

# Eurochild Conference 2018

## Background Paper

#EurochildConf



### Children's participation in public decision-making - a review of practice in Europe



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Putting children at  
the heart of Europe



## Acknowledgements

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## About Eurochild

Eurochild advocates for children's rights and well-being to be at the heart of policymaking. We are a network of organisations working with and for children throughout Europe, striving for a society that respects the rights of children. We influence policies, build internal capacities, facilitate mutual learning and exchange practice and research. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is the foundation of all our work.

## About the Eurochild Conference

***"Building a better Europe with children: All aboard!"***

*29-31 October, Opatija, Croatia*

The Eurochild Conference in Opatija which will be hosted by Society "Our Children" Opatija, will bring positive examples of how public decision-makers at local, national and European levels are respecting the right of children to participate in decisions affecting them. The Eurochild conference will bring together practitioners, researchers, civil society actors, policy and decision makers along with children and young people themselves to contribute to improving children's participation in public decision-making.

**Read the programme and register online:**

<http://www.eurochild.org/events/eurochild-conference-2018>



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For more information see: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/easi>

## Introduction

This background paper is for the Eurochild Conference taking place in Croatia in October 2018. It gives an overview of current practice on children's participation in public decision making<sup>1</sup>. It explains the importance and context of children's participation in public decision making.

Using results from a survey of Eurochild members and a review of academic literature focused on Europe<sup>2</sup>, it provides examples of children's participation activities that are inclusive of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, which have successfully influenced public decision making. It also provides guidance on ensuring that children's participation is inclusive and impactful. The paper ends with recommendations for what we should be doing next.

Children's participation in public decision-making is a process through which children express their ideas about government policies, guidance, budgets and services and through which children's ideas produce changes in, for example, understanding, training, policy and practice<sup>3</sup>. Children can be involved in every stage of the process – deciding what issues are important; giving their ideas and gathering ideas from others; reporting ideas to other decision makers; and in some instances, making decisions themselves about public services. This process, where citizens and governments work together to design and implement policies, plans and services, is sometimes called co-production, collaborative design or service user involvement<sup>4</sup>.

Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) establishes children's rights to express their views on all matters that affect them. However, as the UN Committee's General Comment No. 12 makes clear, obligations under Article 12 go beyond creating opportunities for children to voice their opinions. Governments also have a responsibility to ensure that those views are heard by those making the decisions, and taken seriously<sup>5</sup>.

The UN General Comment makes it clear that listening to children's views is an essential part of assessing what is in their best interests. Listening to children, taking their views and ideas seriously and responding positively makes a difference to children, to public services and contributes to creating a culture of respect and reciprocity. Making extra efforts to ensure the inclusion of children who are disadvantaged (by poverty, or by racism or discrimination based on religion, disability, migration or other statuses) maximises those dividends for all concerned.

1 The term public decision-making is used throughout by which we mean decision-making on state or government policies at all levels of government.

2 The literature reviewed was accessed through academic search engines and websites (EU, Council of Europe, UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Children's Ombudspersons and NGOs working with children). The survey was sent to Eurochild members and their contacts. We received 156 responses, 12 of which were from young people. In this paper we use the term Europe to include all EU and Council of Europe Member States

3 Larkins, C. Kiili, J. and Palsanen K. (2014) A lattice of participation: reflecting on examples of children's and young people's collective engagement in influencing social welfare policies and practices *European Journal of Social Work* 17 (5) 718-736.

4 All forms of involvement can be tokenistic or transformative, depending upon the extent ideas influence decision-making and power to implement decisions is shared, see Needham, C. and Carr, S. (2009) *SCIE Research Briefing 31: Co-production: An Emerging Evidence Base for Adult Social Care Transformation*, London: Social Care Institute for Excellence.

5 RC (2009) [General Comment No 12 The Rights of the Child to be Heard, CRC/C/GC/12](#)

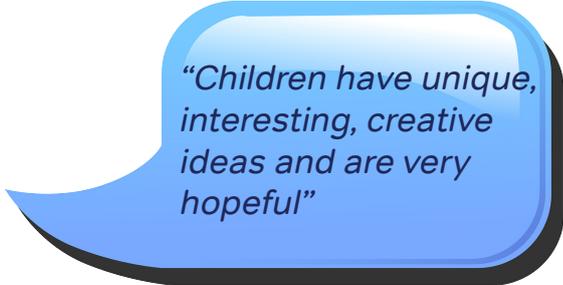
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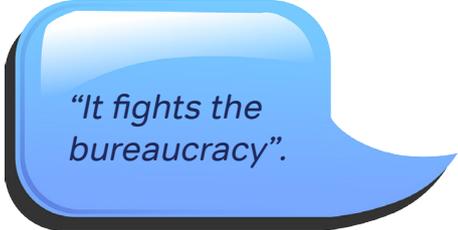
# 1. Why is children's participation in public decision-making important?

Children's participation can improve the effectiveness of policies, the quality of public services and bring benefits to communities. A recent examination of the structures and processes for consulting with children in Ireland, concluded that *'consultations with children can be an important and challenging tool in accessing their views on policy issues of importance to them which help to child-proof policy and ensure it is in the best interests of children'*<sup>6</sup>.

Children taking part in our survey stressed that children's participation is important because:



*"Children have unique, interesting, creative ideas and are very hopeful"*



*"It fights the bureaucracy".*

Adults stated that children's participation is important because it:



*"...helps us do the things we are expected to do in law - service inspections will check up to see whether we are doing children's participation"*

<sup>6</sup> Horgan, D. (2017) Consultations with Children and Young People and their Impact on Policy in Ireland. Social Inclusion, Vol 5 (3) pp. 104-112).

The most powerful argument for children’s participation in public decision making is that it leads to better services. Figure 1 presents the rationales seen as most effective by the survey respondents.



Figure 1. Survey respondents’ perceptions of the efficacy of these arguments for children’s participation in public decision making.

Opportunities to participate in decision-making impact positively on the children involved in terms of their confidence and well-being<sup>7</sup>. A recent report, published by Children in Scotland and the Scottish Government, reviews a number of case studies and suggests that children can increase their knowledge and understanding of their rights as well as learn new transferable skills when they participate in public decision-making<sup>8</sup>.

7 Publication based on a large quantitative dataset is forthcoming based on Graham, A, Fitzgerald, RM, Powell, MA, Thomas, N, Anderson, DL, White, NE & Simmons, CA 2017, Data from: Improving approaches to wellbeing in schools: what role does recognition play? Phase 3: Quantitative data collection, Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University. Contact TheCentre@uclan.ac.uk for details.

