The Speak Up! project was run by Eurochild, which is a European network that promotes the rights of children, and its eight partner organisations from across Europe. Each partner ran activities with children aged 12-15 to find out how children experience their rights. They worked with groups of school children as well as children that may be particularly vulnerable due to their living situation, for example, those growing up in a youth institution or an asylum seeking centre, or due to their characteristics, for example, deaf or hard-of-hearing children.

This flyer tells you more about what we did and what the children told us.
Children speak up!

In the Speak Up! project children met in small groups, so-called focus groups, to learn about, and to discuss, children’s rights. In each country two groups of children were consulted: school children (the so-called ‘control’ group) and children who may be particularly vulnerable due to circumstance or characteristics.


Children’s rights not a game!

A children’s rights game was developed. The cards have signs representing real and fake children’s rights.

Most children had little or no knowledge about children’s rights before they came to the meetings. The game was a fun way for children to learn about their rights.

Child participation methods

Once familiar with their rights, the children selected four rights which were most important to them and closest to their own life experiences and situations. The four selected rights were discussed in more depth and children came up with recommendations for better protection of their rights.

The children used different methods to express their views. Some produced a magazine, others did art work, drama, dance or poetry.
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Three main messages came out of the discussions with children:

1. CHILDREN WANT TO KNOW THEIR RIGHTS

Children, in particular children in vulnerable situations, do not know their rights: they need to be made aware of their rights.

Folder Image

"Just being a child is very important. Not only work or be responsible"
(Dutch girl)

"If children do not learn how to read and write and basic maths, and these are missing from our lives, than we will not be able to form our own opinions and cannot find a job"
(Hungarian child living in foster care)

"...everyone is allowed to make mistakes, aren’t they? Am I right or wrong? That’s how we learn from it and obviously, I reckon, by putting children like us, 13, 14, 15-year-olds into jail and shit, that’s not really going to help"
(English boy)

"Travellers are not meant to do education (...) we’re meant to teach our own ways"
(English Traveller boy)

"... His mother beat him with a cable and he wanted to commit suicide by jumping from the second floor"
(Polish boy, 12y, being a witness of an incidence of violence)

"Regarding asylum seeking procedures: 'speed and clarity is necessary! But in a human way"
(Dutch girl)

"Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty"
(Swedish deaf child, addressed to Swedish and EU politicians)

Folder Image

Folder Image

Folder Image

Folder Image

Folder Image

Folder Image
All children are equal, whatever their race, religion or abilities, whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from and whatever age they are. The fact that they are under the age of 18 does not mean that they should be treated differently.

Eurochild calls on the EU to assess how its non-discrimination legislation can protect children.
CHILDREN HAVE A RIGHT TO BE LISTENED TO AND RESPECTED

Children in Europe, in particular those in vulnerable circumstances, are not asked for their opinion and have had very limited opportunities to think about what is important to them as individuals and to make their own choices in life.

→ Eurochild urges professionals to be trained on children’s rights, including on anti-discrimination and their right to participate.

Child participation structures have to include ALL children. Child participation indicators and benchmarks can help organisations and professionals to strengthen participatory approaches. Eurochild calls for a Europe-wide mechanism to celebrate and promote good practices.

Do you listen to us?

“We would like to participate in more events at school and in our village”
Bulgarian children

‘Make sure our rights are heard and children should know what their rights are’
Irish girl

Pay more attention to us. We do have a very big voice and just because we are small and stuff doesn’t mean we haven’t things to say”
Irish girl

The favourite part of the consultation sessions of some young people were:

“learning about new rights”
UK boy, aged 15

“choosing most important rights”
UK boy, aged 15

What is children’s participation?

Children’s Participation means that “children have their voice heard and are listened to seriously and are able to influence decisions affecting them” (article 12 of the UN Convention on Children’s Rights).
Eight Eurochild partners from different European countries took part in the Speak Up! project, each working with different groups of children experiencing vulnerable situations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANISATION</th>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>CHILDREN IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS CONSULTED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amalipe Centre for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance</td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>Roma children from rural areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roots Research Centre</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Roma children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family, Child, Youth Association</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Children in residential care and children in foster care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pavee Point Travellers’ Centre</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Traveller children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yohri – Youth and Human Rights Institute</td>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>Asylum seeking children living in asylum centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation Institute of Social Initiative</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Children living in ‘urban poverty pockets’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malardälen University</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Deaf and hard-of-hearing children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Rights Alliance for England</td>
<td>The UK (England)</td>
<td>Children in Secure Children’s Homes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you to the Universal Education Foundation and the Institute of Applied Social Research, University of Bedfordshire for their valuable contribution to the project advisory group.

Published in September 2012 by:
Eurochild - Avenue des Arts, 1-2 - B-1210 Brussels
T: +32 (0)2 511 70 83 - F: +32 (0)2 511 72 98
www.eurochild.org - info@eurochild.org

Eurochild is a network of organisations and individuals working in and across Europe to improve the quality of life of children and young people. Our work is underpinned by the principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Eurochild’s activities include:
- Sharing information on policy and practice;
- Monitoring and influencing policy development at national and European level;
- Creating interest groups and partnerships between member organizations;
- Representing the interests of its members to international institutions;
- Strengthening the capacity of its members through training, individual advice and support.

Eurochild has members in 35 countries all over Europe (both within and outside of the EU).

The views expressed in this publication are those of Eurochild and do not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.

This project is co-funded by the European Union’s Fundamental Rights & Citizenship Programme.