



## *Child participation in alternative care*

CP4Europe Webinar on

**“The participation of vulnerable children in decision-making processes –  
from theory to practice”**



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## Children in care have the right and the need to participate!



- Children and young people in care
- Their care givers
- The culture where they grow and develop
- The policy and practice of care.

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## Young woman, Finland



“Children in care have sometimes been programmed into helplessness in their families of origin or in the many letdowns of the childcare system. **Participatory interactions and programs offer an opportunity to un-learn helplessness and learn an empowered sense of self** where the child is no longer a passive object of the care system but an active participant in his/her own care planning and future. In addition, **participation in programs that aim to improve care for other children shifts the child’s perception from being a victim towards appreciation of his/her own ability to contribute to the others' wellbeing.**”

Child participation is an universal right of ALL children, and it is equally a process to support their development and social inclusion.

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## Young woman, Czech Republic



“Youth should be always encouraged to participate and the **adults should create a safe space where they have this occasion and this should be normal standard.** From my experience, I had to wait a long time for this space and even then at first, I struggled to see the importance of my voice, my experience, my opinion. Through out my care experience, **I was rarely asked how I feel or what I think, so I learned that I am not part of decision making about me.** It was decided about me without me. It was in my early twenties, when I have been firstly asked to participate in a project to share my experience. Adult members of this project were encouraging me and treated me as an equal participant. This was new to me and made me want to share my experience with others. Unluckily, it had created some misunderstandings with my care placement as **my involvement hasn't been seen positively by caretakers.** “

Care givers understand and value participation and create opportunities for children to participate!

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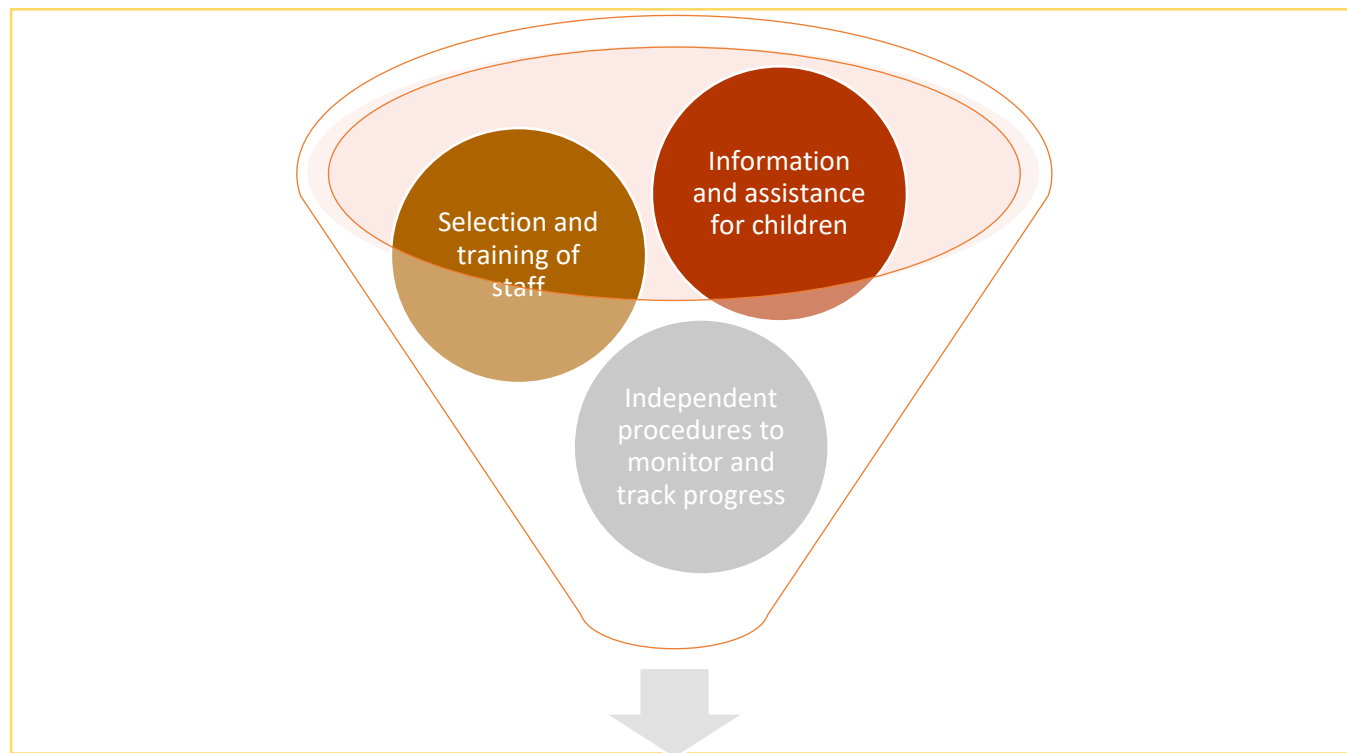
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A culture of co-creation of children and adults should be installed.

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## Young woman and young man from Albania



“When you know the system at first hand (...) you know the problems children and young people have to face: their discrimination in society as marginalized group, their lack of access in different areas, etc. Participating in advocacy was for me the best opportunity to raise voice, awareness and knowledge about the situation of this target group from within it. In Albania case, confidently I can say that **we managed to influence decision makers to change some practices related to child and youth treatment in care institutions** and we were a good help in the new law of foster care program.”

“Working with this project **showed me that the biggest needs that care leavers have in Albania** and worldwide is to get help in transitioning to independence and adulthood after leaving care. Now that I run an organization that helps orphans in Albania, I work towards developing job skills and employment for those who used to live in the orphanage.”

Children’s opinion inform the development of policies and practice of care.

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## In conclusion:

By making participation a reality in every alternative care setting we:

- Help children and young people to understand they matter and are valued
- Enhance the safety feeling which help them overcome their traumas
- Improve decision-making the overall quality of care
- Enhance relationships and reduce conflicts of all kinds
- Shape child-centred services!

*“To all of you who want to work for children and young people without parental care: from the deepest of my heart – if you have planned to make changes about, with and for children and young people without parental care, all you have to do is to listen, to hear and to stay concerned about what they say!”*

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**Thank you for your attention**

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