CONSULTATION WITH EUROCHILD MEMBERS AND OTHER INTERESTED ORGANISATIONS ON PARTICIPATORY METHODS WITH CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

In 2012 Eurochild’s reference group on participatory methods for the inclusion of all children launched a consultation to engage Eurochild members and other interested organisations in a dialogue about child participation & what Eurochild can do to support the development of participatory methods with children & young people.

This summary presents the outcome of the responses received. A table compiling all information provided is also available.

The total number of answers was 56: 53 organisations and 2 individual respondents, of which 31 are Eurochild members (see Appendix1).

Geographical spread/replies per country:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 answer</th>
<th>2 answers</th>
<th>3 answers</th>
<th>4 answers</th>
<th>19 answers</th>
<th>EU/worldwide</th>
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<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>SOS Children’s Villages</td>
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<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>Germany</td>
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<td>IFM/SEI</td>
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<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>Greece</td>
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<td>Plan International</td>
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<td>Croatia</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
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<td>PICUM</td>
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<td>Cyprus</td>
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<td>Denmark</td>
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<td>France</td>
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<td>Liberia</td>
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<td>Malta</td>
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<td>Moldova</td>
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<td>Serbia</td>
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<td>Spain</td>
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<td>Sweden</td>
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Responses represent work undertaken nationally in 20 different countries and answers from four organizations that are working transnationally in EU or worldwide.

The over-representation of the United Kingdom can be interpreted in different ways:

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1 Eurochild’s reference group on participatory methods for the inclusion of all children, and in particular those with particular vulnerabilities aims to raise awareness amongst policy makers working at EU and national level on the advantages on children’s participation and to provide information on how this can be done; and to provide opportunities for exchanging information and practice between practitioners and support them in spreading their experiences.
The survey was conducted in English making it easier for UK organisations to respond.

Participation of children may be more advanced in the UK than in other European countries. Certainly there seem to be more organisations that are working from an advocacy perspective on children's rights in the UK. For example in the Nordic system a lot of work is carried out to increase children's participation in various municipal and government settings but interest groups do not have the same strong position as in the UK.

It is important to take this into consideration when interpreting the results of the study.

The following section presents an overview of the answers received.

**SURVEY QUESTIONS**

1) What methods have you found successful in your work on participation with children & young people?

The respondents described that their work together with young people was performed in many different ways and for different aims. Depending on the objective of the children’s participation and the age of the children, different techniques were used. You can work with some methods if it is a more public work within the democracy (like in Croatia), research with children as researchers/research partners (like in SOS Children’s Villages), with children as consultants and in a more personal and supportive level.

*Children participation in our city is managed through Children city councils (since 2001), Children forums (since 1995), messages of children to adults, focus groups with children, meeting with adults who make decisions in the city, county. We also involve children with special needs in workshops and meetings with adults who make decisions. (Society "Our children" Opatija, Croatia).*

*Peer Research: young people with care experiences were involved as researchers in a project investigating the leaving care conditions for children and young people in alternative care. (SOS Children’s Villages International).*

*PICUM members described activities centered around learning workshops, including language and computer skills and practical information about services etc, but also on power and communication, and creative workshops for theatre, dance, art etc. Young people were engaged and supported in expressing their experiences and issues through these mediums (and parents invited to watch performances etc, to get their by*
in and support as well, and give opportunities for them to ask for advice as well). Children could suggest workshops and topics based on their skills and interests. For older young people, as well as individual casework (legal advice), peer-to-peer support and possibilities to engage in advocacy around their situation were positive ways of enabling their active participation in the processes affecting them. (PICUM - Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants)

Art work and creativity seems often to be used to make it easier and more fun for children and young people to participate and to tell significant experiences in everyday life and opinions.

Activities include

- workshops/ seminars/residential week-ends focus groups, shelter’s meetings, consultation discussions, baby laboratories
- children groups: students councils; pupil governments, students parliaments, children city councils, children forums, youth advisory panels/councils, local support groups, advisory groups of children, children’s parliaments
- trainings (including train the trainers)
- national and European events
- conferences
- peer-learning

Methods include

- group picture stories, maps, story-telling, creative writing
- games, art, dance, role play, craft, music, theatre, photography, film, ludotherapy, recreational and leisure activities
- brainstorming drawings, use of images,
- panel discussions, interviews (individual, semi-structured, structured questions), open-ended questions, observation (direct & indirect), consultations
- new media (use of computers, internet, social networks- eg, for online support)
- young children: persona dolls, the wishcatcher, wishing bottles, mosaic approach, artwork, mark making, drawing, photography

Reference to disadvantaged children groups /children with special needs

Children with disabilities, migrants; asylum seekers/ refugee children unaccompanied children, children experiencing poverty, girls victims of trafficking or sexual abuse, juvenile offenders, children in care, young carers.

