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Guidelines for the Implementation of Child Participation in Lanzarote Committee's Activities and the European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse

Document prepared by the Secretariat of the Lanzarote Committee

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1. Introduction

The [Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#) (hereinafter “the Lanzarote Convention” or “the Convention”), which entered into force in July 2010, requires criminalisation of sexual offences against children. The Parties to the Convention are required to adopt specific legislation and take measures to prevent sexual violence, to protect child victims and to prosecute offenders as set out in the Convention.

The Committee of the Parties to the Convention, the “[Lanzarote Committee](#)” was established to monitor whether Parties effectively implement the Lanzarote Convention. The [monitoring of the Lanzarote Convention](#) takes place in rounds, each round concerning a theme and all Parties are monitored at the same time.

The Lanzarote Committee always seeks and values the views of the [civil society](#), [national human rights institutions](#) and other stakeholders on the implementation of the Lanzarote Convention in the Parties to the Convention.

In addition, as other international human rights instruments, the Lanzarote Convention requires Parties to “encourage the participation of children, according to their evolving capacity, in the development and the implementation of state policies, programmes or other initiatives concerning the fight against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children” (Article 9 (1)). The involvement of children in the work of the Committee can also be firmly based on the priorities of the [Strategy for the Rights of the Child \(2022-2027\)](#) and the [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](#).

The **target group of these Guidelines** is all of those in direct contact with children and who are responsible for facilitating workshops, consultations or other child participation-related activities. The target group is referred throughout the document as “facilitators”.

The **objective of these Guidelines** is to help facilitators to engage with children in a meaningful and respectful manner on issues related specifically to the prevention and protection of children against sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.

The **methodology proposed by the Guidelines** is suitable for children between the age of 11 and 18 years old.

If you are an adult interested in supporting children in organising and participating in the monitoring and capacity-building activities of the Lanzarote Committee or the European Day on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (18 November), then these Guidelines are designed to help you! Packed with background information and practical guidance that you can use in your work with children, this document will help you implement a meaningful and successful work together with children.

Child participation as outlined in these guidelines may be promoted by state authorities, civil society organisations or other relevant stakeholders.

The present Guidelines build on the previous work of the Council of Europe to advance child participation across its member states. The following documents have been used for the development of the methodology proposed in the current Guidelines:

- Council of Europe Child Consultations to Inform the Development of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2022-2027: Methodological Hints and Orientations. Defence for Children International Italy (2021) (*internal document*)
- [Council of Europe Guidelines for Implementation of Child Participation in the 2nd thematic monitoring round of the Lanzarote Convention on “The protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse facilitated by information and communication technologies \(ICTs\)”](#) (2019)

Other Council of Europe publications may be of relevance to facilitators looking for additional information on child participation, namely:

- [Let's decide together! - Guide to meaningful and effective engagement of children in decision-making processes](#) (Guide 2023)
- [Guidelines for developing a National Children's Participation Strategy](#) (2023)
- [Handbook on children's participation for professionals working for and with children](#) (2020)
- CP4Europe Learning [Planning a Collective Participation Process with Children](#) (Self-paced online course – approximately 10 hours including all side activities if you do the course alone / 20 hours if you do the course with a group)

About the Lanzarote Committee

The Committee of the Parties to the Lanzarote Convention (hereinafter the “[Lanzarote Committee](#)”) was established to monitor whether Parties effectively implement the Lanzarote Convention. The [monitoring of the Lanzarote Convention](#) takes place in rounds, each round concerning a theme and all Parties are monitored at the same time. The Lanzarote Committee also organises [capacity-building activities](#), such as study visits, conferences or hearings on specific challenges raised by the implementation of the Convention.

About the European Day

The Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers set up in 2015 the European Day for the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, as a follow-up to its [ONE in FIVE Campaign](#) to stop sexual violence against children. Each year, the Council of Europe invites its

partners to focus on a specific topic on the occasion of the European Day. Further information about Europe Day can be found on our [website](#) and in the [general presentation leaflet](#).

2. Participation of children

Child participation means that children, any person under the age of 18 years old, individually or in groups, have the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and, where necessary, the support to freely express their views, to be heard and to contribute to decision making on matters affecting them. This means that all those accountable for children should create the conditions that help children enjoy their right to participation. This process has been conceptualised as **meaningful participation** in the “Lundy model of child participation” as including aspects of Space, Voice, Audience and Influence.

Space: In order to become increasingly active in influencing matters affecting them, children need to be able to form and express views and they must be afforded the space and time to do so. They must be given the opportunity to gain the confidence, the time and a “safe and inclusive space” to contribute their views.	Voice: Appropriate and accessible information is an important pre-requisite for the ability to speak out and express views and negotiate decisions. Adults have a responsibility to find ways in which to enable children to communicate their views, concerns or ideas.
Audience: Central to the right to participate is that adults listen respectfully to what children have to say. The right to express views and have them given due weight can only be realised if children’s views are heard by those people with the power and authority to act on those views.	Influence: The right to participate does not automatically lead to children’s views being followed, in all circumstances and in every respect. However, it requires that their views are given proper consideration and that any subsequent decision is reported back to children with an explanation of how their views had an influence, and why the decision was made.

Children’s views should be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. The rights of children and young people to participate applies without discrimination on any grounds including race, ethnicity, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, disability, birth, sexual orientation or other status.

