SPEAK UP! GIVING A VOICE TO EUROPEAN CHILDREN IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS

Methodological framework

May 2011
## CONTENTS

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT ............................................................... 2

PROJECT PARTNERS .................................................................................................. 3

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK ........................................................................ 4

Ground Rules for adults to consult with (vulnerable) children .................................. 4

A. Selection process of the children ....................................................................... 5

B. Preparation for the Focus Groups Consultations ................................................. 6

Provide clear information to children and their parents/guardians .......................... 6

A guiding facilitator ............................................................................................... 7

Ensure equal participation of all children: considerations of inner diversity ........... 7

Learning outcomes .............................................................................................. 8

Balance of adults and children in the consultations ............................................... 8

A child-friendly meeting environment ................................................................... 9

Child Protection Measures ................................................................................... 9

Child protection measures to be safeguarded during the Speak Up! consultation process ................................................................................................. 9

Confidentiality ...................................................................................................... 10

Child Protection Guidance for facilitators ............................................................ 10

C. GUIDELINES FOR RUNNING FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS .............................. 11

Tools .................................................................................................................... 11

Timing of the consultations .................................................................................. 12

D. REPORTING GUIDELINES .................................................................................... 12

ANNEX I .................................................................................................................. 14

ANNEX II ............................................................................................................... 16

ANNEX III ............................................................................................................. 19

ANNEX IV ............................................................................................................. 20

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GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

Overall Goal of the project: address children’s own views of their rights, the protection of those rights and their opinions on necessary national and European policy actions. The children involved are particularly vulnerable due to their situation or characteristics, as these children most frequently experience rights violations and are less likely to be heard.

Main Objectives of the Project:

- **Empowerment of children in circumstances or with characteristics that make them particularly vulnerable:** the project will demonstrate how these children can be heard and their voices taken seriously.

- **Ensure the views of children are heard by policy makers:** the views and experiences of children will provide input to the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and to the EU’s work on tackling child poverty and social inclusion, but also to national policy makers.

- **Improve the practice and support the development of a culture of children’s participation:** tools will be developed for children’s participation methodologies for in particular vulnerable groups of children. Desk research will feed into this, as well as exchange of good practices between the partners.

- **Strengthen mutual learning across EU Member States and the exchange between children and organisations:** children will be able to learn from participating projects in other countries in Europe and be able to set up social networking sites; organisations and policy makers will benefit from learning how children’s voices are heard elsewhere in Europe.

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1 Include in all documents produced for this project the European Commission Disclaimer: This project is co-funded by the European Union’s Fundamental Rights & Citizenship Programme + the EC flag.
Eight Eurochild partners from different European countries take part in the Speak Up! project, each working with different groups of vulnerable children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Children and young people in vulnerable or marginalized situations consulted by partners</th>
<th>Timing of meeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amalipe Centre for Interethic Dialogue and Tolerance</td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>Roma children from rural areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roots Research Centre</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Roma children</td>
<td>A sequence of shorter sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family, Child, Youth Association</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Children in residential care and children in foster care</td>
<td>One and a half day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pavee Point Travellers’ Centre</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Travellers children</td>
<td>Three meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yohri – Youth and Human Rights Institute</td>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>Asylum seeking children living in asylum centres</td>
<td>Half a day meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation Institute of Social Initiative</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Children living in ‘urban poverty pockets’</td>
<td>One day meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallardälen University</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Deaf and hard-hearing children</td>
<td>Residential weekend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

In line with General Comment No 12 (2009) “The right of the child to be heard” from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, consultation process with children need to be transparent, informative, voluntary, respectful, relevant, child-friendly environment, inclusive, supported by training, safe and sensitive to risk and include child protection measures.

Objectives and expected outcomes of the consultation process

The consultations aim to:

- assess children’s awareness of their rights;
- find out which rights are most important for the children;
- understand what are the obstacles children face in exercising their rights, including for example violations of rights they have experienced;
- explore what are possible solutions to overcome these obstacles and to improve the protection of these rights with a view to inform policy development and practice at EU, national and local level. These can be solutions and concrete proposals for adults or for the children themselves.
- It is expected that children will mainly come forward with solutions which are close to their lives and living circumstances. However, the European consultant and the facilitators will analyse the outcomes to see what messages these contain for national and European policy makers.
- Another output from the consultation process is the empowerment of children. To assess in what way the children have been empowered, gained confidence and learned other skills, an evaluation will be carried out with them at the end of the consultation days.

GROUND RULES FOR ADULTS TO CONSULT WITH (VULNERABLE) CHILDREN

- Children have to be able to speak for themselves in their own words/mime/sign language in matters that directly concern them, such as their daily life, family matters, their schools, their immediate environment, placement, adoption, institutions they live in, juvenile justice, living circumstances, etc.
- All children need to have an equal chance to participate in the focus group meetings and the individual interviews (if taking place) without discrimination because of age, gender, abilities, language, social origin, class, ethnicity, geographic location, etc.
- Adults involved in the consultation process have to be honest with the children and give clear and understandable feedback. They have to take into account the vulnerability of the children and possible emotional sensitivities to certain issues that can be discussed (see child protection measures).
- Avoid treating children as victims or weak.
- Avoid gender stereotypes in the focus group activities.
- Avoid situations that can create stereotypes or bias.
- Confirm the accuracy of what a child has said (for example at the end of each session when conclusions and outcomes are summarized with and for the children).

