Guidance on Child and Adolescent Participation
as part of Phase III of the preparatory action for a European Child Guarantee
Version 1.0 (December 2021)

This document initially was developed with the aim to provide a simple and synthesized guidance on how to mainstream child and adolescent participation in planning, design and monitoring and evaluation of the different activities of the European Child Guarantee Phase III (CGP3), while at the same time documenting the work that is being advanced in each of the pilot countries.

As the pilot projects implementation advanced, we have realized that this is a valuable document that can serve to provide a framework for the effective engagement of children and young people by all Member States when planning, implementing and monitoring the ECG, informed by promising practices implemented in the pilot countries.

The Guidance on Child and Adolescent Participation as part of CGP3 is directed to the UNICEF Country teams involved in the implementation of the CGP3, in particular the focal points, child protection and social protection specialists, as well as the monitoring and evaluation and communication and advocacy specialists. At the same time, the document can be used to assist national and local authorities, Child Guarantee National Coordinators and other stakeholders in all Member States on how to integrate child and adolescent participation into the different stages of the development, implementation and monitoring of CGNAPs.

This document intends in no way to serve as an exhaustive tool, and it makes reference to other more systematic reports and guidelines on child and adolescent participation. The guidance intends to be a living document aimed at documenting the child participation experiences in the pilot countries as they build the European Child Guarantee and will be enriched with the examples stemming out of the CGP3.

Contents

CHAPTER 1: The framework for child and adolescent participation

1.1 Child and Adolescent Participation in Phase III of the European Child Guarantee

Already before the COVID-19 pandemic, more than one-fifth of Europe's children were at risk of poverty or social exclusion.[1] This number has probably increased due to the pandemic and its economic and social consequences on children and families across Europe.

Poverty and deprivation in childhood impacts significantly the lives of children, undermining their access to health, education, future income earning capacity, and social inclusion. This leads to an intergenerational cycle of disadvantage, with profound and long-term effects on children. Poverty experienced by children has long-lasting impacts on their health, education, socialisation and future employment.

The **Child Guarantee** aims to break this cycle and promote equal opportunities by guaranteeing access to a set of key services for children in need, access to healthcare, education, childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition for the most vulnerable children at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Child and adolescent participation is a cross-cutting area along all key dimensions, pillars and activities of the European Child Guarantee as well as one of the key expected components of the Phase III Pilot Child Guarantee projects. Child participation is essential for reaching the most disadvantaged groups of children and is being integrated into all pillars of the Phase III: in evidence generation, policy/decision making and service design and delivery, monitoring and evaluation as well as in advocacy and communication.

Child Participation in:
• **Evidence generation**
• **Policy Making**
• **Decision-making**
• **Service Design and Delivery**
• **Case management**
• **Monitoring and Evaluation**
• **Advocacy and Communication**

Children have been consulted during the process of the development of the European Child Guarantee. Between 25 September and 2 November 2020, UNICEF, Eurochild, Save the Children, World Vision and Child Fund Alliance conducted a joint consultation targeted to children dealing jointly with the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child 2021-2024 and the European Child Guarantee. This consultation consisted of two parts: (1) an online survey with 51 questions, targeting children aged 11 to 17, and (2) focus group interviews. The main challenges highlighted by children included the discrimination and exclusion faced by children, for instance, in access to basic services, unmet children's expectations at school, violence episodes in children's lives and the lack of consideration of children's point of views, which affect specially the most marginalized groups of children[2].

The Council of the European Union unanimously adopted the Recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee on 14 June 2021. The recommendation calls on Member States to: "ensure the participation of regional, local and other relevant authorities, **children** and relevant stakeholders representing civil society, non-governmental organisations, educational establishments and bodies

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[1] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20200305-1
Adapted from: ADAP Guidelines on Adolescent Participation

[2] https://www.unicef.org/eu/reports/report-our-europe-our-rights-our-future

responsible for promoting social inclusion and integration, children's rights, inclusive education and non-discrimination, including national equality bodies throughout the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the [Child Guarantee National] action plan"[3].

1.2 What is child and adolescent participation?

Participation is much more than having a voice. It is about being informed, engaged and having an influence in decisions and matters that affect one's life – in private and public spheres, in the family home, in alternative care settings, at school, in the workplace, in the community, in social media and in broader governance processes. **Article 12** of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) enshrines participation as a fundamental human right. The State, as the ultimate duty-bearer, has obligations to create an enabling environment that allows the views of children and adolescents to be heard on practices and policies that directly or indirectly concern them. Parents, caregivers, social workers, teachers, health workers and a range of other actors also have responsibilities to listen to children and adolescents and to take their views seriously.

1.3 Adolescent participation

Childhood and adolescence are considered as part of an overall **life course**, within which circumstances in one phase of life influence the later phases. Opportunities to be heard should start in early childhood to lay the foundations for expression and active participation in decision-making and to support children's growth and development into healthy, resilient and active citizens. Although the right to participation applies to every child capable of forming a view, its nature and scope inevitably changes as individuals reach the second decade of life.

> **Adolescence is characterized by the emergence of a sense of identity, acquisition of new responsibilities and exposure to emerging opportunities and risks, and in many cases engagement in more risk-taking behaviours**

The period of adolescence, in particular, is characterized by the emergence of a sense of identity, acquisition of new responsibilities and exposure to emerging opportunities and risks, and in many cases engagement in more risk-taking behaviours. The CRC concept of 'evolving capacities' means that as adolescents acquire greater maturity, so their level of agency to take greater responsibility and to exercise their rights increases. Giving adolescents more influence in decision-making does not remove their entitlement to continued protection under the CRC, nor the obligation to promote their best interests. Some risk-taking has inherent value in both achieving change and helping explore and understand the assessment and control of risk. Engaging adolescents in identification of potential risks and the measures needed to mitigate them, through their exercise of participation, will lead to more effective protection. UNICEF's work in adolescent participation in programming and advocacy has been systematically reflected in the Guidelines on Adolescent Participation and Civic Engagement. The term *'adolescent'* refers to girls, boys and those with other gender identities aged 10–19 years. Adolescent participation and civic engagement are embedded in UNICEF's strategic framework for the second decade as a means of enabling adolescents to reach their full potential and contribute positively to their society. It is a programming principle that underpins the work of UNICEF with children and adolescents and it is a means for achieving results by empowering adolescents themselves to be change agents.

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[3] Page 31, Emphasis added, https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9106-2021-INIT/en/pdf

Reference: *Engaged and Heard: Guidelines on Adolescent Participation and Civic Engagement*

1.4 Applying a rights-based approach

A human rights-based approach (HRBA) is a conceptual framework that bases UNICEF's work in international human rights standards and instruments such as the Convention on the Rights and the Child (CRC) and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) which are aimed at promoting and protecting human rights in general and the rights of children specifically. These human rights norms and standards are the primary frame of reference for UNICEF's work. HRBA means that the ultimate aim of all UNICEF-supported activities is the realization of the rights of children as laid down in the CRC. Human rights and child rights principles should guide our work in all sectors – and at each stage of the process.

The 4 core principles of the CRC are: 1) the right to non-discrimination, 2) the right to life and development, 3) the primary consideration of the child's best interests and 4) the child's right to participation/ to be heard (Article 12). The widespread practice is that the child's right to be heard is conceptualised as "participation" although this term does not appear explicitly in the text. The principle is formulated in Article 12:1 which states that "States parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the rights to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the view of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child". Thus, child participation in general is crucial for the realisation of all children's rights.   In addition to supporting those who have obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of children, by helping them develop their capacities to do so, this also entails an obligation to help those with rights to develop their capacity to claim their rights through effective participation mechanisms. The right of every child to freely express

their views in all matters affecting them and the subsequent right for those views to be given due weight are thus at the core of UNICEF's programming.

The UN CRC is the most comprehensive treaty on the rights of children. It affirms that:

- Children's rights to participation are universal and should be respected in diverse contexts, including complex emergency and humanitarian settings.
- A child's right to be heard (Article 12, CRC)[4] is both, a fundamental right of every child to freely express her or his views, in all matters affecting her or him, and the subsequent right for those views to be given due weight, as well as a key principle that should be taken into account when considering how to implement other rights of children. The CRC further details this right in it's General Comment No. 12.
- Article 12 speaks to the four core principles of the CRC including 2 (the right to non-discrimination), Article 6 (the right to life, survival and development) and, in particular, Article 3 (primary consideration of the best interests of the child).
- Article 12 is also closely linked with other civil rights and freedoms including the rights to freedom of expression (Article 13), freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14), freedom of association and peaceful assembly (Article 15), privacy (Article 16) and information (Article 17).
- A child's right to participate actively in society is strengthened by Article 29 of the CRC concerning 'education for responsible life'.
- The right for children with disabilities to actively participate in the community is also emphasized in Article 23.
- Furthermore, the Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No. 20 (2016) focuses on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence. This highlights the importance of a human rights-based approach that recognizes and respects the dignity and agency of adolescents, including their empowerment, citizenship and active participation in their own lives. Other international and regional human rights conventions and instruments such as the European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights (1996) recognize children's rights to express their views.

Participation of children with disabilities is reinforced by Article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006). The Convention goes on to state: "In all actions concerning children with disabilities, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration," and "…children with disabilities have the right to express their views freely on all matters affecting them." Therefore, child participation is explicitly outlined and reinforced through both international human rights instruments.

HRBAP and Equity: Why is it Important for addressing Child Poverty and Social Exclusion?

