

Press Release

Council of Europe Press Division

Ref: 712a06

Tel: +33 (0)3 88 41 25 60

Fax: +33 (0)3 88 41 39 11

pressunit@coe.int

internet: www.coe.int/press



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"They need a home"
Statement by Maud de Boer-Buquicchio
Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe

on the anniversary of the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Strasbourg, 20.11.2006 – "Tens of thousands of children in Europe live in their own, nightmarish version of Neverland, in which there are very few Wendys and far too many Captain Hooks. For these children, Neverland means that they never had a real home, never experienced genuine love, never had a real childhood and, if nothing is done, will never have a chance at a decent start in life.

The Council of Europe three-year programme Building a Europe with and for Children deals with all groups of children and all aspects of their rights, but it is clear that its impact will ultimately be measured against real and quantifiable improvements in the lives of the most vulnerable categories - children in institutions, unaccompanied migrant children, street children, children victims of domestic violence or sexual abuse.

The Council of Europe is involved because it can help to disseminate good national practices and set European standards. The starting point always is and always must be the protection of the interest of the child and his or hers human rights and human dignity.

One of the challenges is to improve and accelerate adoption procedures, including by creating effective safeguards against abuse and corruption which far too often occur in national and international adoptions. The Council of Europe continues to privilege adoption as close as possible to the child's original environment, but when the choice comes between a homeland and a home, we should think of what is best for the child. I therefore very much support recent European Parliament initiatives which are beginning to question the existing very restrictive approach to international adoptions."

More about the Council of Europe programme Building a Europe with and for Children can be found at <http://www.coe.int/children>

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