2 United Nations, Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment no 12 (2009), CRC/C/GC/12, 1 July 2009.
A. SELECTION PROCESS OF THE CHILDREN

Basic requirements for the selection process

Each partner will select children, aged 12-15 years old, for two focus groups. Each focus group will be composed of a minimum of 10 children. One focus group will be made up of vulnerable children and one with a random selection of school students of the same age as the children in the ‘vulnerable focus group’.

The meetings of the focus group and control groups cannot be mixed, since the results will then no longer be comparable.

Note: One has to be aware that school children are not necessarily “non-vulnerable”, some of them might have experienced very vulnerable situations, for example the loss of a parent, a broken family or other situations. In contrast, so called ‘vulnerable’ children might be extremely strong, because of the necessity to cope with difficult circumstances or characteristics.

Selection Criteria:

- **Age**
  
  The age of the children is between 12-15 years old. Partners are free to choose to work with children with only two years of age difference or with a mix of children aged 12 up until 15 years of age. Children can be 15 years old during the selection process, but may turn 16 during the project’s implementation. **Children in the focus group or for individual interviews and the control group need to have similar ages for comparability reasons.**

- **Background of the children**
  
  *Where possible* ensure that children from both focus groups have the **same background**, for example they are all from a rural area or they all come from an urban area; they come from the same geographical part of the country. However, it has to be acknowledged that not all children will come from the same background, for example immigrant children, asylum seeking children, children in (juvenile justice) institutions or disabled children will have diverse backgrounds.

- **Selection of focus group with ‘vulnerable children’**
  
  *Where possible we select the most vulnerable children*, since these are the children who are least likely to be consulted on their rights and being able to feed into national and EU policy making. For example, the Roma community is very diverse, some groups have modernised and some groups live in a very traditional way (last ones are most vulnerable). Mixing these groups is not an option. At the same time, if partners have experience in working with specific groups of children, it is advised to work the groups of children they already know, since it might be easier for them to get into the consultation process. It is important that partners explain how the selection was done of the vulnerable group of children and the reasons for working with a particular group of children.

- **Selection of the ‘control’ group of children**
  
  The ‘control’ group of children is composed of **school children** of the same age as the children consulted in the vulnerable focus groups. The schools should be **local state schools/public schools** and not private schools. Children’s backgrounds should be matched as much as possible to the vulnerable children focus group. It is advised that partners ask for volunteers, after explaining what the consultations will be about and time investment needed in two or three classes. In the event if more volunteers than places, it recommended that a selection is made using a random but transparent process e.g. a *lottery* so as to avoid designation of the “best pupils”. In countries where it is common for boys and girls to go to separate schools, half of the group needs to be selected at a boys school and the other half at a girls school. Boys and girls will meet in a mixed ‘control’ group. One has to be aware that some schools teach children on human rights and children’s rights and others don’t, this might influence the outcomes of the consultations. Include in the report whether human rights or children’s rights education has taken place at school.
- **Gender balance**

  *In principle* ensure a gender balance (50% girls and 50% boys) in the focus groups. However, this is clearly dependent on the target group. If for example the majority of children in juvenile justice institutions between the age of 12-15 are boys or if the majority of the Roma groups of children you work with are boys, the majority of the children you will work with are boys as well.

  If for cultural reasons, it is required that boys and girls meet in single sex groups, partners are asked to organise separate focus groups to get the views of both gender. are mixed because of their cultural background, for example, traveller children. If this is the case, two separate focus groups have to be organised.

  If one group (boys or girls) prevail, the reasons for this have to be explained in the country report.

- **Equal opportunities**

  Ensure all children contacted in the selection process have equal opportunities to participate in the focus group consultations, taking into account the non-discrimination principle.

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**B. PREPARATION FOR THE FOCUS GROUPS CONSULTATIONS**

**Provide clear information to children and their parents/guardians**

Information to children and parents/guardians of the children about the consultation process, its purpose and its objectives needs to be clear. Involve the children in this process, since for children the achievements could be different (friendships and people that listen to you seriously) from what adults expect (input for the EU Commission).

- **Information sheets for children, parents, schools are provided – a Template is provided in Annex III.**

  These information sheets include clear, sufficient and relevant information, including:

- Objectives of the consultation and how their work will fit into a larger process.
- Description of the consultation process (including timescale).
- The venue and the date.
- The programme of the consultation day.
- The number of participants and their ages.
- The facilitators.
- Logistics and support available.

- **Consent forms for parents/guardians and children are included in Annex I.**

  Partners will share their programme and the dates of the consultations with their partners in the Speak Up! project before the consultations take place. Results will be placed on the Eurochild website, partners section only, to allow partners to learn from each other’s experiences.
A guiding facilitator

The focus group consultations are guided by a professional facilitator with experience in working with this particular group of ‘vulnerable’ children and young people or where possible someone who has had similar experiences than the children. He/she is responsible for ‘guiding’ the process towards the agreed objectives. He/she does not get involved in the contents, but only guides the process and is responsible to protect the group process, the agreed ground rules and keep the group on track according to the activities programme. The facilitator needs to have a good knowledge of children’s rights. The facilitator has to remain neutral, objective, and ethically committed to collaboration and democratic problem-solving. The facilitator needs to help the group to accomplish its objectives while acknowledging the individual needs of its members (see section below on ensuring equal participation for all children).

