

# Press release

## Rights of the child: Belgium takes the lead

This November 20, 2014, the 25th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Ministers coordinating children's rights of the French and Flemish communities, Rudy Demotte and Sven Gatz, as well as the Deputy Prime Minister and federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, Didier Reynders, and federal Minister of Justice, Koen Geens, recall the commitment in Belgium to promote "the rights and interests of the child".

In the context of its Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Belgium, in collaboration with the Children's Rights Division of the Council of Europe, will organise in Brussels on 9 and 10 December a European Conference focused on "the best interests of the child".

During a day and a half, experts from the 47 Member States of the Council of Europe, representatives of international organizations and NGOs will specifically try to make progress concerning children's rights. By exchanging experiences, sharing tools, defining common ethical rules, the objective is to support children's workers in their day-to-day decisions.

The conclusions of the debates are highly awaited on 10 December, International Human Rights Day.

### To act in the child's best interests

The conference will explore the challenges laid down by the implementation of this concept by the decision makers and will specifically pay attention to the child's best interests in family issues. How should the child's interests be taken into account when they are in conflict with those of his/her parents or the society? How should the long-term interests of the child be taken into account in cases of parental separation or imprisonment of a relative?

One of the main challenges of the conference is to mobilize the decision makers and the professionals around the concept of the child's best interests so that it can be taken as a primary consideration in their daily decisions. It is indeed important that judges, medico-psycho-social workers, psychologists, educationalists and other professionals in the field of childhood and youth have at their disposal the necessary tools to assess and determine the child's best interests.

In order to achieve this objective, the Belgian authorities have decided to promote and to develop the normative provisions around this concept, the deontological and ethical rules that pertain to it and the procedural rules related to it.



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## A step in the right direction

As a pioneer in this area, Belgium has undertaken once again to ensure concrete progress for the rights of children. Chairing the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Belgium has decided to give priority to the rights of the child.

Just 25 years ago, on 20 November 1989, the Assembly of the United Nations unanimously adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In Belgium, that Convention entered into force in 1992 and since then, the rights of the child remain a central issue. Recently, Belgium has been one of the firsts (European) countries to allow children to lodge a complaint to the Committee on the Rights of the Child of the United Nations in Geneva.

The full and effective realization of children's rights is a daily struggle that requires a sustained commitment. The programme "Building a Europe for and with children" of the Council of Europe, launched in 2006, aims at improving the rights of all children. The issue of the rights of the child is important not only in Belgium but also in all member States of the Council of Europe. Therefore, Belgium and the Children's Rights Division of the Council of Europe want to get all partners, experts, decision makers and practitioners of these States involved in this work on the child's interests.

For more information on the Conference: <http://www.bestinterests>



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