Achieving sustainable progress and results with regard to equity demands a human rights-based approach. The situation of disadvantaged[5] children, and the structural causes of social exclusion and

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[4] Resource Guide on the Committee of the Rights of the Child's General Comment No. 12
https://www.unicef.org/files/Every_Childs_Right_to_be_Heard.pdf
[5] The Recommendation establishing the European Child Guarantee identifies the following, non-exhaustive list of disadvantaged children indicating that: "Member States should take also into account, wherever appropriate, the

poverty, cannot be addressed without providing those children with a voice and space to participate in decisions affecting them. Those with the power to shape lives must be accountable to the most disadvantaged if inequities are to be overcome. Discrimination must be identified, understood, and challenged to achieve equitable development for all children. If progress towards equity is made without accompanying progress in other areas fundamental to human rights, it is likely that the gains will only be short-term. Investments in services for deprived regions or groups that are not accompanied by, and based upon, structural changes in governance and in the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of communities will not be able to break the cycle of poverty and disadvantage.

1.5 Principles and benefits of Child Participation

The following Principles for Participation have been set out in the Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec (2012)2, in the Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment No. 12, UNICEF's Adolescent Participation in Child Protection, Care & Justice and UNICEF's Children's Participation in the Work of NHRIs. These principles tie in well to the goals of the Child Guarantee, with a focus on voices ranging from ECD aged children to 18 years old, and with an emphasis on children at risk of exclusion being actively sought out to participate.

- There is no age limit on the right of the child or young person to express her or his views freely.
- The right of children and adolescents to participate applies without discrimination on any grounds.
- Particular efforts should be made to enable participation of children and adolescents with fewer opportunities or seldom heard children.
- Parents and caregivers have the primary responsibility for their child, and participation activities should not undermine this.
- In order to be able to participate meaningfully and genuinely, children and adolescents should be provided with all relevant information and in different formats and languages, and offered adequate support for self-advocacy appropriate to their age, disability and circumstances. Ensure accessible, diversity-friendly information for adolescents of different ages and abilities. Provide offline versions of online resources, as some adolescents cannot access the internet. Budget for interpreters (e.g., sign language, braille or local languages).
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- If participation is to be effective, meaningful and sustainable, it needs to be understood as a process and not a one-off event and requires ongoing commitment in terms of time and resources. Children and adolescents should always be fully informed of the scope of their participation.
- All processes in which children and adolescents are heard should be transparent, informative voluntary, respectful, relevant to children's age and experiences, in child-friendly environments, inclusive (non-discriminatory), supported by training, safe and sensitive to risk and accountable.

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specific needs of children who are homeless or experience severe housing deprivation; who have a disability; those with a migrant background; with a minority racial or ethnic background (particularly Roma); those being in alternative (especially institutional) care; and children in precarious family situations."

- Leaving the process should also be easy, guilt-free and with no explanation needed for participants who no longer wish to engage.
- Reporting mechanisms for abuse/exploitation also need to be built into the participation process.

Enabling meaningful child, adolescent and parent participation isn't easy and may require a shift in attitudes of decision-makers and professionals who consider it a inconvenient or uncomfortable. It's important to note that child participation doesn't mean that everything requested or suggested by children will be included in programmes, and this may not be possible, feasible or appropriate. However, it does mean that weight will be given to children's opinions in decision making about services and that the best interests of the child will be applied and that children will receive feedback on what is being taken into considerations and why. In order for participation to be meaningful, a process of empowerment needs to occur. Participation and empowerment should go hand in hand. To promote empowerment, there needs to be real sharing of control, ownership, and the ability to participate, to influence decisions and to influence the allocation of resources.

Adapted from: Coram Children's Legal Centre (2015) 'Unlocking children's rights' the fundamental rights and citizenship programme of the European Union

Benefits of participation for children
- Children develop important life skills including critical thinking, strong communication skills, leaderships skills, self-awareness, conflict resolution skills, intercultural competence, teamworking and decision making.
- They gain a sense of achievement and an increased belief in their own ability to make a difference.
- Children who are used to expressing themselves may be more vocal about abuse or exploitation.
- They gain political and social knowledge and awareness of their rights and responsibilities.
- Child participation leads to the fulfilment of other rights.
- Children learn how to be active and responsible citizens.
- Working together helps develop positive relationships between children and adults; it promotes a positive image of children within their communities, among professionals and among their peers.
- Having a meaningful role to play within a project creates opportunities for personal development among children who are often excluded.
- Involving children in our work provides a means of protecting them from harm and preventing them from being invisible when discussing plans, shaping policies and designing services or making decisions that affect their lives.
- Opportunities to meet, work with, and collaborate with people from different cultural, social, and language backgrounds and contribute toward combatting stereotypes.
- Children are given authority to hold duty bearers to account, to ensure adults think and behave in a way that respects children and childhood.

Benefits of child participation for adults
- Adults find out directly from children about the issues that affect them, rather than guessing what they think.
- Adults are motivated by being more directly accountable to children and by the need for children's rights to be met.

- Adults feel more motivated about the value of their work.
- Children offer creative ideas and suggestions and a fresh perspective.
- Working with children is fun, energising and multi-dimensional.

1.6 Models of Child Participation

For this guidance, the Lundy Model of Child, young person and parent participation (Lundy, 2007) [6]is being used as a theoretical framework, but there are other models and approaches which countries can choose from which can be found here Models of Participation .

The Lundy Model operationalizes the rights to participation enshrined in the UNCRC, as shown below:

Space: Safe and inclusive opportunity to form and express views

Voice: Expression of views must be facilitated freely in a medium of choice

Influence: The view must be acted on as appropriate

Audience: The view must be listened to
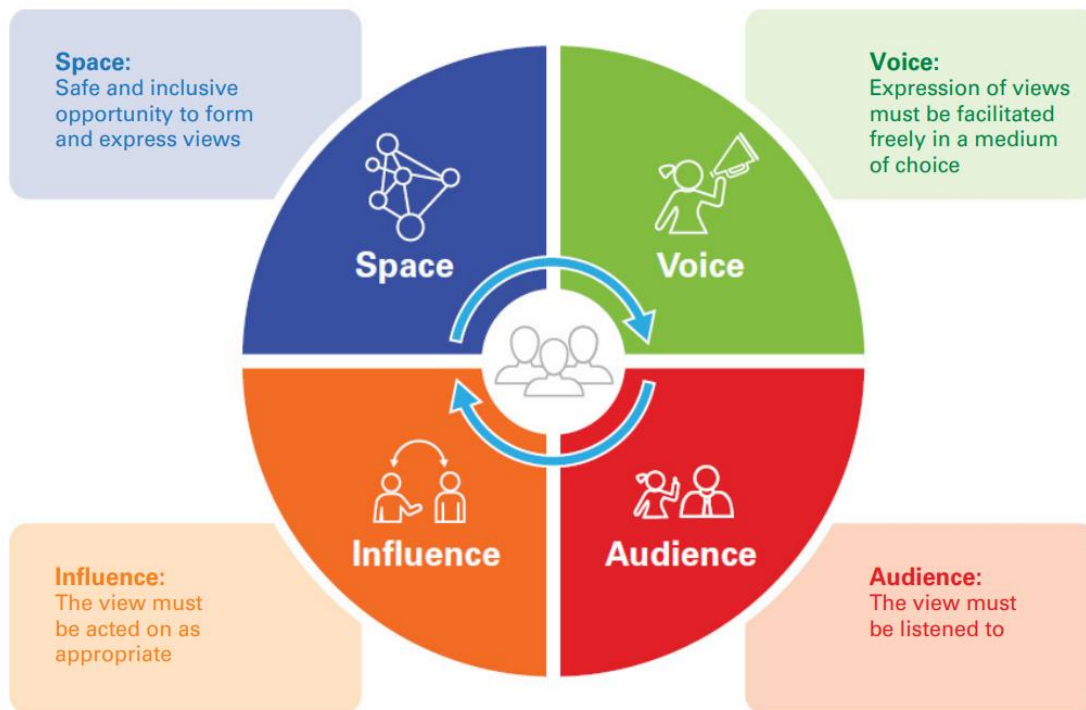
(Lundy, 2007, diagram UNICEF, 2019)

The four key components of participation and the model are as follows:

- **Space:** Children should be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their views.
- **Voice:** Children should be facilitated to express their view.
- **Audience:** The view should be listened to.
- **Influence:** The view should be acted upon, as appropriate.

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[6] *L. Lundy (2013), "A children's rights-based approach to involving children in decision making", JCOM 12(03): C02., Diagram: UNICEF, 2019*

Below are ideas and suggestions based on the Lundy Model, and aligned to the types of service being offered under the Child Guarantee. A checklist is also provided to check that all four dimensions of the model are being implemented.

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Space
Provide a safe and inclusive space for children to express their views.

This could include:

The location: At the child's home (with parents and/or social worker), in ECD centres or playgroups, at schools, at afterschool centres, in green-spaces or play areas, in service offices. Be careful of avoiding spaces/settings that could be upsetting or triggering for children (social service offices, refugee encampments, criminal justice settings, etc.).

The group size and dynamic: This can be in a group setting such as a participation workshop where inputs are actively being sought from a number of children and adolescents, or in a small-group or one-on-one session.

Consider: Is it beneficial to have children in a space that they are familiar with, or do you want them to be in a new space that may facilitate more discussion and free thinking? Is the space child-friendly and accessible? Does the space allow for movement, noise, and mess? Are parents/caregivers comfortable with the space? Does the space trigger anger, hostility, trauma? How will group size influence feedback? If discussing a sensitive, taboo or personal matter children might be reluctant to discuss in a larger group.

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Voice
Provide appropriate information and facilitate the expression of children's views.

