



**Building a Europe  
for and with children  
Construire une Europe  
pour et avec les enfants**



**CRD-PACE-III AA 1**

**25 July 2018**

## **Age assessment from a child's perspective**

### **Child participation workshop methodology**

#### **1. Background**

Children are rights bearers regardless of their immigration status. The rights and safeguards enshrined in International and European human rights standards have been adopted to ensure that States act in the best interests of the child, without discrimination, to uphold the child's right to life, survival and development. In the context of migration, children must be treated first and foremost as children with the right to be heard and to participate in the decision-making processes.

The Council of Europe is committed to assisting member States build strategies to respond to the challenges facing refugee and migrant children, especially unaccompanied and separated children. The [Council of Europe strategy for the rights of the child \(2016-2021\)](#) identifies child-friendly justice for all children and a life free from violence for all children as priority areas to guarantee the rights of the child. The Council of Europe [Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe \(2017-2019\)](#) was adopted to strengthen action on ensuring access to rights and child-friendly procedures, providing effective protection and enhancing the integration of children who would remain in Europe.

The Council of Europe seeks to support member states to implement child-friendly procedures in all aspects of immigration and asylum law, which includes age assessments of children in the context of asylum and immigration procedures. The methods, procedures and policies currently implemented across the member states of the Council of Europe vary greatly. The Council of Europe *Ad hoc Committee for the Rights of the Child* (CAHENF) is currently elaborating guidelines on Human Rights principles applicable to age assessment for children in migration.

#### **2. Objectives**

In this context, the Council of Europe invites children who have experienced age assessment in the context of immigration or asylum procedures to share their views about the rights of the child that should govern age assessment as well as to make recommendations about how these rights can be upheld in practice. Children are also invited to share their views about the effect age assessment can have on the wellbeing of a child and how to inform other children about their rights.

#### **3. Outcomes**

The children's views and recommendations will support the policy work of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Rights of the Child in the drafting process of the guidelines. The findings of the workshops will also support policy makers to understand how to inform children of their rights during age assessment as well as the effects non-human rights compliant age assessment can have on children.

#### 4. Implementation

The aim is to organise workshops in up to 10 member states where different age assessment methods are implemented. Multiple workshops could take place in each country starting from **August and until October 2018**. The purpose is to ensure that input is provided by children in migration who have experienced age assessment according to different methodologies in various member States and at different stages of their journeys.

Children invited to participate in the workshops should do so on a voluntary basis, on the basis that they have experienced age assessment either in the member state where they are present or in another member state. Workshops should take place in a child-friendly space and the participation of the children must be only with their informed consent. The organiser must take the vulnerability of the child into consideration when composing the group. Children should only participate if it is in their best interest and there is no risk of re-traumatising the child by discussing age assessment.

When planning the composition of the group, attention should be given to the size of the group (15-20 children), the age, language and topics of discussion. A gender balance should be sought as far as possible. The organiser must consider whether it would be in the best interests of the children to organise separate workshops for boys and girls.

The type of groups chosen, the time and date of the workshops should be agreed upon with the Council of Europe **before** the implementation based on the partner form filled and returned in due time (Annex 2).

Reporting on the workshops should take place promptly following completion of the workshops based on the reporting form (Annex 4).

#### 5. Methodology

Please note that a detailed methodology will be provided to the selected Service Providers following the restricted consultation procedure. The section below summarises the main elements of the workshops and the expected role and contribution of the facilitator.

##### 5.1 Child participation workshops

Small group discussions, led by a facilitator, will give children the opportunity to discuss the rights of the child applicable during age assessment and to discuss how these can be implemented in practice. During the second workshop children will be given the opportunity to share their personal experience about age assessment by drawing a picture, writing a short story or testimony about how their experience went, children may also decide to send a short audio sound-clip or video (subject to data protection and consent policy). They will be asked to discuss what advice they would give to improve the age assessment procedure, to inform other children about their right and to ensure children's rights are upheld during the age assessment.

These workshops must be implemented in line with the Children's Rights Division Child-Safeguarding Policy. The Children's Rights Division Child Safeguarding Policy Consent form for third parties working in the context of an activity of the Children's Rights Division must be completed and returned to the Council of Europe before implementation begins.

##### 5.2 Role of the facilitator

Before the workshop:

- Obtain the informed consent of the children and/or their parents or guardians, for the child to participate in the workshops. Note that if you will record or photograph the children their informed consent must be recorded on the media consent form (Annex 3), in accordance with the Children's Rights Division Child-Safeguarding policy.
- Create a safe environment that will respect the children's rights ( see the Committee of Ministers Recommendation on Child Participation **CM/Rec(2012)2**: Principles);

- Adapt the session materials to the age, gender and culture of the group of children that will participate in each workshop;
- Ensure that the children understand why they are being consulted and the extent of the outcomes of the consultation;
- Design icebreakers and feedback activities.

