



AMBER Alert Europe

Strategic Plan **2017 - 2022**



The European Child Rescue Alert &
Police Network on Missing Children
As supported by European Parliament WD 7/2016

AMBER Alert Europe

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Child abductors cross borders

In Europe, the border is always near. Police cooperation across borders to find missing children often deteriorates: urgent pleas from the police to the public to aid in the search stop at the border.

We strive to improve the protection of endangered missing children in Europe. Regardless of geographical or linguistic borders. When a child goes missing, we must do everything humanly possible to save their lives, as quickly as possible and with respect for the privacy of the child.

Since our start in 2013, we have taken important steps to further improve the protection of endangered missing children. The launch of AMBER Alert Luxembourg, setting up a Police Expert Network and our successful Written Declaration (backed by 465 MEPs!) are just a few examples.

We have another exciting year ahead of us. In 2017 we will launch AMBER Alert Malta, are co-organiser of the Police Expert Meeting of the Salzburg Forum and will continue to bring our Risk Triage document to the attention of missing children law enforcement experts.

We owe our progress to the passion and commitment of so many people. We are thankful to the organisations that support us. **Your help is crucial. You can save a missing child's life today.**

Thank you for your help.

Frank Hoen,
President AMBER Alert Europe



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Do everything humanly possible to save the lives of missing children

Frank Hoen, President AMBER Alert Europe

Mission:

To save missing children.

Vision:

A world where no child is missing.

Ambition:

We have the ambition to prevent children from going missing and to be a life-saving factor when they do get abducted or go missing. We aim to accomplish this by training and connecting law enforcement across European borders. Also, if necessary, by connecting law enforcement with the public.

Introduction

When an injured child is being rushed into the emergency room a quick intake assessment will take place. This enables medical staff to quickly identify risk and potentially save a child's life. This process is commonly referred to as triage.

A similar process is critical when a child goes missing and the child's life or health is at serious risk of harm

250 000 children are reported missing in the EU each year. ¹ Sometimes, the life of a missing child is in imminent danger. In these cases, every minute counts and immediate action is required. Extensive research shows that in 76% of abduction cases where a child was killed, the child was killed within three hours after the abduction. ^{2,3}

Protection of missing children

Dedicated to the protection of missing children, AMBER Alert Europe trains law enforcement, connects law enforcement across borders and helps law enforcement connect with the public when the police believe the public can help save the child's life.

The European Child Rescue Alert & Police Network on Missing Children

AMBER Alert Europe is an international not for profit organisation with 25 members (law enforcement, Ministries & NGOs) in 17 countries. Its Police Network consists of over 40 experts representing law enforcement from 14 EU countries. The goals of AMBER Alert Europe are backed by 465 Members of the European Parliament: most successful Written Declaration since 2011.

¹ 'Missing children in the European Union, Mapping, data collection and statistics', research conducted by Ecorys for the European Commission, 2013

² Case Management for Missing Children Homicide Investigation', Washington State Office of the Attorney General & US

³ Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, May 2006 – research based on large numbers of real cases

⁴ Information from the CATCHEM database (Centralized analytical team collating homicide expertise and management). CEOP, United Kingdom - research based on large numbers of real cases



“Every second without her is unbearable”

Mother abducted girl
Dutch AMBER Alert – September 29th, 2016



“For us, the border does not exist”

Yves Le Clair, Prosecutor of Briey, France
Picture: Alerte Enlèvement (French AMBER Alert) – April 23rd, 2015



“Child abductors do not stop at borders. Neither should an AMBER Alert”

Frank Hoen, President AMBER Alert Europe
Picture: Polish Child Alert (AMBER Alert) – April 15th, 2015



01

Ambition 2017 - 2022

1. Ambition 2017 - 2022

1.1 Aims

- To be a life-saving factor in abductions or disappearances of missing children throughout Europe.
- To prevent children from going missing throughout Europe.
- To train law enforcement, connect law enforcement across borders and, if necessary, connect law enforcement with the public and other organisations.