This could include: Explaining to children why their participation is important, explaining to how the process will work, explaining what the services relate to. This would be followed by asking children what should be included in a package of services, where they would like to access services, how often they would like to access services, what support they feel they need, who they would like to interact with, who else they think should be involved, how they would like to be included.

Consider: Time will have to be given to providing the background information needed for children and adolescents to understand the bigger picture of service provision they are contributing to and explaining their rights and the importance of them expressing their voice. Children are also more likely to offer inputs if they are provided with different options, however, do encourage suggestions beyond the options provided. It's also important to make sure children know that this is a voluntary process and non-participation is also an option for them. Be aware of the child's level of communication. You may need to help children to formulate their inputs but be sure that you confirm back with them that how you have formulated it reflects what they had in mind and try not to influence their thinking or impose your views. Ensure that language is kept simple for children, avoid jargon and encourage them to ask questions if they are not sure. Use examples and references that children will relate to and feel comfortable speaking about.

Audience
Ensure that children's views are communicated to someone with the willingness and responsibility to listen to them.

This could include: Doing the preparatory work to ensure that policy and decision makers at all levels understand the importance of child, adolescent and parent participation and are eager and willing to integrate these views into their programmes. It could also include working with the children and adolescents to identify who needs what information and what information is relevant for which specific stakeholders when conducting case management. Ensuring that children know who their views are being shared with and managing expectations with children about how their views will be used/considered.

Consider: Participants will be putting a lot of trust in the facilitators so it's important to be open and transparent about how their views will be used, and who they will be shared with. Children will feel betrayed if there is any negative backlash that comes from them speaking out and it will prevent them from doing so in the future. Be transparent about what will be shared with who and why. Wherever possible decision makers should be actively involved in the participation facilitation where possible so that they benefit directly from the powerful experience.

Influence
Ensure that children's views are taken seriously and acted upon, where appropriate

This could include: Engaging in advocacy with decisions makers to encourage that children's views are seriously considered in a balanced way. Using communication campaigns to gain visibility and awareness about child, young person and parent participation and children's views. Providing feedback and explanation to children about how their views were used, and what the outcomes way.

Consider: UNICEF plays an important role in giving legitimacy to children's voices and as such it will be important to consistently emphasize the importance of decisions makers meaningfully using children's views in taking decisions. Whether or not the views of children have been acted upon, it is important to give feedback to the participants about what was decided and why. It will also be important to manage expectations with children. If they give a lot of input and don't see it reflected in programmes it could be disappointing and disenfranchising for them. If their views were not acted upon it is vital to explain why not and to ensure children are aware of other factors which influenced the decision-making process.

Adapted from: Tusla Child and Youth Participation Toolkit, TuslaToolkit and E. Welty and L. Lundy (2013), "A children's rights-based approach to involving children in decision making", JCOM 12(03): C02.

CHAPTER 2: Child and adolescent participation in the design and monitoring of policies, programmes and services

This chapter will aim to provide an overall guidance to UNICEF teams working on testing the European Child Guarantee, on involving children as part of the processes of policy making at national as well as decision-making at local level.

The chapter is divided in 2 sections: 1) policy making at national level; 2) decision-making at the local level.

2.1 National policy making as part of the Child Guarantee

All countries in the EU, following the [Recommendation Establishing a European Child Guarantee](#) will have to develop Child Guarantee National Action Plans (CGNAP) covering the period until 2030, and submit them to the Commission within 9 months from the adoption of the Recommendation. The 7 pilot countries that are being supported by UNICEF as part of the Phase III of the preparatory action for a European Child Guarantee, are also carrying out Deep Dive analysis that will inform the process for the development of evidence-based and informed, costed and monitorable CGNAPs.

This section will particularly look at the national processes for developing, implementing and monitoring CGNAPs, which will be a key conditionality for the countries to access the Child Guarantee support from the European Commission.

Child and adolescent participation is unpacked along two dimensions:

i)   **Process** that are being designed and constructed at national level in coordination with the governments and other key stakeholders to design, develop and approve the national actions plans.

ii) **Content** (goals, activities, indicators and budgets) of the national action plans.

The promotion of child participation as part of the European Child Guarantee should be underpinned by the constant attempt to enhance positive social norms and attitudes concerning the rights and capacity of children and adolescents of all genders, ages and abilities, ethnic, cultural and language groups to participate in decisions and matters that affect them.

Process

The process for the development of the CGNAPs in the pilot countries is being driven by government led-steering committees. Steering mechanisms have been established in Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Lithuania, Italy, Spain to drive the analysis as part of the Deep Dive exercise as well as the development thereafter of the Child Guarantee action plans. These steering mechanisms have government at the lead, mainly Ministries in charge of social affairs, UNICEF as co-lead and often count also the participation of other key stakeholders[7], such as other ministries, ombudspersons, representatives of local authorities, community-based organisations, academia, etc.

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[7] For the latest update on the Steering Mechanisms refer to pages 16-17 of the May 2021 [Programmatic Update](#).

The government and its partners and key stakeholders, should ensure that there are clearly defined spaces for children and adolescents to be meaningfully involved and participate in the process of development of the NAPs as well as other thematic policy-making process.

As clearly articulated in the ADAP Guidelines[8], there are 5 key strategies that can be put in place to create the enabling conditions for the child and adolescent participation to take place. Below is a unexhaustive list of suggestion on how these strategies can be adapted to the CGNAP processes, and possible actions included in each strategy:

1. **Advocate with government and other key stakeholders** to institutionalize **inclusive** child and adolescent participation as a fundamental part of the process for the development of NAPs. Ideally this strategy should be embedded within a wider strategy to promote systematic child and adolescent participation in all policy making process that directly affect them.
   - Child and adolescent participation should be recognized already at the agreement phase for the ad-hoc mechanisms that will be set up by the government to develop, implement and monitor the CGNAPs:
      i. *E.g. Bulgaria has clearly stated in the MoU with the government for the pilot Child Guarantee, that ensuring child participation is one of the key functions of the coordination mechanisms established at national, district, and municipal level[9].*
   - Previous similar experience in the countries can help identify the best solution:
      i. *E.g. in Croatia, The National Programme for Youth 2014 – 2017 included active child and adolescent participation in three ways: they were involved in the research "The Needs, Problems and Potentials of Youth in Croatia"; they were part of the working group and the expert committee for the development of the National Programme; and they were involved in the process of public consultation[10].*
   - As part of the CGNAP development process, design a plan to ensure the participation of children as well as families, service providers and other relevant stakeholders during the consultative process of the CGNAP development. This plan should be an integral part of the development process for the CGNAP and should be adopted by the National Coordinator and/or the steering or working groups established to develop the CGNAPs. UNICEF can support the design and implementation of this plan ensuring that child participation processes are of good quality and respect children's rights. Children's voices and views can be brought in through various forms (presentation from children, reports, video messages, etc.).

2. **Create and sustain specific inclusive mechanisms for child and adolescent participation, such as advisory boards, or children's forums,** that give them a structured space, voice, audience and influence in the process of the development, implementation and monitoring of the CGNAPs.
   - These mechanisms should be institutionalized and formally recognized as part of the CGNAP related development, implementation and monitoring process.
      i. *E.g. In Greece, a youth Steering Committee for the Child Guarantee was established in Greece and had its first meeting on 18th May. The members of the*

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[8] Reference to ADAP Guidelines

[9] "Coordination &Monitoring Committees for the Project shall be established at national, district and municipal level to provide strategic guidance, strengthen inter-sectoral co-operation, enable synergies and integration of policies and programmes, promote knowledge sharing and to include the voice of children, families and communities." MoU **Reg. No: MoU/BULA/2020/03**

[10] Reference: https://www.unicef.org/croatia/media/1721/file/Respect,%20Involve,%20Accept%20.pdf, page 27.

Committee are children and young people representing the groups of children that the Child Guarantee is focusing on in Greece, thus, children living in or having experienced institutional care, refugee and migrant children, children with disabilities and Roma children.

- Effective participation in this process will require adequate space for children and adolescents to provide their point of view and participate meaningfully. This means that children should be given safe and inclusive opportunities to provide their views. This may include planning for dedicated time during the development CGNAP process to present and review the point of view of children and adolescents, either by children themselves, or through the reports or other products developed by children to communicate their views. To ensure this safe space children should first be given the opportunity to form their views (See bullet 3 below).
- Such child and adolescent participation mechanisms should be part of the monitoring and evaluation of these action plans, and not cease to exist after the development of such plans. Appropriate resources are needed to this end by the government.
- The participatory process should remain of adequate quality, by ensuring that it is transparent and informative, age-appropriate, voluntary, respectful, relevant, child-friendly, inclusive, safe and risk-sensitive and accountable[11]
- UNICEF is best placed to propose and support the concrete establishment of these mechanisms in the pilot countries, as this is clearly part of the work that UNICEF is undertaking as part of Phase III.

