

The Council of Europe has also prepared a convention against counterfeit medicines and similar crimes criminalising illegal practices endangering public health. The convention, expected to be adopted in 2010, will also be open for participation by non-member states of the Council of Europe.

## Protecting children

The Internet is also being used to harm and exploit people, in particular children and other vulnerable people. A new **Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse** criminalises certain types of conduct, in particular the use of new technologies to sexually harm children (e.g. "grooming"). Children's well-being in online environments is not only about risks and the need to protect them, it is also about their positive experience in participating online.

### Article 23 (of the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse) – Solicitation of children for sexual purposes

*Each Party shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to criminalise the intentional proposal, through information and communication technologies, of an adult to meet a child who has not reached the age set in application of Article 18, paragraph 2, for the purpose of committing any of the offences established in accordance with Article 18, paragraph 1.a, or Article 20, paragraph 1.a, against him or her, where this proposal has been followed by material acts leading to such a meeting.*



Given the global dimension of these problems, the solutions offered by the Council of Europe are increasingly global in scope. This is why Council of Europe treaties reinforcing the protection of our rights online are open to accession by all states (including non-members).

**The Council of Europe** is an international political organisation, which brings together over 800 million citizens from 47 countries, making up almost an entire democratic continent. In its work based on intergovernmental cooperation, the Council of Europe seeks to promote democracy, the rule of law and human rights. Its permanent headquarters are in Strasbourg, France.



### 47 member states of the Council of Europe:

Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

Discover what the Council of Europe is doing for Internet governance at [www.coe.int/internetgovernance](http://www.coe.int/internetgovernance)



## The Council of Europe and the Internet safeguarding our rights and freedoms

The Internet is one of the greatest liberating forces of our age, making information and global communications accessible to anyone who can log on to the World Wide Web. It is overtaking other forms of communication and replacing the traditional way of carrying out transactions. Unfortunately it can also be used to perpetrate crimes or knowingly peddle misinformation.

The Council of Europe is working with its 47 member states to make sure the Internet provides a safe and open environment where freedom of expression, democracy, diversity, education and knowledge can flourish. We are also helping national and international organisations police the Web, finding ways to stop people trafficking, terrorist recruitment and other forms of cybercrime.

### Article 10 (of the European Convention on Human Rights) – Freedom of expression

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. This article shall not prevent States from requiring the licensing of broadcasting, television or cinema enterprises.
2. The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary.

## Accessing the Internet

Improving access to the Internet is the only way more people will benefit from the opportunities provided by the Web. So there needs to be both affordable and safe access to the Internet.

The Internet is often a lifeline for people with disabilities. So making the Internet more accessible can be a key way for people with disabilities to connect more easily with the world – from voting in elections to buying goods and filling in tax returns! The Council of Europe's disability action plan for 2006-15 includes a set of actions for member states, ranging from improving participation in public life to increasing educational opportunities and involving users with disabilities in the development of new technologies.

## Freedom of expression

The Internet belongs to all of us, and should serve the common good. Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights says that everyone should have the right to freedom of expression and information. This means that state authorities should ensure there is freedom to communicate on the Internet and that there is no censorship.

People should be able to discern the authenticity of information on the Internet in helping them make informed decisions and choices (e.g. buying online). Freedom, confidence and trust to use the Internet is a key aim of the Council of Europe – this is linked closely with the need to protect

personal information, an area where national governments and stakeholders can work together.

## Stopping fraud, crime, and exploitation on the web

The Internet provides a huge potential for learning and communication – but also a high potential for crime. The Council of Europe is working in some very specific areas to reduce cybercrime, and has introduced an international treaty, the **Cybercrime Convention**, which lays out a framework for guiding state policies in this area. It also describes the minimum legal standards necessary for States to successfully prosecute cybercriminals and tackle child pornography. An additional Protocol obliges states to criminalise racist and xenophobic acts committed through computer systems. The **Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism** also covers the virtual world, asking states to establish criminal offences for recruitment and training of terrorists for example.

## Safeguards from counterfeit medicines

Medicines and healthcare products may be marketed via the net in a legitimate way, but also illegally. In the latter case, they can be counterfeit or of poor quality, and be dangerous.

The Council of Europe plays a major role in the protection of health through the European Pharmacopoeia, which ensures the quality of medicines in Europe. In 2007 the organisation recommended standards for mail-order trade in medicines so as to maintain patient safety and the quality of the supplied medicines.