an evaluation by the migration services and in consultation with the requesting Member State. .

In Austria, if the minor is detected and there are no persons living in the territory who have custody over the child, the child will be taken into state custody. In the case of children who have not applied for international protection, the youth welfare service is the competent authority. In **Spain,** the necessary inquiries take place and the judicial authority as well as the Prosecutor are informed. In **Croatia** and **Estonia[141],** the child will be referred to the social welfare authority. **Finland**, **France, Hungary, Ireland[142]** and **the Slovak Republic** place the minor in an adapted children's facility/care placement after having contacted the Member State that issued the alert. This placement will last until a final decision is taken about which country will take care of the child. In **Italy**, it is the municipality where the minor is found that will take care of the child. However, the General Directorate for Immigration and Integration Policy shall be informed of the detection of the minor. However, the General Directorate for Immigration and Integration Policies of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies should be informed about the presence of the unaccompanied minor on the Italian territory and about the protection measures adopted with regard to him/her.

In **Belgium,** once the child is detected, they will be taken in charge as for any other unaccompanied minor. The Guardianship Service has to be contacted and a special registration form for unaccompanied minors has to be filled out and sent to the same service. As soon as possible, a guardian should be appointed. When an unaccompanied minor presents him/herself at the Immigration Office, specialised staff will be present and place the child in a secure and child-friendly environment. When an unaccompanied minor is directly referred to a reception facility, a specialised team will be present at the Observation and Orientation Centres of Fedasil to give the child all the necessary information and protection. The Child Protection Services are not present during the registration process, but if necessary, the guardian can request their intervention and/or support.

In the **Czech Republic** upon the detection of the unaccompanied minor on the territory, the Social and Legal Child Protection Authority (OSPOD) is notified immediately. Care begins immediately when the OSPOD employee takes custody of the unaccompanied minor, assuming full responsibility to act in the child's best interests and provide the necessary support. This mainly entails a petition for a preliminary injunction placing the unaccompanied minor in an appropriate environment. The court must decide within 24 hours. Upon issuance of a preliminary injunction, the unaccompanied minor gains entitlement to stay in the territory of the Czech Republic. Once a preliminary injunction has been issued, all necessary care will usually be provided by the Facility for Children-foreigners with cooperation of OSPOD, whose employee will be designated as guardian for the child. The OSPOD has the obligation to inform the country of origin of minors who are not applicants for international protection in order to search for their parents. After investigation of the situation, the children are either passed on directly to the parents or to institutional care in their country of origin. In other case, relevant OSPOD coordinates the steps to place the UAM to some kind of long-term substitute care in the Czech Republic

In the context of the Dublin Regulation procedures which only applies to unaccompanied minors who have applied for international protection, in **Greece** the Asylum Service proceeds with assessing the best interests of the child, which included evidence assessment and/or follow up of the unaccompanied minor's whereabouts, situation and location (through EURODAC, Dublinet, Embassies), as long as Greece remains the responsible Member State for the unaccompanied minor until his/her family reunification or until the safe transfer to another Member State is carried out.

Latvia provides placements for unaccompanied minors, not only in the child-care facilities, but depending on the status of unaccompanied minor, also in accommodation centres, with a foster family, etc.

In **Sweden,** if a missing unaccompanied minor is discovered by the police or the authorities, the social services in the municipality

137 National alerts as well as SIS alerts and when applicable Interpol "Yellow Notice".
138 IT, LU and SE. In Italy, if the minor is not found, this alert will remain until the minor turns 18 years of age. Luxembourg only withdraws the alert if the Member State which found the minor has taken provisional care of the minor.
139 However, in the case of the Facility for Children-foreigners (ZDC), the missing minor is deleted from its internal "search" list not only if the minor is found but also in case the court decision about the placement of this child to ZDC is cancelled or lost its validity.
140 Malta reported that to date they never encountered cases of unaccompanied minors who applied for international protection with them after being marked as missing in another Member State.
141 The Police will inform the Social Insurance Board Child Protection Department about a detected/found minor.
142 The child remains under the care and responsibility of Tusla.

where the minor is found will be informed immediately and given primary responsibility for the care and well-being of the child. The social service then contacts the Migration Agency to investigate whether a new asylum application needs to be made depending on whether the previous asylum application has been closed.

In the **United Kingdom**, in accordance with the national emergency child protection arrangements, the child will be placed in care and becomes a 'looked after child'.

