



**Missing
Children
Europe**



Centre for the
Study of
Missing Persons
University of
Portsmouth



**Abertay
University**

Once missing, never forgotten?

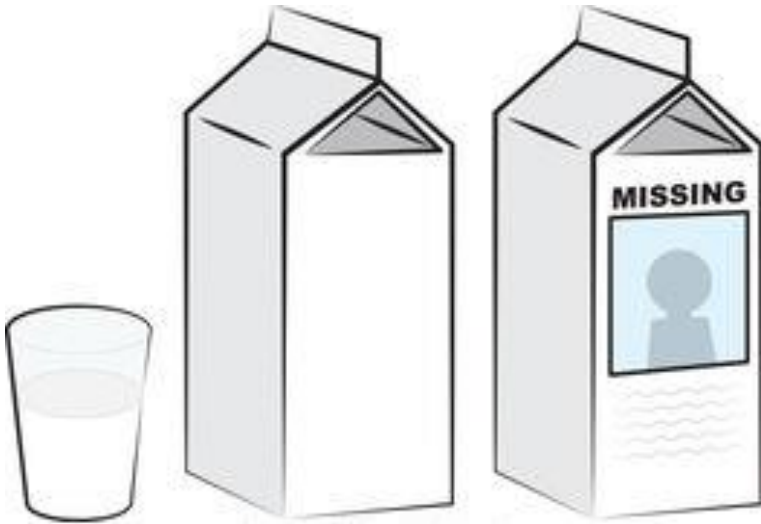
**Results of scoping research on the impact of
publicity appeals in missing children cases**

Forum of the ICT Coalition for Children Online
May 16 2017

 [#neverforgotten](https://twitter.com/neverforgotten)



Common use: publicity appeals



Missing People @missingpeople · Feb 20
 Can you help us #find [redacted], 13, missing from #Romford #London since 17/2. Seen her? Call 116 000
ow.ly/9UL0309ats4



Child Focus
 Page Liked · 17 February · €

Aujourd'hui, il y a 30 ans, Ilse #STOCKMANS a disparu à #Louvain le 17/02/1987. Nous ne perdons pas l'espoir. Un souvenir ? Témoignages, uniquement par téléphone : Child Focus 116000 ou la Police 0800 30 300
<http://www.childfocus.be/fr/ilse-vous-recherche>
 Partagez svp
 See Translation

Like Comment Share

94 Top comments

477 shares 32 comments

Bernie Calling je n'ose penser aux parents et l'angoisse qu'ils ont encore et toujours de ne pas savoir ce qui est arrivé à leur enfant
 See translation
 Like Reply 3 · 17 February at 19:16

Isa Flo Pfg charleroi
 See translation
 Like Reply 1 · 17 February at 11:42

Yannic Papeux Pfg Gembloux
 See translation
 Like Reply 1 · 17 February at 10:39

Write a comment...

Case stories: the positive & negative of publicity appeals



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Jakub, 8, Poland

€ 116000

FOUND



teruggevonden
Bedankt voor het delen



childfocus.be

Scan app

Kendra, 17, UK

€ 116000

FOUND



teruggevonden
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Study: 4 stages of publicity appeals

- 1. Decision-making process**
- 2. Running a publicity appeals campaign**
- 3. Effectiveness**
- 4. Impact**



