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CP4Europe Webinar on Child-friendly communication in crisis situations

How to promote exchange with children and encourage their participation in decision-making processes that affect them

04 April 2022, h10.30-13.00 (CET)

Registration: <https://primetime.bluejeans.com/a2m/register/jctphfqk>

Introduction

In the framework of the European Union and Council of Europe joint Project *CP4Europe - Strengthening National Child Participation Frameworks and Action in Europe*, the Council of Europe is organising a webinar on 'child-friendly communication in crisis situations' to promote the child's right to be heard as well as to be informed in a way which is understandable to them in difficult contexts.

Communicating with children in a child-friendly manner on complex issues and in situations of crisis is more than ever relevant today. Communicating properly with children at the right moment and in the right way effectively contributes to make children feel safer in anxiety inducing environments. With the beginning of the pandemic, children had to face increasingly drastic measures but also stressful issues in particular at school, in the healthcare system and even in their own homes during the confinement period. Today, children in Ukraine are exposed to risks such as serious physical and mental injuries and death, but also neglect, psychological distress and lack of documentation. They are particularly in need of protection as their protective environment is weakened by family separation, displacement and constant shelling. Children outside of Ukraine are feeling the stresses of war from afar. They are also experiencing fear, frustration and helplessness. A lot of children do want to understand and help. It is important to provide ways for them to do so in an age-appropriate way.

While many adults and professionals who work with and for children believe that communicating appropriately with children is something evident, experience and studies show that this is not always the case. These are skills that can be acquired through training. As an example, the [Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on Child-friendly Justice](#) set out that justice professionals should receive training on the needs and rights of children and child-friendly communication techniques and procedures, with due regard for age differences and for the personal circumstances of the children.

In order to provide children with guidance, professionals who work for and with children must ensure that their language is adapted to them, check on children's understanding of the situation, their rights, the processes - their journey through it - and the role of each actor involved in their journey. It is important to also recognise that communication is a two-way process – as well as sharing information with children appropriately, it involves listening and acting on their concerns.

Involving children in what many consider “adults’ matters” poses several obstacles, and these are often related to the way in which they are addressed, and the way in which their words, opinions and views are taken on board. In general, it is important to adapt the language to the interlocutor, and when the latter is a child, to tailor it even more. The child’s right to participation encompasses the right to be provided with adequate information, that they understand and that they are able to use to form their own opinions.

Many European countries have now made some progress in stepping up their efforts to involve *all* children in decision-making processes, supported by research and capacity building sessions. By virtue of the involvement of experts from the recently created CP4Europe Pool of Experts, the event will benefit from their international and long-standing theoretical and practical expertise in the field of child participation and child-friendly communication, along with a variety of tools, methodologies and tips for a smooth implementation. Their presentations will focus on sharing some communication techniques and tools that will take into account the child's voice, well-being and views in order to fully promote their participation especially in complex situations and in situations of crisis.

Objectives

The ultimate goal of this webinar is to encourage member states and their national professionals to implement the participation of all children at all levels in an adapted manner. In particular, the event’s specific objectives can be broken down as follows:

- Create momentum for child participation;
- Support CP4Europe project partners in the way they include *all* children in the project;
- Inform participants about child-friendly language techniques;
- Invite participants to learn more about the tools that exist on the subject and to attend training courses on child-friendly communication;
- Help professionals working for and with children to benefit from existing practical tools, methodologies and guidance;
- Create a platform for the exchange of good practice, tools and other resources relevant to child-friendly communication and child participation;
- Issue practical recommendations on how to communicate with children in and about crisis situations.

Structure and Methodology

The webinar is divided into 3 sections which aim at gradually introducing participants to the practice of child-friendly communication techniques in crisis situations.

The first section of the webinar will focus on the theory of child-friendly communication and how it is interlinked to child participation decision-making in processes that affect them. The sessions will also look at the benefits of such language adaptation in writing, speaking and body language, the effects on the child but also on the professionals they meet. The second section will look at the specifics of informing, communicating and consulting children in crisis contexts, with examples and case studies. Finally, the last part will summarise the lessons learned from the previous sections, analyse the steps to be taken to make it a process and provide participants with methodologies and practical tools ready

for use. The following Q&A section will give participants the opportunity to ask questions to the experts who will be able to tailor their answers to the contexts discussed during the webinar.

Experts will share their knowledge and experiences through presentations containing illustrations of the work done on child-friendly communication techniques in different contexts, sectors and areas, including through videos and pictures. They will also give a short demonstration of the tools and methodologies they are promoting. At the end, participants will receive materials on child-friendly communication and child participation containing challenges/solutions related to different groups of children and hear about lessons learned. Finally, a list of useful resources will be made available to all on the CP4Europe project webpage.

Audience

The webinar will bring together the CP4Europe partners, policymakers, representatives of national authorities and institutions, members of the academia, child participation experts, professionals working for and with children, as well as civil society.

Programme

	Welcome and Introduction
10:30	Opening by the moderators <i>Marine Braun and Stéphanie Burel, Senior Project Officers, Children's Rights Division, Council of Europe</i>
	Child-friendly communication from a theoretical perspective
10.35	What is child-friendly communication, its impact on child participation and its benefits for both children and adults <i>Ruth Farrugia and Aneta Teneva, CoE CP4EUROPE independent experts</i>
11.00	Questions and Answers with experts
11.15	Break
	From theory to practice – Child-friendly communication in crisis situations
11.30	Creating the conditions for communicating about crisis: Watch-Learn-Act <i>Cath Larkins, CoE CP4Europe independent expert</i>
11.45	How to communicate with children about different types of crisis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Child-friendly communication in crisis or war context <i>Aneta Teneva, CoE CP4Europe independent expert</i> - Child-friendly communication during the pandemic <i>Cath Larkins, CoE CP4Europe independent expert</i>
12.00	How to communicate to different groups of children <i>Cath Larkins and Aneta Teneva, CoE CP4Europe independent experts</i>

12.15	<p>The role of schools in explaining difficult situations to children</p> <p><i>Barbara Nemeth, CoE CP4EUROPE independent expert</i></p>
12.30	Questions and Answers with experts
	Lessons learnt and steps ahead
12.40	<p>Recommendations and resources</p> <p><i>Aneta Teneva, CoE CP4Europe independent experts</i></p>
12.45	Questions and Answers with experts
12.55	<p>Concluding remarks by the Council of Europe</p> <p><i>Stéphanie Burel and Marine Braun, Senior Project Officers, Children's Rights Division, Council of Europe</i></p>
13.00	End of the event