8. COLLECTING DATA ON MISSING CHILDREN

8.1. WHAT DATA IS COLLECTED ON MISSING UNACCOMPANIED MINORS?

All Member States reported that information is collected[143] on the personal characteristics of the minor such as name (first and last names), nicknames, names of the parents, identification number, age, gender, nationality,[144] life habits, characteristic features (i.e. tattoo, missing teeth), physical description, clothes, mobile phone number and on the circumstances of his/her disappearance (i.e. date, place, location), and the level of risk of the disappearance. Member States also try to access the social network of the minor (i.e. friends, family members, teachers, social workers but also his/her social media) to find the motives of the disappearance and for any indication of where the minor might be.

The police collect photographs and fingerprints[145] if available (for comparison purposes with databases). Some Member States collect DNA samples (if available) and any other pieces of evidence that will be useful for the investigation. However, only **Germany** reported that a DNA profile is created if DNA analysis-capable material can be secured, and this is done only in the event of a serious presumed death (e.g. after finding a suicide note or due to the special circumstances of the missing persons) and persistent missing persons. In **Italy,** the "AM Form" is compiled by the Forensic Police to implement the Ri.Sc. database (Missing Persons Search) to check possible matches with the data of unidentified corpses.

The **United Kingdom** was the only country to answer that no information on nationality or country of origin is collected.

8.2. WHO COLLECTS THE DATA ON MISSING UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN?

In principle, in the majority of responding Member States, it is the police[146] that collects the data on missing unaccompanied children. In some other Member States, the Immigration Services also collect the data (e.g. the Situation Centre of the Finnish Immigration Service, from the electronic case management system (UMA) in Finland, the Migration Department in Lithuania, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in Italy and SEF in Portugal), in others the Border Guard[147] [148]. In **Cyprus**, the Social Welfare Service carries out this task and in Hungary, it is the Children's Centre.[149] **Ireland** reported that data on children missing from State care, including unaccompanied minors, is collected by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency[150]. **Malta** reported that the coordinator of the reception centre and social worker update any missing unaccompanied minors in the database of the reception centre. However, **Belgium** and **France** noted a lack of recording and centralisation of the data. **France** also reported that the recorded data are fragmented between different institutions (Child Welfare Services, Judicial Protection of Juveniles, police and gendarmerie) plus there are technical limitations.

In the **United Kingdom** it is the Department for Education and in **Norway** the reception centres work closely with the Directorate of Immigration and the police.

In **Belgium,** the General National Database of the police does not specify if the disappearance concerns an unaccompanied minor, and there are other actors that collect information on missing unaccompanied children besides the police, such as: Child Focus,[151] Fedasil (in its digital residents' database, but data is only from unaccompanied minors that went missing from a reception facility), the Guardianship Service, and the Immigration Office (but only the data of those missing unaccompanied minors that were reported to them).[152]

In **Croatia**, data about alerts on missing unaccompanied minors is collected in the Ministry of Interior (MoI) information system. This data is only available upon request from the MoI IT department. The main problem is that once the unaccompanied minor is found the alert is deleted from the system.

In the **Czech Republic**, there are two possibilities to collect data: 1) extract some data from police database where all missing persons are registered; 2) the Office for International Legal Protection of Children collects the data provided by the local social authorities (however these data can be incomplete, because not all local social authorities provide this kind of information).

With regard to the collection of information concerning unaccompanied minors going missing, good practices were reported concerning the collection of data by the reception centres. In **Greece**, the National Centre of Social Solidarity (EKKA) has developed a database[153] to collect information regarding the capacity of different accommodation facilities (short term and long term), and to store information and create a profile for each unaccompanied minor that was referred or placed

143 These data are primarily collected for practical use and not always accessible for creating statistics.
144 Malta also collects information on race.
145 In the Netherlands fingerprints are collected from minors since the age of 6 years of age. In Germany, with the Second Data Sharing Improvement Act, which came into force on 9 August 2019, further measures were taken to register unaccompanied minors. Unaccompanied minors can now be registered in the Central Register of Foreigners (AZR) promptly upon their entry and thus independently of an asylum application (Section 42a subs. 3a SGB VIII). In addition, as of 1 April 2021, the minimum age for taking fingerprints will be reduced from 14 years to 6 years in connection with the EURODAC III Regulation (Section 49 subs. 5, 6, 8 and 9 of the Residence Act).
146 In Poland it is the police which keeps records of the disappearances and not the Border Guard.
147 EE, LV, PL.
148 The Police and Border Guard Board.
149 The Károlyi István Children's Center provides daily information to the institution maintainer and the sectoral management ministry according to the criteria specified by the child protection sectoral management.
150 Ireland reported only on data collected by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency on unaccompanied minors in State care who go missing. Data is collected by Tusla's Office of the Chief of Operations. Tusla's UAM service provides the relevant data on children going missing from care to a central collection point in the chief operations office.
151 Their database does not include all the disappearances that were reported to the police, since the police do not report all disappearances to Child Focus.
152 A minor who is known to the Immigration Office has an electronic file at the Immigration Office. In the event of a disappearance, requests from the police and the answers of the Immigration Office will be classified in this file.
153 It only contains the data of unaccompanied minors who are hosted in the accommodation facilities. (It contains all the UAMs referred to EKKA for placement not only those who are already accommodated). Data of unaccompanied minors who are not hosted in the facilities is collected in the police database for missing persons. Additional data related to unaccompanied minors is collected by The Smile of the Child which handles the 116000 hotline.

