



**Speech by Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, Deputy Secretary General**  
**Award ceremony of the "Crystal Scales of Justice",**  
**Ljubljana, 25 October 2010**

Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I should like to start by thanking Minister Aleš Zalar for having organised the Award Ceremony of the "Crystal Scales of Justice" in Ljubljana on the day of the European Day of Civil Justice for this year. Minister Zalar has long been a dynamic supporter of the Council of Europe, and a setter of precedents.

The first European Day of Civil Justice was launched by the Council of Europe and the European Commission in October 2003 in Budapest.

The aim of the Day is to exchange good practices in order to improve the efficiency, the quality and the fairness of justice. It is also to bring justice closer to citizens and to facilitate access to justice for all.

Due to the successful co-operation between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the field of justice, our two Organisations launched in 2005 a competition, the Crystal Scales of Justice. I remember giving the first Crystal Scales of Justice award to the Rovaniemi Court of Appeal in 2005. I can tell you that their project which was about organising systematic discussions among judges in the Court, leading to consistent and well reasoned decisions, inspired many tribunals in the course of their reforms.

The Crystal Scales of Justice encourages a fresh, innovative and creative look at our justice systems. We are seeking critical approaches to the way civil justice is administered across Europe, and we wish to come up with new ideas, rendering civil justice more expedient, more efficient, more transparent and more user-friendly.

The innovative practices are identified by judges, lawyers, court clerks and public officials who are the key players in their justice system.

These professionals, women and men, show an incredible will to actively and consciously perform their legal duties. It is thanks to them that our judicial systems can be improved in the best interest of all European citizens.

The 2005, 2006 and 2008 European Days of Civil Justice concerned only civil matters. Last year, in 2009, only criminal matters were addressed. This year marks the beginning of a new era, whereby both the civil and criminal fields alike have been brought into focus. In doing so, the Council of Europe and the European Commission wish to demonstrate that both fields equally require efficiency, quality and fairness.

I do not think I should take more of your time before revealing who the laureates are for 2010. Before I do so, together with Minister Zalar and Ms Salla Saastamoinen from the European Commission, allow me to make three remarks:

Firstly, all 50 entries – 20 more than in 2009 - which participated in this year's competition from 21 of our member states, regardless of whether they have been shortlisted or not, should be given credit and thanked for their contribution. This competition is not about who comes first,

second or third – it is about sharing experiences and disseminating innovative ideas across our 47 member states.

Secondly, the projects in this competition have shown to be extremely varied, and of very high quality. They reflect the current debates which take place in our societies, particularly on the length of proceedings or on the confidence and trust of citizens in their judicial systems. I should like to offer my special thanks to all the judicial institutions from all over Europe which have participated in this competition, the jury members as well as the European Commission. This year's four shortlisted projects from Austria, Bulgaria, Finland and Slovenia will soon be presented to you in detail.

Finally, in the light of the future accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights, this event sends out a very strong and positive signal from both the Council of Europe and the European Commission. Both institutions share the same vision: an independent judicial system is an essential pillar for a State governed by the Rule of Law. But, as we know, this is not enough. This system must work efficiently, and deliver high quality service to European citizens in the spirit of Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights, and

of the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights. And that is why we are here together today.

Thank you for your attention.