

Press Release

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Access to justice for migrants, asylum seekers and children on the agenda of the 28th conference of justice ministers in Lanzarote

Strasbourg, 17.10.2007 – The ministers of justice of the Council of Europe's 47 member states will meet in Lanzarote (Spain) on 25 and 26 October to consider ways of improving access to justice for migrants, asylum seekers and children, including child offenders. The new Council of Europe Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse will also be opened for signature.

The conference will be looking at ways of offering migrants and asylum seekers the long term protection they require to exercise all their basic rights, particularly that of access to justice, irrespective of nationality and status. Migration poses an unprecedented challenge for Europe, one that creates many tensions but also opens up new opportunities.

The ministers will also consider measures to improve children's access to the judicial system, in particular guidelines to ensure that the latter is adapted to their requirements. The Council of Europe has made children's rights and their protection against violence a priority, through its 2006-2008 programme "Building a Europe for and with Children".

The conference will be opened by Spain's justice minister, Mariano Fernández Bermejo, and the Council of Europe's Deputy Secretary General, Maud de Boer-Buquicchio.

At the conference, Council of Europe member states will also be invited to accede to the [Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse](#). Under this instrument, for the first time the sexual abuse of children, including abuse within the home or the family, will become a criminal offence. The Convention deals with child prostitution and pornography and children's enforced participation in pornographic performances, as well as their "grooming" for sexual purposes and sexual tourism.

The Council of Europe is also currently drawing up European Rules for juvenile offenders deprived of their liberty or subject to community sanctions and measures, to offer these young persons greater protection and secure their full reintegration into society.

The conference is **open to the press from 9.00 to 10.30 am**, when there will be a **family photo** (Hotel Gran Melia Salinas).

There will be several **contacts with the press** on **Thursday 25 October**, including a briefing on the Council of Europe's activities to promote and protect children's rights.

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A political organisation set up in 1949, the Council of Europe works to promote democracy and human rights continent-wide. It also develops common responses to social, cultural and legal challenges in its 47 member states.

There will be a final **press conference** at **12.15 pm on Friday 26 October**, in the Bridge Room.

For more information, see www.coe.int/minjust.

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