Child participation in the work of the Lanzarote Committee and in the European Day shall adhere to some key principles, which include voluntary, meaningful, safe and inclusive practices. The best interests of the child shall be the primary consideration throughout the whole process of child participation from the preparations until the follow-up of the activities. This means that in any stage of a child participation process, children’s well-being should be a central part of the facilitators’ concerns.

Child participation must be voluntary

Voluntary participation means that children can decide whether to express their views or not, or to exercise, in any other form, their right to be heard. Children shall be enabled to participate in the work of the Committee and shall be provided with the protection called for in the given context and situation. Voluntary also means the possibility to withdraw at any moment, for example during a consultation (if a child feels in need of a break or if they feel bad about any information that is being shared) or from a child participation process completely, if they are feeling overwhelmed by the experience.

Child participation must be meaningful

Children should be invited and involved in decision-making processes that are important to or can have an impact in their lives. Children should be provided with all relevant information and offered adequate support for self-advocacy appropriate to their age and circumstances.

Children and young people should always be fully informed of the scope of their participation, including the limitations on their involvement, the expected and actual outcomes of their participation and how their views were ultimately considered. This means providing clear information to children throughout the process and ensuring that they understand that information.

Child participation must be safe

Children who exercise their right to freely express their views must be protected from harm, including intimidation, reprisals, victimisation and violation of their right to privacy. This means for example, ensuring that children's opinions remain anonymous or that the adults involved will not reprimand children when their opinions go against an institution or a system in place.

A child safeguarding policy should be in place – instigated by the institution or organisation responsible – which applies to all persons involved in facilitating the development and implementation of participation activities. This policy should include all the necessary measures to ensure that professionals do no harm to children and promote their best interest. Child safeguarding includes both preventive actions to minimise the risks of harm occurring and responsive actions to ensure that incidents which may happen are appropriately and swiftly handled.

Particular attention shall be dedicated to respect the privacy of the child. This principle should always be respected and given particular attention in the case of participation initiatives involving vulnerable groups of children, especially child victims.

Child participation must be inclusive

Any participation initiative must ensure that different groups of children have the opportunity to learn about any initiative and to be a part of it. The involvement of children in vulnerable situations, and from various backgrounds is encouraged to ensure representation of all children's experiences, ideas and thoughts in the child participation process. Particular efforts should be made to enable participation of children who have special needs. Gender balance should be taken into account as well.

Child survivors of sexual abuse and exploitation should also have the opportunity to participate in relevant initiatives as they may provide valuable feedback on the response and quality of services, barriers to reporting and other issues that they have experienced. Particular care and attention should be paid when engaging with child survivors, because the issues addressed may have trigger effects concerning their trauma.

To ensure that child participation initiatives are inclusive, it is important to pay attention to how participants are selected. In line with the Council of Europe standards on child participation, the child participants of the consultations should be selected through an open call and volunteer to take part in the process and share their views on the topic. This is not to say that child participation initiatives cannot select certain groups of children or contexts, but that all children wishing to participate should have the opportunity to do so as well.

Children should be given ownership over the process by being informed about the framework, the objectives and the topic of the consultation in advance.

Resource: For more information on child participation requirements, please see the [Handbook on children's participation for professionals working for and with children](#).

3. Facilitation of child consultations

Before you start

Child participation in the monitoring and capacity-building activities of the Lanzarote Committee is encouraged in the form of consultation in small groups with the support of an adult who facilitates the consultation as a process. The National organisations and entities responsible for the child consultations (to which facilitators should be accountable), should put in place a **Child Safeguarding Policy**.

Step 1 - Preparation

Adults involved and respective roles

YOUR ROLE AS FACILITATOR: The consultations with children should be led by one facilitator or team of facilitators who is experienced in holding consultations with children and creating a pleasant and positive atmosphere during the sessions. The facilitator should feel at ease when interacting with a diverse group of children, be sensitive to specific needs of individual participants and feel confident about leading the discussion with the children, even when this requires handling sensitive issues, differing opinions or even conflicts between the children. The facilitator should be able to engage the children in a trust-based conversation, treating them with respect, showing empathy and being non-judgemental about the statements children make. Facilitators should feel responsible for recognising boundaries when behaviour or communication of individual children or other participants become offensive or hurt the dignity of an individual or a group of persons and ensure that such boundaries are respected. Facilitators have to be familiar with national laws and regulations concerning the reporting in cases of risks, threats or violence against a child and the relevant referral mechanisms for children. The facilitator should be committed to and available to follow-up to the consultations and report back to the children. After the consultation has ended, the facilitator will write an e-mail or text message to the children to invite them to share any further suggestions. It could be useful to provide also a mobile phone number, in case some children have difficulties accessing e-mail (or difficulties in writing). Throughout the consultation process, the facilitator will act as a focal point who can be reached by the children and the parents or guardians. It is strongly suggested that the facilitator is assisted by a team of co-facilitators and a note taker.

NOTE-TAKER: The note-taker is present during the session, is appropriately trained to document the consultation and prepare minutes but does not participate actively in the session and the discussions. The note taker should take note of what is said, as detailed as possible. Wherever the note-taker misses a part of the discussion, this could be integrated later on by resorting to the recording of the session, where applicable, for instance where the discussion is fast, or something remains unclear. The notes should reflect group dynamics, for instance if there is silence and no-one speaks out, if there is a heated discussion and many children want to speak at the same time, if there is disagreement between two children or if sub-groups form that disagree about a specific issue, if someone becomes aggressive or if there is laughter and joy, or if someone leaves the room. In the case of online consultations, the note-taker should note down any problems with connectivity or other issues with technology and access.