When the focus groups work in smaller groups it is recommended to have additional facilitators to lead the subgroup work/activities. A maximum of two facilitators is foreseen in the project. Good facilitation is crucial to the outcomes of the consultation process. For the focus group of vulnerable children and the control group, the same facilitators need to be working with both groups.

The role of the facilitators includes:

- To establish ground rules with the participants to ensure safety and willingness to participate.
- To work with the participants to help them develop their own individual ideas and prioritise the issues the group wants to raise. Different form of activities can be used to ensure diverse groups of children can equally participate (see toolkit).
- Assume that the children you work with are experts on their own lives and are wise and creative.
- Ensure equal participation of all children and ensure that different opinions of children are respected (further information on how to achieve this is described below).
- Summarize the main points of the group at the end and pay attention to the comments made after the session(s) are finished.
- Ensure child protection measures are implemented and adhered to.
- Write up the report of the focus group discussions, activities or interviews carried out (see reporting guidelines).
- Ensure children to enjoy the sessions and have fun.

Ensure equal participation of all children: considerations of inner diversity

The term “diversity” is interpreted in many ways but it is most frequently applied within group settings to differences in sex, age, culture, religion, ethnicity, and so forth. We are asking facilitators to be aware of more subtle sources of diversity that are just as fundamental but are more easily overlooked in groups, including classrooms. These are individual differences that include, but are not limited to, how we learn, communicate, solve problems, make sense of our internal and external environments, and manage our sensory input. Anyone who has interacted closely with more than one child – whether as parent, teacher or in some other capacity – is aware of some of these differences although we often label them (“the child is a slow learner”) or judge them (“this is the correct way to learn – that way is not correct”) rather than simply acknowledging the ways in which individuals differ from one another. The first step in working with what we are calling “inner diversity” is to be aware of these differences, and to allow them to be present in how you facilitate groups.

The following are two examples of inner differences and suggestions for how you can broaden your ways of facilitating groups.

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3 Jan Horwath e.a., ‘You Respond’ project “Promoting effective participation by young people who have experienced violence” A guide to good practice through training and development”, Module two (Being an effective facilitator), University of Sheffield, UK, 2011.
Some children (all of these points pertain to adults as well) listen best when they are able to engage tactiley, such as manipulating or making an object. Providing simple materials on the table such as clay or string for them to handle will actually help them listen more completely. Children who do not need this tactile engagement will not use the materials.

Another common difference is in the role of overt or silent verbalization. Some children need to begin speaking in order to understand what they are thinking; others don’t speak until they have "gathered their thoughts." Taking comments from those who begin speaking immediately gives preference to only those few. Make sure that you alternate between allowing some responses from those who think aloud and also encouraging everyone to take 10 seconds to consider their answers/comments before taking verbal responses. Another way of avoiding giving preference to only a few is to encourage various forms of responding: drawings, gestures, writing a word or phrase are all legitimate alternatives.

There are many others that are commonly used. Considering these two examples will create more awareness of these kinds of differences, and asking your respondents about their needs – for example, how they learn best, what they need in order to participate fully – will provide much new information for enhancing your facilitation.

**Learning outcomes**

These focus groups will be learning experiences for all the children in the group, as well as for the adults. It is always useful to make explicit what the intended learning outcomes of an activity are, and to include it in the information given to the participants. This enables the facilitators to check afterwards what actually happened and it will also be a useful contribution to consolidating the methodology at the end of the project for subsequent use.

The learning outcomes identified will cover two aspects:

1. Some will be **content-related**, i.e. to children’s rights
2. Others will be about **transversal outcomes/competences**, such as: trust (e.g. being able to trust adults not to use you in a token manner); self-confidence to participate; capacity to express one’s thoughts and feelings; working in a group; listening to other people; respect for the group; etc.

In order to make children and young people feel comfortable to participate, it is important that the facilitators have the following communication skills.

**Non-verbal communication skills** include maintain constant eye contact without showing any preferences; address the whole group form a visible point without distracting it; smile, nod or engage with others to express sympathy and understanding; be relaxed and confident when standing in front of the group.

**Verbal communication skills** should include: ask using open-ended questions and prompts to elaborate on simple answers; explore whether all the members of the group agree with an expressed statement; speak slowly and clearly and avoid using jargon and technical language; be a good listener; paraphrase participants’ statements to make sure that what they said has been accurately understood; keep an eye on participants requiring translation or in another way might need assistance to be able to follow the discussion; be respectful, trustworthy, non-judgmental, playful; summarize the discussions; guide the participants to draw general conclusions, allowing time for reflection; make sure that participants leave with positive feelings about what they have learned.

**Balance of adults and children in the consultations**

There needs to be a right balance of adults and children during the focus group meetings and the roles of the adults present need to be clearly specified. There can be a **maximum of three adults** present (with clear roles) and for child protection reasons there need to be a **minimum of two adults** present.

When there are two facilitators, it needs to be clear who has the overall facilitating responsibility and what the role of the other facilitator will be, for example work with smaller groups of children or do the reporting
of the consultations. Another adult present could be an interpreter, for example for disabled children who would need sign language.

No other adults, such as teachers, parents/guardians should be present during the consultations. If possible the consultations or interviews with children in juvenile justice institutions need to take place in private.

