

Expert meeting: Returns and transfers in Practice:  
Case examples of children exposed to exploitation  
and trafficking and children at risk

## Case examples by Child Focus, Belgium



# Overview of presentation

- Mission of Child Focus
- Brief overview of Belgian situation
- Procedure of Child Focus for missing unaccompanied minor (MUA)
- Focus on 4 cases of missing unaccompanied minors
  - Roma+possible trafficking
  - « worrying »+possible exploitation
  - Behaviour of UA as an obstacle
  - « success » story

## Mission of Child Focus: general

- = Foundation of missing and sexually exploited children
- Prevention and operational work
- Prevention/awareness raising campaigns&studies
- 2000 cases of missing/sexually exploited children a year
- Reported on 116 000 hotline (Missing Children Europe)
- 1500-1800 cases of missing children (among which 60 UM)

# Mission of Child Focus: missing children in general

- Main goal: assist in finding them back
- Bridge between all stakeholders: facilitator and pressure
  - Assistance to parents
  - Pressure on police and magistrates (cooperation protocol)
  - Media
- If deemed necessary: coordination of « public » searches through poster campaigns, social media,...
- Hotline for testimonials
- Follow-up when found back/returned



# MISSING

**Goran DEMAN**  
**Denderhoutem**  
**07/09/2014**

**14 ans - 1m74 - Corpulence  
mince - Cheveux courts bouclés  
blonds - Yeux bleus -  
Chaussures de sport claires  
Porte peut-être un appareil  
dentaire**

**Partagez cet avis de recherche**  
**Témoignages uniquement par téléphone**  
**Child Focus 116000 | Police 0800 30 300**



## Facts and figures: Belgium and unaccompanied minors

- +/- 1800 reported/intercepted UM's a year
- « intercepted »: real number (3000)?
- Lack of systematic data collection, information exchange and monitoring= no reliable info on disappearances
- About 7% leaves/dissappeares from the 2 main « first phase » observation/orientation centres (others: no info)
- Focus on « abuse of the system »
- Child Focus notified when « worrying » but quite randomly: now +/- 60 casefiles a year

# Involvement of Child Focus in MUA

- Child Focus « theoretically » opens a casefile when
  - History= all
  - Now= worrying and if basic info so role to play
  - Reality= Few cases, randomly reported
  - if reported, we follow-up but level of intensity in action by CF
- +/- 60 casefiles a year
  - 40 boys, 20 girls
  - ½ closed quite soon as no further role for Child Focus possible
  - 1/3 found or localised
  - 40% younger than 13 (worrying!)
  - 1 in 5 13-15 years old
  - 1 in 3 16-17 years old

## Procedure Child Focus for MUA (2)

- Disappearance reported through hotline
- Notifier mostly orientation/observation centre
- Caseworker appointed
- Intermediary role: pushing for action by those concerned with the case
- If enough info provided and necessary for wellbeing of the child because « Worrying/at risk » : we search
- Poster campaigns through network
- File closed if no further role for Child Focus (=if no information)



# 1. Anna, 14, Romania

- In Foster care in Romania
- Sister in BE (Ghent)
- Found begging in Bruges (cfr. question Russian rep. Dr. Kolpakova)
- In observation centre+highly active guardian
- Build-up of contact with sister
- Voluntary return-process
- Missing after meeting on voluntary return (June '14)
- Worrying due to possibility of forced begging: CF notified
- Start of very hard proces for CF

## Anna (2)

- Lack of interest & no action even if suspicion of forced begging (sister?) or even prostitution (last phone signal)
- Coordination meeting: 1 month after disappearance
  - problem of camera footage in station: valuable info lost
- All people concerned on holiday
- No steps are being taken at all: un-sent mission to police of IMEI-tracking: discovery by CF last week
- In France with boyfriend?
- Result: « lost » and nobody is looking...

## 2. Abdel, 14, Morocco

- Disappeared from observation centre in August
- Worrying as contrast with behavior
- On the road since 12
- Magistrate: not worrying due to hard facts
- Phone and seen in Brussels
- Extra worrying due to suspicion of exploitation in night shops
- CF: poster campagne in Brussels
- No sign since

### 3. Karecho, 15, Morocco

- Found in a squat-house in Bruges, known as transit-house for smuggled migrants
- Found together with suspect of smuggling
- Taken to observation centre, immediately left
- CF alerted « randomly »
- No information to CF regarding smuggling
- No cooperation between magistrate disappearance and smuggling: no interest
- Found back by rail-way police
- Taken back to registration: refusal for fingerprints and aggression
- Kicked out and no sign since
- Police quote « He's part of a network »

## 4. Saberi, 11, Afghanistan

- « Succes » story in final outcome and cooperation, not in means
- Found by rail-way police in Antwerp February 2013
- Confiscation of his phone in context of smuggling case
- Knowledge of second attempt through phone tap
- Separated from mother as a tactic (smugglers paid up on arrival)
- Left from shelter, CF involved due to age
- Certainty of smuggling to UK: communicated to CF=rare
- Everybody working together= operational success
- Info sharing on smuggling=we knew where to look
- Poster campaign all along the well-known UK smuggling route

## Saberi (2)

- Found back in truck-trailer destination UK
- Immediately missing again, not found back this time
- Refusal by magistrate for request for mutual assistance/rogatory commission to UK
- Contacts CF-Missing people (Missing Children Europe Network): need for police file
- CF pushed further
- Solved by Dublin Commission: applied for assylum immediately in UK (where brother resides legally, mother also arrived)
- Good cooperation smuggling+disappearance magistrate = best practice but rare
- Smuggling ring arrested
- Phone tap: probably got there in a refrigerated truck=success story?

# Biggest obstacles for work of Child Focus

- Lack of information
  - Lack of gathering info on trafficking/smuggling upon interception
  - Lack of willingness to share info for sake of the criminal case
  - Without information we cannot act, look, nor protect
- Lack of cooperation between team for disappearance and team for smuggling/trafficking
- Lack of interest/efforts and prejudice
- Wrong attitude: « they want to leave »
- Need for change in attitude of all concerned: support agency of the child & assistance and protection along the way

**THANK YOU**

