



FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND CITIZENSHIP PROGRAMME

Preparatory actions 2008 "Child Abduction Alert"

European Commission

Directorate-General
Justice, Freedom and Security

Directorate D
Fundamental Rights and Citizenship

The present document is a brief overview with summaries of the projects funded following the 2008 call for preparatory actions "Child Abduction Alert" under the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme.

The 6 projects funded were selected out of 13 submitted and each project will receive on average 145.000€ in co-funding from the European Commission.

The average partnership is 3 partners and the duration of the projects is 12 months, with starting dates in the beginning of 2010.

The summaries included here are those submitted by the projects themselves and reflect their own presentation of the activities that they will carry out.

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547. EUROPEAN CHILD ALERT AUTOMATED SYSTEM
THE SMILE OF THE CHILD (Greece)

Partners: IAC (Instituto de Apoio a Crianca), Portugal
S.O.S. Il Telefono Azzurro, Italy
Cypriot Police, Cyprus

Grant: 126.169,60 €(representing 80% of the project budget)

The proposed project aims at creating a high quality service and encourage effective cross-border cooperation for the first harmonised European multi-lingual automated child alert mechanism. One of the most significant benefits of the system will be the simple and simultaneous activation of the alert in more than one Member State. The proposed project's initial aim is to simplify and automate the established child alert mechanism operating in Greece "Amber Alert Hellas". The project also seeks to create a uniform system that can be used trans-nationally throughout Europe to ensure fast, accurate and efficient communication between Member States. Initially the system will be available online in English, Greek, Italian and Portuguese. As other Member States implement child alert systems in their respective countries, the proposed system (ECAAS) will be modified to meet their needs and will be made available in their language.

The automated system that is proposed will be a web-based application, in order for its users and associated partners (1) to have direct access and, (2) not to require special hardware or infrastructure to run it. As the system will integrate all functions in a web-based platform, under the appropriate customization, it will allow further Member States to join. The web site will be designed so that each Member State has their own secure site customized with their contacts and information. The user will go onto the page, press their national flag and then be prompted to provide user names and passwords. They will then automatically be directed in their national language. If they wish to communicate with another Member State or participate in the forum, the working languages will be English and French. A translation service will be included in the site of each Member State.

The system will accommodate a forum area, addressing users of the system across Europe in order to exchange knowledge on the system's functions and child alert specific information.

It is equally noteworthy that there will be a digital library in multilingual format available within the web site of the system. The library will be used to share information concerning child alerts and information regarding investigating high risk or vulnerable groups of missing children such as endangered runaways, lost young children or abducted children. There will be also a link from the partners' web sites to the publicly accessible portion of the ECAAS web site. This section of the site will be available free of charge to the general public and will include useful information for children, parents and the general public on how to protect children, what to do if a child goes missing and other subject of interest.

Target groups will initially include a minimum of 20 law enforcement and NGO personnel that normally deal with child alerts. These participants will be trained on the functions of the automated alert system and will be provided with a manual on how to set up and activate the system in their respective countries. Once trained they will then be responsible for training further personnel in their respective Member States and will be available to share their knowledge with other interested States. Thus, a system of training the trainers will be achieved that can then expand trans-nationally. At the end of the project they will also be provided with the best practices guide.

Finding a child before they can be harmed is the ultimate goal of the system; therefore children and their families will be the final the beneficiaries, where the automated system will operate. With a uniform system throughout Europe it will be easier for law enforcement to issue alerts not only in their own countries but in other Member States.

The idea of the automated system is not to claim ownership. The applicant will continue to operate the system for the foreseeable future in Greece and will ensure that the site remains available to all Member States.

548. CREATION & LAUNCH OF CHILD ALERT BELGIUM
CHILD FOCUS (Belgium)

Partner: Free University of Brussels (VUB) – Criminology Department, Belgium

Grant: 219.616,52 €(representing 80% of the project budget)

The final objective is the creation and launch of a Child Alert-system in Belgium. Other objectives are: developing structures and procedures and resolving cross-border cases of disappearances of children, and increase compatibilities amongst national alert systems throughout the EU.