1.2 Objectives

Every missing child matters: quick identification of risk

To save the lives of missing children, AMBER Alert Europe calls for a risk triage for missing children to quickly (dis)qualify risk for the life or well-being of the missing child.

When a child goes missing, it is essential that the circumstances be properly evaluated to determine if the child's life is at immediate risk. Law enforcement agencies should be able to make an early assessment. Speed is essential in this process. Risk triage enables law enforcement to maximise the chances of safely recovering missing children at risk. It also leads to increased awareness on the appropriate investigative strategy for every missing child.

5 key recommendations to save more missing children

To complement the assessment of risk for missing children, AMBER Alert Europe aims to implement the following 5 key recommendations:

1. *A bigger, stronger AMBER Alert network:* AMBER Alert Europe works actively with Member States to assist with the development or further improvement of alert systems, which can also be used for other endangered missing children cases.
2. *More flexibility in issuing alerts:* increase the opportunities to save children at risk of immediate serious harm by adding the possibility to issue an alert when law enforcement specialists have assessed that the child's life is in imminent danger.
3. *Better cross-border information sharing:* child abductors cross borders. Every missing child deserves an equal chance of being found as quickly as possible. This must not be inhibited by them crossing borders. AMBER Alert Europe connects law enforcement, police and citizens across borders to share the missing child's information.
4. *Better cross-border police co-operation:* AMBER Alert Europe trains law enforcement experts and connects law enforcement across borders.
5. *Save missing children at borders:* to better protect missing children at the external EU borders, AMBER Alert Europe urges to immediately enter missing children in the Schengen Information System (SIS II). In addition, border guards must be informed about AMBER Alert and endangered missing children.



02

Strategy & Projects

2. Strategy & Projects

When a child is missing, an early assessment of the urgency of the situation is critical. Assessing the level of risk to the missing child's life and how immediate that risk is, is essential. Speed in this risk triage is needed to save lives. The assessment and categorisation of risk and the particular circumstances of the case should shape the response, informing the investigative and search strategies. Risk should also be regularly reviewed to consider evolving information and circumstances.

IMPACT

- Risk triage is the foundation for AMBER Alert Europe's law enforcement training programs and expert meetings (e.g. Salzburg Forum expert meeting).
- Most successful Written Declaration since 2011: a great majority of 465 Members of the European Parliament from all 28 Member States and all 9 political groups support our mission.

The goals of AMBER Alert Europe are backed by 465 MEPs



MEP Caterina Chinnici (S&D, IT), MEP Helga Stevens (ECR, BE), Patricija Sulin (EPP, SI), MEP Tomáš Zdechovský (PPE, CZ), Frank Hoen (President AMBER Alert Europe), MEP Kinga Gál (EPP, HU), MEP Jana Žitňanská (ECR, SK), MEP Eleonora Evi (EFDD, IT), MEP Jeroen Lenaers (PPE, NL)

2.1 A bigger, stronger AMBER Alert network

AMBER Alerts save missing children's lives. Currently, 18 countries have alert systems in place of which 9 have been used at least once. Unfortunately, these systems cannot be connected with other European AMBER Alert systems. AMBER Alert works actively with Member States to assist with the development and further improvement of systems.

PROJECTS

- *AMBER Alert Malta*: On January 10th 2017, the Maltese Ministry for Home Affairs and the Malta Police Force launched AMBER Alert Malta. AMBER Alert Malta is developed by AMBER Alert Europe, free of charge.
- *Mapping (endangered) missing children*: AMBER Alert Europe provides an always up-to-date overview of AMBER Alerts and missing children in Europe by mapping missing children in Europe. Also, AMBER Alert Europe informs its Police Expert Network, member organisations and European citizens on active AMBER Alerts and missing children in Europe.