3. **Build the awareness, skills and capacities of children and adolescents,** especially the most marginalized and disadvantaged, to form and express their views on decisions and matters that affect them individually and collectively.
    - As part of this strategy, UNICEF and its partners should ensure that they support the capacities of children and adolescents, with a particular focus on the target groups of the most disadvantaged children that are targeted by the Council Recommendation, those that are further identified with more specific reference to the countries and that will be included in the CGNAP.
    - Particular attention should be paid to the specific needs of vulnerable groups, to ensure that barriers to effective participation are addressed.
        i. *E.g. The system dynamic approach is designed to include children with disabilities, but also other vulnerable and marginalized groups[12].*
    - Children and adolescents should be provided appropriate information on the European Child Guarantee and the relevant action plan, as well as on child poverty and social exclusion more generally to be able to form their views. Information should be accessible, child- and diversity-friendly for children and adolescents of different ages and abilities.
        i. *E.g. In Spain, UNICEF developed child-friendly versions of the Deep Dive analysis that is meant to inform the CGNAP development, to ensure that children's point of view on the proposed recommendations is also taken into account. Children's views have been incorporated in the final Deep Dive report.*

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[11] Reference to page 57 of ADAP Guidelines: "Using the nine basic requirements as a planning tool for quality participation processes"
[12] https://sites.wustl.edu/globaldisability/

- Children and adolescents should be given the possibility to choose the way in which they can better express themselves, while being assured that their voice will reach the policymakers.
- Encourage children and adolescents in activities that are aiming to empower them and support building their skills that will enable their effective participation also in policy making processes.
    i. *E.g. **In Croatia** adolescent (13-19) from marginalized and disadvantaged communities are empowered and have strengthened skills for an effective participation in the pilot Child Guarantee project. UPSHIFT programme seeks to ensure meaningful participation of girls and boys from all communities in Medjimurje including Roma to promote their participation through empowerment, cooperation and trust-building. UPSHIFT is designed to build the capacity of the most vulnerable youth and adolescents through 3-day workshop for 10 teams and post-workshop 6 months mentorship programme for 6 teams. 43 adolescents participated in 3-day workshop supported by 10 youth mentors in Prelog Municipality. Following the workshop, 6 winning teams were selected for a post-workshop mentorship programme for up to six months.*

4. **Build the awareness, skills and capacities of government representatives and other relevant stakeholders participating in the steering committees/working groups , as well as those outside of the coordination mechanisms that support the participation process,** to promote and support child and adolescent participation and civic engagement, to share information and power with adolescents, and to take children's and adolescents' views seriously, especially for the most vulnerable and marginalized.
    - In order to facilitate an effective participation, the **adults working and mentoring children** in the participatory journey need to have the adequate knowledge and skills to guide and support them at best. This is particularly important for those adults that will be in direct contact with children for planning, supporting and enabling them to form and express their viewpoints.
    - Adolescents should receive clear feedback on how their participation has influenced outcomes and should be supported to share that feedback with their peers.
    - To this end, it will be useful to share tools and experience from the pilot countries of the Phase II of the European Child Guarantee.

Content

In addition to ensuring that child and adolescent participation is ensured as part of the process for the development of the CG national action plans, it is equally important to ensure that child and adolescent participation is adequately reflected in the CGNAPs. This means ensuring that child participation should be considered at all the levels of the design of the action plans, including but not limited to:

- Including **child and adolescent participation as a standalone specific objective**, aiming to improve the confidence, skills and knowledge of the children targeted by the action plan, to express their views while ensuring the creation of the relevant spaces for children and adolescents to do so.

- Ensuring that the CGNAPs incorporate **child and adolescent participation as an effective tool to monitor the implementation of the action plan** and evaluate its impact. This may include the institutionalization of the child and adolescent participation mechanisms set forth as part of the development of the action plans.
- Ensuring that **child and adolescent participation is an integral part of the design and implementation of programmes and services** that will be put forward as part of the CGNAPs.
- Ensuring that **adequate human and financial resources** are allocated to enable effective child and adolescent participation mechanisms and processes on all the different levels (national, regional and local), including for the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized (intrepreters, sign language interpreters, accessible and culturally appropriate formats). Ideally, these should support the mechanisms already put in place during the pilot phase of the Child Guarantee in the pilot countries.
- Ensuring that there are **clear indicators capturing the child participation** component at the different levels of the action plan – with a clear focus and related disaggregation of indicators for the most disadvantaged groups of children.

2.2 Local-level decision making as part of the European Child Guarantee

At sub-national level, and as part of Pillar III of the CGP3, UNICEF is supporting both regions (districts or counties) as well as municipalities to introduce and test **evidenced-based, sustainable and scalable models of services and interventions.** The services should be part of regional/local level service development plans and should be integrated and coordinated across multiple sectors, while also being mainstreamed into local and national service provision systems.

This work is being done in close cooperation with regional and municipal authorities and is being coordinated in different ways (see table in Annex). The local level action has a strong emphasis in building local partnerships between local authorities, health and education institution, child protection and social assistance, service providers, civil society organisations, organizations of persons with disabilities, parental networks, communities, children and families to meet the real needs of the most disadvantaged and socially excluded children and their families.

Working closely with the regional and municipal authorities will ensure effective child and adolescent participation:

- **Child and adolescent participation should become an integral part of the coordination mechanisms** that are being set up to coordinate the design, implementation, and M&E of the service development plans, models of services and interventions that are part of the European Child Guarantee at local level. To this respect, strategies 1-4 outlined in the previous section also apply to this process.
- Local authorities and service providers should ensure that children that are direct clients/participants of the services and interventions are enabled to bring their voice and opinions in the **local decision-making platforms**, such as municipal or regional councils, children and young people advisory boards, and that local decision-makers have mechanisms in place to collect the opinions and views of children and adolescents and provide feed-back on the results of their participation.

- It is important also to create the necessary spaces and adjustments for child and adolescent participation and linkages with **the regional/municipal directorates/agencies of the different sectors** involved in the design and implementation of the services: such as the directorates of education, health, social services, housing, etc.
- For feedback mechanisms and participatory tools for service delivery see chapter 3 and 5.

In the pilot countries, UNICEF and its partners are working to ensure that the child and adolescent participation practices and tools developed at the local level, are scaled up at national level and incorporated in the national Child Guarantee action plans, budgets and monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

Chapter 3: Child and adolescent participation in service design and delivery.

3.1 Why participation of children and adolescents in service delivery matters

Child and adolescent participation are vital in the design, implementation and review of service provision and case management. Participation ensures ownership, sustainability and fit-for-purposes services which promote dignity, transparency and agency. Specifically, child and adolescent participation in service design and delivery has been found to have the following benefits[13]:

- **Services are tailored to children's needs:** Children and adolescents experiences help to shape programmes and ensure implementors have a deeper understanding of issues from the view of the recipients of services. In turn this ensures that services and interventions are as close as possible to the needs of children and their caregivers in a way that is appropriate and culturally accepted by them and are effective and efficient.
- **Ownership and Enthusiasm:** Children and adolescents feel that projects or programmes belong to them and in-turn bring energy and enthusiasm to the process.
- **Sustainability:** Participation ensures that programmes are fit for purpose, accepted by communities and promoting child/young person agency, making them more likely to be sustained.

Participation of Parents/Carers[14]

It is also important to ensure that parents are engaged and actively involved in service design and delivery. Parents bring knowledge and expertise about their own children that no one else has, and this is especially important in terms of parents of children with disabilities or special needs. Participation of parents ensures that:

- services are better designed to meet the needs of users;
- participation helps parents and carers to be active agents as opposed to passive recipients;
- parents and carers feel empowered to feel they have some control over their own and their child's lives even in difficult situations;
- stress levels of parents and carers are reduced, allowing them to get more from services offered, and;
- relationships between service providers and parents and carers remain strong and interactive.

3.2 Participation at every step

Children, adolescents, and their parents and carers should participate in each phase of service delivery, from the design to implementation, review and monitoring and evaluation. Participation can be conducted in the form of formal, facilitated participation events at key stages in the programme (for example when developing communications materials for the CG, you might host a workshop with children

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[13] *Adapted from:* Re:Action Consultation Toolkit, *Save the Children*

[14] *Adapted from: Parent Participation in Service Design Council for Disabled Children.*

to get their inputs). These events are helpful, however participation should also become an on-going practice which is embedded service design and delivery, where there are multiple entry points for children to be actively involved in shaping the services and support being provided to them. For example, opportunities for children to give input into how they want their ECEC facilities to be run on a day-to-day basis with children being encouraged to give input into what kind of meals they would like to see on the menus, what kind of involvement they would like from their parents at the centre, and so on.

Specifically, participation should be fostered:

In design phase: Children, adolescents, and their parents and carers, should be actively included in designing a service or service package to ensure the service are **accessible, appropriate and acceptable** to them. They should play a key role in identifying and articulating the goals/expected outcomes of the service, the needs, the practicalities (such as location, regularity, package offered) as well as the potential challenges pitfalls. Linkages should be made to other services and the policies and legislation framework under which services fall should be referred to highlight the rights of the participants.

In the implementation: Within service provision, engagement with children and families should be embedded in a constructive way with an emphasis on functional feedback loops. Children should be able to provide feedback on service implementation for all users, not just their own case management. Children should feel like active role-players in decisions that impact on their lives, and parents should be also be supported to provide input and feedback, while also promoting their children's voices.

In Review/Revision phases: As well as on-going feedback and in-implementation programme improvements, key review phases should be built into service provision to allow children, adolescents and parents a chance to provide structured and comprehensive feedback on service suitability and satisfaction.

Throughout monitoring and Evaluation: M&E Programmes should also be developed in such a way that the voices of children and adolescents and their parents are represented, and that data is routinely collected on issues that measure their levels of satisfaction, and track indicators important to them. They should be fully consulted in this process. More information on this can be found in Chapter 5.

3.2.1 Service Design
Participation in the design of services can take different forms, here are some suggestions for how UNICEF teams and partners can involve children and young people in the design phase.

1. **Discover - the needs, challenges and concerns:**
   - What do children and families need?
   - What do you want to improve or fix?
   - What do you want to change or challenge**?**

It is important to ensure that you have the correct understanding of the challenges, needs and concerns of the service users. For this you need their inputs. These can be collected through online of offline questionnaires, social media engagements such as polls and discussions, one-to-one interviews, focus groups, workshops, suggestion boxes, consultation meetings, or open calls for structured or unstructured

inputs, and should be inclusive of and accessible for vulnerable and marginalized children and youth[15]. For example, if under the CG your country is developing centres for integrated services, it will be important to find out what has prevented children from accessing services before. Was is the locations? The design of the centres? (such as not having privacy for personal conversations, or not being accessible), was it cost of transport to get to centres?

