



Council of Europe

NEWS
Note
to Editors

tel : +33 (3)88 41 25 60 / fax : +33 (3)88 41 39 11 / e-mail : pressunit@coe.int

Hague conference: protecting human rights in multicultural societies

Strasbourg, 06.11.2008 – The Council of Europe is organising an international conference in The Hague (The Netherlands) on 12-13 November on the human rights challenges which culturally diverse societies are nowadays facing in Europe.

The conference, which is organised in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations of the Netherlands, is entitled “Human Rights in culturally diverse societies: challenges and perspectives”. It will gather some 150 representatives of governments, NGOs, academics and experts.

The discussions will focus on:

- Integration and respect for diversity: how to ensure equal enjoyment of human rights and preserve social cohesion.
- the challenges faced today by states in their relation with religions.
- How can a proper balance be found between freedom of expression and protection against hate speech?
- How can the right of vulnerable or minority groups to participate in public life, for example through peaceful demonstrations, be guaranteed?

Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Guusje ter Horst, Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations of the Netherlands, and Eva Smith-Asmussen, Chairperson of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), will open the meeting at 9.30 on 12 November.

During the conference, the Council of Europe will launch two manuals on **hate speech** and the **wearing of religious symbols in public areas**, two topics which have caused intense controversy in Europe in the last years. The manuals aim to become a useful tool for policy makers, experts and others by clarifying both the concepts and criteria used by the European Court of Human Rights and other bodies when addressing these specific questions.

The conference is **open to the press**. It will take place at Het Spaansche Hof, Westeinde 12, The Hague.

[Programme](#)

Contact:

Jaime Rodríguez, Press Officer, Tel. +33 (0) 689 99 50 42 ; jaime.rodriguez@coe.int