in an accommodation facility. Meanwhile, legal provisions for the Unaccompanied Minors Registry and the Accommodation Centres Registry (for unaccompanied minors) have been adopted. Through this process, EKKA is able to monitor the situation and it is mandatory for all referral actors (Police, Asylum Service, Reception and Identification Centres (RICs), NGOs) or accommodation providers to report to EKKA every time an unaccompanied minor absconds from their facilities.

In **Italy**, the Law No 47/2017 established at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy the "National Information System for Unaccompanied Minors" (SIM). This system takes the form of a census information system, aimed at recording the entry of the minor into the national territory, regardless of their status as an applicant for international protection, and to monitor their subsequent reception path. For each minor, personal data, any identity document held, the placement and information relating to administrative procedures concerning him/her (such as, for example, the request for international protection), the reception path and his/her possible removal are recorded in the system. The public bodies responsible for the reception and protection of unaccompanied minors (first, the local authorities, responsible for taking charge of minors) have access to the SIM and can view and enter data pertaining to them within it. The reports concerning unaccompanied minors made by the Public Security Authorities and the Juvenile Courts are entered in the SIM by the competent office. The SIM also records information concerning missing unaccompanied foreign minors, namely the date and place of disappearance, as well as all previous reports of disappearance or tracing. Such information remains recorded in the SIM until the minor reaches the age of majority or if he/she is tracked the national territory. A protocol was also signed with the Government's Special Commissioner for Missing Persons, aimed at sharing the information contained in the SIM on unaccompanied minors reported missing.

In **the Netherlands** registrations of unaccompanied minors going missing are made by several organisations which work with unaccompanied minors (such as the reception organisation for asylum seekers (COA) and the guardian agency for unaccompanied minors (Nidos) or have a task in registration and investigating missing people in general (police). Registrations about missing unaccompanied minors are made within the scope of the tasks of these organisations. Each of them uses their own definitions, directly derived from their specific tasks and applicable laws. As a result, the numbers generated by the different organisations can deviate, as can the registered details. However, the Dutch Minister of Migration recently announced in a letter to the Dutch parliament (23 March 2020) the concerned organisations agreed on the use of more joint definitions.

In **Norway**, the data is electronically registered at the reception centres. The reception centres and the Directorate of Immigration have a shared system which allows updated information to be shared when an unaccompanied minor goes missing.

The **network of hotlines for missing children** collects and analyses data related to cases of missing unaccompanied children reported to the 116 000 hotlines on an annual basis. Data is broken down in five groups of missing children: Missing children in migration, runaways, parental abduction, criminal abductions, lost or injured children, otherwise missing children.[154]

8.3. WHICH CATEGORIES OF MINORS ARE INCLUDED?

Member States reported that they do not differentiate between different groups of missing children when it comes to data collection.

8.4. DOES THE DATA INCLUDE MISSING UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN WHOSE AGE ASSESSMENT HAS NOT YET BEEN CONCLUDED?

In 12 Member States, Norway and the United Kingdom, the data registry also covers "age disputed minors" whose age assessment has not yet been concluded.[155] Nevertheless, in five Member States[156] , even if the age assessment has not been concluded, the individual has to be treated as a minor and the procedure described above has to be launched irrespective of any doubts on the age of the minor. In **Hungary**, the data registry only covers children whose age assessment has been concluded.[157] In **Bulgaria** if the children's age is not confirmed, they may not be subject to national-level search.

8.5. WHY DATA OF MISSING UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN ARE NOT COLLECTED?

Latvia, Luxembourg and **Slovenia** reported that they do not collect data for missing unaccompanied children currently and that they do not have plans for collecting it in the future. **Estonia** and **Latvia** indicated that there were no reported disappearances of missing unaccompanied minors during the last years, however, data would be collected if it were needed or officially requested by EU institutions

Luxembourg mentioned that neither the police nor the Directorate of Immigration collects data on missing children. There are two reasons for not collecting the data: a lack of registration of data and no national need for the data - the figures for unaccompanied minors in Luxembourg are very low. However, if needed, it is possible to determine how many unaccompanied minors have gone missing during the asylum procedure while a closure decision is taken. Furthermore, it is registered when a minor applies for international protection but disappears before lodging the application for international protection. In practice, the reception centres alert the police when a child disappears, like for any Luxembourgish minor.