CO-FACILITATORS: The co-facilitators, on the other hand, should be adequately trained in child participation and children's rights, be prepared to respond to questions relating to the consultation and the thematic priority, help stimulating the discussion of the children if they get stuck, and would take notes when assisting the children working in sub-groups. The number of co-facilitators will depend on the number of participating children and consequently on the number of discussion

groups. It is advised to have two extra co-facilitators, in case someone gets ill or has other impediments at last minute. When composing the group of co-facilitators, the facilitator and/or the National Delegations should consider gender balance, age and background of the co-facilitators. When composing the sub-groups of children for the group activities and matching them with the co-facilitators, the facilitators should pay attention and be sensitive to questions relating to gender, age and background, always having in mind the best interests of the participating children.

Organisation of child consultations

FACE TO FACE CONSULTATIONS: Where consultations take place face-to-face the logistics will require attention: How will children arrive at the location of the consultations; will it be too much of an effort for them? If children must travel it is highly necessary to organise chaperones to accompany them. Who covers the costs for the travel and stay of the children, their parents, guardians or chaperones? Children with disabilities should not be in any way prevented from participating and the national organisations or entities involved are invited to provide all the necessary resources for their participation. During breaks, national organisations or entities should be prepared to offer drinks and snacks for the children, while ensuring that the organisers are informed of and respect any nutritional needs of the children or other special needs that have to be taken into consideration for the organisation of the sessions. During the face-to-face sessions, all participants and facilitators should be seated in a circular setting, on comfortable chairs and without any tables, respecting the personal space of each participant while allowing for free-flow of information.

TIMING AND DURATION OF THE SESSIONS: To ensure meaningful child participation, it is essential to adapt the sessions not only to the context, but also to the format of the consultations, the age and other characteristics of the participants. It is important to bear in mind that each child is different, having different attention spans and participation limits. Consultations may be exhausting, and online consultations require even more concentration. Some children may feel pressured to continue, experiencing “fear of missing out”. It is essential that children feel comfortable asking for a break and do not feel pressured to perform.

The date, time and duration of the sessions should be determined in advance and communicated to the children and parents or guardians. National organisations or entities involved can adapt the length of the sessions to the specific group if needed. The facilitator should be attentive to the needs of the group, asking them during the session how they are feeling and asking if they need a break.

PREPARING THE SESSIONS: The facilitator and/or the National organisations or entities should make sure to carefully prepare the consultations with the children in advance. All the material shared with children should be in a language they can understand and provided in child-friendly formats. In most cases, translation of the documents to be used and the consent forms for children and parents or guardians, will be necessary.

Background information

INFORM YOURSELF: Before you start the child consultation, you will need to document yourself specifically on child sexual abuse and exploitation. The [Detailed concept note on sexual abuse of children in their circle of trust including recommendations by the Lanzarote Committee as well as promising practices which can be easily replicated](#) includes general information about child sexual abuse and exploitation that will be of interest to your work. The Council of Europe has also developed other awareness-raising and communication tools and resources that will be relevant to you to document yourself and/prepare information to use with the children involved, as follows:

- [For children](#)
- [For parents](#)
- [For authorities and parliaments](#)
- [For professionals working for and with children](#)
- [Infographics / Banner / Header / Panels](#)

Resource: For more information on how to communicate specifically with child survivors, see the resource [Caring for Child Survivors of Sexual Abuse: Guidelines for health and psychosocial service providers in humanitarian settings](#) (2012), by the International Rescue Committee and UNICEF

Other important actions to take before the child consultation takes place

Before the child consultation takes place, you will need to get **informed consent from the children and/or the parents**, in accordance with the national legislation in place. Make sure that you explain carefully and thoroughly the aims of the child consultation and how it will take place. You should also let children and parents know that children will be able to stop participating at any moment, should they decide to. Annex 1 provides an example of an informed consent form that you may use and/or adapt to your needs. If you are registering and using any media-related materials, you will also need to ask children for their informed consent for recording / media use for children participating in the Child Consultations (*See Annex 2*).

Materials

Online sessions: computer with camera and microphone, access to appropriate video conferencing platforms. Face-to-face sessions: chairs, flipchart, post-its and projector to project the power point presentations. Power Point presentation for the thematic priority (see document “Thematic Specifications” for the priority theme you have chosen).

The facilitator and/or the National Delegations should make sure to carefully prepare the consultations with the children in advance. All the material shared with children should be in a language they can understand and provided in child-friendly formats. In most cases, translation of the documents, such as the visual representation showing the seven steps of the consultation in circles, the evidence and rights (see document “Thematic Specifications” for the priority theme you have chosen) and the consent forms for children and parents or guardians, will be necessary. In case of online sessions: Appropriate video conferencing platforms are very simple to use. Nonetheless, it is kindly suggested that the facilitators familiarise themselves with the tools, in order for the sessions to proceed as smoothly as possible. The polls suggested in some sessions can be administered through the appropriate video conferencing platforms.

Always start the session by introducing the group rules and ask the young people if they want to add anything. Example group rules: "Turn off your microphone when you are not speaking to avoid background noise" or "We want to create a safe place together. Only share information that you feel comfortable to share with us and always respect the opinions of other participants.”