Tips:
Space:
- Ensure that opportunities for anonymous input are provided.
- Ensure that there are not socio-economic barriers to participation. E.g. If some children don't have access to social media, ensure other mediums are also provided to them.
- Ensure the space used for participation activities are designated accessible venues, and consider the accessibility of transport to/from venue.

Voice:
- Ensure that language is age appropriate and understood by all language groups, and accessible in different formats (speech, print, Braile...), .
- based on age/level of engagement of participants multiple choice questions might be needed, but questions should be open in nature, and 'other' options should be provided.
- Ideally you would be using a mix of methods to consult with children to ensure they can pick the one that they are most comfortable.

Audience:
- Be open about how this information will be used.

Influence: The view must be acted upon, as appropriate, and adolescents should receive timely feedback about the outcome(s) and the extent of their influence
.
- At the end provide options for more general feedback, there may be themes which are affecting the participants that you haven't considered.

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2. **Define - consolidate inputs to define package:**

UNICEF and government counterparts should be systematic in ensuring your understanding of the issues raised in part one. Compile and analyse the collected information in order to define the exact needs that need to be answered and the expectations of the participants. Ensure that the children's perspective doesn't get lost in this process, and be aware of your own bias, ensuring you're not being selective or assumptive. These consolidated inputs should be reshared with participants to ensure that it is reflective of their inputs and fit for purpose.

Tips:

Voice:
- Ask the children to get involved in the work and keep the children's language through the process.

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https://www.researchgate.net/publication/277664426_Understanding_Young_Children's_Capabilities_Approaches_to_Interviews_with_Young_Children_Experiencing_Disability

- Ensure the format of the final summary/analysis is presented in a child-friendly and accessible way so that they can easily understand and provide feedback.

Audience:
- Recognize your own assumptions and those of your organization.
- Conduct the analysis with people from different sectors and viewpoints, including children of different ages and representatives from the different CG target groups who will be recipients of services (Roma children for example, or children with disabilities).
- Go through the information multiple times and try to categorize in different ways- new themes might emerge!

Influence:
- Take the time to consciously stop and consider aspects of the input that surprise you or challenge your assumptions.

3. **Develop - design and develop together:**

Using all the information gathered and with your analysis of needs and challenges start brainstorming to develop a service / programme that would address the challenges, reflect the needs, and comfort the concerns raised in the first two phases. Involve children in this brain-storming process, or if this isn't possible, ensure you get their input on your ideas once they are formed.

Some ideas of methods to use in the process can include:

- Staging a play to show the types of ideal support they envision.
- Drawing/ using pictures.
- Using story telling
- Using digital products.

Tips:
Space: Children must be given safe, inclusive and accessible opportunities to form and express their views.
- Multiple choice options could be provided where you offer different ideas or scenarios to children and ask them which they think would be best. Encourage other children to ask questions and build on the ideas.

Voice: Children must be facilitated to express their view.
- With all of these options ask question, present scenarios and prompt the children to think through their scenarios with questions such as "what should happen next", "who could help?", "who else shall we involve?" to inform service design.
- For family visitor programmes, the proposed themes to be covered could be presented to families in a role-play version, for them to experience if they feel at ease with the methodologies and topics.

Influence:
- Start to formulate concrete designs using the brainstorming and sense-check these with the participants. For example, in developing community centres in Croatia, children could be encouraged to draw their ideal centre highlighting all the aspects of the centre that would make them feel comfortable and welcome. Similarly, designs could be shared with children and their families for them to give input into the blueprints.

More ideas of how to conduct these brainstorming sessions can be found here: https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/18104/pdf/save_the_children_child-centered_design.pdf

4. **Deliver - test with target group:**

The service you have designed now needs to be tested with its intended target group – some of whom should have been involved in the design phase. Testing should take place in a few phases, from a quick and low-cost initial testing, to in-practice service testing. Testing can be done in the form of:

- Role-play with the participating children- acting out how processes and engagements would take place – for example, if moving into foster care setting as in the Italian CG programme, children might feel more comfortable voicing their opinions if they have a chance to play-out how the process might work.
- Trialling tools/resources/websites. Having children test the relevant resources to ensure they are user-friendly, fit for purpose, intuitive to use, and aesthetically pleasing.
- Piloting – taking a small number of target users through the designed services to ensure they are working as envisioned.

Note that the teams should be ready to make changes, even if the design is in its late stages.

Tips:
Space:
- Create an environment that encourages feedback.
- pay attention to the children's actions and reactions and be aware of dynamics that might be impacting children's experience.

Voice:
- Consider providing incentives for involvement to motivate participants.
- Provide opportunities for anonymous feedback.

Audience:
- Clearly communicate to participants what the piloting is for and manage expectations. Some children, such as those involved with foster care programmes will be feeling unsettled and uncertain, so managing expectation, choosing the correct methods for testing, and providing consistency is key.

Influence:
- Ensure you play an observer role and do not influence the process or the feedback.

3.2.2 Service Implementation

Once services are up and running there are numerous entry points for on-going participation in service provision. Participation can be individual, reflecting on the service package, or reflecting on a user's own case-management, or it can be group participation.

Individual participation – reflecting on a service user's own experience as a whole or involvement in their own case management (see section above on specifics for case management).

Individual participation can take the following forms, and ideally should consist of a mixture of methods:

- **One-to-one consultation with their case manager or coordinator**. Where feedback can be directly given to a trusted adult in real-time as issues/concerns or ideas arise.
- **Submission of their views in writing or visuals to assessment, planning and review meetings.** Anonymous options should be provided.
- **Attending and being actively involved in meetings.** A child's attendance at a meeting is more likely to result in their involvement in decisions, but the language, setting and level of formality must be child friendly.
- **Using an adult advocate to bring their views to the attention of the decision-makers.** This might be needed when dealing with services or institutions that are not child friendly and have not embraced child participation.
- **Engaging in a process of family-led decision-making.** Ensuring that children are not intimidated or mis-represented based on family dynamics.
- **Making complaints using a child-friendly mechanism.** Young people rarely access traditional complaints mechanisms, so it's vital to ensure that in the service design a mechanism that they are comfortable with is integrated into the service delivery.

Collective participation

The following structures and procedures for collective participation can be used during service implementation.

- **National, regional or local advisory forums convened by service providers, central government or local authorities comprising children receiving services.** To receive collective feedback, and ideally feedback related to integrated services and service gaps/overlap.
- **Involving a panel of children in the recruitment of personnel. E**nsuring that children are comfortable with service providers.
- **Involving children in the development and delivery of training.** Ensuring that service providers are considering children and seeing them as active participants from the start.
- **Including children's views in review/inspection reports.** Ideally using children's language.
- **Consultations or research conducted with children in receipt of services and promoting child- or youth-led action research** with children leading the collection of data from their peers.

Adapted from: IRISS, Frameworks for child participation in social care

3.2.3 Practical examples

How these principles are applied will differ based on factors including group size, children's age, topics of discussion, resources available, and level of intervention. Below are two practical examples of how these 4 dimensions can be applied in a practical way.

Profile of Children: Children under 10 years old in the care/ protection service.	
Theme of Discussion: Review of service implementation to find out how to better support young children with protective care.	
Size of discussion: Individual (one child at a time).	
Dimension	**In practice implementation**
Space: Creating a safe space in which children can express themselves freely.	• Making child comfortable by meeting them with social worker or another adult they trust and feel comfortable with. • Choosing a venue that the child feels at ease (avoiding interview style seating, harsh lighting, punitive settings. • The child's primary school was chosen as a venue. It's sunny and bright, with colourful posters, and plenty of creative materials available for use in the consultation. The child feels happy and comfortable here. • Asking child if there are topics that they are not comfortable covering, or if there are things they don't want to share and offer them opportunities to leave the room at any point.
Voice: Providing children with a range of options to choose how to express themselves	• Providing child with a simplified version of the protection order that applies to them to ensure they fully understand all aspects of it. • Providing the child with different options for how to communicate, taking into account their freedom of thought and providing comfortable space for the child to express their views. In this context child feels most comfortable drawing pictures showing what she wanted, and needed help to turn the messages in the pictures into a letter to social workers and judge responsible for her care.
Audience: Communicating children's views to those with the power to make decisions.	• Creating linkages with social workers and judge to ensure they were informed about the process of gaining feedback from the children participants. • Informing the child about who would be involved. In this case she requested that her teacher also be included, and she felt this would help her.
Influence: Children's views being considered by those with the power to effect change.	• Embedding child participation into the whole system. In this case working with the legal system to ensure that the judge was willing to be informed by the child's inputs. • Providing feedback to the child about the decisions taken and which parts of her feedback had or had not been incorporated and why.

