Interoperability

AMBER Alert Europe’s Position on interoperability of information systems in the field of migration and security

I. INTRODUCTION

AMBER Alert Europe, the Missing Children Alert Network, is a non-profit organisation that connects law enforcement with citizens when the police believe the public can help save a missing child’s life. AMBER Alert Europe represents a network of 26 members (civil society, authorities and business) in 18 countries. AMBER Alert Europe facilitates the only European Police Network on Missing Children.

II. AMBER ALERT EUROPE POSITION

AMBER Alert Europe broadly welcomes the European Commission’s intention to introduce a proposal on interoperability of information systems by end 2017. AMBER Alert Europe supports that border and law enforcement authorities must have appropriate access to all existing databases when needed to help them do their job, including finding a missing child, while ensuring that individuals’ data is safe and there is no infringement of their right to privacy.

EC’s forthcoming proposal on interoperability of EU information systems for borders and security is a laudable step towards the right direction, but it needs to be expanded to give comprehensive answers to the security challenges of the Union, otherwise the intention, as announced, represents a missed opportunity. As concluded by the dedicated high-level group, interoperability can support the detection of missing children and facilitate a targeted response. However, Amber Alert Europe’s view is that this requires the systematic recording of children at risk in SIS II.

We strongly believe that the value of our security information is maximised not only when systems talk to each other, but also when border and law enforcement experts talk to each other. With more and more missing persons cases involving several countries, quick and reliable information sharing between EU countries is crucial.1 Every endangered missing child deserves an equal chance of being found as quickly as

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1 Acting quickly is critical. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (USA), seventy-four percent of abducted children who are ultimately murdered are dead within three hours of the abduction.
possible and this must not be inhibited by them crossing borders. With 37.5% of the EU population living in border areas, ensuring that information about endangered missing children is shared across borders is essential. AMBER Alert Europe calls for protocols to ensure that when a child is at risk in a border area or law enforcement suspects that the child may have crossed the border, law enforcement agencies in the other country are informed immediately. When law enforcement decides to inform the media and public about such a case, media and public at the other side of the border should also be immediately informed in case there is a cross-border risk. Furthermore, AMBER Alert Europe calls for increased cooperation between existing and future EU agencies to allow for the pro-active sharing of information and coordination of actions on endangered missing children.

Missing children police experts must have the possibility, when needed, to pick-up the phone and quickly contact their colleagues in another EU member state on specific missing children cases. The AMBER Alert Europe-run Police Network on Missing Children has already showcased the necessity for mutual learning, exchange of best practices, as well as development of innovative working methods which may be transferable to other Member States. AMBER Alert Europe calls for the appointment of a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for endangered missing children on a national level, acting as the first point of contact for other EU member states when a child goes missing and might have crossed the border. This is also the first point of contact for sharing of police expert best practices and relevant documents on the topic of endangered missing children.

**AMBER Alert Europe** recalls the steps made during the Dutch EU Presidency with a dedicated conference on “Missing Persons, Missing Information” and reconfirms its readiness to engage with the European Commission, the Estonian EU Presidency, the forthcoming Bulgarian EU Presidency, Europol and all relevant stakeholders, to ensure that this opportunity is not missed.

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