In **case of face-to-face sessions**, and when necessary, facilitators can share power-points, which should be prepared in advance and easy to read and to understand, taking into consideration the group target.

A **preparatory meeting** with all (co-) facilitators is highly suggested, where they are briefed about the background, purpose and scope of the consultations, the thematic priority and their role during the consultation, as well as the child safeguarding and wellbeing rules.

Lastly, it is kindly suggested that the National Delegations or entities - together with the facilitators - **provide all the necessary information** on the Child Consultation process both to the participants and their parents or guardians.

Step 2 - Implementation of the consultations

INTRODUCTION OF PARTICIPANTS: 30-40M: getting to know each other - biographies - child-friendly space – informality

The aim of the introduction session is to create an informal, safe and child-friendly common framework allowing the children to feel safe and at ease. A biographic narrative exercise helps all the participants to establish a personal connection with the theme, to get to know each other and to warm up for their subsequent interaction and collaboration. This exercise is important for the introduction of the participants and to introduce the thematic priority to be discussed during the consultation. The facilitator should very briefly, with just a few sentences, introduce the theme and the purpose of the consultation.

The facilitator explains to the group that they will begin this session with an exercise to present themselves. The participants will introduce themselves through a simple biographical narrative exercise. The facilitator writes down the thematic priority on the flipchart or in the appropriate video conferencing platform, invites the children to reflect about it and to try and express their first thought in just one key word. The facilitator asks each child to write down this key word on a post-it sticker or in the chat function of the appropriate video conferencing platforms. This should be a simple exercise, creating a common ground for the session. For instance, if the thematic priority is “Access to and safe use of technologies for all children”, the facilitator shares the screen in the appropriate video conferencing platforms and sends the link to the children through the chat of the platform. All children open the link so that they can see the virtual white board on the shared screen of the facilitator. The facilitator writes down the thematic priority on the virtual white board and reads it out aloud. The facilitator proceeds to ask the children, “Based on your experience, what is particularly important when using technologies?” The facilitator gives the children a few minutes for reflection and invites them to write down a key word or a short sentence on a post-it sticker or in the chat function, in response to the question. While the children are reflecting, the facilitator writes down his or her own key word on a sticker or in the chat. Where consultations take place face-to-face, the facilitator asks the children to come up to the flipchart and stick their post-it on the paper.

When all children have done this, the facilitator begins by reading out his or her own key word and explains briefly, why he or she chose this key word and what personal experience is connected to it. After having shared these thoughts, the facilitator introduces him-/herself by saying his/her name and any other information about his/her role and profession that he/she would like to share. Then, the facilitator starts reading out the key words or short sentences one by one as they appear in the chat, or picking them up one by one from the flipchart. After having read the key word out aloud, the facilitator asks the child who wrote it down, to say a few words about this key word and, subsequently, to present himself/herself. There is no rigid structure for this exercise. The facilitator invites the children at the beginning to share what they feel comfortable to and to say the name, by which they would like to be called. The co-facilitators, note taker, representative from the National Delegations or any other adults present during the session should also participate in the presentation in the same modality as children.

SETTING THE SCENE: 20-30M: making common sense and direction - background – objectives

"Why are we here? What is the Council of Europe? What is the Lanzarote Convention? What are we expected to do?" The aim of this stage is to clarify the purpose and objectives of the consultations. The participating children will be informed, in a clear and concise manner and in a language they understand, why they were invited to participate in the consultation, what the Council of Europe is, the background to the development of the new Lanzarote Committee monitoring round (or other activity) and its meaning. This informative briefing aims to consolidate the information children will have already received prior to the consultation. It aims further to foster an understanding of the purpose and scope of the consultation and what they are expected to do. This explanation should be clear and brief. For instance:

- The Council of Europe is an international organisation of national governments with 46 member States in Europe that aims to protect human rights. In 2007, the Council of Europe adopted the Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, also known as “the Lanzarote Convention”, which requires criminalisation of all kinds of sexual violence against children. It sets out that states in Europe and beyond shall adopt specific legislation and take measures to prevent sexual violence, to protect child victims and to prosecute those who commit the crimes against children (perpetrators). The “Lanzarote Committee” is the body established to monitor whether Parties effectively implement the Lanzarote Convention.
- “So as you may know Lanzarote Committee is preparing a new monitoring round (*or other activity – adjust as necessary*) on the implementation of the Convention on the prevention and protection of children against sexual abuse and sexual exploitation (Lanzarote Convention). The monitoring round is a very important activity because it enables the Lanzarote Committee to understand what the 48 countries that have signed the Lanzarote Convention are doing to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation. The new monitoring round focuses on what is called ‘the circle of trust’, we will explore what this means later on. Several countries will be engaging with children to understand their opinion on this important topic (*adjust as necessary*).”
- “Several international conventions assure to children the right to participation. In particular, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child asserts in article 12 the right to participation as a basic principle: ‘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’. The Lanzarote Convention affects and impacts children from all the Council of Europe member States, therefore your participation during our sessions is very valuable. It is your opportunity to share with the international authorities - that most of the time seem so far away - what is really important to you.”

- “Your views and the recommendations you develop as a group, together with the views and recommendations of the children who are participating in other countries, will be reported to the representatives of national governments and ministries when they meet at the Council of Europe. By participating in this consultation, you will influence the development of the new monitoring round of the Lanzarote Committee (***or other activity – adjust as necessary***).”