Belgium emphasised the need for a centralised database at the national level but this has not been concretised and **Sweden** answered that this year (February 2020) the authorities concerned had gathered to work on national guidelines where the statistics issue was addressed. As of 2020, the County Administrative Boards have been commissioned, as a way to strengthen the child's rights, to cooperate with relevant actors in order to counteract the risk that unaccompanied minors and adolescents are exposed to human trafficking and exploitation.

154 The results of this data collection are published annually in May in a publication named "Figures and trends of missing children". See http://missingchildreneurope.eu/annual-reports/documentid/473/searchid/5/searchvalue/116000

155 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, ES, FI, HR, IT, NL, PL, SE. In Finland, the data source is based on the termination of registration in reception centres for unaccompanied minors. In Poland, pursuant to the provisions of Decision No. 165 of the Police Chief Commandant of July 25, 2017 regarding the functioning of the National Police Information System, in the event of disappearance of unaccompanied minors, these data are obtained from their documents, statements of persons or other sources.

156 BG, DE, IE, IT, and LT. In Ireland, Tusla does not conduct age assessments and cannot make a formal legal declaration about a person's age. Tusla does form an opinion on the basis of a Child Protection Risk Assessment, which includes a dimension on age. An inconclusive Child Protection Risk Assessment cannot be used to remove a child from the care and protection of the Child Care Act 1991, as amended.

157 In all cases, the age of the UAM's entering the Children's Center in Hungary is assessed in advance by the foreign police or the asylum procedure.

The statistical issue remains so far unresolved and is highly dependent on the procedures within the Police administration regarding the registration of missing children.

8.6. HOW IS THE DATA KEPT UP TO DATE AND MONITORED?

14 Member States[158] reported that the police continuously update the file throughout the investigation. Norwegian authorities continuously monitor and update information throughout the investigation.

In **Italy**, missing children data is monitored by the Government's Special Commissioner for Missing Persons in cooperation with the Department of Public Security. The data entered into the police information system[159] are processed by the Department of Public Security and forwarded to the office of the Commissioner to prepare of the six-monthly report on missing persons to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

In other Member States[160] the information on the disappearance of a missing unaccompanied minor is updated by institutions other than the police.

In **Belgium**, Child Focus updates and monitors their data. Fedasil does not update the information, unless the missing minor 'is reintegrated in Fedasil's reception network. The same happens in **Greece** and **Norway** when the minor reappears in the reception centres. In **Hungary**, the Children's Centre provides daily information to the institution maintainer and the sectoral management ministry, which also records unauthorised departures. In **Lithuania,** the Migration Department updates the file if the minor returns to the Refugee Reception Centre or is identified by another institution and returned to the Centre.

In **Ireland**, the case file remains open to Tusla (the Child and Family Agency) until the child's 18th birthday, when the file is closed by Tusla but remains open to the police. The police regularly update Tusla regarding missing young people, even over the age of 18 years. Tusla reports to the police in writing if a missing child is located.

In **the Netherlands** every organisation that registers a missing unaccompanied minor will make the registration in accordance with their own working process and definitions. COA, for instance, distinguishes between a missing unaccompanied minor and an unaccompanied minor who is considered to have departed with unknown destination (MOB). An unaccompanied minor is considered missing when he/she has not been seen for 24 hours, without any notification, and reported missing digitally in the portal of the national police. When there are indications of (direct) danger, the police will be notified immediately. An unaccompanied minor is considered departed with unknown destination when he/she does not return from having gone missing, using certain time limits. Nidos also uses the concept 'departed with unknown destination', however no time limits are used: actions of the guardian are determined by the degree of concern/worries that the guardian and foster parents have about the disappearance of the minor. Like the police, these organisations will keep their registrations up to date.

8.7. IS THERE A RISK OF DUPLICATION OF DATA? CHALLENGES AND BEST PRACTICES?

Only some Member States[161] reported on the possible risk of duplication of data. **Austria, Belgium, Germany** and **the Netherlands** reported a risk of duplication in the data collected while **Finland,[162] Greece, Hungary,[163] Ireland,[164] Italy, Spain, Norway** and **the United Kingdom** informed that there was no risk of duplication.

Austria and Sweden indicated that when a person deliberately used different personal data when dealing with governmental or non-governmental institutions, there was always the risk that the same person could be recorded under different personal data. Unique identification was then only possible by obtaining and comparing fingerprints.