Child Focus will work out this project in collaboration with six partners (law enforcement, academic, NGO):
Belgian Federal Police – Missing Persons Unit (Cel Vermiste Personen - Cellule Personnes Disparues)
Belgian Federal Police – Wanted Notice Unit (DGO-Opspringen)

Board of General Prosecutors
Ministry of Justice – Criminal Policy Department
University of Brussels (VUB) – Criminology Department
Missing Children Europe

Final beneficiary is the Belgian population, especially the children. In case of cross-border use citizens from other countries will be the beneficiary. Law enforcement, judiciary and NGOs in Belgium, and in numerous EU-member states will benefit as well.

The project includes several actions:

A) Evaluation of current procedures used in Belgium for notifying the public on missing children, and of rapid child alert-procedures in EU member states, in the light of recent European developments, including 1) the use of Child Alert systems in an increasing number of EU Member States and 2) the adoption of a best practice document on the issue by the European Commission. This plan-evaluation is carried out by a researcher on the basis of data collected in 5 national or international meetings / workshops. The 2 international meetings will bring together representatives from 8 EU-member states.

Deliverable: Publicly available report on comparative analysis of the different child alert communication models in Europe, including:

- 1) A comparative analysis of the underlying choices of the models in European countries.
- 2) A sketch of advantages and potential pitfalls
- 3) A description of users involved to launch Child Alerts in the respective countries
- 4) A summary of Belgian stakeholders perspectives on a Child Alert model
- 5) Recommendations on the design of this project
- 6) Recommendations on the issue of transnational cooperation

B) Another concrete deliverable is a centralized web application, in other words: a fully operational Child Alert, managed by Child Focus in collaboration with the Belgian Federal Police - Missing Persons Unit and Wanted Notices Service, offering the possibility for third parties, such as broadcasters, to subscribe to readily formatted information of which they guarantee broader distribution within centrally defined areas and timeframes. When a Child Alert is launched, all appropriately formatted information will automatically be sent to all relevant subscribers. The subscribers, amongst which numerous press and media organizations guarantee immediate further dissemination of the general public. 1 meeting is held for validation of this Child Alert-platform.

C) The launch of the Belgian Child Alert-application will be accompanied by a press campaign. This includes 1 dissemination and validation meeting, and 1 press action, including a press conference and a Media-kit.

549. CALLERT – Child Call Alert - creating an alert mechanism in case of children abductions and/or life threatening disappearances of children

Inspectorate General of Romanian Police (Romania)

Partners: The Romanian Centre for Missing and Sexually Exploited Children – FOCUS, Romania
Prosecutor’s office attached to the High Court of Cassation and Justice, Romania

Grant: 212.255,72 €(representing 79,77% of the project budget)

The objective of the project it’s to create an alert mechanism alerting the public in cases of children abductions and when children’s live can be serious at risk, mechanism which could answer the need for a quick response in such cases.

I. Project team. Clear responsibilities and roles will be shared among project team members during the 1st Steering Group. Contacts will be established for a good communication. Project team members and experts will bring their personal expertise into the project, as well as updated information about national experiences in the field, so that the project activities to be developed making use of all information available.

Decision makers will be kept close to the project in order to ensure a smooth implementation, as well as its further sustainability.

Quarterly and Half-Year Reports will be presented in the Steering Groups.

The project management team will be available for evaluation and monitoring carry out on behalf of the EC at any moment. Access to any document regarding the project will be ensured.

II. Key stakeholders meetings – designed to elaborate the mechanism formalized between all stakeholders plan for the implementation of the child alert mechanism. The project team will identify and invite to the stakeholder meetings partners who have proven efficient in relaying and disseminating the information such as: press agencies, TV and radio broadcasters, internet service providers, mobile phone companies and transport

companies. In those meetings will be discussed and agreed for each partner the responsibilities such as: responsible person, type of message to be transmitted, duration and frequency of the message. After all the partners agreed, the formalized mechanism between all stakeholders will be official signed in order to ensure that they will execute the service.