THEMATIC PRIORITY AND KEY DEFINITIONS: 30-40M: mapping ideas, keywords and sharing definitions

After these introductory sessions, the facilitator reiterates the thematic priority that they will be discussing. The facilitator is asked not to provide the children with a definition of the priority theme, but to rather engage the group in a discussion exercise. The aim of this exercise is to create a space where children feel at ease to express what they understand the thematic priority to be about. They explore key words that they consider important for this thematic priority. The facilitator guides the discussion of the children to clarify what these key words mean for them, and what they could mean for other children, so that the children are encouraged to share their very personal experience but to also reflect about how these experiences might be different for other children, for instance classmates, friends, children from their communities.

This exercise aims to gather a diversity of direct or indirect experiences of children with regard to the priority theme. The facilitator guides and steers the discussion with a view to maintaining the focus on the priority theme while also allowing references to other themes that are related to it.

The facilitator opens a new sheet of paper on the flipchart or a new page on the appropriate video conferencing platform or other means and asks the children what they understand by that thematic priority. If necessary going word for word of the thematic priority, building a framework and definition that everyone agrees upon. In order to achieve this, the facilitator should ask the children to share their thoughts and as the children to speak, the facilitator takes note on the video conferencing platform or other means.

When everyone has shared their keywords, the facilitator engages the children in a discussion to “build” a definition of the thematic priority. The facilitator uses the words of the children as much as possible and can complement them with his or her own suggestions only where necessary, making sure the children agree and understand. The facilitator should keep note of this exercise on the flipchart or the video conferencing platform so that the final agreed definition will be visible to everyone. If the children disagree on a specific wording or element of this definition, the facilitator should not exert pressure on them to agree on a single wording but can take note of the two parallel wordings and let them stand together as two options.

REALITY CHECK/ EVIDENCE? BIOGRAPHY AND POINT OF VIEW: 40-50M: sharing facts - experiences - biographies - stories - nurturing common understanding

After discussing the thematic priority and arriving at a definition that all participants agree with, the facilitator presents a brief situation overview concerning the thematic priority. The presentation is done in an accessible way, using a child-friendly language, with the aim of engaging the children, inviting them to share their experiences.

The presentation conveys information, data and evidence, and specific findings that have emerged from the monitoring rounds of the Lanzarote Committee, information compiled by National Delegations specifically on the situation in the country where the consultation takes place, and information from other national or international sources. The aim of this phase is to bring participants closer to the theme by sharing data, information and analysis on a range of different aspects that are relevant for the thematic priority.

The facilitator is strongly encouraged to adopt an interactive and engaging approach when presenting the evidence. The facilitator should not appear to have all the answers and knowledge already but rather assume a curious attitude and invite the children to explore some of the data and information together with the group. The facilitator could say, for instance, “let’s find out together what the Council of Europe has reported regarding this theme”. ***Please refer to the support documents prepared for each monitoring round or European Day activity.*** National Delegations are invited to collaborate with the facilitators in preparing the presentation for this session, compiling relevant data and information and presenting them in a child-friendly language and in an accessible style.

After the presentation of the evidence, the facilitator reads out to the children a quote from a fictitious child living in Europe. This statement, connected with the thematic priority and the evidence shared, aims to bring the theme of the consultation closer to the participants, promoting a connection between the evidence and the lives of children. It aims to help them shift from an abstract to a personal and biographical perspective. In this way, their contributions and suggestions are anticipated to be even more tangible and concrete.

After that, the facilitator invites the children to share their thoughts, experiences and feelings on the information conveyed. The facilitator should be prepared to enable the children to share their personal experiences relating to the thematic priority in a supportive manner without being intrusive and refraining from putting pressure on the children to say something or to share personal experiences. Where the children are reluctant to speak out or to discuss, the facilitator could share her/his own experience or tell the children about the experience of a child he knows (which could be real or fictitious) to make children feel more comfortable to speak. All statements that the children make, and the thoughts, feelings and experiences they share, should be documented. The documentation will be essential to prepare the report to the Council of Europe at the end of the process.

Remember: Facilitators should remind children that they are not expected to share their own personal stories if for example they have experienced abuse. Child consultations are not a group therapy session and it is important to ensure that children understand that. In case where children *really want to* share their stories with the group, the facilitator should call attention to the other children to respect anything that is shared during the discussions and not to publish or share those stories further.

WHAT SHOULD BE IN PLACE: CHILD RIGHTS PRINCIPLES EMERGING FROM THE LANZAROTE CONVENTION: 30-40M: approaching a child rights-based perspective - theory/reality/perceptions

After the presentation of the evidence and the sharing of experiences, it is time to confront these results with human rights principles and the rights of the child. This step aims to present some key human rights and child rights principles/norms, related to the thematic priority, in child-friendly language and an accessible manner for the participating children. The idea is for the children to learn about their own rights and to be prepared to form and share their opinions on “what should be in place for all children”.

The facilitator should start by reminding participants about the Lanzarote Convention, as follows:

“As a reminder, in 2007, the Council of Europe adopted the Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, also known as “the Lanzarote Convention”, which requires criminalisation of all kinds of sexual violence against children. It sets out that states in Europe and beyond shall adopt specific legislation and take measures to prevent sexual violence, to protect child victims and to prosecute those who commit the crimes against children (perpetrators). The “Lanzarote Committee” is the body established to monitor whether Parties effectively implement the Lanzarote Convention. As you may remember Lanzarote Committee is preparing a new monitoring round (**or other activity – adjust as necessary**) on the implementation of the Convention on the prevention and protection of children against sexual abuse and sexual exploitation (Lanzarote Convention).”