IMPACT

- In cooperation with national (law enforcement and ministerial) authorities, AMBER Alert Europe developed AMBER Alert systems in the Netherlands (2008), Slovakia (2015), Luxembourg (2016) and Malta (2017).
- AMBER Alert assists EU Member States, to create and/ or further improve a national AMBER Alert system. Among these countries are Poland, the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Luxembourg and Malta.
- The University of Portsmouth published the first research on the effectiveness of AMBER Alert systems in European countries (2016), based on data provided by AMBER Alert Europe.



“Ensuring children’s well-being and protection from harm have always formed an intrinsic part of the Maltese people’s core values. The Issue of abducted or missing children has always been given utmost priority by our Police Force, and during its Presidency of the Council of the EU Malta will be working hard to see further developments on a European level in this field.”

Carmelo Abela, Minister of Home Affairs and National Security in Malta on the announcement of AMBER Alert Malta and the cooperation with AMBER Alert Europe.

- Since the start in 2013, 8087 missing children were mapped on www.amberalert.eu (last updated Oct 1st, 2016). For 91 children law enforcement decided to issue an AMBER Alert.
- *In Jan-Sep 2016, 95% of the AMBER Alert children was successfully recovered following the AMBER Alert.*
- *In 2015, AMBER Alert Europe mapped 1848 missing children publicised from EU Member States, including Switzerland. 1390 children were recovered within one month (72%). For 30 children an AMBER Alert was issued (29 AMBER Alerts). 22 AMBER Alert children were successfully recovered (73%).*
- The success of the AMBER Alert system depends on the voluntary cooperation of citizens and organisations. For example, AMBER Alert Europe teamed up with Facebook, Google's Waze, FRONTEX, IOM, Victim Support Europe, Europol, Eurojust, Interpol.

2.2 More flexibility in issuing alerts

In order to significantly increase the opportunities to save children at risk of immediate serious harm, AMBER Alert Europe calls for amending the current criteria for issuing AMBER Alerts by adding the possibility to issue an alert when law enforcement specialists have assessed that the child's life is in imminent danger.

IMPACT

- Based on data provided by AMBER Alert Europe, a University of Portsmouth research shows that similar to the US, AMBER Alerts in Europe are not only issued for proven abduction cases.
- Several European Member States have already adopted flexible criteria.

Luxembourgish Minister of Justice and Secretary of State of the Ministry of Internal Security sign up for AMBER Alert Luxembourg



2.3 Better cross-border information sharing

In Europe, the border is always near. It is estimated that 37.5% of Europeans live in border areas.⁴ However, information on missing children often stops at national borders. Following the Schengen agreement and the freedom of information, AMBER Alert Europe calls for protocols to ensure information on endangered missing children immediately crosses internal EU borders.

PROJECT

People Missing in Euregion Meuse-Rhine: Pilot project in cooperation with the Euregion Meuse-Rhine and the Province of Limburg (NL), intended to develop border protocols to ensure that when someone goes missing in the Meuse Rhine Euregion, police, media and citizens in the area are immediately informed and on the lookout. The project will be continued in 2017.