1. Decision-making process

Most publicity appeals launched for

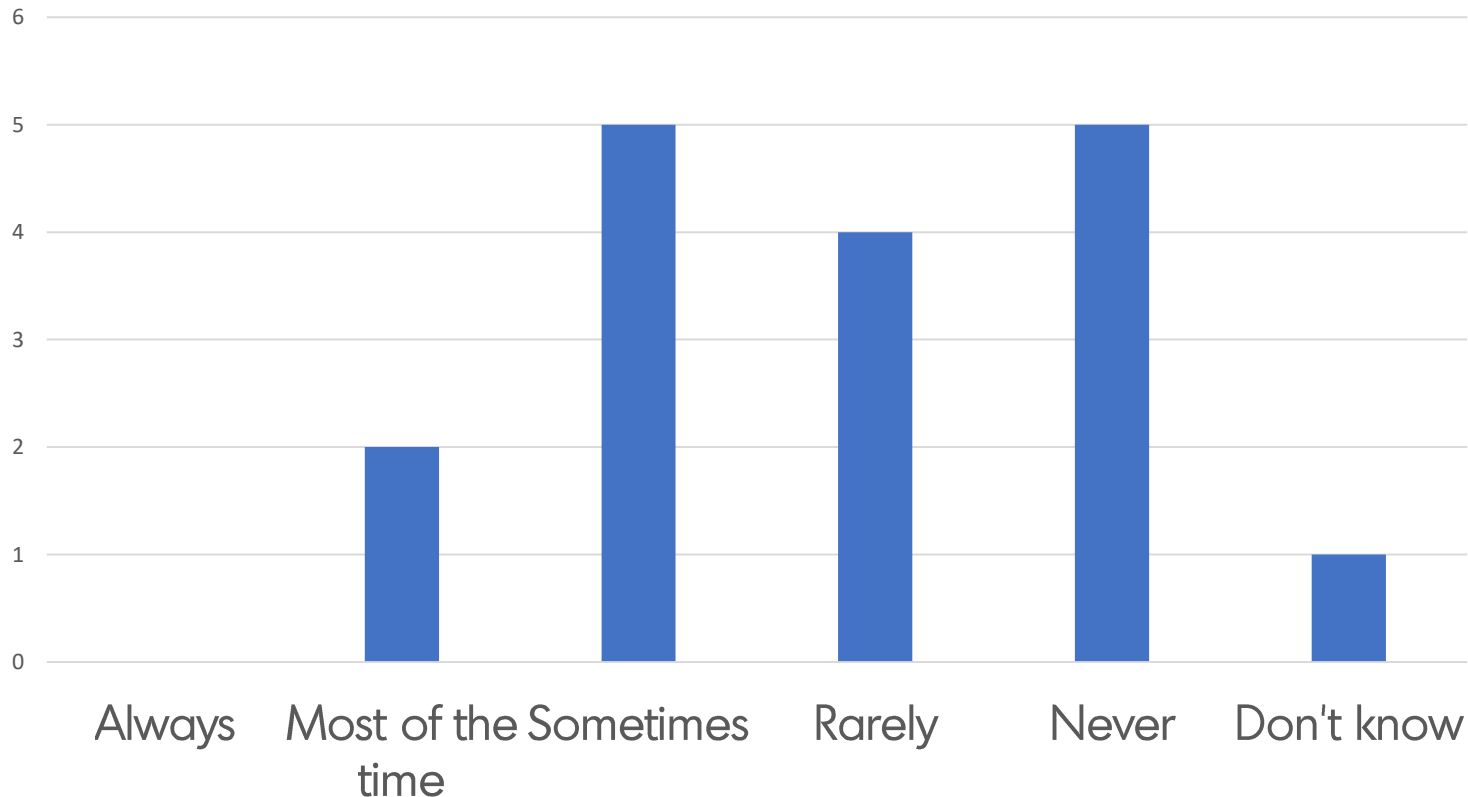
1. Runaways
2. Lost, injured or otherwise missing children
3. Criminal abductions

Actors involved

1. Police
2. Hotlines
3. Parents / carers
4. Judiciary
5. Volunteers

1. Decision-making process

Pressure from family to launch an appeal?



Impact of publicity appeals mostly taken into consideration **while child is missing**, rather than upon return

Requests refused if:

- Negative impact on child and/or investigation
- Child not in danger/no parental authority (parental abductions)



1. Decision-making process

Good practices:

- Collecting and analysing specific information about the child from family, friends, guardians, prosecutor, police
- Discussing impact of publicity with family as well as police
- In short: Hotlines are a focal point for information and support in a missing children case