In **Belgium**, there was no shared database in which the data from different administrative systems and other sources was collected making the risk of duplication a reality. This was the reason why some disappearances were 'double coded' as some registered disappearances concerned the same minor, known under different identities and/or referred several times to an administrative system.

In **Germany**, the data reflected the number of missing persons' reports filed, so the risk of duplication was high if the individual has been reported missing more than once. Furthermore, notifications were often missing if the unaccompanied minor reported missing was subsequently found. In addition, a report may also be missing, for example, if an unaccompanied minor travelled abroad alone and this was not reported. It could also be assumed that at least some of the missing persons' reports were a result of multiple entries in the course of the initial distribution of asylum seekers. Multiple entries due to missing identity papers and missing identification measures were also possible. The evaluation of the joint file could therefore only provide an approximation of the situation.

In **the Netherlands** the majority of missing unaccompanied minors are registered by more than one organisation. The registration of disappearances is, with the exception of registration by the police, part of a more comprehensive registration process that the organisations have to carry out as part of their respective tasks, so duplication is inevitable. Besides that, an unaccompanied minor can disappear and then return more than once. These consecutive disappearances can be registered separately in the same administration/system. As mentioned above, very recently progress was made on the use of more joint definitions.

A good practice in order to avoid duplication was to centralise the collection of data as is done in **Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Spain** and **the United Kingdom**.

It is important to mention that within the SIS, there is automatic functionality to identify possible duplications via comparison of identity particular and comparison of fingerprints. Any possible duplications are immediately dealt by SIRENEs.

158 AT, BG, CY, CZ, ES, FI, HR, IE, IT, MT, NL, PL, SE and SK. In Finland, the registration is renewed in case the UAM returns to reception system and the "disappeared"-label is removed from the system. It is also possible that while the UAM remains as disappeared in the system, information about location is updated, for example through the Dublin process.
159 The data contained into the "police information system", more exactly the "Inter-Forces Data Base -SDI", are strictly confidential and are processed by the Department of Public Security. Statistical information are forwarded by the Department of Public Security to the office of the Commissioner in view of the periodic report on missing persons released by the Commissioner.
160 BE, EL, IE, LT and UK
161 AT, BE, DE, EL, IE, IT, NL and SE plus UK
162 The data is collected from one register, the electronic case management system (UMA).
163 The Children's Centre records and the Central Electronic Register of Service Users (CERSU) database are separate, so there is no possibility of duplication.
164 Answer relates to data collected by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency.

8.8. WHERE IS THE DATA STORED?

The data for missing unaccompanied minors is entered in the national information systems of the police and in the majority of Member States it is introduced in the SIS (see section 7). In **Ireland,** data on UAMs missing from care is held in the internal systems of the child protection authority. However, a distinction has to be made between those Member States that have a specific database of missing children and Member States that register the disappearance in the national databases on missing persons. As can be seen from Figure 6 only nine countries[165] reported that they had specific databases for missing children. The rest of the reporting Member States used the general missing persons database.

In **Belgium**, the police registers missing persons in their General National Database.[166] The other actors (Fedasil, Guardianship Service, Immigration Office) register missing children in their own internal databases, but these are not missing persons databases.

FIGURE 6 DATABASES USED FOR REPORTING MISSING CHILDREN

Source: EMN NCPs

8.9. IN WHICH ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS IS THE DATA COLLECTED?

Some of the administrative systems where information on missing unaccompanied minors is collected in the different Member States can be seen in the table below.

165 EL, HU, IE, FI, IT, LT, PT and NO
166 The General National Database of the police consists of all the information systems of the police and is intended to support the tasks of the judicial or administrative police in order to guarantee a maximum structured and secure information management. The General National Database of the police contains all the information that the police officers need in terms of people, objects, vehicles and places. Information on missing persons is only a part of this database.
167 "List" of Office for International Legal Protection of Children. These data can be incomplete, because not all local social authorities provide this kind of information.
168 Data on UAM going missing who are not hosted in accommodation facilities.
169 Internal systems of the child protection authority (Tusla)
170 The data is primarily entered in the police database. In addition, the Finnish Immigration Service keeps their own record.
171 In accordance with the ordinance No. 48 of the Police Chief Commandant of 28 June 2018 regarding search for a missing person and proceedings in the event of the disclosure of a person with an unknown identity or finding unknown corpses and human remains.

