

“ 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 5

EXPLAINING CHILDREN’S ROLE IN MEETINGS AND PROCEEDINGS: A CHECKLIST





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When children are involved in decision making: in their day-to-day lives in meetings, interviews, hearings and proceedings. They need to have good information to help them understand and support their engagement with the process. Check that you have ways (both written and by talking), consistent with their age and maturity, to enable children to know and understand the following:

- ▶ Children's rights in your setting, and rights specific to any proceedings or hearings?
- ▶ How children's rights to be heard will be implemented?
- ▶ How your setting or system works, and the roles of all the different professionals?
- ▶ What children may be involved in at different times and different procedural steps?
- ▶ What options children have about this involvement, and possible consequences of these options inside or outside your setting, meeting or hearing?
- ▶ What representation is available for children (for example, advocates who will speak on their behalf)?
- ▶ What protection is available to for children (for example, possibilities for anonymity)?
- ▶ What practical arrangements are and how they can be influenced:
 - how, when and where any meetings or hearings will take place
 - who will be present
 - how long it will last
 - the format of the meeting
 - what information will be discussed or any charges or allegations made
 - what degree of privacy and confidentiality will apply
 - who will be allowed to speak +
 - how children's views will be taken into account
 - when any decisions will be made and by whom
 - how decisions will be communicated to children.
- ▶ What services are available (for example, health, psychological or social, or organisations that can provide support), and how to access them?
- ▶ How and when decisions will be reviewed and how to request a reviewed decision?
- ▶ How to make and follow up a complaint and how complaints will be dealt with?

Providing the parents or legal guardians with the information is not an alternative to communicating the information to a child. In many circumstances, both the child and the parents or legal guardians should receive the information.

Adapted from a checklist in UNICEF/Save the Children (2011) [Every child's right to be heard: A resource guide on the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment no.12](#)

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.