8 Ross, G. Kerridge, E. & Woodhouse, A. (2018) [The Impact of Children and young People’s Participation on Policy-making](#). Children in Scotland and the Scottish Government

## 2. What is the policy context at a European level?

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child makes it clear that Article 12 applies not only to children as individuals but also to children as a group. They state that children's participation in public decision-making should be more than a one-off event:

*“The concept of participation emphasizes that including children should not only be a momentary act, but the starting point for an intense exchange between children and adults on the development of policies, programmes and measures in all relevant contexts of children's lives.”<sup>9</sup>*

The Council of Europe's recommendation on the participation of children and young people aged under 18 states that:

*“particular efforts should be made to enable participation of children...who are vulnerable or affected by discrimination, including multiple discrimination’. Member States are required to remove any restrictions that exist in law or practice and ‘take a co-ordinated approach to strengthening children's participation’ and ‘ensuring that participation is mainstreamed in decision and policy making structures’<sup>9</sup>.”*

The European Union recommends that Member States:

- Put in place mechanisms that promote children's participation in decision-making;
- Enable and encourage children to express informed views, ensuring that those views are given due weight and are reflected in the main decisions affecting them;
- Involve children in running services and consult them on relevant policy planning;
- Reach out to and support the participation of children from disadvantaged backgrounds<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)2 of the [Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18](#) p.6-8

<sup>10</sup> European Commission Recommendation of 20 February 2013 Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage (2013/112/EU)

### 3. What is the current situation in Europe?

Children's rights to spaces to be heard and taken seriously in public decision making are not fully or consistently respected across Europe. This is particularly true for children in vulnerable situations.

There are some examples of positive country-wide commitments to children's participation. The National Strategy for Child Rights in the Republic of Croatia 2014 - 2020, specifically recognizes children's participation as one of its four strategic goals. Ireland has become the first country in Europe to establish a national strategy for children and young people's participation in decision-making<sup>11</sup>. Research in 2015 suggested 11 EU Member States have written into their constitutions, children's right to be heard<sup>12</sup>.

Research and UN reports over the past ten years show that in all EU Member States<sup>13</sup> and in the majority of Council of Europe Member States<sup>14</sup>, some form of children's participation is provided for in at least one piece of legislation, and sometimes this includes opportunities for collective participation. Within the Council of Europe, 12 countries have provided some voting rights to under 18s, often just in local elections and sometimes only if they are employed and paying taxes<sup>15</sup>.

However, in the most recent rounds of reporting back to governments across Europe on their periodic examinations, the UN Committee has recommended that 21 European countries make greater efforts to ensure that children are involved in the development of public policy<sup>16</sup>. The Committee has pointed to the lack of a culture of listening, inadequate resourcing, absent and poorly functioning participation structures, and children's views not being given adequate weight.

The Committee has also raised specific concerns about the lack of opportunities to participate for disabled children, Roma children, and children with experience of migration and/or asylum processes and those experiencing poverty as well as children facing other disadvantages<sup>17</sup>.

11 Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2015) [National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making. Dublin: Government Publications Office.](#)

12 ECORYS. 2015. [Evaluation of Legislation, Policy and Practice on Children's Participation in the European Union](#) (EU). Final Report. Brussels: EC Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers.doi:10.2838/45596.

13 ibid

14 Database of Extracts from UN Concluding Observations regarding child participation and inclusion

15 According to the Child Rights International Network this includes Austria, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Malta, Slovenia, Switzerland, parts of the UK, and possibly Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia [https://www.crin.org/sites/default/files/crin\\_voting\\_ages\\_compiled\\_0.pdf](https://www.crin.org/sites/default/files/crin_voting_ages_compiled_0.pdf) [accessed 6.5.18]

16 Database of Extracts from UN Concluding Observations regarding child participation and inclusion

17 ibid

The most recent reports on the implementation of the European Union's 2013 Recommendation on Investing in Children<sup>18</sup> show that across the EU27 Member States, children's participation in public decision making is rare and even where spaces for participation have been created, children's views only very occasionally have an impact on public policy.

#### **4. Can all children participate in aspects of public decision making?**

Yes. Our survey and literature review collected examples from across 28 Council of Europe Member States<sup>19</sup> of children attempting and sometimes succeeding in influencing national, regional, local and international decision-making on issues as diverse as: Alternative Care, Asylum Policy, Bullying, Child or Youth Policy and Action Plans, Children's Participation, Child Protection, Children's Rights, Community Improvement, Day and After School Care, Disabled Children's Services, Disaster Management, Employment, Environment, Family Life, Gender Discrimination, Government Spending, Health, Inclusion, Media (influence of and access to), Planning, Play and Leisure, Poverty Reduction, School and Education, Sexual Health and Relationships, Transport and Traffic, Violence against Children (including Child Sexual Exploitation), Votes at 16, Young Carers, and Youth Justice.

The 36 examples of impact included in the survey returns most commonly involved care-experienced children, children living with a disability, living in poverty or from minority ethnic backgrounds. Some examples of participation in public decision making also included young Roma, asylum seekers and refugees, children in contact with youth justice services, children experiencing difficulties at school, living rurally or in large households and children aged under 8 years.

<sup>18</sup> ESPN Thematic Reports on Progress in the implementation of the 2013 EU Recommendation on "Investing in children"

<sup>19</sup> Examples were found from Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Malta, FYR of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom. See case study database here. See footnote 1 for description of the methodology

## 5. How do children participate in public decision making?

Children's participation in public decision making happens in a myriad of forms, many more ways than can be described in this paper. Figure 2 provides a visual picture of some of the forms and here we include descriptions of selected examples to illustrate the range.

Find the case studies in the annex

### Consultations with children are sometimes initiated by governments

to support the development of new legislation, guidance and plans. For example, in **Ireland**, in 2016, the government commissioned a consultation with children aged under 12 so that they could contribute to the development of the national after-school-care policy. And, in Slovakia, children aged 11-14 were supported by UNICEF to conduct research that contributed to the national Action Plan for Children 2013-17<sup>20</sup>.



**Children's Ombudspersons can initiate debates.** For example, in **Estonia**, children debated the right to vote at 16 with the Children's Ombudsman. The children and young people (aged 13+ and from a variety of disadvantaged backgrounds) concluded that the voting age should be lowered. Their views were supported by the Ombudsman and many politicians, resulting in a change in the law.



**NGOs and academics also initiate participatory groups and research concerned with particular rights or children in disadvantaged situations.** For example, in **Serbia**, in 2017, an NGO conducted participatory research, which was inclusive of a broad range of children, and then fed children's views into the new national Violence Against Children Strategy.



In the **Netherlands**, since 2016, local child-led groups have been set up so that children can meet decision makers to present their ideas on reducing poverty and social exclusion. And, back in 2004, in Turkey, street children were involved in participatory action research to develop local planning guidelines<sup>21</sup>.