**A child-friendly meeting environment**

The meeting environment for focus group meetings is very important for the atmosphere in which their discussions and activities take place. The atmosphere in which children participate should truly enable children to be heard in matters that affect them. Working in small focus groups creates such an environment and enables the children to gain self-confidence, feel safe and it creates intimacy and friendship for all children opposed to large sessions which can be intimidating for them.

The meeting room needs to be big enough for ‘plenary sessions” and for round table discussions (world café), but also for other activities, such as drama, role plays and creative and artistic work. Where possible use existing meeting spaces for children, like youth clubs, etc. If not, try to decorate the room with posters or pictures to make it less ‘clinical’.

Ensure that sufficient breaks and time for lunch is included in the programme and ensure that child-friendly food and drinks are available.

**Child Protection Measures**

Child protection is one of the core principles underpinning the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and measures protecting children from harm and abuse and to make them feel safe need to be in place during consultations with children and young people. In particular when consultations involve vulnerable or disadvantaged children, child protection measures need to be safeguarded throughout the consultation process. To have their health, safety, well-being and best interests safeguarded during the participation process is key to ensure they can achieve their full potential.

Eurochild has already some child protection measures in place for child and youth participation activities, including parental consent forms and the need for an accompanying adult when children and young people have to travel. However, a child protection policy for child and youth participation needs to include the following measures as well:

**Child protection measures to be safeguarded during the Speak Up! consultation process**

- Inform the children and young people on the child protection measures and rules and ensure they understand these before the start of the meeting.
- Make sure the accompanying adults, facilitators and other persons working with the children during the focus group consultations are fully briefed on their role and responsibilities before the start of the meeting.
- Ensure consent forms for parents/carers and children are filled in and returned prior to the focus group meeting(s) (template consent forms included in the annex);
- Ensure there is at least one adult person whom children can speak to in confidence, the so-called child protection focal point. This person has the responsibility for the children’s security and support needed during the consultations/meetings and in the evenings at any accommodation venues. Preferably this should be someone else than the facilitator of the focus group meeting.

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4 The Child protection measures described here are partly based on the *Toolkit of good practice from the Save the Children International Alliance “So you want to consult with children?”*, chapter “Ensuring children are safe and protected”, 2003.
The children have to be informed at the start of the meeting(s) about the name and the role of this person.

- Set up a **central data base with all details of the child and youth participants** (contact details, medical needs or conditions, to be taken from the parental and children’s consent forms), with one person being responsible for holding this information and keeping it safe.

**Ground rules for child and youth participation**

- **Respect the privacy** of the children. This means that written reports should not reveal the identity of any of the children, unless the child and his/her parents/carers give prior consent.
- Children’s participation is entirely **voluntary** and each child should be free to step out at any moment if he or she no longer wishes to take part.
- Value the views of the children and **take their views seriously**.
- Strive to understand the children in the context in which they live.
- Treat the children with **respect** and recognise them as individuals with their own rights.

**Confidentiality**

- Ensure that everything that is discussed or presented during the consultations is treated with **confidentiality**. This means that children need to be consulted and agree on the outcomes of the meeting and/or meeting report and give their consent that this can be published.
- Inform the children that the **meeting will be recorded and/or filmed /photographed** to be used for reporting and analysing purposes and ask their **consent** for this in the consent form. In case photos or films will be used publicly, the children’s consent will have to be asked again.

**Child Protection Guidance for facilitators**

- **Give guidance for facilitators, how to deal with sensitive issues** and provide information on what to do when children confide on sensitive issues, for example concerning abuse, violence. They need to be provided with a list of contact details of professionals or professional organisations that they can refer children to for professional assistance. These could for example be obtained from the children’s helpline services.

  Ensure that you know your national legislation, for example when a child confides on abusive behaviour of an adult does the law prescribe a duty to report this to the relevant authorities, even if the child confides this information to you in confidence?

- **Facilitators and other adults involved in the focus group consultations need to ensure** there is a culture of openness to enable any issues or concerns to be raised can be discussed.

- In general it is inappropriate for the facilitators and adults to spend excessive time alone with children away from others or to take children to places where they will be alone with the chaperone/facilitator.

- **The facilitator or adult involved in the focus group consultations must never:**
  - Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children.
  - Develop physical/sexual relationships with children.
  - Develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive
  - Act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse.
The facilitator or adult involved in the focus group consultations must avoid actions or behaviour that could be considered as poor practice or potentially abuse. They should never:

- Use language, make suggestions or give advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive
- Behave in any manner (physical, psychological, verbal, etc.) which is inappropriate or sexually provocative
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children
- Discriminate against, or favour particular child(ren) to the exclusion of others.

- **Child protection measures when planning residential weekends:**
  
  - Ask the children if they have a preference with whom they would like to share a room.
  - Rooms should be single sex – girls with girls and boys with boys.
  - Be aware of possible conflicts and arrange accommodation to minimise these, wherever possible or appropriate.

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**C. GUIDELINES FOR RUNNING FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS**

The way the programme is filled in is left reasonably free to the different partners, as long as the key questions and guidelines from the methodology are followed.

Prepare the facilitator(s) and other adults involved (i.e. interpreters, reporter, etc) in the consultations prior to the consultations. Ensure they are familiar with the objectives and purpose of the consultations and have experience in working with the specific groups of children.