Adapted from: Tusla Child and Youth Participation Toolkit, TuslaToolkit

Profile of Children: Children and young people with cognitive disabilities from age 7-25 years old

Theme of Discussion: Research into designing services that better promoted personal safety and prevents abuse.	
Size of discussion: varies across individual and groups.	
Dimension	**In practice implementation**
Space: Creating a safe space in which children can express themselves freely.	• Due to the unique needs of this group and large age range, a variety of spaces were used. Researchers visited the children's homes for one-on-one discussions (together with parents), conducted group sessions where games and play were used to communicate concepts and to stimulate input, and school settings were also used.
Voice: Providing children with a range of options to choose how to express themselves	• Facilitators developed a series of methods for communication including • Game-based activities • Pictorial mapping • Photographic methods (photo elicitation and photo documentation) • Guided collage (e.g. storyboards) • Communication tools (e.g. Talking Mats) • Walk-along interviews. • Personalized communication and safety plans were developed for each child.
Audience: Communicating children's views to those with the power to make decisions.	• Great emphasis was put on gaining trust between the young people and the facilitators, and time was spent training facilitator to respond appropriately to disclosures as well as suggestions. • and inputs from the children. Support workers were on hand to provide psychosocial support if needed. • The whole process was explained to the children and their families and regularly reinforced and the findings and recommendations were shared with the children and their families for sign off before being finalized.
Influence: Children's views being considered by those with the power to effect change.	• The involvement of children's voices in this research was used to reinforce the importance of the recommendations with decisions makers. Decision makers were involved in the planning phases of this work to ensure they were primed to receive the recommendations.

Adapted from: *Including children and young people in safeguarding*, *Child Ethics*

Practical tools, activities, tips and games that use during consultations can be found in the *Useful Resources* annex.

3.3 Child Participation in Case management

Case management is a way of organising and carrying out work to address an individual child's (and their family's) needs in an appropriate, systematic and timely manner, through direct support and/or referrals, and in accordance with a project or programme's objectives.[16] The aim of this process/method is to support and guide the delivery of social services, and it essentially involves client(s) and social service worker(s) (professionals and/or paraprofessionals). ***The individual case plan*** is at the heart of case

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[16] CM_guidelines_ENG_.pdf (cpcnetwork.org)

management, which is developed based on a coordinated and collaborative process with the client(s) and service provider(s).

It is important that the case management and the decisions in that framework to address the needs of the child take into account the views of the child, in line with article 12 of the CRC. As the case management, should aim to reach an arrangement and come up with an individual care and protection plan that is in the best interest of the child, there is a fundamental link with the participation of the child in this process. This entails ensuring that the child has access to information that is appropriate to the age and development of the child throughout the different stages of the case management process.

Child participation is a fundamental element **of case management[17]**. Below are a few guidelines of how to think of child and adolescent participation for each of the steps.

After a case of a child in need or a child at risk is identified by a social worker, and after the social worker has done an initial assessment to screen for any immediate protection needs, he/she will operate **a comprehensive or complex assessment** to understand and assess the situation of the child and the family looking at the needs and risks as well as protective factors both at the level of the individual child as well as at the level of the family and the community around the child. Usually, this is a process which is led by statutory social workers, officially delegated with the responsibility to manage the cases, but involves a multi-disciplinary team of professionals. The assessment will look at the child well-being, safety and needs. During the complex assessments, the child's wishes and preferences should be identified and considered, when decisions are made that concern him/her directly. A direct communication with the child is an essential starting point to build a trust relationship between the social worker and the child, and should take place in a safe environment, in a child friendly manner, and at a rhythm that is adapted to the development and understanding of the child. This means that the social worker may need to see the child more than once until the trust relationship is built and the child may feel safe to express his or her views. The social worker may also use various methods and techniques to collect the views of the child[18]. The case manager should explain the child that the information about the child will not be used without the child's or his/her parents'/carers' consent. While the child should be encouraged to participate and talk, he/she should not be put under pressure to do so, threatened, or punished if refuses to talk.

Child participation is inexorably linked to consultation with the child's family, appointed representative and/or other persons they see as important and trusted, whose views and opinions should also be included in the case management process.

Taking the child's views into account does not mean that the adults must do anything the child wants – this is the adult's responsibility to protect and promote the child's high interest – but the child, even if does not agree, should be helped to understand what was decided and how this decision was achieved.

The assessment will inform the development of an **individual care/protection plan**, which will include all the necessary actions required to meet the identified needs of the child (and family) and address the

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[17] For a list of resources on this topic please visit: http://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/resources/compendium/procedures
[18] For some examples please consult: Children's Participation Toolkit for Social Workers and Help Practitiners, January 2018, East Sussex; Child Welfare Information Gateway – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Child Protective Services a Guide for Case Workers (pg. 58-63); Case Management Practical Guide – Moldova (Annex 11, pg. 102);

identified risks to its safety and well-being. Child participation in the planning process is essential, to make sure that the individual plans are adequate and efficient and contribute to the development of the child and their capacity of being agent of their own protection. Whenever possible, a child-friendly version of the plan should be communicated to the child, to make sure that the child understands the planned actions.

Participation of the child and family in the process of the development of the individual plan is crucial to ensure that children and families are informed and they can provide their views in the planning process, and ultimately to ensure that the plans are accepted by the child and family and that they commit to their implementation – thus becoming part of the problem resolution. The same principle should apply in the process of the revision of the individual plans which should happen periodically. Child participation should be clearly spelled out and formalized in the protocols and procedures which regulate the decision-making process around the individual plans, such as case conferences, multi-stakeholder case management groups, case review processes, etc.

Whenever possible, agreement and consent to receive a service from the child and the parents should be sought for the services and actions planned in the individual plans. In some cases, this consent will not be possible, and the professionals may decide to take a decision to protect a child (e.g. remove from an abusive environment in the family and place in alternative care) without such consent. In these cases, the child should be explained the reasons why such actions are taken, and the participation of the child and other (non-violent) family members should be constantly encouraged.

CHAPTER 4: Child and adolescent participation in communication

Given the central importance of child participation, the Phase III of EU Child Guarantee and the work that UNICEF is supporting in partnership with Governments and the European Commission, seek to ensure that participation is part of a larger process of child and adolescent programming, rather than an event or a one-off activity or series of activities. The goal is to enable children to develop new skills, increase their confidence and knowledge and see that their views are valued and respected. As such, their participation is not only required in the process of design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation at service, sub-national, national and EU levels, but their views must also be incorporated across all communications and advocacy work.

Child participation is thus central achieving the aims of communication and visibility which are to raise awareness, inform, and ultimately inspire citizens in implementing countries and across the EU about the EU Child Guarantee.

Child and adolescent participation is a cross-cutting area of the communication strategy of the CGP3 which aims to: (a) Generate awareness and build support for investing in children and CG Phase III to influence EU wide CG framework; (b) Strengthen political commitment and institutional engagement of the Government and other relevant national stakeholders in support of the CG; (c) Raise awareness and build support for investing in children and the reforms and policies, programmes and services being introduced in Phase III of the CG. The overall aims and specific objectives require that voices and opinions of children and young people be included across all communications related activities of the EU Child Guarantee in order to showcase how a comprehensive focus on children, including the most vulnerable can ensure a more just, inclusive and ultimately more prosperous Europe. The strategy aims to give children and youth a voice – to empower them, to hear their story, to let them present the positive impact of the project being the main beneficiaries of the EU Child Guarantee - through various communications activities and products including: video report/testimonials, photo stories as well as through youth participation mechanisms (participation in Steering Committees, consultations, youth groups, U-Report, etc).

The communications approach being employed should be positive and empowering, ensuring the active engagement and participation of children, youth and their families as an integral part of the communications work.

Specifically, UNICEF is leveraging and engaging the organization's social media/online platforms and media contacts in the seven pilot countries, together with the network of National Committees in order to engage other EU Member States across the European Union. In addition, joint activities have been planned to leverage the European Commission's communication channels to echo and amplify the messaging through policy makers and influencers. As part of the overall digital engagement strategy, Social Media Activations have been planned where young people's voices have been included through direct participation, short video human interest stories and testimonies. Such activations have already taken place around the Porto Summit and the 10 June High-Level Event "Making the European Child Guarantee a Reality". Children's voices and perspectives have been highlighted and incorporated across all communications related activities and products from key messages, human interest stories,

infographics, programmatic updates, events, with countries adapting and tailoring content to reflect their national realities and a consolidation of this content at EU level to reflect and amplify country perspectives at regional level.

Below are some main activities and ways in which communication and visibility plans incorporate the voices and perspectives of children and young people:

Communications Activities	Descriptions	Timeline
Digital engagement plans /Social Media Activations	Social media packs including: Human-interest video clips (social), photo essays and stories with short captions, testimonials with emphasis on impact of local interventions including through [#HumansofEUChildGuarantee];	-March 24 Launch, -May Porto Summit -June High Level Event
Human Interest Stories	[written and long form video]: stories where beneficiaries are visited at the beginning and end of the pilot, demonstrating impact on their lives over the period of the initiative.	2 HIS/Country; 1 to be followed up
Programmatic Updates	providing a snapshot and progress on ongoing work in the 7 pilot countries and highlighting/ incorporating stories and perspectives of children and families who are beneficiaries of the piloting at national level.	-Nov 2020 -Feb 2021 -May 2021 -Nov 2021 -Feb 2022 -May 2022
Articles/Interviews/ media placement	Human-interest stories, related social media posts , quotes, videos, interviews with parents, and children who are service recipients young advocates and ambassadors as well as content reflecting progress from Youth Steering Committees.	Continuous
Youth Blogs Series/vlogs/Peer to Peer Workshops/ Surveys and Online Polls **Online Youth Forum at regional level** [TBD]	Youth Blogs Series/vlogs/Peer to Peer Workshops/ Surveys and Online Polls by and with adolescents and young people, testimonials from UPSHIFT, U-report, etc. Consultations with young advocates/ambassadors/volunteers selected at country level.	June 2021-end of pilot Sept/Oct 2021?
High Level Events	3 main events are foreseen (1) High-Level Launch Event, (2) High-level event [(3) Final Event.	-Nov 2020 -June 2021 -TBD

CHAPTER 5: Child participation in monitoring and/or evaluation activities and processes

Participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) mean that key stakeholders including children and their families have a say in what to measure and how to measure throughout the design of national policies and action plans and the implementation process and that they discuss and decide how the national policies, plans and programmes brought about change and whether they improved their lives.

