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CP4Europe Webinar on “The theory and practice of involving vulnerable children in decision making”

9 December 2021, h10.00-12.30 (CET)

Introduction

In the framework of the European Commission – Council of Europe joint project *CP4Europe - Strengthening National Child Participation Frameworks and Action in Europe*, the Council of Europe is organising a webinar that builds on the progress achieved so far in the area of child participation in decision-making. In particular, the organisation of this event responds to the need of including *all* children in decisions that affect them, as observed by the CP4Europe country partners throughout the first part of the implementation of this project.

Involving children in what many consider “adults’ matters” poses several obstacles, but involving vulnerable children in the same matters is even more challenging. The term ‘vulnerable’ includes a great variety of children living in many different situations, including children with disabilities, survivors of child sexual abuse and/or exploitation, children living in institutions or those from a national minority background, just to mention a few. In other words, this group of children is far from homogeneous and targeted measures must be in place to safeguard as well as to empower them, by making their participation possible and meaningful. At the same time, the importance of the work of trained and specialised professionals is central.

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, along with a variety of tools, methodologies and tips for a smooth implementation. Their presentations will focus on overcoming the challenges of involving vulnerable children, showing the feasibility of involving those in vulnerable situations in different contexts.

This unique webinar will guide participants through a journey from theory to practice in pursuit of further solutions to ensure that the voices of children who are seldom heard are listened to and acted upon.

Objectives

The ultimate goal of this webinar is to encourage member states to implement child participation of all children at all levels. 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
- Promote inclusive child participation by strengthening its implementation at national level to reach out to as many children as possible;
- Assist professionals working for and with children to take advantage of the existing practical tools, methodologies and tips;
- Create a platform to exchange good practices, tools and other useful resources to consult vulnerable children.

Structure and Methodology

The webinar is divided into 3 sections which aim at gradually introducing participants to the practice of vulnerable children's participation. The first section will tackle the theory of child participation and the most important concepts to understand before engaging in activities with vulnerable children, providing for a common understanding of the basics. The second section will dive into the specificities of informing, communicating and consulting different groups of vulnerable children, along with examples and case studies. Finally, the last section will wrap up the lessons learned from the previous sections and will provide participants with methodologies and practical tools ready to 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 a specific national context.

Experts will share their knowledge and experiences through presentations containing illustrations of the work done with vulnerable children in different contexts, including through videos, pictures and testimonials. They will also give a short demonstration of the tools and methodologies they are promoting. At the end, participants will receive materials on child participation containing challenges/solutions related to vulnerable 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
10:00	Opening by the moderator <i>Marine Braun, Senior Project Officer, Children's Rights Division, Council of Europe</i>
	Main challenges and safeguarding considerations online and offline
10.05	Overcoming the challenges to ensure inclusive children's participation in public decision making <i>Catherine Larkins, CoE CP4EUROPE independent expert</i>
10.20	Ethical considerations and safeguarding processes <i>Ruth Farrugia, CoE CP4EUROPE independent expert</i>
10.35	Consulting vulnerable children online: maximising opportunities, challenges and recommended measures <i>Ioana Bara-Busila, CoE CP4EUROPE independent expert</i>
10.50	Break
	Specificities on the participation of different groups of vulnerable children
11.00	Getting the perspectives of children in out of home care <i>Raluca Verweijen, CoE CP4EUROPE independent expert</i>
11.15	Involvement of children with intellectual disabilities <i>Aneta Teneva, CoE CP4EUROPE independent expert</i>
11.30	Participation of survivors of child sexual abuse and exploitation <i>Mariana Yevsyukova, CoE CP4EUROPE independent expert</i>
	Recommendations and resources
11.45	Lessons learned <i>Aneta Teneva, CoE CP4EUROPE independent expert</i>
12.00	Q&A with experts
12.25	Concluding remarks