**Tools**

**Partners can choose their own tools on how to work with children,** which can involve:

- Role plays.
- Carry out individual ‘TV interviews’ with the children, which are recorded on tape and let the children play with the video recorder as well.
- Carry out interviews with and by children to write their own magazine.
- Do creative activities such as drawing or art work, for example children work in pairs and make a shoe box which represents on the inside their inner feelings and which presents on the outside what they look like, to visualize their feelings instead of talking about it. After the creative work, the pairs are presenting their shoeboxes to the rest of the group.
- Discussions in small group, for example using the world café technique. Children sit in small groups of 3 to 4 children around tables with table clothes on them (make it cosy and child-friendly, with drinks and biscuits on the table); children are allowed to draw and write on the table cloth.
- Show a film which involves one or more of the rights chosen by the children, followed by a discussion about this.
- Mix activities and energizers with questions/group discussions, ensure it is not boring! **Ensure it is fun for the children!**
- For more concrete tools and examples to be used see the **separate toolkit**.
Timing of the consultations

The programme will not take more than 2 days in total. Partners can decide whether they opt for a residential weekend of 1.5 days with a short half-day follow-up meeting or shorter meetings or for shorter meetings of each a few hours or two one-day meetings. This depends on their experience with the particular groups of children they will work with. For some groups it works very well to spend a weekend together, to allow them to get to know each other better and in this way feel more confident to discuss about their experiences and feelings and have more interactions with the other children. For other children it is difficult to keep the attention for a whole weekend or for practical reasons they cannot stay for a whole weekend. They could meet in a sequence of afternoon meetings of each a couple of hours. Specific timing for each step in the consultation is provided in the toolkit.

When splitting up the consultations in shorter sessions, it would be good to spend each of the sessions working on one of the steps of the methodological framework.

Session one: do an introductory, warming up game; information session on children’s rights and doing the children’s rights game; ask the children to choose four of the ten children’s rights.

Session two: Discuss or explore the first children’s right chosen by the children.

Session three: Discuss and explore the second children’s right to be chosen by the children.

Session four: Discuss and explore the third children’s right to be chosen by the children.

Session five: Feedback session.

Partners are free to choose in which order they would like to carry out the focus group meetings, either doing the control group first and then the focus group of vulnerable children or the other way around. Some might choose to do the control group first to test the programme and activities. Others might want to focus on the vulnerable children first.

The idea is to ask the children to talk about their own experiences. It is important for children to describe everyday situations and talk about themselves. In this way children are empowered and encouraged to talk and take part in the discussions.

Children may have limited vocabulary, therefore other consultation forms have to be used than only talking and discussing. Another reason to use different techniques/consultation forms is to ensure more interactivity between the children, the social and cultural context in which they operate, and the requirements of the particular group.

D. REPORTING GUIDELINES

A template with reporting guidelines for the country reports of the two focus group consultations that took place is included in Annex II.

Feedback (report) to the children after the meeting(s)

After the consultations have taken place and the reports written up by all partners, a feedback session will be organised for the children to share outcomes of the different consultations.

Partners will make a short film of the children’s consultations (for internal use only!). The Eurochild office will compile the eight films together, subtitles could be added by each partner in their own language or a voice over could be included so that all the children are able to watch the film. The film will be shown at the feedback session.

Provided the children give their consent, the film could be used to promote the Speak Up! project with governmental and EU partners as well.

Children should feel that their views make a difference to the way plans and decisions are made.
Children may choose to connect with children from the partner countries via Social Networking tools. Eurochild will make its Facebook and Twitter accounts available for this purpose. However, it has to be born in mind that many children involved in the consultations may have no access to computers, but they can possibly use computers during the focus group meetings. Language could also be a limitation.

**Thank you gift for the children**

Each partner decides which gift the children would appreciate, for example a voucher to go to the film or to be used for other activities.

Partners can raise with the children the possibility to take part in the final Eurochild conference in 2012 or to participate in the Cypriot EU Presidency conference on children’s voices on social inclusion and assessing their well-being in 2012.
**CHILDREN’S AND PARENTS CONSENT FORM**

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

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<td>Mobile number (if available)</td>
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<td>E-mail address</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date of birth</td>
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**YOUR CONSENT**

I give permission to be filmed or photographed during the above event & for the material to be used by [partner organization] and Eurochild.  

Child’s signature & date

**PARENTAL/GUARDIAN CONSENT**

I give the permission for …………………………………………………………

Parent / Guardian’s signature & date

If at any time she/he requires urgent medical attention, provided that I am not available, I give the permission for her/him to receive appropriate medical attention from a registered practitioner.
Parent or guardian to contact in EMERGENCY case. It is very important you fill in this section fully.

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**INFORMATION ON YOUR CHILD (IN CARE)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dietary requirements (e.g. vegan)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allergies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is your son/daughter/child in your care on any medication? (if yes, please state)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dosage:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medication:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does your son/daughter/child in your care have up to date first aid training?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there anything else you would like the organizers to be aware of for the children’s meeting(s)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please return this form to ……………… before [DATE] by mail or by post

[ADDRESS PARTNER ORGANISATION, TELEPHONE, WEBSITE] or hand in at the beginning of the children’s meeting.

[Provide brief information on the partner organisation’s work…..]