After this introduction, the facilitator presents some key child rights norms, connected with the thematic priority. **Please refer to the support documents prepared for each monitoring round or European Day activity.** In order to promote participation and a dynamic environment the norms/principles will be reassumed and shared through a poll (in case of face-to-face sessions the votes could be done by raising hands). With regard to the thematic priority focusing on the protection of children from sexual abuse in the circle of trust, the facilitator could say: “According to the Lanzarote Convention, the circle of trust includes children’s family members, such as parents, siblings, cousins, aunts/uncles or grandparents, but also care providers in institutions, teachers, doctors, and other adults” (**please adjust as necessary**). The facilitator invites participants to vote Yes, No or Partially. After this quiz, the facilitator invites the children to explain their responses and initiates the discussion with the children. For further details regarding the facilitation of this session, please refer to **the support documents prepared for each monitoring round or European Day activity.**

AND NOW WHAT? RECOMMENDATIONS, CONSIDERATIONS AND PROPOSALS: 50-60M: exchange - discussion - expectations - priorities - ideas – proposals

In the final phase of the consultation, the children develop and discuss their own proposals, expectations and recommendations, as well as questions, with regard to the improvement of the situation. All this will inform the drafting process of the new monitoring round of the Lanzarote Committee or European Day activity.

This phase builds on the previous ones: the participants are now familiar with the thematic priority, with the main international standards regarding this theme, and they understand the difference between human rights standards and what happens in reality. At this point, the aim is to enable a discussion on ideas on how to reduce the gap between standards and reality.

It is possible that the children will not only formulate their expectations and proposals, but also raise questions. These are also important, as they can provide a fruitful basis for discussion.

During this stage, the facilitator organizes children in groups of 4-5 children to discuss their thoughts, expectations, considerations, and ideas. The main question guiding their discussion is what they would want to see included in the recommendations by the Lanzarote Committee, specifically with regard to the priority theme they have been discussing. In a face-to-face meeting, the groups of children could sit in different corners of the meeting room, if it is sufficiently spacious, or in surrounding rooms. In an online format, the facilitator can open breakout rooms (in the appropriate video conferencing platform) and invite the participants to discuss

The facilitator introduces the group work and informs the children how much time they have (20-25 minutes suggested), that one of the co-facilitators will join their group to take notes, and that they should identify a volunteer within their group who reports back to all children what they discussed and what are their main expectations and recommendations for the new monitoring round or European Day activity.

In each group, one of the co-facilitators is present to take notes of the discussion, to respond to any questions of the children, clarify doubts and help them solving any difficulties that may arise during the discussion. At the beginning of the discussion, the children are asked to identify a speaker who will report back to the full group the main issues they discussed and the key points they would recommend for the new monitoring round or European Day activity.

After the discussion in sub-groups, the facilitator closes the breakout rooms and the participants come back to the plenary to share the results.

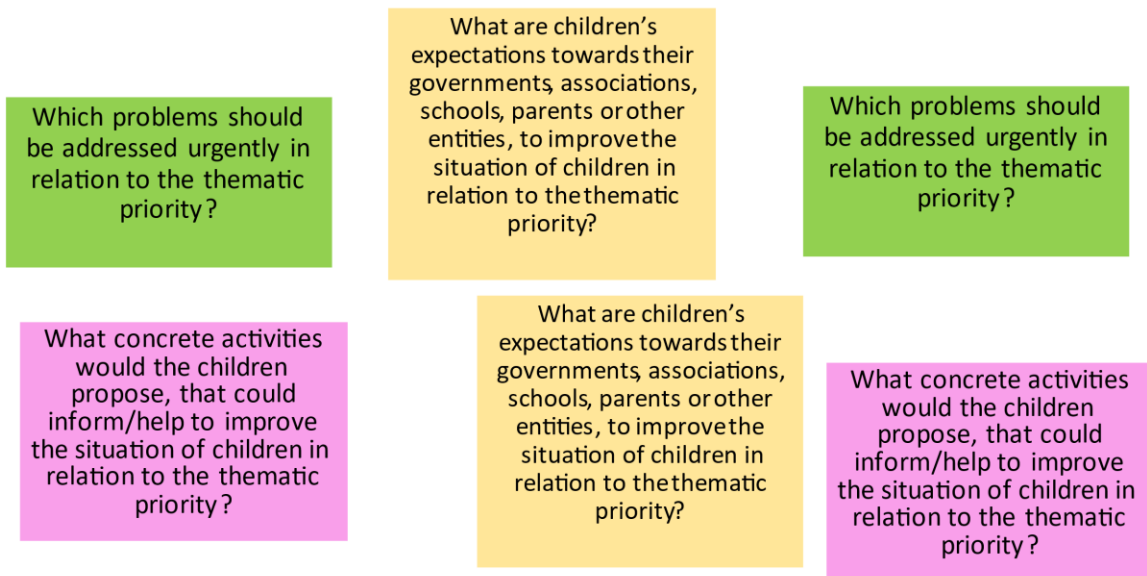
After the speaker of the first group has reported back to the plenary, the facilitator or the speaker ask the other members of that group if they would like to add anything to what the speaker has said. The groups proceed to report back to the plenary in this way. When all groups have reported back, the facilitator opens the discussion to allow all children to comment on the outcomes of the group

work. After that, the facilitator opens the final discussion, with the aim of identifying suggestions to the following questions:

- 1) Expectations: What are children’s expectations towards their governments, associations, schools, parents or other entities, to improve the situation of children in relation to the thematic priority?
- 2) Priorities: Which problems should be urgently addressed regarding our thematic priority?
- 3) Recommendations: What concrete activities would the children propose, that could inform the Strategy to help improve the situation of children in relation to the thematic priority?
- 4) Ideas: How can children be meaningfully involved in these activities, at the local and international levels?