III. Organization of the two study tours with the aim to analyse good practices in two European countries where the alert mechanism is functioning (France and Netherlands). Five members from the project team will be involved, three from IGp, two from Focus and one from Prosecutor Office.

IV. Developing the public awareness campaign in order to disseminate the information for both specialist and the public, will be created and printed 5000 posters and 30000 flyers. Also the public awareness campaign will have a media component, consisting in a TV and audio spot in order to inform the public about the alert mechanism.

V. Implementation of the awareness campaign

The campaign will be launched in 9th month of the project, the flyers and brochures will be disseminated a TV/audio spot will be available on TV and radio.

VI. Organization of the training sessions for the representatives of the structures involved in functioning of the alert mechanism. The training sessions are held in order to familiarize the participants (police officers, prosecutor, focus representatives, other significant partners) with the alert mechanism procedures.

VII. Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the project. The monitoring of activities will be done permanently. The team of the project will evaluate the project and will monitor if the objectives are accomplish. After the project completion the intervention plan for the implementation of the child abduction alert shall be elaborated with specific responsibilities or each signatory part.

Special software will be in place for supporting the alert system.

Also, a TV and radio spot shall be created and broadcasted. A number of 35000 information materials (flyers and posters) shall be created and disseminated.

Beneficiaries: Romanian Police, Public Prosecutors Focus organization, public at large

552. CHILD ABDUCTION ALERT CRIMINAL POLICE (Portugal)

Partners: Procuradoria-Geral da República, Portugal

Grant: 112.404,08 €(representing 77,5% of the project budget)

Objectives:

Following the informal Council meeting (JHA) on 1 and 2 October 2007 and the Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting of 27 and 28 November 2008, Polícia Judiciária established for itself the objective of creating a technological mechanism aiming at the rapid dissemination of alerts in case of the abduction of minors. One of the missions of this criminal police is the investigation of the disappearance of people, namely minors. So it is extremely relevant to set up a mechanism to resolve more efficiently the abduction of minors, using all the possible ways, internal and cross-border.

Main activities:

- To identify and order the suitable software, according to the objectives established;
- To purchase the suitable equipment: call centre, professional call recording system, personal computers and auriculars;
- Installation of both the equipment and the software;
- Testing of the system;
- Users training;
- Start to operate.

Number and type of beneficiaries:

- The beneficiaries are all missing minors, their families, their friends and the community as whole.

Expected results:

- To have a call centre operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with all the channels available to rapidly disseminate alerts of abduction to other stakeholders.
- To be more efficient in combating the abduction of minors;

- To prevent minors to be taken away from their places of residence, by means of the immediate dissemination of relevant information;
- To be able to stop processes of abduction and punish the criminals;
- To rise people awareness to a serious family, social and police problem;
- To get people involved in the detection of suspicious situations that may perform the crime of kidnapping and minors' abduction;

Outputs and deliverables:

- The call centre installed and duly operating.

553. ITALIAN CHILD ABDUCTION ALERT SYSTEM

MINISTRY OF INTERIOR-SIRENE (Italy)

Partners: Comando Generale dei Carabinieri (CC), Italy
 Ministero della Giustizia: Autorità Centrale Giustizia Minorile, Italy
 Ministero dell'Interno: Direzione centrale anticrimine (Dac) della Polizia di Stato, Italy
 Ministero dell'Interno: Public Security Department- Central Directorate for Training, Italy

Grant: 145.820,56 €(representing 97,91% of the project budget)

Objectives:

- a) Agreement on the selection of one of the partners as the single central authority
- b) Design of a network with a detailed set of rules and roles for all actors in all phases of the child alert procedure;
- c) Effective use of recent technologies to ensure efficient and rapid broadcasting of the alarm.