FIGURE 7 ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS WHERE INFORMATION ON MISSING UNACCOMPANIED MINORS IS COLLECTED

Member States (plus NO and UK)	Administrative system/ name is provided
AT	Police administrative system
BE	Police (and public prosecutor), Fedasil, Guardianship Service, Child Focus
BG	Automated Information Database System “Search and tracing activities”.
CY	Police, Social Welfare Services
CZ	Police database for missing persons and the “list” of the Office for International Legal Protection of Children
DE	Specially marked data records (with the keyword "unaccompanied minor refugee") from the joint database for missing and unknown dead (Vermi/Utot). The police information system is called INPOL.
EE	The Police and Border Guard Board´s national database,
EL	Social Solidarity – EKKA database and Police database for missing persons
ES	Police reporting systems, which are connected to the central databases of the State Secretariat for Security
FI	Electronic case management system (UMA) of the Finnish Immigration Service
FR	Child Welfare Services, Judicial Protection of Juveniles, police and gendarmerie
HR	Ministry of Interior Information System
HU	Central Electronic Register of Service Users database
IE	Internal systems of the child protection authority (Tusla)
IT	Police Authority’s national databases plus the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy “Informatics System for Minor”.
LT	Migration Department’s administrative system on unaccompanied minors
MT	Police Incident Report System (PIRS)
NL	Police databases, central reception organisation (COA) and guardian agency for UAM (Nidos)
PL	National Police Information System (KSIP)
PT	SEF Integrated Information System
SE	Police Authority’s national databases.
NO	Data is collected from an administrative system at reception centres.
UK	Data is collected from English Local Authorities by the Department of Education.

Source: EMN NCPs

172 This system is part of the Ministry of Interior information databases processing personal information.
173 Created by law 47/2017.

8.10. DATA AVAILABLE AT AGGREGATED LEVEL

Seven Member States [174] and Norway reported that they hold aggregated data on missing unaccompanied minors.[175] In **Italy**, the number of missing unaccompanied minors is available within the statistical and monitoring reports, concerning the phenomenon of unaccompanied foreign minors in Italy, periodically published by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and publicly available[176] **Hungary** holds limited data at an aggregated level (e.g. age, nationality, country of origin, sex). In the **Czech Republic** part of the information collected is used for analytical and strategical work of the police.

FIGURE 8 DATA AVAILABLE IN THE EU MEMBER STATES, NORWAY AND THE UNITED KINGDOM ON THE NUMBER OF UNACCOMPANIED MINORS GOING MISSING

Source: EMN NCPs

9. DATA COLLECTED (2017-2019)

Whilst most Member States collect information on missing unaccompanied minors, this information is not readily available in most cases. In total, 15 Member States were able to provide information in all three of the reference years 2017-2019.[177] **Italy** reported for 2018 and 2019. **Spain** were able to provide data for one year only. **Bulgaria** and **Slovenia** reported that no information was available; in the case of **Bulgaria**, this was because the national legislation on search activities did not provide for a separate category of "missing unaccompanied minor migrants". **France** stated that no precise data has been collected on the national level on unaccompanied missing children. **Estonia** and **Latvia** reported that there have not been missing unaccompanied minor cases reported during the last three years (2017-2019).

The following summarises the latest available data for those Member States that were able to provide it:

- **Belgium** reported different groups of data provided by different institutions.
- Child Focus reported 119 cases in 2017, 128 in 2018 and 113 in 2019. The large majority were male: 95 (79.8 %) in 2017, 99 (77.3 %) in 2018 and 82 (72.6 %) in 2019. With regard to their age, the majority of children were under the age of 15[178] with the exception of 2019: 63 (52.9 %) in 2017; 72 (56.3 %) in 2018 and 48 (42.5 %) in 2019). The three main nationalities of the children reported missing during the three years 2017-2019 were Afghanistan, Morocco and Eritrea which amounted to 75 (20.8 %), 65 (18.1 %) and 29 (8.1 %) respectively.
- The Guardianship Service registered 862 disappearances in 2019 of persons who were reported to the service as a possible unaccompanied minors.[179] Of these, 514 disappeared[180] without any doubt as to their minority, one was under the age of five (the child was taken by the suspected mother without being able to establish this officially); two were between 6-10 years; 118 were between 11 and 15 years; and 404 were 16 years or older.
- Fedasil reported disappearances from their four Observation and Orientation Centres,[181] a total of 987 missing unaccompanied minors in 2018 and 1072 in 2019.[182] The large majority was male (812 (82.3 %) in 2018 and 849 (79.2 %) in 2019) and more than 15 years old (867 (87.8