20 See <https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/slovensky/ministerstvo/konzultacne-organy/rada-vlady-sr-ludske-prava-narodnostne-mensiny-rodovu-rovnost/vybor-deti-mladez/napd-eng.pdf>

21 Ataöv A. and Haider J (2006) From Participation to Empowerment: Critical Reflections on a Participatory Action Research Project with Street Children in Turkey Children, Youth and Environments Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 127-152

Children have initiated campaigns, taken part in activism, lobbying and awareness raising activities that aim to have an impact on public decision making through influencing public opinion and politicians' attitudes. For example, in Hungary, in 2016 students protested against the public education system and in Lithuania, the Pupil's Union campaign was successful in reducing the number of final exams taken by school pupils<sup>22</sup>. In **Spain**, and in other examples across Europe<sup>23</sup>, Roma children and young people supported by Roma-led NGOs (and sometimes by academics) met with members of Parliament and local councillors to build relationships and lobby on specific issues that concern them.



Children have identified their own priority issues when asked to do so by parliamentary committees. For example, in **Wales**, children identified safe places to play as their priority. Politicians invited children into the National Assembly and went out to meet children aged under eight years, and specific groups of disadvantaged children (including asylum seekers).



Figure 2: A myriad of forms of participation

22 ESPN Thematic Reports on Progress in the implementation of the 2013 EU Recommendation on “Investing in children”

23 See [www.perAction.eu](http://www.perAction.eu)

Children can monitor public decision making and help set budgets. For example in **Croatia**, in 2011, children helped prepare an Alternative Children Report on the State of Children’s Rights in Croatia which was delivered by the Society “Our Children” Opatija to the UN Committee for Children’s Rights in Geneva.



And, in **Cyprus**, children were involved in a consultation about a national Sexual Health Strategy in 2017. As well as giving their views and making recommendations, the children now have representation on a committee that is developing the action plan and budget for the strategy and on another committee that is responsible for monitoring the delivery of the strategy. There are very few examples of children in Europe being involved in making decisions about public budgets, although there are examples of this at local levels in the UK and Spain<sup>24</sup> and this practice is long standing in some areas of Brazil<sup>25</sup>.



**Children can become part of expert advisory groups informing the government, Ombudspersons or NGOs.** For example, in **France**, in December 2016, children became part of a national advisory council that provides advice through an expert committee linked to the Prime Minister. They have recently contributed to guidance on responding to the UN Committee Report on children’s rights in France. Ombudspersons ask governments challenging questions, and working with them has enabled children to raise concerns, engage in campaigns, and respond to government led consultations in Croatia, Serbia<sup>26</sup>, Switzerland, Wales and beyond.



For example, in **Croatia**, children working with the Ombudsperson for Children contributed to change the age of consent. Children advising the Ombudsperson have also created reports and videos linked to legislation and specific issues, such as experience of care systems<sup>27</sup>. Children involved in these projects have used them to campaign locally, nationally and internationally<sup>28</sup>.



24 <https://pbnetwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Participatory-Budgeting-Toolkit-2010.pdf>

25 <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/d6ce/68bb9e15f9093a6f086771eb5fb3954c5ff0.pdf>

26 In Serbian, [http://www.pravadeteta.com/attachments/394\\_Liflet%20-%20priprema%20343x240mm.pdf](http://www.pravadeteta.com/attachments/394_Liflet%20-%20priprema%20343x240mm.pdf)

27 <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/publications/hidden-ambitions/>

28 <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/we-want-to-help-people-see-things-our-way/>

NGO advisory groups can be local, national or international, such as **Eurochild’s Children’s Council** which is an inclusive group of 12 children from across Europe, who are selected as ambassadors for Eurochild’s children’s participation work. They bring children’s ideas into Eurochild’s work and are seeking to influence the realisation of children’s rights across Europe.



The most common forms of sustained structures for children’s participation are national, local or school-based children’s parliaments, councils or forums. Children can have an impact on public decision making through being involved in these councils if its activities are closely focused on influencing public decision making and the councils have a clear link with political structures. For example in **Scotland**, from 2017 onwards, children in the Scottish Children’s Parliament and the Scottish Youth Parliament meet annually with the full Scottish Cabinet including the First Minister. Most recently they raised concerns about equal protection from violence and the age of criminal responsibility and the Scottish Government agreed to support legislation in these two areas.



Sometimes, local children’s councils are also involved in long term projects, like the child friendly cities initiative created by UNICEF<sup>29</sup>, which seeks to create spaces for collaboration and shared city-wide plans which are sensitive to children’s needs. For example in **Croatia**, since 1999 the “Our Children” children’s council has enabled children aged 10-15 to conduct projects and organise surveys on a wide range of issues and these are then presented to children’s council meetings. Their work is supported by mentors, who are often ex-members of previous children’s councils.



<sup>29</sup> <https://childfriendlycities.org/>

## 6. How can we ensure that opportunities to participate are accessible to, and inclusive of, all children?

Special efforts are required to ensure that all children are supported to participate in public decision-making. Much more needs to be done to reach out and make participation processes more accessible and inclusive to children in vulnerable situations. Here are a few suggestions of successful strategies identified from our review of previous research and by the survey respondents:

- Use clear and accessible language that children can understand and a range of communication methods that children use and can relate to. Publicise the ways that children can get engaged, including in places that children frequent (online and offline).
- Audit participation activities to remove barriers and ensure they are accessible to children from a range of different circumstances. For example, whether transport costs can be reimbursed promptly, whether buildings are physically accessible to wheelchairs, whether interpreters are available to support children who have newly arrived in the country.
- Have multiple ways to engage and support children's participation not 'one' way. Be strategic. Monitor who is coming and who isn't and work at encouraging or finding ways to engage others. Get advice from children. Opportunities for reflection and evaluation will assist in building an evidence base of what approaches work best with particular populations in particular contexts. Experiment with a range of methods<sup>30</sup>.
- Explore how best to deploy capacity building programmes to enhance engagement with children from under-represented groups. For example, training for staff and volunteers working with children; training for children; establishing quality mentoring programmes. Work with children should be delivered in spaces that they find safe and accessible with the longer term aim of establishing an integrated approach.

<sup>30</sup> Crowley, A. Moxon, D. (2017) [New and innovative forms of youth participation in decision-making processes](#). Council of Europe.

Figure 3 below presents the methods of increasing inclusion seen as most effective by the survey respondents.