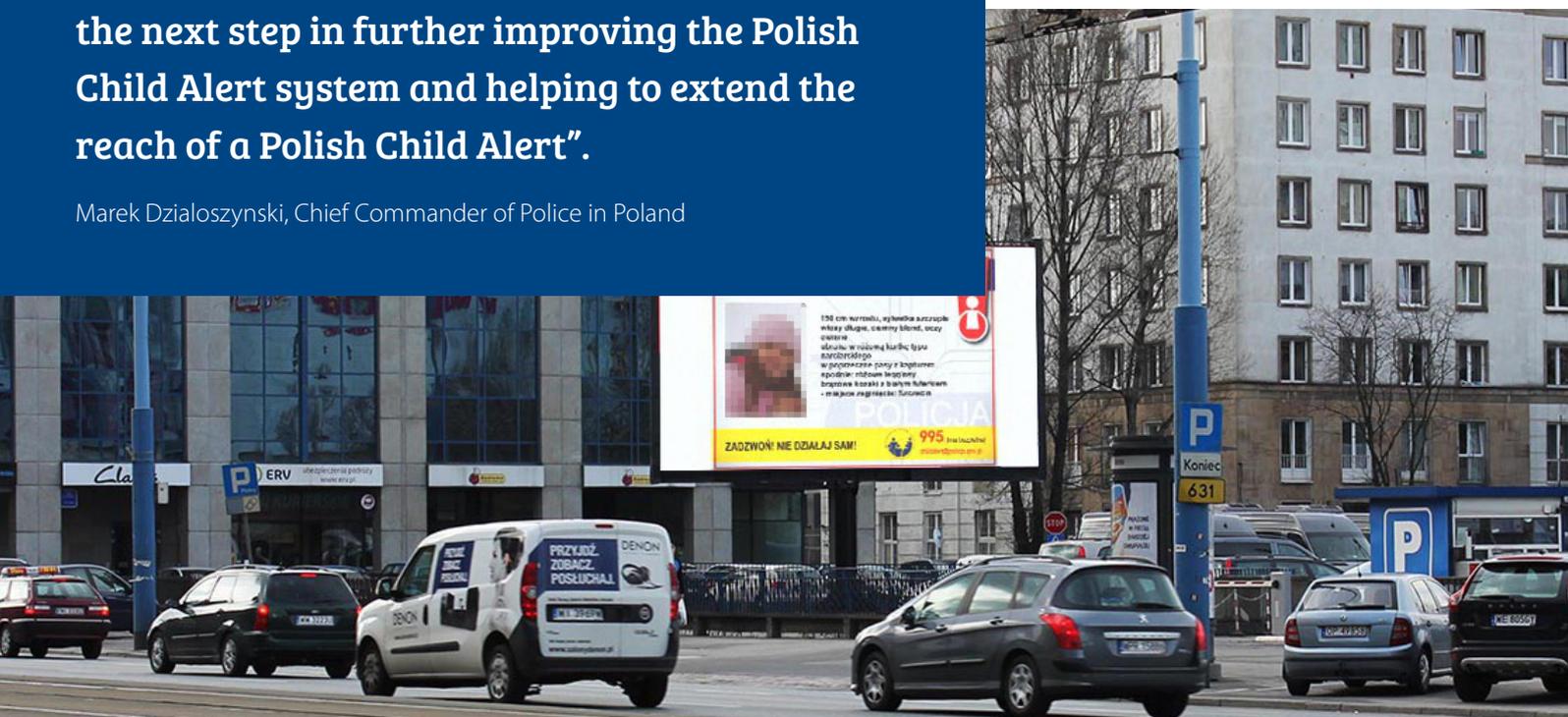
IMPACT

- 20 (regional) media in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany have signed up to receive alerts when a vulnerable person is missing in the Euregion Meuse-Rhine. Information on 3 missing children in the Euregion Meuse-Rhine was shared (Aug-Dec 2016), all children have been found.
- On request of national law enforcement agencies, AMBER Alert Europe assisted in disseminating information on missing children across borders. For example, in the cases of a Polish Child Alert (2015, found in Germany), a Dutch AMBER Alert (2016, located in India) and a German missing child (2016, found in Spain).

⁴ Gendarmerie Nationale, <http://www.gendarmerie.interieur.gouv.fr/>

“Joining forces with AMBER Alert Europe is the next step in further improving the Polish Child Alert system and helping to extend the reach of a Polish Child Alert”.

Marek Działoszynski, Chief Commander of Police in Poland



2.4 Better cross-border police co-operation

It is essential that when a child's life is in danger law enforcement experts must be able to evaluate the circumstances properly and initiate immediate action. A (in)formal police network should bring together law enforcement experts in the field of missing children and child alerting.