Each one of these questions should be matched with a colour for a post-it for the flipchart or the video conferencing platform. At this point, the children should participate in plenary organising their ideas, priorities, expectations and recommendations by allocating them to the respective colours. The aim is to create a “map”, with all the main suggestions of the group, presented as tangible proposals. This map can help to give ownership to the children of the work they developed and will be useful for the last session, closure and next steps. Example:

And now what? Recommendations, considerations and proposals



CLOSURE AND NEXT STEPS: 30-40M: ending the consultation - sum-up results - feedback - next steps
- final words to children

The facilitator begins the concluding session with a recap of what the children have said, discussed and concluded in the previous session. The facilitator invites the participants to share their thoughts on how they experienced their participation in the consultation and explains the next steps.

The session is closed through a group exercise, similar to the one proposed for the introduction session. The facilitator invites the participants to share what they would like the Council of Europe to remember when drafting the recommendations and report of the new monitoring round or European Day activity. In a face-to-face meeting, the children could write key words on post-it stickers and post them on a flipchart or the facilitator could ask the children to speak out. In an online format, the children may register their contributions in the video conferencing platform. The facilitator assures the children that their messages will be delivered:

“If you were in front of the government representatives from the 47 member States of the Council of Europe right now, what would you say to the people in charge?” This is an opportunity for the children to summarise in a few words what is important for each one of them. All these messages should be included in the country reports.

It would be important to leave space for further interaction, ideas and suggestions from the children, also beyond the duration of the consultation. To enable this, the facilitator will send an e-mail to all the participating children and inform them that they can write to him or her to share additional suggestions or any questions that may arise in the days following the consultations. The facilitator informs the children that at a specific date (*to be determined, according to each activity*), the National Delegation or entity responsible for the child consultation will send the relevant report to the Council of Europe. So, it would be important to receive their additional thoughts and ideas, if any, before the established date.

Before the closure of the consultation, the facilitator explains the next steps and what will happen now that they have come to the end of their consultation: the National Delegation or entity will write a report on the consultation where they include all the important thoughts, ideas and recommendations that the children have expressed, as well as the questions that they have asked and which have remained open. The National Delegation or entity sends this report to the Council of Europe. At the Council of Europe, there is a group of very committed professionals who are excited to read all the reports that they receive from the countries where the consultations take place. These people are in charge of writing the report of the new monitoring round or European Day activity. They will include the recommendations from the children in the new report or activity and may highlight which of the recommendations came from children. As soon as the report is formally adopted by the Council of Europe, the National Delegations and entities, together with the facilitator

will get back in contact with the children to give them **feedback** and inform them about the report/activity and what the countries have decided to do over the coming years.

Children may have the opportunity to present the results and thoughts of the consultations in relation to the new monitoring rounds or European Day activity. In that event, National Delegations or entities will be informed and will facilitate the participation of children wishing to participate.

Step 3 – Conclusion



The methodology presented above was developed during the preparation of the Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027) and it was used by nine participating countries. The content has been adapted to the specific needs of the Lanzarote Committee and its activities, including its monitoring work and awareness raising activities promoted in the context of the European Day. In addition to these Guidelines, the Committee and/or the Secretariat may prepare additional guidance or checklists to be used by facilitators to develop specific activities. Annex 3 provides two suggestions agendas for the sessions proposed, whilst Annex 4 provides for a template for the country reports. The content of the sessions and all the templates provided can and should be translated and adapted to the country context and the different consultations with children, as appropriate.

All related materials and future calls for consultations with children will be published on the webpage of the Council of Europe Children’s Rights Division.

Annex 1 – Informed consent form for children

Informed consent form for children participating in the Child Consultations to inform the ... *(please insert the title of the activity here, as appropriate, for example “Child Consultations to inform the third monitoring round of the Lanzarote Committee on the protection of children and prevention of sexual abuse in the circle of trust”).*

Thank you for being here with us, your participation is very valuable not only for you but also for children all across Europe! Before starting we need to make sure you understand what is expected of you.

	 Yes	 No
Someone explained to me the objective of this consultation in a comprehensible language and I understand what is expected of me.		
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the activities and the facilitator answered to all my questions in a manner that I could understand.		
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may quit at any time without explaining why.		
I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, articles or presentations by the research team and the Council of Europe.		
I understand that my name will remain secret and will not appear in any reports, articles or presentations. I can choose an alias.		
I don't mind that activities are recorded, in writing or audio, in order to write the reports.		
I want to take part in this consultation.		



If you crossed all boxes ‘yes’, you are ready to sign below and start the activity! If not, you can ask the facilitator for clarifications, help or you can leave this activity.