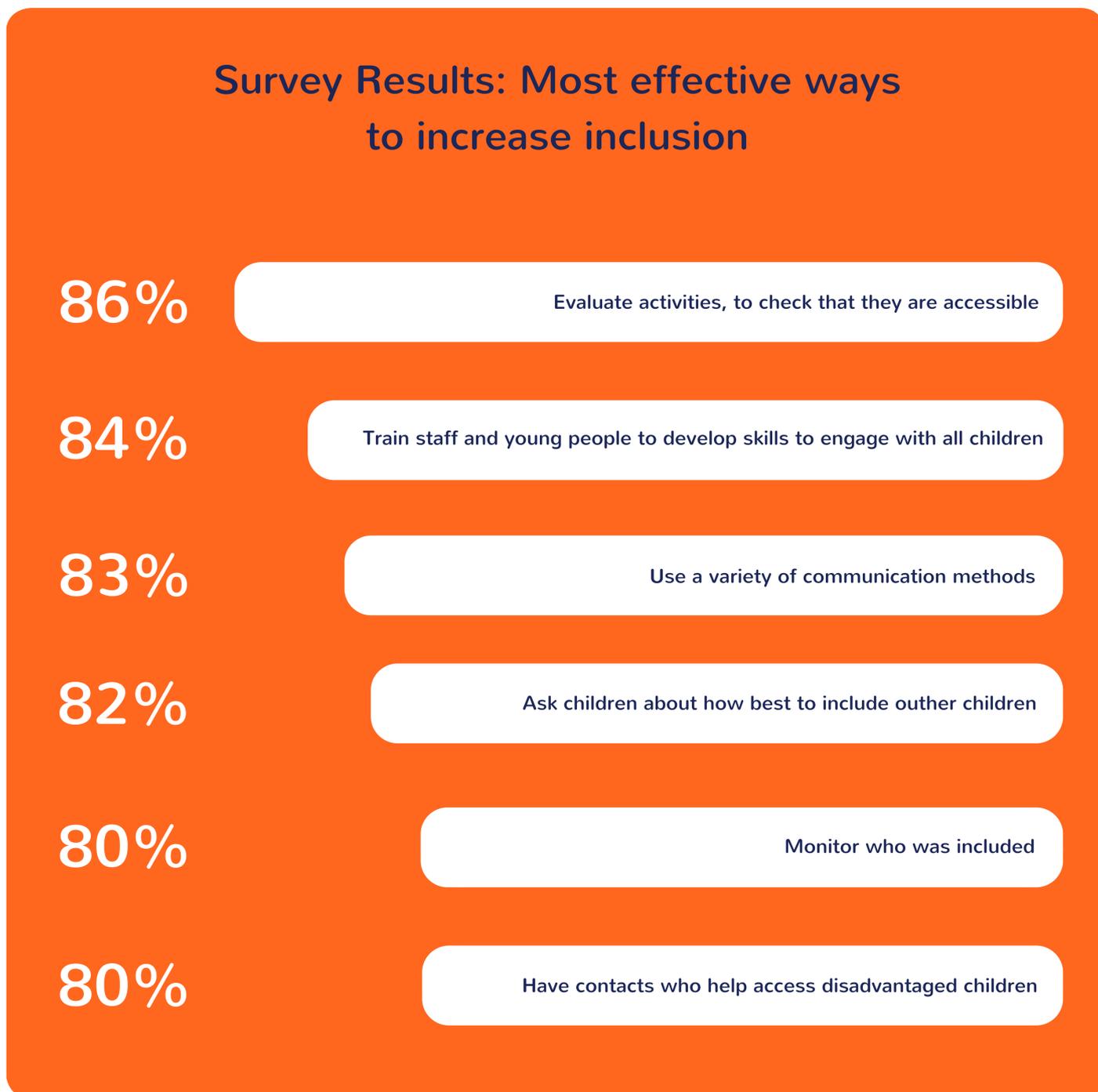


Figure 3. Survey respondents' perceptions of the efficacy of these strategies to increase inclusivity in children's participation in public decision making

## 7. What factors support children to influence public decision-making and what factors are hindrances?

There are many more opportunities today than 20 years ago for children to express their views but attention is now needed on ensuring that those views are clearly communicated to those with the responsibility to listen and make decisions.

The checklist on ‘audience’ in Ireland’s National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making<sup>31</sup> asks: Is there a process for communicating children’s views? Do children know who their views are being communicated to? And does that person/body have the power to make the decisions?

Our survey shows that some of the most inclusive and impactful children’s participation happens where children communicate directly with powerful decision makers, rather than communicating through someone else. What also seems key is the role and outlook of the professional adults involved both those supporting children to participate in policy making processes and those who are the decision-makers. Adults can make all the difference in the ways in which they support children to take part in decisions about policies and programmes.

The Eurochild conference survey and the research literature<sup>32</sup> illustrates how some factors help children’s participation achieve impact on public policy making and some factors hinder children having influence. The most important factors are set out in Figure 4.

31 Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2015) [National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making](#). Dublin: Government Publications Office.p22

32 See for example: Crowley (2015) Is anyone listening? The impact of children’s participation on public policy. *International Journal of Children’s Rights* 23 (3) 602-621. and D’Arcy, K. And Brodie, I. (2017) Literature Review: Participation in policy and practice – children and young people who are affected by sexual violence <https://www.our-voices.org.uk/assets/documents/leapliteraturerevieweu.pdf>

Figure 4– What Helps and Hinders?

It HELPS if you:	It HINDERS if:
<p><b>Create supportive contexts</b></p> <p>Children are seen as rights holders, as active citizens. Resourcing is adequate.</p> <p><i>It helped 100% of the time where decision makers have to demonstrate they have included and responded to children's views.</i></p>	<p>There is low commitment to children's participation and to children's rights more generally.</p> <p>Children are seen as objects of concern with the adults in charge.</p> <p>Resourcing is short term or insufficient.</p>
<p><b>Develop good understanding</b></p> <p>Children are well prepared, trained and organized and believe in their own ability to advocate for change. They are supported by skilled facilitators over a long period of time.</p> <p><i>It helped 100% of the time when children understood policy.</i></p>	<p>There is lack of preparation, limited skills / capacity and low confidence.</p>
<p><b>Gather support</b></p> <p>Communities and organisations are accessible to and supportive of, children's efforts to influence decision-making.</p> <p><i>It helped 100% of the time, when children got support for their goals from older children and adults in their families or communities.</i></p>	<p>There are no or limited opportunities for the children to meet with other citizens affected by the particular policy and/or their organisations.</p>
<p>Have a clear message and communicate clearly Children have clear objectives, focused on opportunities to influence policy. They are supported to think strategically and develop a sophisticated understanding of the policy landscape. Mainstream and social media are used to raise public awareness and put pressure on government decision makers.</p> <p><i>It helped 100% of the time to watch out for government consultations on the issues you are interested in.</i></p>	<p>Children are not sure what it is they want to change or how to do so. They and the adults in support do not understand the policy landscape.</p> <p>Decision makers are unclear about what's up for discussion and change.</p>