During the workshop:

- Enable the children to express their views and recommendations in a way that can be communicated to the Council of Europe.
- Invite the children to prepare their contributions to be sent to the Council of Europe, this may be through drawing a picture, writing a letter, writing a poem or rap, making an audio recording, making a poster in a group.
- Keep the workshop focused on the topic and ensure that all the children have the opportunity to contribute accordingly;
- Ask the children to rank their views in order of importance or summarise the discussion and make recommendations.
- Take notes to ensure thorough feedback.

After the workshop:

Prepare a brief report of the workshop including:

- Information on the composition of the group (how many children, age range, gender and context in which they live – without including identifiable information about the children);
- The children's contributions, which should reach the Council of Europe no later than 2 weeks after the workshops;
- A summary of the findings and recommendations made by the children during the workshop (that may have been missed out of the children's contributions).

## 6. Aims of the workshops

Please note that a detailed workshop outline with activities and materials will be provided to the Service Providers selected following the restricted consultation procedure. Service providers would be expected to implement at least 2 workshops with 1 group of children.

### Workshop 1 (2 hours)

Aims:

- Explore the rights of the child that are particularly relevant during age assessment and the consequences on age assessment (do the children agree/disagree that these rights apply to age assessment).
- Explore who is responsible to uphold those rights (children's recommendations).
- Explore how to make sure children are aware of their rights (children's recommendations).

Rights identified:

Best interests of the child	Presumption of minority
Right to be heard and participate	Right to information and advice
Right to liberty: not to be detained	Right to have a Guardian
Right to Privacy: consent and data protection	Right to Education, Healthcare, Leisure
Right to protection from all forms of violence	Effective remedies

## **Workshop 2 (2 hours)**

Aims:

- Recall the rights of the child identified as particularly relevant during age assessment.
- Explore how the rights of the child can be respected during age assessment (gather children's views and recommendations).
- Explore how age assessment might violate the rights of the child (gather children's views and experiences).
- Explore the actions children can take if their rights are violated (gather children's views and recommendations).
- Explore how age assessment can affect the wellbeing of the child (children's views and experiences).

### **7. Reporting guidelines**

The child consultations should be reported in two ways:

- (1) providing the original materials prepared by the children to the Council of Europe by sending them through the post and
- (2) returning to the Council of Europe the completed report form (Annex 4).

Both of these reporting mechanisms are equally relevant and important for the Council of Europe to draw meaningful conclusions from the workshops as a whole.

## **Annex 1. Resources**

Relevant policy documents of the Council of Europe:

- [Strategy for the Rights of the Child \(2016-2021\)](#)
- [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2012\)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18](#)

Related Council of Europe publications:

- [Brochure: "I have rights"](#)
- [Compasito - Manual on human rights education for children](#)
- [Compass - a manual on human rights education with young people](#)
- [Living Democracy manuals](#)
- [Bookmarks – A manual for combatting hate speech online through human rights education](#)
- [Child participation assessment tool](#)
- [Implementation Guide to the Child participation assessment tool](#)

## Annex 2. Partner form

### Participation of children in the Round-table on Child-friendly information

#### Partner form

Please return this form before the workshops take place.

#### 1. Partner information

Full name of the Organisation	
Address	
Country	
Telephone	
E-mail	
Website or social media	
Legal representative and its function	
Contact person name: E-mail:	

#### 2. Description of the organization

Please briefly elaborate on the aim of the organization, the target group, the geographical cover, the main activities and any relevant experience.

#### 3. Project details

Which age group(s) will you work with? (delete as appropriate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children under the age of 13</li> <li>• Children aged 13-16</li> <li>• Children between 16-19</li> </ul>
How will you compose the groups and select the children? Is there a group of children you are already working with or will you launch an open call?	
Tentative date and place of the workshops:	Workshop 1: Workshop 2:

#### 4. Facilitator's profile

Please briefly introduce the facilitator(s) who will implement the consultations with the children.

### Annex 3

#### Contact details of consenting party

Name & name of parent/guardian if under 18 years of age	
Date of Birth	
Email Address	

I, the above named, hereby consent to the use, by the Council of Europe (and those acting with their combined or individually granted permission and authority), of any **[photographs/video recordings/audio recordings]** taken of me, or if applicable my child, during my, or if applicable my child's, participation in **[add event, location, date]**.