174 Except the data regarding the circumstances of the disappearance.
175 BG, CY, EL, IE, IT, MT and PT. These Member States did not specify which information is aggregated. In Bulgaria, this excludes data regarding the circumstances of the disappearance.
176 https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/immigrazione/focus-on/minori-stranieri/Pagine/Dati-minori-stranieri-non-accompagnati.aspx
177 BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, FI, HU, IE, LT, LU, LV, MT, PT, SE.
178 Regarding age categorisation, Child Focus has put the 15-year-old in the 'less than 15 years' - category because they categorise disappearances themselves into: 1) younger than 13 years (a criterion for worrying disappearance); 2) 13-15 years; 3) 16-17 years. Information provided by Child Focus on 2nd March 2020.
179 The Guardianship Service registered these disappearance as 'worrying' on the basis of the information that it had at that time, such as, for example, the age or behaviour that was in contrast with the person's usual behaviour. This does not mean that the public prosecutor also regarded this disappearance as worrying. The public prosecutor is the competent authority for ultimately determining whether a disappearance is worrying or not.
180 Some of these 514 youngsters reappeared, after which they sometimes disappear again, etc. Taking this into account, the Guardianship Service concluded that eventually 420 unaccompanied minors disappeared without there being any news from them.
181 First reception phase for UAMs.
182 No information was available for 2017.

%) in 2018 and 954 (89 %) in 2019). The main nationalities were Eritrea (37.4 %), Morocco (17.3 %), Algeria (13.2 %) and Sudan (6.8 %) during the two years.

- **Cyprus** reported that during the period 2017-2019 only one unaccompanied minor went missing. It was a Somalian national, female and over the age of 15 years.
- **Czech Republic** reported that according to the data of the Office for International Legal Protection of Children, there were registered 4 UAMs going missing in 2017, 12 in 2018 and 18 in 2019. From those the totality in 2017 and 2018[183] were male and the large majority were over the age of 15 years of age (3 (75%) in 2017, 9 (75%) in 2018 and 13 (72.2 %) in 2019). The three most representative nationalities during the reporting period were: Afghanistan (27 (79.4 %)), Iraq (3 (8.8 %)) and Vietnam (3 (8.8 %)). The data from the police is not provided as it contains all foreigners unaccompanied minors.
- **Finland** reported 31 unaccompanied minors going missing in 2017, 10 in 2018 and 1 in 2019. The large majority were male (93.5 % in 2017 and 100% in 2018 and 2019) and over 15 years of age (96.8% in 2017 and 100 % in 2018 and 2019). The most representative nationalities during the three years were Belarus (9 (22 %)), Afghanistan (6 (14.6 %)) and Morocco (6 (14.6 %)).
- **Germany** reported 6 215 unaccompanied minors going missing in 2017, 3 968 in 2018 and 2 222 in 2019. The large majority of the unaccompanied minors going missing were male (5 769 (92.8 %) in 2017, 3 654 (92.1 %) in 2018 and 1 981 (89.2 %) in 2019). The large majority were older than 15 years of age (5 922 (95.3 %) in 2017, 3 817 (96.2 %) in 2018 and 2 097 (94.4 %) in 2019). The four top nationalities for the reporting period were: Afghanistan (2 739 (22.1 %)), Syria (2 160 (17.4 %), Morocco (1 221 (9.8 %) and Somalia (1 029 (8.3 %)). These four nationalities amounted to 57.6 % of the unaccompanied minors going missing. Germany reported that of the unaccompanied minors reported missing, 6 004 returned or were detected in 2017 (96.6 %), 3 744 (94.4 %) and 1 791 (80.6 %) in 2019.
- **Greece** reported 826 missing unaccompanied minors in 2017 (398 of whom found), 1114 in 2018 (505 found) and 1340 in 2019 (366 found). The large majority were male over 15 years of age. However, these numbers refer to persons who may have been reported missing more than once. Of those still remaining missing, many minors have returned but the authorities have not been notified of this or even, according to the experience of the Police, they have left the facility on their own will and under the supervision of a relative who lives in another EU member state. The later cases need to be identified through different systems so that they can be registered as found. Although, the number of cases reported cannot be considered reliable on the aforementioned grounds, in 2017 the most common nationalities were Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, Algeria and Iraq, in 2018, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and Algeria while in 2019 Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and Algeria.
- **Hungary** reported 220 missing unaccompanied minors in 2017, 90 in 2018 and 7 in 2019. In 2017 98.7 % /225) were male and only 1.3 % were female; in 2018, 84 (93.3 %) were male and 6.7% (6) were female and in 2019, 85.7 % (6) were male and only 14.3 % (1) was female. Different from other countries, the large majority of the missing unaccompanied minors were younger than 15 years of age (137 (60.1 %) in 2017, 57 (63.3 %) in 2018 and 4 (57.1 %) in 2019). The most common nationality during the three years was Afghani (183 (80 %) in 2017, 58 (64.4 %) in 2018 and 3 (42.8 %) in 2019). The second nationality was Pakistani (16, 17 and 1 respectively).
- **Ireland** reported that during 2017, eight unaccompanied minors were reported as missing from care; 11 in 2018 and 24 in 2019. 5, 4, and 6 unaccompanied minors were found in each year respectively.
- **Italy** reported 3 099 unaccompanied minors going missing in 2018 and 2 676 in 2019. As in other Member States the large majority of the minors going missing were male (2 913 (94 %) in 2018 and 2 570 (96 %) in 2019) and they were over the age of 15 years of age (2 843 (91.7 %) in 2018 and 2 457 (91.8 %) in 2019). The main nationalities in the two reporting years were: Tunisia (1 472), Eritrea (613) and Pakistan (503).
- **Lithuania** reported 10 missing unaccompanied minors in 2017, 18 in 2018 and 10 in 2019. The majority of unaccompanied minors were from Vietnam (35 of 38). However, it should be noted that majority of them absconded before concluding age assessment. Lithuania reports focus in strengthening cooperation with Vietnam in the past years.
- **Luxembourg** reported that during 2017 there were 30 missing unaccompanied minors, 32 in 2018 and 53 in 2019. In 2017 and 2018 all of them were male. In 2019 there was only one female missing unaccompanied minor. During 2017 and 2018 the principal nationality was Moroccan (16 and 8 respectively) respectively but during 2019 the main nationalities were Algerian (30) and Tunisia (11). The large majority of the missing unaccompanied minors were over 15 years of age (28 in 2017, 30 in 2018 and 51 in 2019) and the number of missing unaccompanied minors under the age of 15 remained constant at 2 during the three years.
- **Malta** reported two unaccompanied minors going missing in 2017, 16 in 2018, 64 in 2019 and 21 in 2020. From all the missing unaccompanied minors all are male with the exception of three females in 2019. The ages vary between the age of 14 and 18 years of age. The top five nationalities were Sudan, Bangladesh, Ivory Coast, Eritrea and Somalia.
- An analysis of missing unaccompanied minors in **the Netherlands**, published 23 March 2020, concluded that from 2015 up to and including 2018, 1 750 unaccompanied minors disappeared from Dutch reception accommodation. Most of them (88 %) were boys and 75% were aged 15-17 years old. Around 50% had disappeared before a decision on an asylum application was made, while the vast majority was proven to have been registered in another Member State before entering the Netherlands. For 24 % of these youngsters, the Netherlands received return requests from other Member States. The majority of the missing unaccompanied minors does not seem to have had the intention to stay in the Netherlands for a substantial period of time.
- **Portugal** reported that four unaccompanied minors went missing in 2017, five in 2018 and eight in 2019.
- The Police in the **Slovak Republic** do not collect data specifically on unaccompanied minors reported missing but on all missing minors within Slovakia. Data has been provided by the Centre for Children and Families[184] which recorded 23 missing unaccompanied minors in 2017, 9 in 2018 and 65 in 2019. They were mostly male, older than 15 years of age and the main nationalities were Afghanistan, Vietnam and Bangladesh.

