

HIGH-LEVEL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Progress towards meaningful
child participation in decision making
– a multi-stakeholder dialogue

PROGRAMME



21 October 2021

Building a Europe
for and with children

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Where and When?

When:	Thursday, 21 October 2021, 14:00 – 17:30 CET
Registration:	On the conference webpage (on the right side). You will receive the link and instructions on how to access the event in due time.
Working languages:	English and French
Organised by:	The Council of Europe Children's Rights Division
Any question to:	ChildParticipation4Europe@coe.int

Background

The European Commission and Council of Europe joint project “[CP4Europe – Strengthening National Child Participation Frameworks and Action in Europe](#)” (hereinafter: “CP4Europe”) was launched on 1 April 2021, with an implementation period of two years, to tackle and respond to the challenges faced in carrying out meaningful child participation in decision making at all levels. The project is implemented by the Council of Europe Children's Rights Division in cooperation with its 5 partner countries – the Czech Republic, Finland, Iceland, Portugal and Slovenia.

Promoting children's rights to participation is a priority of the Council of Europe [Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2016-2021](#) and it will be maintained as such in the new Strategy covering the period 2022-2027. The implementation of the CP4Europe project feeds into the range of actions taken to satisfy this priority both at European and national level, in accordance with the Council of Europe standards, notably the [Council of Europe Recommendation on participation of children and young people under the age of 18](#).

The project promotes the use of European tools on child participation amongst member states, including the [Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool \(CPAT\)](#) along with its [implementation guide](#), as well as the [Handbook on children's participation for professionals working for and with children](#) launched in January 2021. These tools are used to assess the extent to which child participation is currently implemented and mainstreamed in each of the 5 countries involved, to promote stronger national and local child participation mechanisms, and to bridge the gap between theory and practice by training professionals on child participation methods and activities.

The present conference constitutes the first high-level international event organised in the framework of the CP4Europe project to ensure that child participation in decision making remains at the top of European and national agendas while fostering efficient co-operation between different institutional actors.

Challenges & Objectives

The participation of children in decision making as a standard practice can already count on the support and commitment of many European leaders, national authorities, experts, and professionals who have witnessed the substantial benefits derived from listening and acting upon children's opinions.

However, it is often reported by professionals and children alike, that one of the main barriers to systematically implement child participation in decision making is the lack of support from political leaders, senior managers in administrations and in general the higher hierarchy. Children are still not taken seriously by many adults who have the power to influence their lives. For this reason, it is pivotal that children's rights advocates get together and reflect on strategies and good practices to strengthen child participation at all levels, to effectively integrate children's suggestions, opinions and grievances when it comes to decisions that affect them.

This event gives participants the opportunity to start implementing child participation and integrating the voices of children in high-level debates immediately, without further delays. It brings together European and national leaders, representatives of national authorities and other institutions, members of international organisations, the civil society, as well as child participation experts and academics, in dialogue with children. The conference's structure and sessions are designed in a way that allow adults and children to jointly engage in powerful discussions on how to take child participation in decision making one step further. Such collaborative approach will enable decision-makers to identify and better draw the path ahead together with children, who represent the ultimate beneficiaries.

The specific objectives of this conference can be broken down as follows:

- To create a momentum for child participation;
- To foster a multi-stakeholder dialogue between European institutions, national authorities and children;
- To establish stronger links between the work carried out at the European and the national and local levels to respond to children's challenges to be heard and to have their opinions respected;
- To create an avenue for child participation in a high-level environment and an opportunity for them to contribute to the discussion, while also giving the chance to adults to take note of their perception and reflections on the topic, possibly question some of their traditional concepts and habits, and inform their future activities and projects;
- To share good practices and a set of tools that will promote and ensure better child participation if replicated in European, national or local decision-making mechanisms and processes;

<p><i>Moderators:</i> <i>Marine Braun, CP4Europe, Senior Project Officer, Council of Europe</i> <i>Luis Manuel Pinto, Council of Europe independent expert</i></p>	
14.00	Opening speech: The participation of children in our democracies
	<i>Snežana Samardžić-Marković</i> , Director General of the Directorate General of Democracy, Council of Europe
14.10	Welcome and introduction
	<i>Regina Jensdóttir</i> , Coordinator for the Rights of the Child, Head of the Children's Rights Division, Council of Europe
14.20	Session I – The importance of child participation and its impact on children and society
	<i>Baroness Doreen Massey</i> , Representative at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), in a dialogue with <i>Simona</i> (18 y.o.) and <i>Vanessa</i> (17 y.o.) from Portugal, and <i>Lara</i> (17 y.o.) <i>Izabela Lara</i> (14 y.o.) from Slovenia
14.40	Questions from the chat
14.50	<i>Break</i>
15.10	Session II - At the European level: what is being done to promote CP and ensure its meaningful implementation
	<i>Afshan Khan</i> , UNICEF Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia <i>Valeria Setti</i> , Coordinator for the Rights of the Child of the European Commission <i>Marie-Louise Coleiro-Preca</i> , President of Eurochild, in dialogue with <i>Eetu</i> (15 y.o.) and <i>Kärg</i> (18 y.o.) from the Eurochild Children's Council
15.40	Questions from the chat
15.50	Session III - At national level – activities, challenges and good practices of child participation
	<i>Janez Cigler Kralj</i> , Minister of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of Slovenia (recorded video presentation 7 mins.) <i>Žana</i> (16 y.o.) from Slovenia will comment on the video of the Minister
	<i>Mgr. Kateřina Jirková</i> , Deputy Minister for Family Affairs, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic

	Rosário Farmhouse , President of the National Commission for the Promotion of Rights and the Protection of Children and Young People of Portugal in dialogue with Eva (14 y.o.)
	Elina Pekkarinen , the Ombudsperson for Children of Finland in dialogue with Tuvia (16 y.o.)
	Salvör Nordal , the Ombudsperson for Children of Iceland in dialogue with Vilhjalmur (12 y.o.)
16.35	Questions from the chat
16.45	<i>Break</i>
16.55	A multi-level dialogue on implementing child participation
	Discussion and Q&A facilitated by the moderators
17.30	Closing of the conference