*Eurochild is an international network of organisations working across Europe to improve the quality of life of children and young people. Our work is based on the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The fight against child poverty and social exclusion is at the heart of our work programme. Eurochild is supported by the European Commission within the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (2007-2013).*
ANNEX II

REPORTING GUIDELINES

TEMPLATE

The country report is intended to describe the consultation process, as well as the outcomes of the child focus group consultations. The report needs to be done in writing, in order to be fed into the Eurochild report and to be used at local and national level. In addition, other formats for reporting can be used, such as a film or works of art. Photo’s or art works or the children working/playing/discussing can be included in the written report, after having obtained their consent.

Two separate reports have to be written, one for the ‘vulnerable’ group of children and one for the ‘control’ group. Each report should have a maximum of 20 pages and be structured around the following questions/guidelines.

1. **BACKGROUND INFORMATION/INTRODUCTION**

This section should give an overview of the event (venue, the organisers, participants, the methodology used, how the report was produced, etc).

Each partner should collect the following demographic data and include in this section:

- Number of children who participated.
- Ages of the children who participated.
- Gender breakdown.
- Geographical background (where do the children come from in your country, including information on rural or urban area).
- Ethnicity breakdown.
- Characteristics of their specific vulnerability (for example disability, living circumstances, etc.).
- Provide information on the selection process and explain why you choose this specific group of ‘vulnerable’ children and/or school children; give explanations in case there is no gender balance or other specifics of the groups consulted.

**Preparation of the children**

- How have children been prepared for the focus group consultations, did they receive information in writing beforehand or in another way, or have the children met before and are known to the facilitators and organisers?
- Has human rights or children’s rights education taken place at the school attended by the children?

**Programme/Methodology**

- Detailed Programme/Methodology of the focus group meeting(s), should give a broad overview of the methods used, how children were supported to have their say on all the different issues, and how the information was collected, recorded and analysed.
- **Location of the Focus group meeting(s),** describe the environment in which the meeting took place.
- Describe the setting in which children participated, e.g. children were seated in smaller groups around tables or on cushions on the floor or outside on the grass; seating changed with the programme activities, plenary sessions or smaller working sessions, individual interviews.
2. **Key Findings**

This section should provide a summary of the main findings emerging from the consultation event.

3. **Children’s Awareness of Children’s Rights**

- What were the outcomes of the children’s rights game?
- Which four rights were selected by the children and why?
- What do they know about the selected rights?

4. **Children’s Needs in Relation to the Four Selected Rights.**

The toolkit provides specific questions for each of the 14 Children’s Rights, which should be reported on in this section. These questions roughly focus around

- What were the activities and daily life experiences described by the children?
- Which relations do children have when exercising these rights; do these people listen to them and take their views seriously?
- How do they feel when their rights are not guaranteed?

5. **Proposals for Policies or Actions for Children’s Rights**

- What solutions – policies or actions – do the children suggest to improve a better implementation of their rights: at local level; at regional level, at national level, at institutional level (e.g. in schools, in institutions, in their neighbourhood, etc).
  - at European level (what are transnational issues, which issues are or might be important for specific groups of children in Europe or for all children in Europe?)
- Any other outcomes/recommendations or conclusions of the children’s consultations; what did children respond to a final question: what would they change for children if they were the Prime Minister?

6. **Evaluation of the Focus Group Meeting(s)**

Describe which tool was used to evaluate the focus group meeting(s) and include a short evaluation of the consultation meeting(s), which should cover children’s feedback to the consultations, what worked well, what could have been differently, and lessons learned.

Questions to be answered can be found under section V. Evaluation in the Toolkit.

7. **National Research**

Partners will be asked to carry out a literature review on the incidence of children’s participation in their country, in particular the participation of vulnerable groups of children.

Partners will also look into children’s consultations around children’s rights in their country.

The key outcomes of these reviews will be included in the country reports and could be included in the template Diagram below: what are the outcomes of each child consultation event for us/policy makers and what are the outcomes for the children themselves?


**How to deal with quotes, photos of the children and creative work made by the children**

Quotes of the children are only referred to anonymously, indicating whether it was made by a boy or a girl and the age of the child. In the report it will be clear what background the children have. Children have to give consent for the quotes to be used and they have to give consent for the use of photos in which the children are shown and creative work made by them.

**Children’s Flag**

Children will be asked to make a small piece of cloth with a message on it. All pieces will be sown together and made into a flag (Mary volunteered to sew them together).

**Feedback (report) to the children after the consultation meeting(s).**

After the consultations have taken place and the reports written up by all partners, a feedback session will be organised for the children to share outcomes of the different consultations.

Partners will make a short film of the children’s consultations (for internal use only!). The Eurochild office will compile the eight films together, subtitles could be added by each partner in their own language or a voice over could be included so that all the children are able to watch the film. The film will be shown at the feedback session.

Provided the children give their consent, the film could be used to promote the Speak Up! project with governmental and EU partners as well.

The Feedback session will not be reported in the country reports, but the fact that it will take place will be referred to in the report.

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5 For each child participation initiative a separate diagram will be filled in.
ANNEX III

INFORMATION SHEET FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

TEMPLATE

The information sheet includes clear, sufficient and relevant information, including:

✓ Objectives of the consultation and how this work will fit into a larger process:

(see goal and objectives of the project on pages 1 and 2)

- We do this to influence policies at local, regional, national and European level. Policies mean ‘what local and national governments and EU institutions want to achieve’ and ‘why they want to achieve this’. We want to make sure that your views make a difference to the way governments and the EU make plans and decisions.