Other comments
• need to reach out rather than expecting voluntary opt in
• gender – sometimes more appropriate gender separate
• some methods more specifically for young children
• child-friendly experienced facilitators: listening, open, respectful, build confidence
• environment – child-friendly
• preparation of the children – role of adults in guiding processes
• participation methods tailored to the situation + one size does not fit all: important to have a range/combining methods

2) Do they differ according to age?

The majority of respondents replying positively – naturally the question is associated with the developmental stage of the child.

Methods also vary according to ability and level of understanding, maturity and experience of the children involved, gender, and therefore the agenda needs to be adapted accordingly.

For younger children: sometimes activities need parental support/involvement; visual materials/techniques preferred (no reading/writing): gentle bioenergetics; play & pet therapy.

Range of age groups: variety of responses as it is linked to the type of activity
0-2  2-4  4-8  5-8  9-14  9-13  11-16  14-18  10-14  10-18  12-15  16-18  16-21

3) Do they differ according to the children’s situation or characteristics?

Some confusion in answers in distinguishing between equal treatment/inclusion and tailoring for special needs. Some replies have considered the particular context/methods on how participation with children is carried out.

Need to tailor according to:

• size of the group,
• child’s situation & interests & needs & wishes,
• methods used and aims (eg: community development or personal development),
• target group (where first all needs and specificities of vulnerabilities need to be defined which will determine choice of methods and agenda),
• disability,
• gender,
• context (local/regional/national);
• family environments,
- cultural elements,
- access to technology,
- education system,
- literacy.

Other comments
- Integration is a key principle for inclusion. Children personal capacities do not depend on social structure - no separation of children from different situations and backgrounds in different groups, but mainly adapt the program according to children that will participate.
- When working in a group every child finds its place and group balance is achieved. Also social, cultural, economic and other backgrounds influence upon children’s performance and participation so they need to be taught to respect other person’s differences.
- More support is needed for those who are less able.

4) What are the challenges you face in your participatory work and are there any particular ways that these have been overcome?

“Have a strategy rather than ad hoc participation”

Participation not understood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>How to overcome</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making children’s voices heard (by policy makers, authorities, etc)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals, organisations , particularly local authorities don’t always value participation</td>
<td>Collecting robust evidence to show the positive impact of participation. Converted individuals can then act as champions for participation within their own organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcoming prejudice that children are only interested in their surroundings and tangible issues</td>
<td>Give children the space and opportunity to think about issues Education Proving that children have a lot to say (long term process!)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expected outcomes V results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>How to overcome</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expectations by donors/clients that children will offer time without limits while children have their own time commitments, or that issues that are deemed important by clients/ donors</td>
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</table>
are not perceived as such by the children.

| Balancing the organisation’s wishes for an outcome with the needs & wishes of children | Constant reaffirming what the children’s wishes are & organisation’s willingness to be flexible in relation to timescales, methods of presenting the materials, etc. |
| Level of understanding and mentality on the part of target groups/clients, coupled with narrow-mindedness of support actors and partners | Remain assertive, patient and persistent in working with the different groups & successfully pushing their common agenda for development. |
| Need to convince skeptical adult decision makers that what children tells them is valid & authenticated & needs to be paid attention to | Supporting children in producing their own high quality hard-hitting reports |

**Lack of resources – staff & financial**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>How to overcome</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Find time, place and resources to carry on participation activities + accessibility issues when talking about children with disabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of stakeholders and community support (governments companies)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited guidance for participation at national/local events</td>
<td>Support the development of guidance</td>
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**Staff training & professional support**

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<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>How to overcome</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of involvement of professionals is unsatisfactory because they are themselves not able to understand the benefit of child participation</td>
<td>Efforts put in explaining professionals the adopted methodology, aim, and benefits of children’s participation and benefits themselves they can achieve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of experience and ability of field staff to work with children</td>
<td>Capacity building, quality trainings provided for staff &amp; professional development for adults working in this field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of understanding of child participation by staff</td>
<td>Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notion of child participation remains quite unknown both for decision-makers &amp; specialist in the area of education &amp; social assistance</td>
<td>Capacity building, piloting positive practices that demonstrate benefits and sustainability of participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competences of educators</td>
<td>Support / coaching the educators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-recognition of children as citizens whose needs need to be taken into consideration in the planning &amp; preparation of an activity or event</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adults (often in formal education settings) find</td>
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</table>
it challenging to allow children to have a say in how they do things

