

November 2008 - Call for applications for the European Crystal Scales of Justice Prize for innovative practices contributing to the quality of criminal justice

After the third successful edition of the Crystal Scales of Justice Prize in the civil justice field in 2008, the European Commission and the Council of Europe decided to establish a complementary biennial prize in the criminal justice area. The Crystal Scales of Criminal Justice will be awarded for innovative practices contributing to the quality of criminal justice. The competition will be organised on a biennial basis by the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the years in which the civil justice prize is not awarded.

The launch of the first edition of the criminal justice prize was officially announced during the award ceremony of the civil justice prize in Catania, Italy on 24 October. This prize is an excellent way of encouraging new practices that contribute to improving the quality of justice. This event enables judges and other legal practitioners voluntarily to join forces with the Commission and the Council of Europe to assess the quality of legal systems by exchanging best practices.

The Crystal Scales of Justice Prize is organised with Commission funding under its "Criminal Justice Programme". The competition is designed for projects, which aim at improving the organisation and procedures of justice systems (e.g. trials), or improving mutual knowledge and exchange of best practices in the area of criminal justice.

In order to be eligible, initiatives must be presented by a court, a bar association or an association of legal professionals, a prosecution office, a prison or probation administration, or any other entity responsible for criminal justice affairs in a Member State of the European Union or the Council of Europe. Applications for the 2009 edition must be submitted by 1 March 2009 and meet the eligibility criteria outlined in the rules of the competition.

All projects will be assessed by a panel of judges composed of European legal practitioners. The prize and three special distinctions will be awarded during the plenary session of the Justice Forum, which will take place in the first half of 2009 in Brussels.