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Processing incoming return cases by Central Authorities

Has your child been taken to another EU country without your consent or in breach of a court decision? Central Authorities can help you take the necessary steps to launch legal proceedings and have your child returned.

1 Which EU rules apply?

Where a child has been taken to or kept in a Member State other than the Member State where the child normally lived before the abduction and this breached custody rights of another person, the [1980 Hague Convention](#) applies, as complemented by Chapters III and IV of the [Brussels IIb Regulation](#). The Regulation applies in all EU countries except Denmark.

The Practice Guide for the application of the Brussels IIb Regulation can be found on this page: [EJN's publications](#).

2 What are Central Authorities and how can return applications be made?

Central Authorities are public bodies designated by each Member State to facilitate administrative and judicial cooperation in cross-border family matters. To identify the Central Authority of your Member State, you can visit the link at the bottom of this page.

Any person, institution or other body claiming that a child has been removed or retained in breach of custody rights may apply either to the Central Authority of the child's habitual residence or to the Central Authority of any other Member State for assistance in securing the return of the child.

The application shall contain:

- information concerning the identity of the applicant, of the child and of the person alleged to have removed or retained the child.
- where available, the date of birth of the child.
- the grounds on which the applicant's claim for return of the child is based.
- all available information relating to the whereabouts of the child and the identity of the person with whom the child is presumed to be.

The request for return under the 1980 Hague Convention can be found [here](#).

3 What are the main functions of Central Authorities in child abduction cases?

Central Authorities play a supportive role throughout the return proceedings. They cooperate with Central Authorities in other Member States and encourage cooperation between competent judicial and administrative

authorities, thereby promoting the prompt return of the child.

In particular, Central Authorities may:

- help locate the child if their whereabouts are unknown.
- contact the other parent or the authorities in the other Member State.
- encourage mediation and other means of alternative dispute resolution.
- provide information about legal procedures and available legal aid.
- transmit the application to the competent court.
- cooperate with courts and authorities in both Member States throughout the procedure.

4 How does cooperation between Central Authorities work?

When the Central Authority receives a complete return application, it transmits it without delay to the Central Authority of the Member State to which the child was taken.

Within five working days, the requested Central Authority must acknowledge receipt of the application and indicate which initial steps are being taken. Additional documents may be requested where necessary.

The requested Central Authority will then either transmit the application to the competent court or inform the applicant about the steps to be taken to initiate return proceedings. This might include, where appropriate, indicating the competent court, providing information on the availability of legal aid or legal representation or informing about the possibility of resolving the matter amicably.

Please select the relevant country's flag to obtain detailed national information.

5 Related links

- [Processing incoming return cases by courts](#)
- [Find the Central Authority in your EU country and other relevant information](#)
- [Practice guide for the application of the Brussels IIb Regulation](#)
- [Cross-border parental child abduction leaflet](#)
- [Family mediation](#)
- [HCCH Child Abduction Section](#)

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