PROJECTS

- *Salzburg Forum:* To further improve cross-border law enforcement cooperation to find missing children, the Ministers of the Salzburg Forum announced a police expert meeting, co-organised by AMBER Alert Europe, in the first half of 2017. During this meeting the risk triage process will be discussed.
- *AMBER Alert Europe's Police Expert Network:* AMBER Alert Europe's informal Police Expert Network provides specialist support, advice and training to its members. The goal set for 2017 is to enlarge the group with members from at least 2 different countries.

- *SPOC Dutch Presidency:* AMBER Alert Europe initiated a formal European platform of national police contact points for missing children and non-binding guidelines for its Member States on the use of cross-border citizen assistance. AMBER Alert Europe continues to work with the Slovak (Jul-Dec 2016) and Maltese (Jan-Jun 2017) Presidencies to make sure finding missing children remains a key priority.

- *Police training:* Risk triage is the foundation for AMBER Alert Europe's training programmes. In AMBER Alert Europe's training centre law enforcement experts train and educate law enforcement professionals, parents and children on topics related to missing children. The videos cover a wide range of topics such as how to prevent children from going missing and what to do when a child goes missing. Also, AMBER Alert provides for on-site police training by police experts. The goal for 2017 is to create an online training module for risk triage, including videos, plus, at least 2 prevention videos in multiple languages for parents and children will be produced.



“Knowing who to speak to in another country simplifies and speeds up actions to locate and recover the child”

Charlie Hedges, Coordinator Police Expert Network
AMBER Alert Europe



IMPACT

- In November 2016, Ministers of the Interior of the Salzburg Forum, adopted a Joint Declaration which acknowledges the urgent need for new solutions and improvements in the search for missing children, including a better use of citizens' assistance and an effective inter-agency cooperation. In 2017 a police expert meeting will be organised to further improve the above.
- The formal European platform of national police contact points, initiated by AMBER Alert Europe, was announced by the Dutch Presidency in 2016.
- In 2014, AMBER Alert Europe launched the Police Expert Network on Missing Children, currently consisting of over 40 law enforcement specialists from 12 countries.
- Short animated videos developed by missing persons' police experts from all over Europe, were launched in 14 countries.

2.5 Save missing children at borders

An early assessment of a missing child report to determine the urgency of the investigation is critical. Core to this process is assessing the level of risk to the missing child and how immediate that risk is. To identify and protect children at EU external borders, Member States should make a best effort to immediately enter endangered missing children in the Schengen Information System (SIS II). Also, border guards should be actively informed about endangered missing children and AMBER Alerts by law enforcement agencies. Raising awareness and providing practical guidance for border guards is essential to identify and protect children that may be at serious risk of harm such as trafficking, smuggling and abduction.

European wide prevention campaign to keep children safe

amberalert.eu/missing-children-training



WHAT SHOULD I DO IF
**MY CHILD IS
MISSING?**

PROJECT

SIS Policy Level: Members of AMBER Alert Europe's Police Expert Network underline that endangered missing children should always be inserted in the international Schengen Information System (SIS II). In addition, they call for a categorisation of missing minor alerts. Also, passports of children leaving the EU should be swiped and subsequently checked against, at the very least, national- and SIS II databases.

IMPACT

- AMBER Alert Europe aims to make use of preventive alerts in such a way that an abducted child whose life is at immediate risk and its abductor can and will be stopped at the border. As initiated by AMBER Alert Europe, the European Commission, the Dutch and Slovak Presidencies improved the use of SIS to find missing children. In particular, preventive SIS-alerts, reinforced checks, categorisation of SIS alerts and the use of biometrics and vehicle license plate information.

- Risk triage is brought under the attention of border guards and police experts in EU Member States. AMBER Alert Europe set up a Risk Triage Checklist and provides for police training.
- AMBER Alert Europe and Frontex actively cooperate with border guards on the VEGA children project, a training programme and handbook for border guards.