It HELPS if you:	It HINDERS if:
<p><b>Represent all children</b></p> <p>Discrimination is challenged. Barriers are removed. There is reflection and monitoring to try and understand how representative those who are participating are and how more inclusive practice can be promoted.</p> <p><i>It helped 100% when children's participation groups were seen to truly represent all children.</i></p>	<p>The <i>status quo</i> is never challenged and there is a resistance to change.</p>
<p><b>Establish many different ways to participate</b></p> <p>Children, like adults are all very different and like to take part in things in a variety of ways.</p> <p><i>It helped 100% when children communicated views using creative methods music, poetry, and art.</i></p>	<p>There is only one recognised way of doing children's participation – for example, through the school council.</p>
<p><b>Think about time</b></p> <p>Sufficient time is available to prepare and support children to engage (and to be able to be flexible and be able to respond to individual need and circumstance). There is awareness that changes to policy may happen months or even years after the children participated.</p> <p><i>Allocating enough time to the whole process (including preparation and follow up) has significant resource implications which need consideration at the planning stage.</i></p>	<p>Things are done too quickly.</p> <p>There are only one-off opportunities for children to participate.</p> <p>There are no or limited resources to support either adequate preparation or follow through.</p>
<p><b>Follow up and get feedback</b></p> <p>Feedback is sought from those with responsibility for listening so that children get find out how their views and ideas were taken into consideration when decisions were made and can plan what to do next.</p>	<p>There is a lack of follow up and feedback to children.</p>
<p><b>Evaluate and reflect</b></p> <p>Space is allocated to reflect on the process with children and identify what worked well and not so well.</p> <p>Learning is captured and incorporated into future plans.</p>	<p>Things are done in the same way every time.</p>

## 8. How will we know how we are doing?

Public decision-making is rarely a linear process and it can be hard to keep track of the links between the views that children are expressing and the policy that is developing. All too often children's participation is conceived of as a one-off event, not necessarily open to all children. With that in mind it is important to establish measures and structures that guarantee participation rights for every child to be heard in all areas of their lives. The Council of Europe has developed a Tool for measuring progress on implementing its Recommendation on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18. At the heart of the Children's participation Assessment Tool are 10 indicators which measure progress and help governments to ensure they are fulfilling their obligations<sup>33</sup>.

In another initiative, this time with a global reach - a number of the major international NGOs collaborated in the development of measurement tools with which to evaluate children's participation in the context of any particular project or programme. These tools provide a conceptual framework for the analysis of children's participation using the following approach:

- **Scope** – what degree of participation has been achieved (consultative, collaborative or child-led), at what stages of programme development, and with which children? In other words – what is being done?
- **Quality** – to what extent have participatory processes complied with requirements for ethical and effective practice<sup>34</sup>? In other words – how is it being done?
- **Outcomes** – what have been the outcomes of children's participation, on children personal development and communities, and on the wider realisation of their rights? In other words – why is it being done and what has changed? The indicators of effectiveness are determined by those involved – both children and adults<sup>35</sup>.

33 Council of Europe (2016) [Child Participation Assessment Tool](#).

34 There are nine basic requirements for effective and ethical participation set out in the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment No 12 Para 134 states that all processes, in which a child or children are heard and participate, must be: transparent and informative; voluntary; respectful; relevant; child-friendly; inclusive; supported by training for adults; safe and sensitive to risk; and accountable.

35 Lansdown G and O'Kane C, (2014) [A Toolkit for Monitoring and Evaluating Children's Participation, Booklet Three](#), Save the Children/WVI/Plan/UNICEF/The Concerned for Working Children.

One of the most important indicators to monitor in terms of children's participation is undoubtedly whether or not children get feedback from the decision-makers as to how their views have been listened to and taken into account.

The importance of feedback and what it indicates is emphasised by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child:

*Since the child enjoys the right that her or his views are given due weight, the decision maker has to inform the child of the outcome of the process and explain how her or his views were considered. The feedback is a guarantee that the views of the child are not only heard as a formality, but are taken seriously.<sup>36</sup>*

There is a strong case for monitoring and evaluating the impact of children's participation on public decision-making. Only by scrutinising what is happening as a result of children's participation as well as ensuring that the process is safe, fair, inclusive and ethical, can we understand what works and why and what support is required, hopefully thereby, avoiding children becoming frustrated and disillusioned. Effective evaluation provides a mechanism through which adults can be more accountable to children.

36 CRC General Comment No.12 [The Rights of the child to be Heard](#) CRC/C/GC/12, para 45.

Figure 5 presents a checklist for governments and non-governmental organisations to use when establishing or reviewing policies, structures and activities to support children's participation in public decision-making.

### **RIGHTS**

- Is children's right to participate in government decision-making written into law, and is there a strategy on implementing this?
- Are government decision makers required to demonstrate how they have taken children's views into account?
- Can children access complaints mechanisms if those rights are not realized?

### **RESOURCES**

- Is money and time allocated for child participation in government decision making?
- Have disadvantaged children been consulted about how to reach out to them, and is funding available to support this?
- Do all children have access to information and training on child participation and government decision making?
- Do all policy makers and professionals have access to information and training on child participation?

### **RELATIONSHIPS**

- Are there a range of spaces in which children can influence and take part in decision making and having their say?
- Are there mechanisms for feeding children's views into government decision making and through which children will receive feedback?
- Have links been made between government decision makers and the NGOs and Ombudspersons working with vulnerable children?
- Can children access support for their concerns from their politicians, Ombudsman, NGOs, communities, families and older young people?

### **REVIEW**

- Is monitoring, evaluation and review written into a participation strategy, and are children involved in this?
- What is going well and what are the challenges?
- How can we learn from this to improve our approach?

## 9. What should we be doing next?

Governments at all levels should take a strategic approach to supporting children's participation in decision-making. Influencing policy-making takes time and can challenge cultural values, but enabling social dialogue is a key European goal<sup>37</sup>.

National and local strategies and mechanisms should be developed with children and encompass a myriad of forms and structures for involving children in public decision-making<sup>38</sup>.

European, national and local governments will need to establish some essential building blocks. Implementing the following measures provides an excellent foundation on which to build<sup>39</sup>:

- **Measures to protect the right to participate:** Enshrine children's rights to participate in legislation and provide access to effective complaints mechanisms if those rights are not realised.
- **Measures to promote the right to participate:** Education on rights to participate should be embedded in school curricula. Children interested in children's participation should have access to training on advocacy and policy making. Policy makers and professionals working should be trained on children's participation and parents. The wider public should be informed about children's rights to be heard. Adequate financial and time resources for children's participation should be allocated to public decision-making processes.
- **Measures to create spaces for participation:** Children need a variety of spaces to express their views, including formal structures such as advisory groups and school and municipal councils focused on influencing decision-making; meetings with decision-makers; opportunities to participate in accessible consultations; and, membership as of committees where decisions are made; as well as more informal opportunities to take part in activism and have a say on issues that concern them. Public services should establish feedback mechanisms through which children can share their concerns, experiences and ideas for improvement.

<sup>37</sup> See European Pillar of Social Rights <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13129-2017-INIT/en/pdf>

<sup>38</sup> Commission Recommendation of 20 February 2013 [Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage](#) (2013/112/EU)

<sup>39</sup> These measures are reflected in: Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18.

- **Measures to ensure inclusion:** Resource, implement and evaluate different ways of reaching out and engaging children from relevant minority groups and children with fewer opportunities. Successful outreach takes many different forms and it is important to take time to reflect and learn from children themselves about ‘what works’ and to provide peer to peer training and support for disadvantaged children. Co-operation between government and civil society organisations including children’s NGOs and ombudspersons should be strengthened to support effective ways of engaging seldom heard children in public decision- making.