- We do this to learn something:

These focus groups will be a learning experience for all the children in the group, as well as for the adults. The learning outcomes identified will cover two aspects:

One aspect will be content-related, children will learn about children’s rights.

The second aspect will be about learning new competences, such as: self-confidence to participate trust (for example, being able to trust adults not to use you in a token manner); capacity to express your thoughts and feelings; working in a group; listening to other people; respect for the group; make a film, etc.

✓ Participation is voluntary and it is your own choice to participate or not to participate in certain parts of the consultations.

✓ Description of the consultation process, including timescale.

✓ The venue of the meeting.

✓ The dates of the focus group consultations and the date of the follow-up meeting.

✓ The programme of the consultation day(s).

✓ The number of participants and their ages: 10-12 children of 12-15 years old, boys/girls.

✓ The facilitators: their names and their roles.

✓ Any other adult present and his/her role, e.g. interpreter, social worker.

✓ Logistics and support available.

✓ Consent form to be filled in by the children and their parents/guardian’s

✓ Where to get help? Information on legal and social support that children might wish to use. Include contact details of relevant persons and organisations.

For a child-friendly lay-out of the information sheet, including standard setting on children and young people’s participation, see the Children & Young People’s Participation Consortium for Wales:

http://www.torfaen.gov.uk/HealthAndSocialCare/SocialCareServices/ChildrenServices/InvolvingCYP/Can dYPParticipationConsortium/Publications/Standards.pdf
ANNEX IV

FULL TEXT OF ARTICLES UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD AS INCLUDED IN TOOLKIT

Article 2 UNCRC (all children are equal)

1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child’s or his or her parent’s or legal guardian’s race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child’s parents, legal guardians, or family members.

Article 8 UNCRC (all children have the right to identity)

1. States Parties undertake to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations as recognized by law without unlawful interference.

2. Where a child is illegally deprived of some or all of the elements of his or her identity, States Parties shall provide appropriate assistance and protection, with a view to re-establishing speedily his or her identity.

Article 12 UNCRC (children have the right to express their opinion)

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

Article 17 UNCRC (children have the right to information)

States Parties recognize the important function performed by the mass media and shall ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health.

To this end, States Parties shall:

(a) Encourage the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child and in accordance with the spirit of article 29;

(b) Encourage international co-operation in the production, exchange and dissemination of such information and material from a diversity of cultural, national and international sources;

(c) Encourage the production and dissemination of children’s books;

(d) Encourage the mass media to have particular regard to the linguistic needs of the child who belongs to a minority group or who is indigenous;

(e) Encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being, bearing in mind the provisions of articles 13 and 18.
Article 19 UNCRC (no child shall be maltreated)

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

2. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.

Article 20 UNCRC (children without a family have the right to special protection)

1. A child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose own best interests cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the State.

2. States Parties shall in accordance with their national laws ensure alternative care for such a child.

3. Such care could include, inter alia, foster placement, kafalah of Islamic law, adoption or if necessary placement in suitable institutions for the care of children. When considering solutions, due regard shall be paid to the desirability of continuity in a child’s upbringing and to the child’s ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background.

Article 22 UNCRC (refugee children have the right to special assistance)

1. States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is seeking refugee status or who is considered a refugee in accordance with applicable international or domestic law and procedures shall, whether unaccompanied or accompanied by his or her parents or by any other person, receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in the enjoyment of applicable rights set forth in the present Convention and in other international human rights or humanitarian instruments to which the said States are Parties.

2. For this purpose, States Parties shall provide, as they consider appropriate, co-operation in any efforts by the United Nations and other competent intergovernmental organizations or non-governmental organizations co-operating with the United Nations to protect and assist such a child and to trace the parents or other members of the family of any refugee child in order to obtain information necessary for reunification with his or her family. In cases where no parents or other members of the family can be found, the child shall be accorded the same protection as any other child permanently or temporarily deprived of his or her family environment for any reason, as set forth in the present Convention.

Article 23 UNCRC (disabled children have the right to special care)

1. States Parties recognize that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child’s active participation in the community.

2. States Parties recognize the right of the disabled child to special care and shall encourage and ensure the extension, subject to available resources, to the eligible child and those responsible for his or her care, of assistance for which application is made and which is appropriate to the child’s condition and to the circumstances of the parents or others caring for the child.
3. Recognizing the special needs of a disabled child, assistance extended in accordance with paragraph 2 of the present article shall be provided free of charge, whenever possible, taking into account the financial resources of the parents or others caring for the child, and shall be designed to ensure that the disabled child has effective access to and receives education, training, health care services, rehabilitation services, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in a manner conducive to the child’s achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his or her cultural and spiritual development.

4. States Parties shall promote, in the spirit of international cooperation, the exchange of appropriate information in the field of preventive health care and of medical, psychological and functional treatment of disabled children, including dissemination of and access to information concerning methods of rehabilitation, education and vocational services, with the aim of enabling States Parties to improve their capabilities and skills and to widen their experience in these areas. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

**Article 24 UNCRC (all children have the right to health care)**

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services.