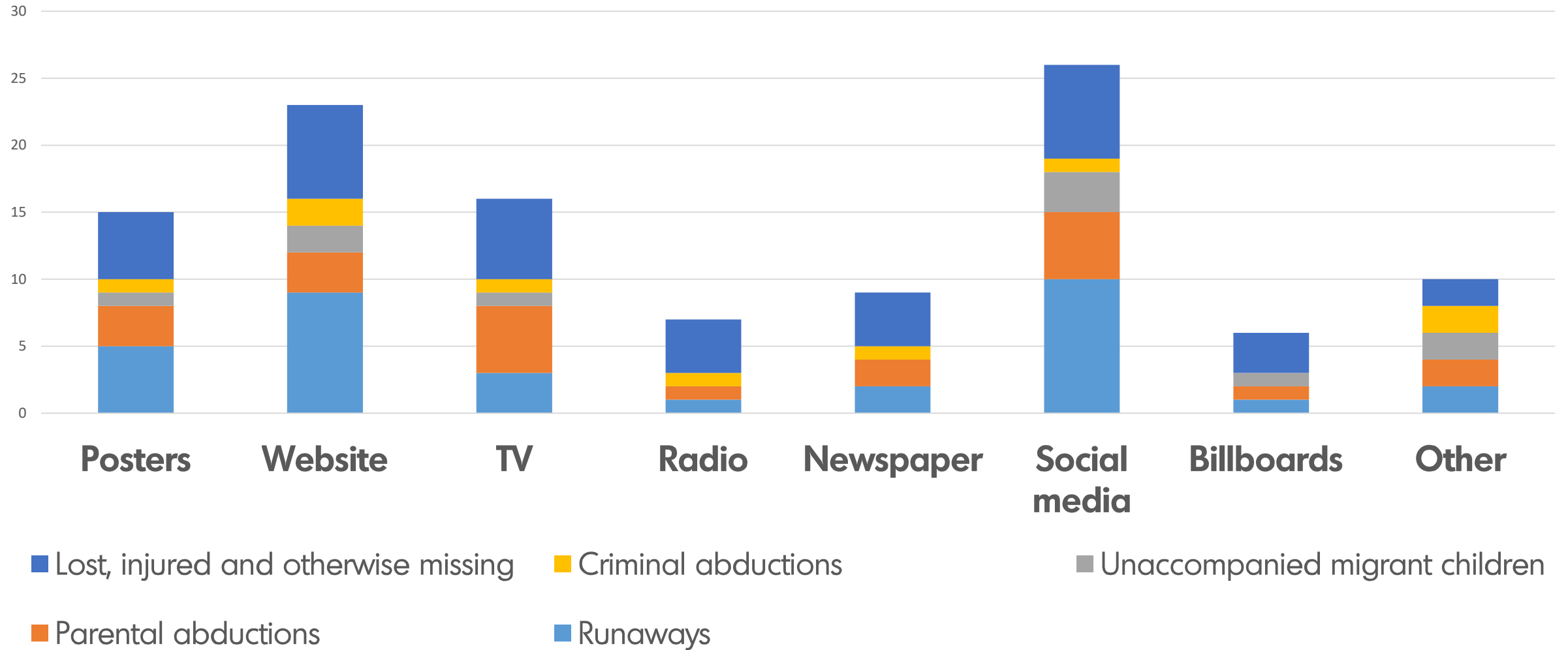
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1. Decision-making process

Challenges and concerns:

- Best interest of the child: Life threat vs negative impact
- If police plays the main role, decision not up to the hotline
- Hotline's limited ability to distribute appeals