“It should not matter where children come from or where they go missing. It should not even matter whether children go missing near a border or not - because to child abductors there are no borders either”

Frank Hoen, President AMBER Alert Europe



03

Organisation

3. Organisation

In order to advocate our message within the European Institutions, AMBER Alert Europe is registered in the EU Transparency Register, under number 488692317424-44. Also, AMBER Alert Europe is officially recognised as ANBI (Dutch “public benefit organisation”), RSIN: 852414183.

AMBER Alert Europe Foundation
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3.1 Board

AMBER Alert Europe is run by a Board of Directors, who set out the policy and execute tasks at the benefit of the foundation. In addition, there is AMBER Alert Europe’s Advisory Board, which functions as an advisory body to the Board of Directors.

Both boards are composed by a selection of experts from law enforcement, academia, civil service as well as civil society. Board members do not receive a remuneration for the work carried out in their function. They may receive a compensation for their travel expenses.

Board of Directors



Dr. Petra Binkova (Czech Republic)

Expert in crime prevention and specialised in the field of violence on children, formerly Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic



Carole Bird (Canada)

Royal Canadian Mounted Police (ret.)



Frank Hoen (The Netherlands)

AMBER Alert Europe & AMBER Alert Netherlands, Netpresenter

Advisory Board



Caroline Humer (USA)

International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children



Henk Jansen (The Netherlands)

Independent Security and Investigations Professional



Lars Bruhns (Germany)

Initiative Vermisste Kinder



Prof. Dr. Rinus van Schendelen (The Netherlands)

Erasmus University Rotterdam



Victor Reuter (Luxembourg)

Grand Ducal Police



Maurice Lenferink (The Netherlands)

Safety Region Rotterdam-Rijnmond

3.2 Employees

Currently there are 3 employees (2.8 fte) working at AMBER Alert Europe. Their activities involve mainly PA, PR, advocacy and communication activities as well as building and maintaining relationships with associations that want to cooperate with AMBER Alert Europe as well as countries that expressed an interest in setting up a national AMBER Alert system. In addition, the rest of the AMBER Alert team is composed of people that are serviced by AMBER Alert Europe's sponsors.

Furthermore, AMBER Alert Europe does work with a Missing Children Police Expert Group Coordinator, on a consultancy basis. He is acknowledged as one of the UK's foremost experts on missing persons, particularly children and those who are abducted and trafficked. He advises on strategy and policy in the area of missing children, as well as provide training for law enforcement authorities on this issue.

AMBER Alert Europe welcomes volunteers to its organisation.





On April 23, 2015, an AMBER Alert (Alerte Enlèvement) was issued for a 7-year-old girl from France. The child was found safe and well by the French police. According to the French prosecutor the French authorities decided to launch the alert, although there was no certainty for a proven abduction. The alert was also spread in neighboring countries Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany.



On May 8th 2013 an AMBER Alert was issued in the Netherlands for two boys (7&9). As a result of the media attention in neighboring countries Dutch, Belgian and German citizens started initiatives in the search for the missing boys. The police in neighboring countries however, were not informed and not coordinating these initiatives. Sadly, the bodies of the boys were found a few weeks later in the Netherlands.



04

Financial Planning

4. Financial Planning

AMBER Alert Europe receives donations in the form of government grants, and in the form of services (IT, communication) from companies and individuals that, in the context of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and/or their personal engagement, are eager to contribute to the protection of missing children.

Crowdsourcing

AMBER Alert Europe covers most of its expenses by crowdsourcing. It includes donations in the form of services such as office accommodation, IT services and the AMBER Alert bears which are used for branding.

In addition, we have planned to spend received benefits on:

- Recruitment
- Management and administration
- Our objectives as described in chapter 2
- Office costs, such as phone expenditures and office supplies
- Marketing costs, such as marketing material (e.g. prevention videos, posters), travel costs (e.g. travelling in relation to police training) and events/ conferences (e.g. launch AMBER Alert Malta, event Salzburg Forum)

For more information, please see our annual and financial reports at <https://www.amberalert.eu/who-we-are>