- **Measures to promote accountability:** In order to ensure that children’s views are taken seriously, governments should be required to demonstrate how they have listened to children and the weight that these views have been given, thereby strengthening government’s accountability to children. Guidance on how to provide this feedback could be developed with children, and may be facilitated by the creation of monitoring and inspection systems. The mechanisms for ensuring accountability should be written into the participation strategy.

## Annex

Case studies showing the range of forms child participation can take in public-decision making:

### Ireland: Implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

**Aims:** In developing Standards for School-Age Childcare (SAC), the Government commissioned a consultation with primary school age children on what afterschool services should look like. The consultation with children directly informed the Action Plan and in her foreword, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs stated: 'Children who were consulted about what they wanted from school age childcare made a deep impact on the plan and their rights and wishes were placed firmly at the centre of all considerations.'

**Children gave their views and these were passed on to government decision makers by an adult**

**POWER SHARING:** This participation opportunity was started by adults. Adults and children work together to lead activities. They decide together the questions to explore, goals and recommendations to achieve and their action plans.

**Impact on Public Decision Making: Decision makers said that children had an impact on their thinking, their views led to a close examination and an immediate change in child care policy.**

#### **What works well?**

The National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making, 2015-2020 is helpful. This government commitment to participation meant the NGOs specialising in children's rights on the Working Group could ensure children's views were taken into consideration.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) is the developer and policy holder of the SAC Action Plan and the department and also the department containing the Participation Unit that commissioned this consultation with children. The Department has always been very motivated to building the SAC policy and its implementation in SAC services based on the views expressed by the children.

As this was the first time this type of plan was developed there was no need to challenge any already established policy.

**Any barriers?** SAC services are operated privately in Ireland (by for- and non-profits), with the State's role to be primarily regulation and funding. The challenge now will be whether the outcomes of participation will be visible in the regulatory standards and in contractual conditions between SAC services and the State. In a private market approach to childcare, there is always a downward pressure on standards and regulation in order to reduce the costs to the providers.

*Organisation: A researcher*

*Scale: Working at national level*

*Age Range: 8-12 years*

*Including: Young children*

*Dates: 13.12.16 onwards*

*For further information: Report of the Consultations and Action Plan*

## **Estonia: Votes at 16**

**Aims:** We were debating with the Child Ombudsman whether 'vote 16' should happen. We reached the conclusion that it should. We made it possible for 16-17 year olds to vote in last elections.

### **Children spoke to government decision makers and:**

- talked about their experiences
- made recommendations
- discussed together how to implement changes
- inspected policies, services or decisions

**POWER SHARING:** This participation opportunity was started and designed by adults. Adults led the activities and controlled the budget but children and adults decided together the goals they wanted to achieve and their recommendations.

**Impact on Public Decision Making: Children's views led to a change in policy or practice over time**

**WHAT HELPED?** Adults were patient and gave time to make sure that children were participating to their fullest capacity. Many adults and policy makers were in favour of the change of law from the beginning.

**Whenever the government wants to change a major law that involves children or young people, they contact our organisations. Recently it has come to a point where the meetings are set up by children directly, not through other adults (which is a big improvement, because 1. it saves time and 2. it shows that we are trusted to make decisions).**

**Any barriers?** We, the children, didn't know all the laws from the beginning

*Organisation: An NGO led children's council/ parliament*

*Scale: Working at Local, Regional, National, European scales,*

*Age Range: 13-18+ years*

*Including: Children who have experience of criminal justice systems, living in poverty, being disabled and children of minority ethnic backgrounds*

*Dates: Not given*

## Serbia: Protecting Children from Violence

**Aims:** The 'Children in action! Children and adults together towards the safe childhood' research project aimed to empower children to express their views on violence and to present recommendations to the Violence Against Children working group of the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs.

### **Children spoke to government decision makers to:**

- talk about their experiences
- make recommendations
- discuss together how to implement changes

**POWER SHARING:** This participation opportunity was started by adults and they decided the questions to explore. Adults and children worked together to lead activities, identify goals and decide recommendations and action plans.

**Impact on Public Decision Making: Decision makers said that children had an impact on their thinking and children's views led to a close examination of a policy or practice**

**What helped?** Children selected to act as 'children advocates' received a special training so they could built skills needed to present key messages and to engage into dialogue with policy makers

Attention was paid to monitor the impact of children's perspective in the development and finalization of the new Violence Against Children strategy.

We had time, so that after 3 months children could start to lead this project more and come up with their own ideas and connect to stakeholders. It took time to build relationships based on trust and listening and to connect them to support if needed.

**Any barriers?** This is ongoing lack of training in child participation and the UNCRC (for children's services organisations, children and social activists) and a significant power imbalance between children and power structures.

Stakeholders were not involved enough in deciding who should be part of the project and improving this would have increased their sense of ownership. Competition for contracts means that services which should collaborate are sometimes competing against each other.

*Organisation: 'Children in action! Children and adults together towards the safe childhood'*

*An NGO led children's forum*

*Scale: Working at national level*

*Age Range: 13-18 years*

*Including: Children with experience of being in care, Disabled Children. Young Roma.*

*Dates: 1.9.2017 to 1.3.2018*

*For further information: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Yq4SfaQFtZYIC7G0WtwzIrs794RyZxXEy7j9b-Gpnc8/edit?usp=sharing>*

## **Netherlands: Speaking Minds – Opinions on Poverty Policy**

**Aims:** Children growing up in poverty engage in dialogue with local government representatives to improve local policies to combat poverty among children and young people

**Children speak to government decision makers to:**

- make recommendations
- discuss together how to implement changes
- inspect policies, services or decisions

**POWER SHARING:** This participation opportunity was started by adults. Adults and children work together to lead activities. They decide together the questions to explore, goals and recommendations to achieve and their action plans.

**Impact on Public Decision Making: Anti-poverty and social exclusion policies have been improved and municipalities have gained tools for youth participation.**

**What works well?** Children attend weekly meetings and receive information about how municipalities work and how they can influence the policy.

They are taught research skills and communication techniques so that they can do research and communicate their advice well. Advice is given using photographs taken by children handed over to politicians and policy staff

The municipality discuss the recommendations with the young people at discussion tables.

The activity is evaluated afterwards, with children and policy makers.

**Any barriers?** The extent to which children's views result in change in policy is sometimes limited. Not all municipalities have adopted this approach.

*Organisation: A Government led children's council/forum*

*Scale: Working at national level*

*Age Range: 12-18 years*

*Including: Children with experience of being in care. Possibly children in other vulnerable situations.*

*Dates: July 2016- July 2018*

*For further information: <https://www.savethechildren.nl/wat-doen-we/samenwerking/met-andere-hulporganisaties/speaking-minds>*

## Spain: Promoting Roma Inclusion

**Aims:** A group of Roma young people, supported by the Federació d'Associacions Gitanes de Catalunya, went to the Catalan Parliament to meet with members of the Intergroup on Gypsy People. The young people wanted to boost inclusive policies and promote child-led approaches to addressing the issues facing their communities.