2. Running an appeal



3. Effectiveness of publicity appeals

Overarching aim: Finding the child

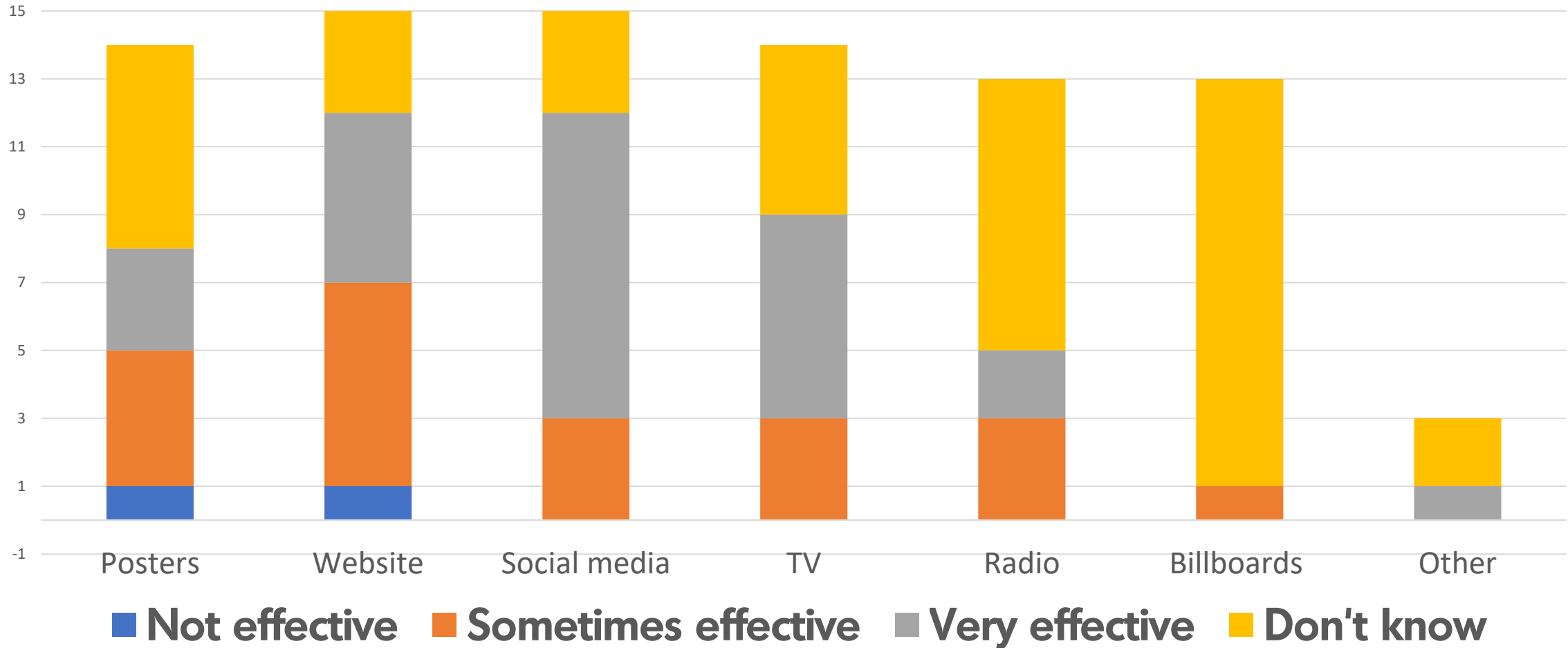
Specific aims:

- Testimonies, new data about the missing child, reporting of sightings
- To encourage the missing child to get in touch so they can be safeguarded
- Reassure the family, informant, police, public that everything is being done to find the child

Further aims:

- Raise awareness of missing issue and services offered
- To "make real" or memorialise the child, ensure they are not forgotten or erased

3. Effectiveness of publicity appeals



3. Effectiveness of publicity appeals

Good practices:

- National evaluation
- Social media monitoring tools
- Monitoring of printed media
- Family feedback surveys

3. Effectiveness of publicity appeals

Challenges:

- Evaluations are costly
- Police confidentiality
- Difficulty in measuring accuracy of information, reach of appeals & effectiveness

4. Impact of appeals upon return

"Thank you for immediately disseminating my child's information. Without your help, I wouldn't know what to do. My child doesn't know how to read or speak."

Mother of 15-year old girl who went missing due to mental health issues

4. Impact of appeals upon return

Positive, short term:

- Public support/ encouragement to child
- Relief and positive surprise for parents
- More care by third parties, eg. school administration and peers
- Gratitude and relief (parents)

Positive, long term

- More services are involved in taking care of the child
- Improved relationship among family members
- Reduced risk of running away again?

4. Impact of appeals upon return

"We are concerned because 2,5 years after my daughter's disappearance, whenever she searches for her name on the internet, she finds websites where she is still mentioned. My daughter is concerned because the profession that she chose requires a certain amount of publicity, but she feels that the information about her disappearance exposes her in a negative way."

Mother of a now 18 year-old who went missing and attempted suicide at 16



4. Impact of appeals upon return

Negative, short term:

- Gossip, threats, insults on social media
- Feeling embarrassed towards schoolmates, not wanting to return to school
- Increased attention towards the child and family from the public
- The child didn't like the photo, viewed the appeal as annoying
- Feeling of shame for the family towards the community

Negative, long term

- Lasting digital footprints about disappearance – the right to be forgotten

4. Impact of appeals upon return

Good practices:

- Pilot in Belgium: cooperation between Child Focus & Google

Good practices:

- Need for better guidance for practitioners and awareness of the public to make good use of publicity appeals to mitigate negative impact

Way forward

Important gaps of knowledge:

- Effectiveness of appeals
- Short term and long term impact on child & family

› **Need for further research to inform practical guidelines**



Thank you



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Any questions?

Delphine Moralis

Secretary General

delphine.moralis@missingchildreneurope.eu

+32 2 894 74 82

Rue de L'Industrie 10, 1000 Brussels

www.missingchildreneurope.eu