Activities:

1. Definition of the Centre responsible for launching the alert
 - 1.1: 3 study visits (France, Czech Republic and The Netherlands)
 - 1.2: National workshops
- 2: Network
 - 2.1: Mapping and database of potential actors
- 3: Procedures
 - 3.1: Strategic framework for definition of roles and procedures
 - 3.2: Guidelines for procedures at central and local level
- 4: Memoranda of understanding
 - 4.1: Institutional framework and design of memoranda
 - 4.2: Diffusion of information relating to memoranda
 - 4.3: Negotiation and signing of memoranda
- 5: Training
 - 5.1: Design and coordination of the training system
 - 5.2: Development and piloting of on- and off-line training materials
- 6: Communication
 - 6.1: Website
 - 6.2: Printed materials (Brochures, flyers, posters)
 - 6.3: 3 national conferences in Rome
- 7: Quality control, audit
- 8: Management and administration
- 9: Steering committee

Beneficiaries:

The direct beneficiaries of the project are the Central Law Enforcement Agencies who participate as partners. These partners belong to the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice or the Comando dei Carabinieri. The project will provide them with a much-needed mechanism for carrying out their institutional role more effectively in cases of abducted minors. Indirect beneficiaries are the targeted actors in the public administration, the media, transport companies and other institutional and social bodies who have a role in launching the alert. It is not possible to quantify these actors at this stage, and indeed this task will be performed under activity 2.1 (database creation).

Expected results:

Operational system for child abduction alerts, characterized by clear and effective network and chain of Communications
 Signed memoranda with principal actors

Training system designed and operational

Outputs and deliverables:

Report on principal EU systems agreement on Centre responsible for alert database of actors at all levels

Strategic framework for definition of roles and procedures handbook

Standardized memoranda templates for various categories signed memoranda with principal actors

Training system framework

On and off line materials for training

Report on efficacy of pilot training

Website

2000 brochures printed and distributed

Posters and flyers designed and printed

556. LADS.eu (Lutte Anti Disparitions dans l'Union européenne)
MINISTRY OF JUSTICE (France)

Partners: National Policing Improvement Agency, UK
The Ministry of Justice, the Netherlands
Service de coopération technique internationale de police, France
Federal Public Service Justice, Belgium

Grant: 145.359,85 €(representing 79,54% of the project budget)

The project is designed to strengthen compatibility and coordination of child rescue alert systems between France, Belgium, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

All these Members States have a system with similar operating characteristics: this system involves the public in the searching, which is subject to preliminary conditions and limited to a precise geographic area.

These systems have proved efficient on a national scale (for instance, the 8 child rescue alerts issued in France have all had a favourable outcome). Nevertheless, where an abduction takes place in a border zone, past evidence shows that the hypothesis of an escape of the kidnapper with the child abroad can not be ruled out and requires not only the cooperation of judicial authorities, national investigators and their European counterparts but first and foremost the simultaneous broadcast of the alert message in the country/countries that might be involved.

That is why France, Belgium, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands have chosen to strengthen the coordination and the compatibility of their child rescue alert systems. Nonetheless, two kinds of problems have been identified.

Legal problems:

- The conditions for initiating an alert vary from one country to the other.
- The legal conditions for intervention as well as the judicial proceedings that are specific to each country also differ. Thus the conditions of validity of an arrest of the kidnappers of a child in a cross-border country may be questionable.

Practical problems:

- The lack of clear identification of counterparts in the States involved could put off the time the alert is issued.
- Broadcasting the information must not be left to a single country so as to be able to react quickly when an alert is issued.

The "LADS.eu" project is based on these facts and aims at working out innovative operational tools, with a view to increase mutual trust and to ease the implementation of an alert system:

- The determination of common criteria for issuing an alert.
- The drafting of the procedural protocol that must be followed in case a child rescue alert is issued.
- The production of a European crisis directory allowing quick and reliable identification of the counterparts in the countries involved in the alert.
- The setting up of an Internet secured forum for exchanging information, aiming at organising and accelerating the broadcast of the facts that are useful for the investigations.