**Time & timing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>How to overcome</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adapting to young’s people schedule (week-ends, school holidays)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of the participatory activity</td>
<td>Clear and good advanced planning, expectations of children's long-term involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Adapt to needs of children as the participatory activity develops</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Access**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>How to overcome</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical - to some children (eg. in hospitals)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucracy</td>
<td>working in children in non-school settings such as play centers and after school clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- specific reference to schooling system to be allowed into classrooms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- overcoming rigidity in education/schooling systems that prevent children organizing &amp; working on issues that interest them &amp; affect them directly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical – running events for children who cannot provide their own transport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>use of interpreters but is serious obstacle to effective participation and needs to be further explored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- diversity of languages to work with</td>
<td>find creative ways of engaging with children around core issues relating to the policy, identifying ways that impact on their lives &amp; which are at their level of understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>- policy documents are structured around consultation questions in a format which is unsuitable for young children</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Children related**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>How to overcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivation of young people</td>
<td>system of recognition of children’s involvement, system of awards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>main factors explaining this is the educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain children’s attention and commitment</td>
<td>system crisis and the lack of parents competence to educate children in some key soft skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain their level of engagement</td>
<td>need for clear expectations &amp; roles; selecting the appropriate children so they are not overwhelmed or feel inadequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment, confidence, ability, availability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of children’s engagement in decision making because they have never been consulted or empowered in the first place</td>
<td>needs to be reinforced, not given up on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children may have limited experiences and struggle to think beyond these</td>
<td>focusing on feelings rather than on knowledge and core skills. Visits &amp; trips to sites beyond the children’s natural environment can also help to broaden horizons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support children throughout the process</td>
<td>great experience of leaders/ coordinators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals needs</td>
<td>normally overcome on an individual basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s behavior: negative behavior-reaction, emotional ability, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, school drop-out, low self-esteem</td>
<td>prevention is the key, depending on the issue appeal to strategic means of intervention: patience, empathy, mutual trust, counseling, psychotherapy, family intervention, involvement of teachers and social workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-voluntary child participation (i.e. situations where children re obliged to take part</td>
<td>special attention is devoted during the participation process to overcoming children’s original resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing children’s critical consciousness – support them to critically reflect on aspects of their lives and don’t leaving them at the end of the project without on-going support</td>
<td>importance of working with partner agencies who are able to provide long-term support to participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn children how to lead activities themselves and take an active role</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful participation</td>
<td>be honest with the children; stop with tokenistic representative boards of youngsters (who in fact don’t represent anybody rally) and stop inviting children to conferences where they can say stuff &amp; adults are so impressed and charmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of participation</td>
<td>getting children’s contributions properly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Involve families (especially those from most deprived backgrounds) for whom participation is not seen as a need & added value compare to the most immediate basic needs they need to fulfill.

5) Please share any tools, protocols, methods, risk assessments, ethics guidelines, child protection measures, safeguards, etc… you have used in your participatory work. Please ensure that these are referenced appropriately, with an added note on author credits. The information collected will be collated in a dedicated Eurochild webpage.

USED AND USEFUL INFORMATION REPORTED BY CONSULTANTS

Different types of handbooks


Comaposito – a manual on human rights education for children, COE

Frost, David & Stenton, Sally (2010). Learning to Lead: The Story So Far. Illuminating the nature, benefits and challenges of the Learning to Lead programme, Published by Learning to Lead CIC / University of Cambridge Faculty of Education,


OMCYA (2005). Guidelines on good practice in participation - Young Voices, guidelines on how to involve children and young people in our work. Ireland


The Picture Book Project, Action for Children, Seven Stories

Workplan and methodology for consultations/ workshops with children and professionals from institutions (developed under project "Interact - Participation and Awareness Raising for the Safer Use of New Technologies" funded by EC).

Articles


Kirby, Perpetua, Lanyon, Claire, Cronin, Kathleen & Sinclair, Ruth *Building a Culture of Participation*, UK: Department for Education and Skills.


**Research with children as research partners or researchers or methodological questions of taking part in the research**


Children's Research Centre; Original Research by Children and Young People, The Open University, Walton Hall, UK http://childrens-research-centre.open.ac.uk/research.cfm


http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/our-vision/participation


Save the Children (2005) Children and Participation: Research Monitoring and evaluation with children and young people:  
www.crin.org/docs/resources/publications/hrbap/SCUK_participation.pdf

Sheffield University (2010) *You Respond.* Sheffield. University of Sheffield retrieved at:  
www.you-respond.eu


Tisdall, Kay, Davis, John M & Gallagher, Michael (eds.) (2009). *Researching with Children & Young People: research design, methods & analysis.* London. SAGE Publications Ltd

West, A (1996) Young people participatory research experiences of leaving care in *PLA Notes Issue* 25. 73-76. London. IIED.


