



# NEWSLETTER

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## Organ Trafficking Convention Opened for Signature

The [Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs](#) was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 9 July 2014. The adoption of the Convention represents a historical milestone in the fight against organ trafficking. It is the first legal document that provides an internationally agreed upon definition of trafficking in human organs, identifying the activities that ratifying States must criminalize in their national laws. Like other criminal law instruments, the Convention also includes provisions to deter these practices and to protect victims. This instrument complements the existing international legal framework against trafficking in human beings (including for the purpose of the removal of organs), which does not reach some transplant related crimes and many of the actors, such as surgeons, whose involvement lies at the heart of the criminal activity.

The Convention was opened for signature on **25 March 2015** in the city of **Santiago de Compostela, Spain**. The opening ceremony included remarkable launching speeches by leaders of the Council of Europe, including Secretary General [Thorbjørn Jagland](#), [Dr Margaret Chan](#), Director General of the World Health Organization, and representatives of Spain, the host government, among others.



**Thorbjørn Jagland**

At the event, fourteen coun-

tries signed the Convention: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Moldova, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom. This signifies their intention to ratify it, which will bind them legally to incorporate its provisions into their domestic law. The Convention, which was conceived to have a global scope, is open for signature and ratification not only by Council of Europe member or observer countries but by any State in the world, and several have already indicated that they are considering acceding to the Convention, as have additional COE member States. **The DICG Executive Committee encourages all DICG members to explore with their own government the possibility of signing the Convention if it has not already done so.**



**Margaret Chan**

The opening ceremony was followed by an International High Level Conference on Trafficking on Human Organs, with very active participation by several members of the DICG Board of Councillors. The experience derived from our involvement in the promotion of the Convention, has convinced the DICG Executive Committee that this new instrument will play a key role in combatting organ trafficking through harmonizing national legislation and through providing a necessary platform for international cooperation.

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