### **Children spoke to government decision makers to:**

- talk about their experiences
- make recommendations
- discuss together how to implement changes

**POWER SHARING:** This participation opportunity was started by adults. Adults and children work together to lead activities. They decide together the questions to explore, goals and recommendations to achieve and their action plans.

**Impact on Public Decision Making:** Decision makers said that children had an impact on their thinking. They became aware that young Roma did not feel included in youth policies and that they wanted to participate.

**What works well?** The group overcame stereotypes that young Roma face in society. They felt empowered to speak together with policy makers. For many of them it was the first time they had spoken to people with the power to make the changes they were seeking.

The young people built leadership capacities and a positive image of their community.

**Any barriers?** The young people had some fear of working at this political level.

It is hard to identify what changes have occurred in practice as this is a long process of requiring shifts in attitudes and awareness.

*Organisation: An NGO led one off event, part of an ongoing activity for a specific group of children/youth*

*Scale: Working at regional level*

*Age Range: 15-18+ years*

*Including: Young Roma, some of whom were young carers or living in poverty situations*

*Dates: 1.1.15 onwards*

*For further information: <http://www.rom21.eu/es/> <http://www.museuvirtualgitano.cat/es/2016/06/30/la-fagic-dona-inicia-al-projecte-sam-roma-sam-manusha/>*

## Wales: Developing the Right to Safe Places to Play

**Aims:** The National Assembly for Wales asked 2700 children in Wales what issues concerned them. Safe places to play and hang out ranked highest and the committee held an inquiry into the issue. The committee held a public consultation, took written and oral evidence from professionals and children. Children said they wanted safe places to play, with adult supervision.

Children gave their views and these were passed on to decision makers by adults.

### **Children also spoke directly to government decision makers to:**

- Talk about their experiences

**POWER SHARING:** This participation opportunity was started and led by adults. Children and adults decided on the question to explore – safe places to play – and children gave their views. Adults then decided on the goals, recommendations and action plans.

**Impact on Public Decision Making:** A report containing children's views was published in 2010 and this influenced the development of the statutory guidance for the Play Sufficiency Duties within the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010.

**What helped?** The Committee issued a questionnaire aimed at children and young people and also:

- met with children in schools and groups across Wales;
- held a workshop for disabled children, young carers, asylum seeking children and others;
- visited several play provision sites;
- encouraged children and young people to send the Committee pictorial and video evidence;
- Invited children, supported by Funky Dragon (the Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales), to give evidence to the Committee;
- The Assembly Education Team held workshops with children and young people.

**Any barriers?** Local authority approach to play sufficiency legislation varies across Wales. Austerity budget cuts continue to hit play provision hard in Wales.

*Organisation: A Government-led one off event which linked with the national children's parliament*

*Scale: Working at national level*

*Age Range: Under 8 to 18 years*

*Including: Children with experience of living in poverty, being disabled, asylum seeking and children from Roma and other minority ethnic backgrounds*

*Dates: Started in 2009 and continued for 6 months*

*For further information: [See the Report](#) and <http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/sufficiency>*

## Croatia: Children's Priorities in a Child Friendly City

**Aims:** Children participate in workshops about children rights and communication facilitated by mentors in the Union of Societies Our Children in Opatija. In these workshops children discuss topics that are important for the lives of children in Opatija (Child Safety, Sport, Health, Leisure activities and entertainment). Projects are conducted through fieldwork, interviews, Surveys and Polls. The results are presented at children's city council meetings.

Children give their views and these are passed on to government decision makers by adults.

### **Children also speak to government decision makers to:**

- talk about their experiences
- make recommendations

Children have a small budget

Children conduct public campaigns.

**POWER SHARING:** This participation opportunity was started by children. Adults and children work together to lead activities. They decide together the questions to explore, goals and recommendations to achieve and their action plans. Adults control the budgets.

### **Impact on Public Decision Making: Decision makers say that children had an impact on their thinking**

**What works well?** The Children's City Council of Opatija is an activity that allows children to speak up and tell their wishes and needs to adults and those who make decisions on issues relating to the lives of children and other residents in Opatija.

Many activities are led by older young people who have previously been part of the structure. Children work well together as a team. Their views and opinions provide useful guidance for policy makers. It works well when children join adults at their meetings.

Opatija is part of the "Child Friendly City" network that was established by unicef. There are 93 child friendly cities across Croatia and they all have a set of standards to work towards, including the creation of collaborative spaces between adults and children in which local plans are developed.

### **Any barriers?** Busy schedules of adults.

*Organisation: A children's council/forum*

*Scale: Working at local level*

*Age Range: 10-15 years*

*Including: Disabled children*

*Dates: 1999 onwards*

*For further information: <http://savezdnd.hoola.hr/show.jsp?page=6129> and <http://dnd-opatija.hr/en/news/>*

## Cyprus: Sexual Health

**Aims:** To influence the Draft National Strategy on Sexual and Reproductive Health of Children/Young people in Cyprus (2017) children were given information about existing policies in Cyprus and other countries. They then made suggestions in the early stages of drafting the strategy and now they are included in the Committee for the Action Plan (where budgets will be finalised) and the monitoring committee.

Children met with government decision makers to:

- talk about their experiences
- make recommendations
- discuss together how to implement changes
- inspect policies, services or decisions

**POWER SHARING:** This participation opportunity was started and led by adults. Adults and children worked together to decide the questions to explore, goals and action plans. Children decided on recommendations. Adults controlled budgets.

**Impact on Public Decision Making: Children's views had an impact on decision makers thinking and led to both an immediate change in policy or practice and close examination of a policy.**

What works well? The willingness of the Ministry of Health to involve children at the early stages of drafting the Strategy and the openness the decision maker had in listening to children's views and recommendations was the most decisive factor. The second factor was that the Children involved had a number of preparatory sessions with adult coordinators who provided information on what policies were up till then in Cyprus and what policies exist in other countries. Through discussion, children were then able to formulate concrete suggestions that they submitted to and discussed with the decision makers.

**Any barriers?** Due to the openness of the Ministry and the closeness of the subject to children's interests, we faced no challenges in this activity.

*Organisation: A government led children's council/forum/parliament*

*Scale: Working at regional and national levels*

*Age Range: 13-18 years*

*Including: Children with experience of being in care, living in poverty, being disabled and having a minority ethnic background.*

*Dates: March 2017 onwards*

## **France: Implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**

**Aims:** A national advisory council composed of 12 children has been set up to provide advice through an expert committee linked to the Prime Minister of France<sup>1</sup>. The 12 children have given advice particularly on promoting children's rights (e.g. rights to be systematically heard, for personal data to be protected on line, for awareness raising about children's rights and intergenerational leisure opportunities).

