

NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUES 2026

Barnahus as a concrete implementation of the Lanzarote Convention and child-friendly justice standards: a North-South dialogue

Lisbon, Portugal, 18 May 2026

CONCEPT NOTETHE NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUES

In 2024, in response to today's tense and rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape, the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe (NSC) launched the "[North-South Dialogues](#)", an initiative that emphasises the need for deeper dialogue to address critical global issues.

The North-South Dialogues bring together stakeholders from Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and beyond, to explore opportunities for co-operation and address shared challenges. Fostering collaborative solutions, these discussions aim to build trust and strengthen partnerships, in line with values and standards of the Council of Europe that are shared in other regions.

On the occasion of the **31st North-South Prize of the Council of Europe Award Ceremony** and inspired by the exemplary work of the 31st North-South Prize laureate, **Mr Bragi Guðbrandsson** – founder of the [Barnahus model](#) and current member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child – this edition of the North-South Dialogues will focus on **child-friendly and multidisciplinary responses to violence against children**.

CONTEXT/RATIONALE

Organised by the North-South Centre, in collaboration with the [Children's Rights Division](#), the North-South Dialogue 2026 "Barnahus as a concrete implementation of the Lanzarote Convention and child-friendly justice standards: a North-South dialogue", aims to foster a constructive discussion and reflection on building effective, child-friendly justice systems on different latitudes.

All forms of violence against children, including sexual exploitation and sexual abuse are among the gravest violations of human rights - ending them by 2030 is one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Yet, around the world, judicial and administrative proceedings often fail to address the specific rights and needs of children, exposing them to secondary victimisation and undermining their trust in democratic institutions.

In partnership with:



Building a Europe
for and with children

Construire une Europe
pour et avec les enfants

The Council of Europe [Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#), also known as “the **Lanzarote Convention**”, stands as the most comprehensive binding international instrument providing a holistic response to sexual violence against children. To date, 48 States have become Parties, and the Convention remains open for accession by countries worldwide, strengthening global efforts to safeguard children. Tunisia acceded to it in 2019 becoming the first non-European State Party. The Lanzarote Committee is the body established to monitor whether Parties effectively implement the Lanzarote Convention.

Other regional frameworks also significantly contribute to these efforts, such as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and its optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC), on the basis of which many African countries have criminalised the sexual exploitation and abuse of children and enacted national protection systems into law.

These legally binding documents are complemented by international soft-law standards on **child-friendly justice** (such as the Council of Europe Guidelines on Child-friendly Justice or the Guidelines on Action for Children in the Justice System in Africa), together setting clear guidance to prevent secondary victimisation and calling for child-friendly, multidisciplinary responses. The **Barnahus** model, identified as a promising practice by the Lanzarote Committee in 2015, exemplifies this vision in practice: it delivers timely justice and comprehensive support to child victims while minimising further harm.

The event will explore the interconnections of **sexual violence against children** and **child-friendly justice**, underlining the urgent need to address these as a unified system. Drawing on the Lanzarote Convention and promising practices such as Barnahus, the event will dive into ways to adapt and apply innovative, multidisciplinary models in different regions in order to deliver justice and support for child victims while preventing further trauma.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Enhanced understanding of **international standards** to protect children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, having as a reference the Council of Europe’s Lanzarote Convention;
- Exchange on **child-friendly justice standards** in the North and South;
- Increased awareness of **Barnahus** as a practical implementation of the previous standards and as a model for avoiding secondary victimisation;
- Strengthened democratic participation of **civil society and survivors** in policy-making.

PARTICIPANTS

Policymakers, officials and members of the diplomatic community, notably from Europe, Africa and the Middle East, as well as practitioners and civil society representatives engaged in child protection.

LANGUAGES

The official languages of this event will be **English and French**.