

Good afternoon Ladies and gentleman and dear Mr. Ambassador

I am Dion a child advisor from Albania, supported by Childs right connect.

The session today was about Children's participation in decisions about their health and I am going to report about this session.

In the beginning we were presented with the guide from the Council of Europe that was enriched from a group of children from Teddy network. My peers and I worked on the child friendly version of this guide. We understood the benefits that this guide presents.

We learned more about the problems that children are facing with their health decisions especially the fact that they are ignored by parents and health professionals. It was even stated by one of the experts on the panel that children had told her that they have felt rejected and even like an object in specific scenarios. From a children point of view we saw that even small decisions may have a very big impact.

Experts from all over Europe shared that even health professionals are not well prepared to deal with these kinds of situations in relation to children, and these makes even these adults feel sacred. But we as children with the support of the experts think that just the simple things like compassion or empathy would really help children. They don't need a lot of resources; they just need some respect and need to feel valued.

It was also pointed out that even parents felt scared in different scenarios and weren't familiar with the rights of their children and how they should proceed. We suggested that parents and health professionals should always encourage children and young adults that they will support them despite the decision that they take. Children are often scared because they think they will be disloyal if they don't agree with their parents.

We also talked about non ideal situations that are in the guide. For example, when a child doesn't agree with something or parents and doctors don't agree. Ms. Palazzani shared with us her experience in Italy with the ethic Committee which had worked in several cases like these. We all agreed that a committee like this would be more helpful than a judge like in a lot of European countries. Also, health professionals should be brave enough to stop a procedure if they see that the child is not comfortable. A lot of these professionals think that children won't remember these kinds of experiences, but studies have shown that children have a very good memory and these kinds of traumas really influence them. Ms. Amalini shared with us the fact that even body language is very important and she had had cases where the culture exchange had help children, especially those who are treated abroad. Children that suffer from a talking disorder may express their feelings through singing or drawing. Experts from the session shared with us the fact that in European countries it is being discussed to add an exam for children during preschool to evaluate their mental health, not just the health of their body.

Speakers from our group of Child advisors shared their view on the role of parents and how they want to be treated. They wanted to know always the truth and to know what is going on. One of the quotes that my friend Sarah shared and that it really stuck with me was: “The truth will set you free but first it will make you miserable”. For them it was very important to always answer to the 4 W’s: Who, What, Where, Why. We were also presented with a role play by Lana and Denis where we saw a child who wanted to participate in the decision making but they were shut down by their parents. And they asked to everyone: How would you feel if you were in this child position? And I want you to keep this in mind.

To sum up everything we as young advisors and the experts think that it doesn’t take a lot of resources to help children you just need to hear them, show empathy and tell them the truth. We can’t have a high-quality healthcare without the children’s participation and not involving them could have long term consequences.

I want to close my report with quote from a very well-respected figure from Albania, Mother Teresa: “Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin children and adults”.

Thank you.