

# Press Release

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## 23 Council of Europe member states sign Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Lanzarote (Spain), 25.10.2007 – Twenty-three Council of Europe member states today signed the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse ([CETS n° 201](#)), which represents a major step in the prevention of sexual offences against children, the prosecution of perpetrators and the protection of victims.

Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, said: "The new convention can make a real difference in the protection of children – but it must enter into force". She expressed satisfaction at the number of signatures on the first day and encouraged other countries, be they members of the Council of Europe or not, to follow suit as soon as possible.

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden, the "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey signed the convention at the beginning of the 28<sup>th</sup> Conference of the European Ministers of Justice which is being held on 25-26 October in Lanzarote. The convention will enter into force once it has been ratified by five states.

For the first time, an international treaty criminalises sexual abuse, an offence which is usually carried out by people known to the victims – sometimes within the family – and is one of the most damaging for children.

Preventive measures outlined in the convention include the screening, recruitment and training of people working in contact with children, making children aware of the risks and teaching them to protect themselves, as well as monitoring measures for offenders and potential offenders.

The convention also establishes programmes to support victims, encourages people to report suspected sexual exploitation and abuse, and sets up telephone and internet helplines for children.

It also ensures that certain types of conduct are classified as criminal offences, such as engaging in sexual activities with a child below the legal age and child prostitution and pornography. The convention also criminalises the use of the new technologies – the internet in particular – to sexually harm or abuse children, for example by "grooming", an increasingly worrying phenomenon of children being sexually harmed after meeting adults they have previously encountered in internet chat rooms or game sites.

With the aim of combating child sex tourism, the convention establishes that individuals can be prosecuted for some offences even when the act is committed abroad.

The new legal tool also ensures that child victims are protected during judicial proceedings, for example with regard to their identity and privacy.

[Factsheet on the convention](#)

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