What follows is not new but draws on existing guidance on child participation in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities and processes and highlights some of the key points that UNICEF Country Offices/UNICEF National Committees and their partners are encouraged to consider when:

1. Deciding on whether to engage members of the groups of children prioritized by the given country in monitoring the implementation of Phase III of the European Child Guarantee.

2. Exploring the conditions that need to be in place and the spaces available at national and subnational level to engage children in the design and the M&E of the implementation of the national action plans for the European Child Guarantee[19].

Children can play an important role in improving M&E activities, processes and results. The UNICEF's 2019 Guidance Note on Adolescent participation in UNICEF monitoring and evaluation[20] highlights key areas in which child participation can add value:

- Increase relevance, ownership and credibility.

- Enhance accountability to children themselves and other targeted populations.

- Improve utility.

- Build engagement and trust in the results of M&E.

- Help to make policies and plans at all levels more responsive to the needs and demands of children and thus contribute to better outcomes for children.

To measure progress in achieving the expected results in Phase III of the European Child Guarantee and in the implementation of the European Child Guarantee national action plans, it is critical to understand what matters to children who are at risk of poverty and social exclusion and experience disadvantages, how they define quality, what changes they think need to be monitored and evaluated (topics, questions) and how to monitor and evaluate these changes (indicators, methods) and how to communicate and make good use of the results. Experience shows that such participation processes often reveal issues that adults are not aware of or tend to ignore when designing M&E frameworks and choosing indicators.

To help decision-making on whether to have children participate in M&E activities and processes, each country will need to find answers to some key questions. The following list has been adapted from a

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[19] Available under: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0137&from=EN.
[20] Available under: https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/documents/unicef-guidance-note-adolescent-participation-unicef-monitoring-and-evaluation.

similar list presented in the above-mentioned UNICEF 2019 Guidance Note. The questions in the list are geared towards child participation in Phase III of the European Child Guarantee:

1. What are we aiming to achieve by having children participate in M&E activities and processes in Phase III of the European Child Guarantee?

2. Will child participation add value and enrich the findings of Phase III of the European Child Guarantee?

3. What benefits can be derived from child participation for all involved in Phase III of the European Child Guarantee?

4. Is child participation ethical and is the "do no harm" principle respected?

5. What are costs for child participation in Phase III (time, resources, opportunity costs)? Do the benefits outweigh the costs? Can participation be properly resourced in Phase III of the European Child Guarantee?

6. Is there sufficient time to develop the necessary partnerships with children in Phase III of the European Child Guarantee and to empower them for participation?

7. If children do not participate in monitoring Phase III, will this compromise our objectivity and integrity?

8. Are we equipped to engage children at risk of poverty and social exclusion including those experiencing disadvantages in M&E activities and processes?

The space for child participation in M&E activities must be created by UNICEF and national and local authorities throughout Phase III and throughout the design, implementation and M&E of the national action plans for the European Child Guarantee. This allows children to have more control over the content, the process and the results of M&E activities and processes related to the European Child Guarantee and enables them and their families to actively engage in taking or identifying corrective actions if and as needed. This in turn will add value in key areas – see the bullet points on the previous page.

Deciding to have children participate in M&E activities and processes means for many organisations a transformation of their M&E culture. Achieving meaningful participation in M&E activities can take time and it requires that the existing barriers to PM&E -such as a lack of capacity and understanding and existing cultural and social norms- are effectively addressed, as well as careful planning and preparation. The latter may necessitate measures to (a) empower children for participation, (b) increasing the understanding of PM&E among policymakers and other key stakeholders and identifying PM&E champions, (c) building capacity in PM&E of managers and staff with M&E roles and responsibilities within the systems implementing Phase III of the European Child Guarantee or measures under the national action plans for the European Child Guarantee, as well as (d) adequate financial and technical resources to implement PM&E activities. To be effective, evidence shows that PM&E must be embedded in national and subnational M&E frameworks and systems, in results-based management cycles, and should not be carried out as a stand-alone activity. PM&E planning and preparation must further assure that evidence-based methods and tools are applied and carefully consider ethical implications of child participation in M&E activities and processes and the safety of children in all stages. This may mean that an ethical

framework for PM&E activities may need to be developed setting out ethical standards including standard operating procedures[21].

Figure 1 in this Chapter shows how child participation can be integrated into the results-based policy cycle and in all M&E activities and processes including reporting and feedback loops.

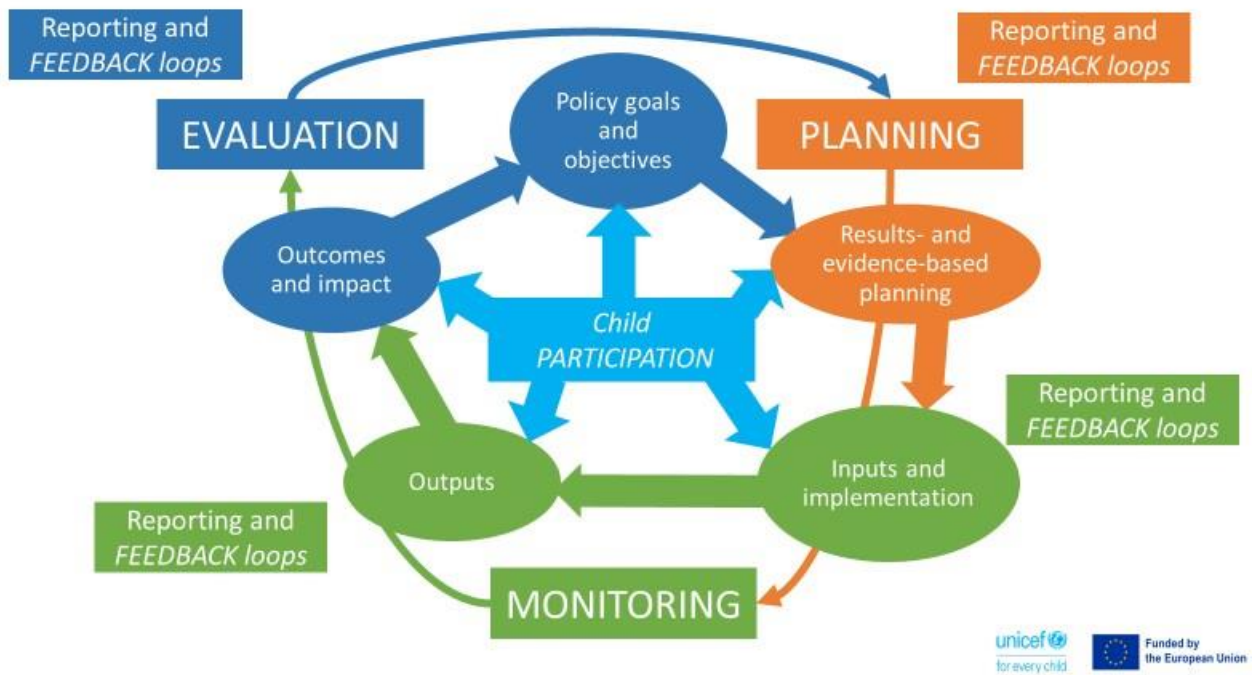**Figure 1:** Child participation in a results-based policy cycle

Table 1 in this Chapter provides an overview of the (possible) spaces for child participation in monitoring Phase III of the European Child Guarantee and in evidence generation and analysis (Pillar 1).

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[21] For more on ethical child participation in research and M&E, see: https://childethics.com/library/other-literature/children-and-participation-research-monitoring-and-evaluation-with-children-and-young-people/.

Table 1: (Possible) Spaces for child participation in evidence generation and analysis and in monitoring Phase III of the European Child Guarantee (ECG)

MAIN DATA STREAMS	MECHANISMS AND SPACES FOR CHILD PARTICIPATION	DOCUMENTATION OF CHILD PARTICIPATION
Analysis (Deep Dives)	**Mechanisms for engagement:** 1. National ECG Steering Committees or similar stakeholder coordinating mechanisms 2. National Child/Youth participation mechanism(s) (*may be linked to or an integral part of 1.*) **Space for engagement:** • Design and implementation of Deep Dives • Validation of the findings	• Terms of Reference (ToR)/work plans • Meeting protocols • Country reports • Phase III reports/updates
Operational research (4 Implementation countries in Phase III)	**Mechanisms for engagement:** • Subnational ECG Steering Committees or similar stakeholder coordinating mechanisms • Subnational Child/Youth participation mechanism(s) or system(s) **Space for engagement:** • Design: stakeholder meetings and mapping of context • Primary data collection from service users	• Meeting protocols • Results of mapping • Research protocol and instruments • Ethical and child safeguarding protocol/Results of ethical review • Data set • Country research brief • Final research report • Phase III reports/updates
Routine Phase III Programme Monitoring in-country (National: 7 countries, Subnational: 4 Implementation countries)	**Mechanisms for engagement:** 1. (Sub-)National ECG Steering Committee or similar stakeholder coordinating mechanisms 2. (Sub-)National Child/Youth participation mechanism(s) or system(s) **Space for engagement:** • Development of theories of change for the country Phase III programme and/or the theories of change for the country-specific models of services and interventions incl. results frameworks • Meetings to review, discuss and verify progress made, results achieved, challenges faced and overcome, new risks and how best to mitigate them, validity of the underlying assumptions	• ToR/work plans • Meeting protocols/recordings • Theories of change and results frameworks • Phase III reports/updates
Strengthening monitoring systems (National and subnational level)	**Mechanisms for engagement:** 1. (Sub-)National ECG Steering Committee or similar stakeholder coordinating mechanisms 2. (Sub-)National Child/Youth participation mechanism(s) or system(s) **Space for engagement:**	• ToRs/work plans • Meeting protocols • Plans for strengthening national and/or subnational statistical authorities/M&E managers and staff, data