I UNDERSTAND WHAT IS REQUIRED OF ME AND I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE PART IN THIS ACTIVITY.		
_____	_____	_____
NAME/ALIAS	SIGNATURE	DATE
CONSENT FROM PARENT / GUARDIAN		
_____	_____	_____
NAME/ALIAS	SIGNATURE	DATE
FACILITATOR CONDUCTING THE ACTIVITIES		
_____	_____	_____
NAME/ALIAS	SIGNATURE	DATE

***[name of the organization]** acts in conformity with the Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (General Data Protection Regulation). We keep your personal data safe and protected against unauthorised or unlawful processing and against accidental loss, destruction or damage. We will use your data only for the purpose of this project and we will delete it when the project comes to an end.

Annex 2 – Informed consent form for recording / media use for children participating in the Child Consultations

Thank you for being here with us, your participation is very valuable not only for you but also for children all across Europe! Before starting we need to make sure you understand what is expected of you.

	 Yes	 No
Someone explained to me the objective of this consultation in a comprehensible language and I understand what is expected of me.		
I accept that the facilitator records this consultation and use the recording for documentation purposes.		
I consent to original materials created by me in the framework of this consultation, such as artwork, drawings, poems or essays, may be used, shared and published in a report by the Council of Europe.		
I accept that the facilitator or someone from his/her team takes group photos of me and other participants during the activity.		

I UNDERSTAND WHAT IS REQUIRED OF ME AND I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE PART IN THIS ACTIVITY.		
_____	_____	_____
NAME/ALIAS	SIGNATURE	DATE
CONSENT FROM PARENT / GUARDIAN		
_____	_____	_____
NAME/ALIAS	SIGNATURE	DATE
FACILITATOR CONDUCTING THE ACTIVITIES		
_____	_____	_____
NAME/ALIAS	SIGNATURE	DATE

***[name of the organization]** acts in conformity with the Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (General Data Protection Regulation). We keep your personal data safe and protected against unauthorised or unlawful processing and against accidental loss, destruction or damage. We will use your data only for the purpose of this project and we will delete it when the project comes to an end.

Annex 3 – Suggested agendas for the sessions

TWO SESSIONS OF 2.5 - 3 HOURS	
FIRST SESSION	1. Introduction of Participants (30-40 minutes)
	2. Setting the Scene (20-30 minutes)
	Small break (<i>tbd with the participating children according to their needs</i>)
	3. Thematic Priority and Key Definitions (30-40 minutes)
SECOND SESSION	4. Reality Check: Evidence, Biography and Point of View (40-50 minutes)
	Recap of the previous session (15-20 minutes)
	5. What Should Be in Place: Human Rights and Child Rights Principles (30-40 minutes)
	6. And Now What? Recommendations, Considerations and Proposals (50-60 minutes: break suggested before coming back to plenary)
	7. Closure and Next Steps (30-40 minutes)

THREE SESSIONS OF 1.5 - 2 HOURS	
FIRST SESSION	1. Introduction of Participants (30-40 minutes)
	2. Setting the Scene (20-30 minutes)
	Small break (<i>tbd with the participating children according to their needs</i>)
SECOND SESSION	3. Thematic Priority and Key Definitions (30-40 minutes)
	Recap of the previous session (15-20 minutes)
	4. Reality Check: Evidence, Biography and Point of View (40-50 minutes)
	Small break (<i>tbd with the participating children according to their needs</i>)
THIRD SESSION	5. What Should Be in Place: Human Rights and Child Rights Principles (30-40 minutes)
	Recap of the previous session (15-20 minutes)
	6. And Now What? Recommendations, Considerations and Proposals (50-60 minutes: break suggested before coming back to plenary)
	Small break (<i>tbd with the participating children according to their needs</i>)
	7. Closure and Next Steps (30-40 minutes)

Annex 4 – Template for Country Reports

The National Delegations or other responsible entities, with the help of the team of facilitators, are responsible to report back to the Council of Europe, specifically the Secretariat of the Lanzarote Committee, on the results of the consultations with children. A suggested structure for the country reports is included below. The National Delegations are free to include more information and details if they consider it useful. The deadline for the submission of the country reports will always be communicated through the website of the Children’s Rights Division. Depending on the activity, the Lanzarote Committee or the Secretariat will work with the reports from the national delegations and include the children’s inputs accordingly.

GENERAL INFORMATION	
Country	
Facilitator(s)	<i>Please provide information on who was in charge of the organisation and who contributed to the organisation of the event, and information on the facilitator(s)</i>
Session	<i>Please provide information on dates and location of the sessions, duration / time of the sessions,...</i>
Thematic priority or activity	
Format used	<i>Face-to-face or online</i>
Children	<i>Please provide information regarding number of children consulted, age, gender, national or social origin, specific vulnerabilities or other specific characteristics, where the children come from (city/region), how they travelled there in case of face-to-face consultations,...</i>
Number of sessions held	
Other relevant information about the setting	<i>Any other information, for instance information about the dynamics and interaction between the children and between the children and the facilitator</i>

SUMMARY OF RESULTS	
Children's thoughts and considerations on the thematic priority or activity	
Children’s expectations of their governments (national/local), public institutions, schools, parents, communities, relevant associations or other entities, to advance the situation of children in relation to the thematic priority	
Children’s recommendations, or concrete action / activities proposed to the Council of Europe / Lanzarote Committee and, specifically the monitoring round or activity in question	

Issues to be addressed urgently	
How can children be involved in future activities	
Quotes by children	
Other relevant notes, e.g. questions raised by children (including questions that have remained unresolved)	