**Ethical guidance**

*Code of Conduct for Work with Children*  


Different Web pages with useful information

Creating a Junior Safeguarding Children Board: Eat Carrots be Safe from Elephants (Powys Advocacy for Children and Young People, Tros Gynnal): http://www.powys.gov.uk/index.php?id=5204&L=0

http://ciudadesamigas.org. The project called "CAI- Ciudades Amigas de la Infancia", (Friendly cities with Infancy) from UNICEF has a lot of guidelines to apply.

https://www.eigen-kracht.nl/sites/default/files/state%20of%20affairs%202011-web.pdf www.harryshier.comxa.com See for example "Participación de niños, niñas y adolescentes en el mundo real".


http://woodcraft.org.uk. Following are two links to resources the Woodcraft Folk have created: Leading for the Future http://woodcraft.org.uk/leadingforthefuture. This is a tool that supports young people to explore leadership skills. Follow the Trail http://woodcraft.org.uk/resources/follow-trail-elfin-pioneer-groups. This is a resource full of activities that enable children and young people to review services, supporting them to make recommendations for change.

http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk/docs/Participantsnotpawnsguidance20100315_000.pdf (Consulting pupils re school closures and other important educational matters)

http://www.crfr.ac.uk/reports/Participation%20briefing.pdf  (Meaningful impact on policy)

http://www.sccyp.org.uk/what-were-doing/a-right-blether  (Large consultation in which around 75,000 children and young people participated including work with specific groups)

http://www.sccyp.org.uk/what-were-doing/a-right-wee-blether (Children aged 2 to 5)

http://www.syp.org.uk/  (Range of engagement methods with young people)

http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/ (Range of imaginative approaches with primary age children)

Keeping Warm this Winter (Children in Wales and Consumer Focus Wales)


The Children and Young People’s National Participation Standards (Participation Consortium) The Blast off Guides (Participation Consortium) * several versions for children and young people with disabilities have been produced by the Together 4 Rights project in Children in Wales (http://participationworkerswales.org.uk/news/article-202.aspx)

Young Carers materials (Children in Wales) http://participationworkerswales.org.uk/news/article-234.aspx

Other information

IFM-SEI educational tool at www.ifm-sei.org/toolbox see rainbow resources on gender and sexuality rights education with children.

Presentation in English which The Young Developers, Socca, City of Helsinki Social Services Department made. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-11TxFnhC9E&feature=player_embedded. Additional information: kati.palsanen@hel.fi

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WIFQG0ejt4A&list=PL6E1erLAOOGZ7I0jVqHWrwaQxNj1gmS2&index=7&feature=plpp_video.


Maci, F. Working with families in the child protection
Appendix 1

List of organizations/respondents:

1. Action for Children, UK
3. ALLFIE www.allfie.org.uk
5. BeatBullying, www.beatbullying.org, UK
6. Centre for Children's Rights, Queen’s University Belfast www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/CentreforChildrensRights/
7. Center for the Study of Childhood and Adolescence, Cyprus
15. Cruse Bereavement Care, www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk
16. DECET / Bureau MUTANT, www.decet.org
17. Defense for Children www.defenceforchildren.nl
18. Devoted grandmother
19. Early Years, www.early-years.org, UK
20. ECR-group foundation - Exploited Children Resources, Cambodia
23. European Network of Women www.enow.gr, Greece
25. Foundation for Social Welfare Services, Malta
27. Liberia National Association of the Blind (LNAB), Inc./National Commission on Disabilities (NCD), Liberia
28. Helsinki City Department of Education, Finland
29. Highland Children's Forum – Scotland, UK
31. Il Grillo Parlante www.ilgrilloparlante.com, Italy
32. Intermedia Consulting NGO, Italy
33. International Child Development Initiatives, www.icdi.nl, NL
34. IFM-SEI / International Falcon Movement – Socialist Educational International EU/worldwide
35. Joint Council for Child Issues in Denmark, Denmark
39. Partnerships for Every Child, Moldova
40. PICUM - Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants, EU/Worldwide
42. Society "Our children" Opatija, www.dnd-opatija.hr, Croatia
43. Suela Kusi (Associate Member), Albania
44. SOS Children’s Villages International, Worldwide
45. SOS Children’s Villages International (2) Worldwide
46. Start Strong, www.startstrong.ie, Ireland
47. Stoke-on-Trent Citizens Advice Bureau, UK
49. Trustee - Action for Sick Children www.actionforsickchildren.org, UK
50. Participation Network www.participationnetwork.org, UK
51. The Participation Workers’ Network for Wales, UK
52. University of Bedfordshire, Institute of Applied Social Research, UK
53. University of Deusto, Spain
54. Woodcraft Folk, www.woodcraft.org.uk, UK
55. YAP Ireland, www.yapireland.ie, Ireland
56. YEPP International Resource Centre, www.yepp-community.org, Germany