	• Design, implementation and monitoring of the national ECG action plan • Development of a monitoring framework for the national action plan including nationally agreed indicators and a monitoring implementation plan that sets out the actions necessary to strengthen the national and/or subnational statistical authorities, M&E managers and staff, and existing national and/or subnational data systems to produce quality data for the agreed indicators	and data systems (e.g., data improvement plans) • Phase III reports/updates
Monitoring Child Safeguarding in key Child Guarantee services (4 Implementation countries in Phase III)	**Mechanisms for engagement:** 1. (Sub-)National ECG Steering Committee or similar stakeholder coordinating mechanisms 2. (Sub-)National Child/Youth participation mechanism(s) or system(s) **Space for engagement:** • Joint assessment of whether and what child safeguarding mechanisms and/or systems are in place in key ECG services provided at subnational and national level including areas for improvement/gaps that need to be filled to ensure safe and child-friendly national and subnational: → Feedback systems → Complaints systems → Channels for children to report violence, abuse and exploitation.	• Meeting protocol(s) • Assessment results • Development/improvement plans (as an integral component of national action plans, e.g.) • Phase III reports/updates • Documentation of how reports generated by the systems and/or mechanisms are used to improve child safeguarding in key ECG services
Child-led research	**Mechanisms for engagement:** 1. (Sub-)National Child/Youth participation mechanism(s) or system(s) **Space for engagement:** Child-led research in selected implementation sites (e.g., on service access barriers)	• Meeting protocols • Research protocols • Ethical and child safeguarding protocol/Results of ethical review • Data sets • Research reports and presentations • Phase III reports/updates
Child-led evaluation (Evaluation of re-oriented services)	**Mechanisms for engagement:** 1. (Sub-)National ECG Steering Committee or similar stakeholder coordinating mechanisms 2. (Sub-)National Child/Youth participation mechanism(s) or system(s) **Space for engagement:** • Joint assessment of available spaces for children/youth to design and carry out their own evaluation of:	• Meeting protocol(s) • Assessment results • ToR/work plan • Evaluation design, protocol, report • Ethical and child safeguarding protocol/Results of ethical review • Phase III reports/updates

	→ re-oriented[22] key ECG services in the implementation countries → other aspects of the ECG national action plans	
Consultations/Polls	U-Report: adolescents aged 13+	• U-Reports • Phase III reports/updates
Human Interest Stories	Selected families, children, young people, adult caregivers	• Stories/videos • Ethical and child safeguarding protocol • Phase III reports/updates
Evaluation (CG Phase III Programme)	Building on mechanisms and systems for child/youth participation established/leveraged in Phase III at national and subnational level and the operational research results/routine monitoring	• Ethical and child safeguarding protocol/Results of ethical review • Evaluation report(s)

The following are key steps to consider in planning and preparing for PM&E in the design, implementation and monitoring of the countries' national action plans for implementing the European Child Guarantee:

1. **Identification of stakeholder groups to be involved in the planning of the PM&E process** (such as the established child and youth participation mechanisms and systems) as part of planning the development and implementation of the national monitoring framework for the national action plan.

2. **Establishment of a PM&E coordinating mechanism** under the European Child Guarantee coordinating mechanisms at national and subnational level (including any existing national and subnational M&E and Research committees or technical working groups).

3. **Definition of the objectives of PM&E by stakeholders**: what will be monitored, how and by whom, and how data will be used and disseminated. **Development of PM&E agenda and plan** including the **identification of relevant PM&E indicators**.[23]

4. **Implementation and monitoring of PM&E activities** as part of implementation and monitoring of the national action plan:

    a. **Participatory data gathering**: Data on implementation processes, strategies and results can be collected using both quantitative and qualitative methods (incl. community-led methods) and by collecting data via real-time monitoring systems, particularly feedback and complaints systems in key European Child Guarantee services.

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[22] Re-oriented in terms of: inclusion, outreach, and other service reach, scope and quality dimensions set out in the European Child Guarantee Recommendation and prioritized by the countries to close the identified implementation gaps for the most disadvantaged children.

[23] For useful quality criteria to apply when identifying relevant PM&E indicators, see BetterEvaluation - Equal Access Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation toolkit, Module 2: Setting objectives and indicators, available under: https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/EA_PM%26E_toolkit_module_2_objectives%26indicators_for_publication.pdf.

b. **Participatory data analysis:** Active stakeholder engagement in the analysis of data and information, particularly of successes and constraints and the formulation of conclusions and lessons learned, and in defining and agreeing on actions to be taken.

c. **Participatory data use and dissemination:** Active stakeholder involvement in sharing and using the information.

There are many ways and methods to engage children in M&E activities and processes. Table 1 in the aforementioned UNICEF Guidance Note provides a detailed overview of different types of participation in M&E activities and processes. The Note also includes useful 'supporting tools and tipsheets' for action to decide on and prepare the participation of children, discuss the potential scope of participation in monitoring, and how to engage them in evaluation activities, among other useful information.[24]

As Table 1 in this Chapter shows, it is important to monitor, document, and eventually evaluate child participation in M&E activities, to disseminate the results, and to ensure a feedback loop to the children themselves. Useful guidance and tools for the M&E of child participation is the 2014 Save the Children's Toolkit for monitoring and evaluating children's participation[25], which also talks about how to undertake participatory M&E and includes practical tools for organisations to collect the information needed. Another useful reference is the 2020 Council of Europe's Handbook on children's participation[26], which includes various real-life examples.

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[24] Another useful resource is the following UNHCR guidance: https://www.unhcr.org/protection/children/50f6d1259/listen-learn-participatory-assessment-children-adolescents.html.

[25] Available under: https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document-collections/toolkit-monitoring-and-evaluating-childrens-participation.

[26] Available under: https://rm.coe.int/publication-handbook-on-children-s-participation-eng/1680a14539.

Annex 1: Checklist: Are you conducting your activities in a way that meaningful enable child participation?

Space:

Checklist:

- ☐ Were children consulted in choosing the space and did you consider their preferences?
- ☐ Can children and their families get to the venue, and fully participate at the venue?
- ☐ Is the space safe both in terms of environmental and in atmosphere and do you have enough adult: child ratio?
- ☐ Is the space child-friendly? Have you looked at the room from a child's perspective?
- ☐ Does it have furniture and supplies that allow for dynamic use of the space? Does it allow for noise, movement and creativity?
- ☐ Have you considered the effect that group size will have on the conversation and adapted accordingly?
- ☐ Did parents/caregivers give permissions/approval and sign indemnity for their child to be at this space?

Voice:

Checklist:

- ☐ Have children been given all the information they need to form a view?
- ☐ Have different options been provided to them?
- ☐ Have different ways of communicating been offered to them? Drawing, writing letters, singing songs, putting comments in anonymous comment boxes, etc.
- ☐ Do the children know that this process is voluntary and that they can opt out at any time?
- ☐ Is the language being used age appropriate, jargon free and aligned to references appropriate to children's ages and interests?
- ☐ Have you created an atmosphere that encourages asking questions and seeking clarifications?
- ☐ Are you frequently checking that your understanding of children's inputs are correct?

Audience:

Checklist:

- ☐ Is there a process/system for communicating children views and meaningfully embedding them into decision making?
- ☐ Have children been informed about the chain of communication and who will be privy to their views?
- ☐ Are your facilitators experienced and trained in conducting child participation activities?
- ☐ Have stakeholders been mapped together with children to identify who needs to know what?

☐ Have children been informed about the whole decision-making process and understand their role in the process in a way that manages expectations?

Checklist:

☐ Were children's views considered by decisions makers?
☐ Was preparatory work done to ensure children's voices are taken seriously?
☐ Was feedback provided to participants about decisions taken and how their views were used or not used?
☐ Have you laid foundations with decision makers, NGOS, partners around the importance of child, young person and parent participation and are they willing and ready to listen?
☐ Can you demonstrate that the views of children have influenced your services or how you do business?

Useful Resources

Resources for decision makers and to advocate for improved child participation	Child Participation Assessment Tool (coe.int) DisplayDCTMContent (coe.int) Models of Online, Youth and Citizen Participation // Version 1 // July 2011 (nonformality.org) Guide-to-making-decisions-booklet.pdf (childcomm.tas.gov.au)
Games, activities and practical guidance	https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/3583/pdf/3583.pdf EDC/HRE Volume VI: Teaching democracy - A collection of models for democratic citizenship and human rights education (coe.int) TOOLKIT ARTWORK (savethechildren.org.uk) The Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation Interviewing young people on sensitive topics: An iterative approach.
Case Management/Social Work Guidance	http://teampata.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Participation-toolkit-Jan18-update-web.pdf Guide to Involving Children and Adolescents.pdf (nwleics.gov.uk) https://calswec.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/case_plan_field_tool_for_parents_122014.pdf https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/cbc/quality-visits-supervisors-cp-00075.pdf

	Contact/Prof/05 (councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk)
Working with local governments	https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/UNICEF-Child-Participation-in-Local-Governance.pdf
	https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dretssocials/sites/default/files/arxius-documents/encouraging-children-participation-municipal-services-projects.pdf
	https://childfriendlycities.org/strategies-child-and-youth-participation/

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