183 There was no information provided for 2019 regarding gender.

184 Centre for Children and Families is an official state facility taking care for UAMs detected in the territory of the Slovak Republic. They record statistics of UAMs who escaped from the Centre for their internal purposes so the statistics may not reflect the entire situation of either those undetected UAMs or if UAM was reported missing by some other institution/private person/NGO.

- **Spain** reported that in 2018 a total of 8 871 third country national minors were reported missing.[185] From those the large majority were male (8 510, 95.9 %)) and older than 13 years of age (8 644 (97.4 %)).[186] The main nationalities were Morocco (5 950 (67.1 %)), Guinea (795 (9 %)), Algeria (686 (7.7 %)), Mali (441 (5 %)) and Ivory Coast (285 (3.2 %)).
- **Sweden** reported that according to the statistics from the Swedish Migration Agency 189 UAM went missing during 2019 from which almost 160 (85%) were male and 29 (15%) were female. The large majority were over the age of 15 (125 persons – 66%). The three main nationalities were Afghanistan (54), Morocco (48) and Somalia (19). According to the same statistics the total number of UAM that went missing were 270 persons during 2018 and 335 during 2017, for those years the main nationalities were the same.
- **Norway** reported 225 missing unaccompanied minors in 2017, all male, all over 15 years old; 201 from Afghanistan.

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185 Spain does not distinguish between third-country national accompanied and unaccompanied minors. This total is an aggregated figure, that is, 8 871 minors did not go missing in 2018, but as 2018 there were that number of minors missing.
186 Includes male and female.

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