2. States Parties shall pursue full implementation of this right and, in particular, shall take appropriate measures:

   (a) To diminish infant and child mortality;
   
   (b) To ensure the provision of necessary medical assistance and health care to all children with emphasis on the development of primary health care;
   
   (c) To combat disease and malnutrition, including within the framework of primary health care, through, inter alia, the application of readily available technology and through the provision of adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking-water, taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution;
   
   (d) To ensure appropriate pre-natal and post-natal health care for mothers;
   
   (e) To ensure that all segments of society, in particular parents and children, are informed, have access to education and are supported in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition, the advantages of breastfeeding, hygiene and environmental sanitation and the prevention of accidents;
   
   (f) To develop preventive health care, guidance for parents and family planning education and services.

3. States Parties shall take all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children.

4. States Parties undertake to promote and encourage international co-operation with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the right recognized in the present article. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

**Article 28 UNCRC (all children have the right to education)**

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

   (a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;
   
   (b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take
appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;

(c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;

(d) Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;

(e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child’s human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.

3. States Parties shall promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

Article 29 UNCRC (the aims of education)

1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

   (a) The development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;

   (b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;

   (c) The development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;

   (d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;

   (e) The development of respect for the natural environment.

2. No part of the present article or article 28 shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principle set forth in paragraph 1 of the present article and to the requirements that the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State.

Article 30 UNCRC (all children have the right to enjoy their own culture)

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.

Article 31 UNCRC (all children have the right to play)

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

**Article 34 UNCRC (no child shall be sexually abused)**

States Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:

(a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;
(b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;
(c) The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

**Article 37 UNCRC (no child shall be deprived of his/her liberty)**

States Parties shall ensure that:

(a) No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment without possibility of release shall be imposed for offences committed by persons below eighteen years of age;
(b) No child shall be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily. The arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law and shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time;
(c) Every child deprived of liberty shall be treated with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person, and in a manner which takes into account the needs of persons of his or her age. In particular, every child deprived of liberty shall be separated from adults unless it is considered in the child's best interest not to do so and shall have the right to maintain contact with his or her family through correspondence and visits, save in exceptional circumstances;
(d) Every child deprived of his or her liberty shall have the right to prompt access to legal and other appropriate assistance, as well as the right to challenge the legality of the deprivation of his or her liberty before a court or other competent, independent and impartial authority, and to a prompt decision on any such action.

**Article 40 UNCRC (children in conflict with the law have the right to special assistance)**

1. States Parties recognize the right of every child alleged as, accused of, or recognized as having infringed the penal law to be treated in a manner consistent with the promotion of the child’s sense of dignity and worth, which reinforces the child’s respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of others and which takes into account the child’s age and the desirability of promoting the child’s reintegration and the child’s assuming a constructive role in society.

2. To this end, and having regard to the relevant provisions of international instruments, States Parties shall, in particular, ensure that:

(a) No child shall be alleged as, be accused of, or recognized as having infringed the penal law by reason of acts or omissions that were not prohibited by national or international law at the time they were committed;
(b) Every child alleged as or accused of having infringed the penal law has at least the following guarantees:
(i) To be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law;
(ii) To be informed promptly and directly of the charges against him or her, and, if appropriate, through his or her parents or legal guardians, and to have legal or other appropriate assistance in the preparation and presentation of his or her defence;

(iii) To have the matter determined without delay by a competent, independent and impartial authority or judicial body in a fair hearing according to law, in the presence of legal or other appropriate assistance and, unless it is considered not to be in the best interest of the child, in particular, taking into account his or her age or situation, his or her parents or legal guardians;

(iv) Not to be compelled to give testimony or to confess guilt; to examine or have examined adverse witnesses and to obtain the participation and examination of witnesses on his or her behalf under conditions of equality;

(v) If considered to have infringed the penal law, to have this decision and any measures imposed in consequence thereof reviewed by a higher competent, independent and impartial authority or judicial body according to law;

(vi) To have the free assistance of an interpreter if the child cannot understand or speak the language used;

(vii) To have his or her privacy fully respected at all stages of the proceedings.

3. States Parties shall seek to promote the establishment of laws, procedures, authorities and institutions specifically applicable to children alleged as, accused of, or recognized as having infringed the penal law, and, in particular:

(a) The establishment of a minimum age below which children shall be presumed not to have the capacity to infringe the penal law;

(b) Whenever appropriate and desirable, measures for dealing with such children without resorting to judicial proceedings, providing that human rights and legal safeguards are fully respected. 4. A variety of dispositions, such as care, guidance and supervision orders; counselling; probation; foster care; education and vocational training programmes and other alternatives to institutional care shall be available to ensure that children are dealt with in a manner appropriate to their well-being and proportionate both to their circumstances and the offence.
Eurochild is a network of organisations and individuals promoting the rights and welfare of children and young people in Europe. The network currently has 90 members in 32 European countries. Our work is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Eurochild is supported by the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (2007-2013). This programme is managed by the Directorate-General for Employment, social affairs and inclusion of the European Commission. It was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment and social affairs area, as set out in the Social Agenda, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy goals in these fields.

The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA-EEA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

PROGRESS mission is to strengthen the EU contribution in support of Member States’ commitments and efforts to create more and better jobs and to build a more cohesive society. To that effect, PROGRESS will be instrumental in: providing analysis and policy advice on PROGRESS policy areas; monitoring and reporting on the implementation of EU legislation and policies in PROGRESS policy areas; promoting policy transfer, learning and support among Member States on EU objectives and priorities; and relaying the views of the stakeholders and society at large.