

“ Listen – Act – Change

Council of Europe Handbook on children’s participation

For professionals working for and with children



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Building a Europe
for and with children



Annex 2

**PRODUCING ACCESSIBLE
INFORMATION: GUIDANCE**





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Throughout children's participation processes communication has to be accessible and understandable. The best way to make sure your information materials will be understood by children is to involve them in designing, writing and testing it out on others. There are a range of ways of providing accessible information (including feedback) to children.

Written documents are one way (as long as they are written in age-appropriate language). If you write things remember to add pictures and colour. But also think about other ways of communicating such as:

- ▶ Posters.
- ▶ Power point presentations.
- ▶ Comic books/cartoons.
- ▶ Audio and Video and online content including Blogs and Vlogs.
- ▶ Music.
- ▶ Digital storytelling (using photographs & voiceovers).
- ▶ Drama.
- ▶ Workshops and events.

In many cases the best solution may be a combination of products. Consider, for example: a leaflet and a film, or a poster, comic book and blog. The best solution will depend on different factors. Those working with children should consider these key questions when preparing information:

Question	Considerations
What is your overall aim?	For example, is the aim to inform, inspire, generate ideas, raise questions or feedback to children about how their views were considered and taken into account in the decision-making process?
Who are your target audience(s)?	Which age group? Is it all children within an age group or is it a particular group?
What is your budget? What resources are required?	Consider initial and ongoing costs. What staff resources do you have?
Time constraints?	What is realistic and practical in the time scale you have?
What information?	What information do children say they need? What do you want to find out? What feedback do children expect?
How can children be involved?	How can children and young people be involved in the design and creation of the product?
If advised - can you use the technology and online spaces that children use to communicate?	For example, subtitles or extra voiceovers for DVDs for those with visual or hearing impairments are possible, though with an additional cost. The combination of visual images and speech can improve understanding for those with learning disabilities.
How can you use technology to improve inclusion?	

Since coming into force over 30 years ago, Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has affirmed children's right to express their views on all matters that affect them. The Council of Europe has sought to make this right real and concrete in the member states through its Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)2 on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18, and has also embedded child participation in its own standard-setting, monitoring and capacity building work as well as at its international events. This Handbook represents a substantive contribution to the Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016 to 2021) promoting child participation under its second priority area.

The Handbook was produced by the Children's Rights Division of the Council of Europe in collaboration with international child participation experts and following the consultation of more than 50 children and young people on the challenges to be addressed.

It is meant to be a hands-on tool for people who work with children in a professional capacity, for example in schools, hospitals, alternative care settings, child protection services, and other social services. It is designed for social workers, teachers, judges, lawyers, immigration officers, psychologists, civil servants, youth workers and day care workers, offering them practical approaches to "do" children's participation and make it work for all children, including those in vulnerable situations, both at an individual and a collective level.

Professionals using this Handbook are invited to improve their capacities and skills to "listen" to children, to "act" upon the lessons learned and to "change" any decision making involving or concerning children. They are also invited to spread the good practice promoted through this tool and thus, in the end, to make a life-changing impact for children in those contexts where decisions are made without truly listening to them.

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.