The **[photographs/video recordings/audio recordings]** will only be used for educational or information purposes to illustrate or promote the above stated event and any Project or Programme related to it. The material in which they will be used may be accessible to the public, or published on a public network (e.g. the Internet).

I grant the Council of Europe permission to communicate and make the **[photographs/video recordings/audio recordings]** available to the public in all media, including but not limited to print, digital media and the internet.

I understand that should a legend or caption be written on or near the **[photographs/video recordings/audio recordings]** by the Council of Europe or the European Commission, it will preserve my reputation. However, I understand that the Council of Europe and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for the use of the images by third parties not being covered by this authorisation.

I grant the Council of Europe permission to store and use copies of the photographs for the purposes described above, to store my contact details in their databases in case they need to contact or identify me and to transfer the **[photographs/video recordings/audio recordings]** to the European Commission strictly for the purposes described above.

I understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time by writing to the following addresses: **[add e-mail address]**. In which case the Council of Europe will cease to use the **[photographs/video recordings/audio recordings]**, but I accept that those copies of the photographs which have already been used or provided to third parties cannot be withdrawn from circulation.

.....

Signature of person giving consent

.....

Signature of parent/guardian < 18

Date .....



## Annex 4. Reporting form

### Report of the Child Participation in the Round-table on Child-friendly information

Please fill up all sections below in English unless it is not relevant for your project.

Please return the duly completed report by [INSERT DATE] at the latest.

#### 1. Partner information

Full name of the Organisation	
Address	
Country	
Telephone	
E-mail	
Website or social media	
Legal representative and its function	
Contact person name: E-mail:	

#### 2. Preparations of the child consultations

	Workshop 1	Workshop 2	Additional workshops
Target group			
Place of the Workshop			
Date and duration of the Workshop			
Number of participants			

Age of the participants			
Gender balance M/F			
Language(s) spoken during workshop			
Number and role of adults present			
Name of the facilitator(s)			

- Did all of the child consultations take place as planned? If no why?
- How did you compose the groups and select the children?
- How did you ensure you had the informed consent of the children to participate in the workshops?
- Did you encounter any obstacles or challenges during the preparation of the child consultations?
- Please share information about the professional background of the facilitators.

### 3. Implementation of the child participations

#### Workshop 1

- Please explain the implementation of workshop 1, did it achieve its aims?
- Please summarise the discussions in relation to each aim:

	Points raised by the children during workshops:
Rights of the child	
Rights of the child that are particularly relevant during age assessment. Do the children agree/disagree that the rights listed are relevant? Were these rights a reality for them?	
The consequences of the rights of the child for age assessment.	
Who is responsible to respect those rights (children's recommendations).	
How to make sure children are aware of their rights (children's recommendations).	

- What was the overall experience of the children talking about age assessment?
- Please share any other relevant observation (e.g. if children spoke about an issue with enthusiasm, anger or sadness or eventually seemed to find very difficult to speak about).

## Workshop 2

- a. Please briefly explain the implementation of Workshop 2. Did the session achieve its aims?
- b. Please summarise the discussions in relation to each element:

	Points raised by the children during workshops:
Introduction to age assessment: who involved, methods, why age assessment takes place.	
Explore how to uphold the rights of the child during age assessment (children's views and recommendations).	
Recognising a violation of the rights of the child (children's views and experiences).	
Actions children can take if their rights have been violated during age assessment (children's views and recommendations).	
How age assessment might affect the child's wellbeing (children's views and experiences).	

- c. How did the children discuss and organize themselves to decide on the content and form of the messages to send to the Council of Europe?
  - d. To what extent did the children need facilitation (understanding the topics, recommending creative methods to communicate with children)?
  - e. Please share any other relevant observations.
- 4. Bearing in mind the agreements with children and their parents/guardians concerning privacy and confidentiality issues, please share any pictures, videos, drawings, posters or notes produced by the children during the workshops.**
- 5. Please also provide feedback on the following issues.**
- a. Please evaluate the Implementation Package (delete as appropriate):  
 poor,                      sufficient,                      good,                      very good  
 Were you provided with all the necessary information to implement the child consultations?
  - b. Please evaluate the methodology (the session outlines) provided for the child participations:  
 poor,                      sufficient,                      good,                      very good  
 Was it feasible to implement the session outlines? Please share also suggestions for content development.
  - c. Please evaluate the overall support provided by the Council of Europe to implement the child consultations (administrative, technical, financial):  
 poor,                      sufficient,                      good,                      very good