

Protecting children against sexual abuse: the Council of Europe calls on governments to step up their action

Strasbourg, 20.10.2011 – The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse ([Lanzarote Convention](#)), which came into force on 1 July 2010, is a genuine asset to states for preventing and combating all forms of violation of children's fundamental rights. To date it has been signed by 28 countries, and ratified by 15. The Council of Europe has committed itself to raising governments' awareness of the need for effective implementation of the convention and supporting them through regional conferences. The next conference is due to take place on 27 and 28 October in Zagreb, Croatia (*).

The convention represents a considerable advance as regards preventing sexual offences against children (for example, it makes "grooming" – adult online manipulation of children for sexual purposes – a criminal offence), bringing prosecutions, protecting the victims and bringing about international co-operation. It also recommends adopting programmes of assistance to victims and setting up telephone and Internet hotlines for children.

Figures suggest that one in five children in Europe are victims of sexual violence. It is estimated that in 70 to 85% of cases the abuser is someone the child knows. And in 90% of cases, the offences are not reported to the authorities. Given the scale of the problem, the Council of Europe has made the promotion of children's rights a priority. The conference will offer an opportunity to present the "One in Five" campaign in order to encourage governments to launch their own national campaigns.

Opening addresses will be given by Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, and Jadranka Kosor, Prime Minister of Croatia. A **press briefing** is scheduled for **Thursday 27 October at 10.15 am** (Westin Hotel).

(*) Croatia ratified the convention on 21 September 2011.

[Further information](#)

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