### **Children speak to government decision makers to:**

- make recommendations
- discuss together how to implement changes
- inspect policies, services or decisions

**POWER SHARING:** This participation opportunity was started by adults. Adults and children work together to lead activities. They decide together the questions to explore, goals and recommendations to achieve and their action plans.

### **Impact on Public Decision Making: Children's views have been included in the committee's action plan on implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**

**What works well?** The group has been set up by law. There is a legal requirement for the group of children to be , given information about developments at least three times a year, and to be given opportunities to express their views on these matters.

The time working just as a group of children, support by associations (NGOs) using participatory techniques to develop their own ideas and proposals is effective. They are also given time to participate in the full committee, alongside the adult members, and are invited to present their ideas.

A report on the methodology being used will be developed this year so that the possibility of developing child participation in other public institutions can be considered.

**Any barriers?** The extent to which children's contributions are recognised and valued by the full committee is variable. The functioning of the committee has not been adapted to enable children's participation, and sometimes this make participation impossible.

*Organisation: A Government led children's council/forum*

*Scale: Working at national level*

*Age Range: 8-17 years*

*Including: Children with experience of being in care. Possibly children in other vulnerable situations.*

*Dates: 13.12.16 onwards*

*For further information: <http://www.hcfea.fr/>*

## **Croatia: Advising the Ombudsperson and Changing the Age of Sexual Consent**

**Aims:** High school students attending a focus group facilitated by the Office of the Ombudsman for Children suggested that a survey should be conducted in schools to explore student's perspectives on the age of consent, as they had concerns that it did not provide sufficient protection for children. The survey, with 2500 revealed that 95% of children thought the age of consent (14 years) was too low. The Network of Young Advisors to the Ombudsman for Children (NYA), comprised of 20 members aged 12-18 years from across the country, used the survey results to advocate for change.

Children give their views and these are passed on to government decision makers by adults.

**Children also speak to government decision makers to:**

- talk about their experiences
- make recommendations

Children conduct public campaigns.

**POWER SHARING:** This participation opportunity was started by children. Adults lead activities. Adults and children decided together the questions to explore, goals and recommendations to achieve.

**Impact on Public Decision Making: In 2012, the Criminal Code was changed. We succeeded in raising the age of consent to 15.**

**What helped?** The Ombudsman had been hosting discussion and making recommendations on this issue since 2007, but the 2012 survey was a powerful and completing argument. The NYA has time to build their capacity for advocacy by being involved in many participation activities during their 3-year mandate. Outgoing children help appoint new members of the NYA. The members a of NYA are in constant contact with each other in an online forum. For example, they have contributed to Parliamentary debates, to the 2011 Council of Europe Recommendation on the Rights and Legal Status of Children and Parental Responsibilities and to raising awareness of peer violence through an infographic booklet "Speak Out, Silence Hurts the Most" an a video.

**Any barriers?** It took time to achieve the change.

*Organisation: A Children's Ombudsman Advisory Group*

*Scale: Working at national and European levels*

*Age Range: 12-17 years*

*Including: Children from a wide variety of backgrounds from across the country.*

*Dates: 2007 onwards*

*For further information: Information about the campaign against peer violence across Europe can be found [here](#) in as final video combined with contributions from other countries.*

## Eurochild: Realising Children's Rights Across Europe

**Aims:** This activity had the goal of introducing children rights in the EU policies of the upcoming years. The Eurochild Children's Council (ECC) will collect ideas and opinions from national organisations to feed these into Eurochild's advocacy work influencing European and national policy.

### **Children spoke to government decision makers to:**

- talk about their experiences
- make recommendations
- discuss together how to implement changes

**POWER SHARING:** This participation opportunity was started by adults and children. Adults and children work together to lead activities. Children decide the questions to explore. Adults and children decide together the goals and recommendations to achieve and their action plans. Adults control the budgets.

**Impact on Public Decision Making: Children have represented their view at the European Parliament and the EU President has agreed to hold a plenary debate with children in November 2018.**

**What works well?** The support of Eurochild member organisations has helped the ECC group include children from across Europe. The relationships of trust between Eurochild and the member organisations have developed over time. The children involved have great language, group work and advocacy skills. These skills, some of which have developed through membership of organisations in their own countries and by training provided by Eurochild, has helped the children build good working relationships with each other. These skills also enable them to take leading roles at public event, asking difficult questions to senior leaders. Our experience over the past years, developing child participation within Eurochild, has also helped us understand more about how to collaborate effectively with children.

**Any barriers?** There are challenges of working across big distances in Europe. We need a common working language. Costs limit how often we can meet and language limits who can be involved.

*Organisation: An NGO led children's council/forum*

*Scale: Working at international level*

*Age Range: 12-17 years*

*Including: Children with experience of being in care, asylum seeking and from minority ethnic backgrounds.*

## Scotland: Criminal Responsibility, Equal Protection from Violence and Commitment to Participatory Processes

**Aims:** Representatives of the Children's Parliament and Scottish Youth Parliament met with the full Scottish Cabinet, including the First Minister. They discussed a range of children's rights issues that they wanted to see the Scottish Government take forward and address. At the first meeting, children and young people spoke about the need for equal protection from violence and the need to increase the age of criminal responsibility.

### **Children met with government decision makers to:**

- talk about their experiences
- make recommendations
- discuss together how to implement changes

**POWER SHARING:** This participation opportunity was started and led by children and adults. Adults and children worked together to identify goals. Children decided upon the questions to explore and recommendations. Adults decided upon action plans and controlled budgets.

**Impact on Public Decision Making:** The cabinet agreed to make the meeting annual, and at the second meeting agreed to support legislation in the two areas – raising the age of criminal responsibility and providing equal protection from violence.

**What helped?** After a lot of advocacy work, we succeeded in securing a provision in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 to ensure that Ministers take into account children's views when making a decision. Whilst legally, this is a weak duty, we have seen an impact on the extent to which Scottish Ministers involve children and young people in decision-making.

Cabinet members fed back that they learnt a lot from listening directly to children and young people and learning from their lived experience.

People in the Scottish Government attended an event to learn about about different ways that they can go about listening to children and young people's views on their policies and laws. This was run by Young Scot, Scottish Youth Parliament, Children's Parliament and Children in Scotland.

The Scottish Government conducted research to look at the importance of listening to children and young people's views when adults are making decisions about policies, laws and services that affect them.

**Any barriers?** A participation framework is being developed but it is not yet in place. There is still a lot more to do, particularly in relation to empowering younger children to get their voices heard.

*Organisation: A children's parliament and activities for specific groups of children. Children, NGO and Government led.*

*Scale: Local, Regional, National, International*

*Age Range: 8-18+ years*

*Including: Children with experience of being in care, living in poverty, being disabled and children from minority ethnic backgrounds.*

*Dates: March 2017 onwards*

*For further information: A full report including other issues discussed is available here: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/02/4187/0> Part 1,1(2) - <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2014/8/section/1/enacted>*

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