



Council of Europe actions on participation of children and young people under the age of 18. Roadmap 2009 – 2011

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Introduction

In the high-level conference “Building a Europe for and with children¹” – towards a strategy for 2009 – 2011” (Stockholm September 2008) it was agreed that the Council of Europe should adopt a new strategy for the further development of its programme focusing on three priority areas: (1) elimination of all forms of violence against children, (2) child participation and (3) child-friendly justice. This strategy was adopted by the Committee of Ministers in its meeting on November 27th.

The Council of Europe’s future work on child participation will be built upon the experiences of the youth policy sector and with the involvement of the structures responsible for decision making and co-management. In addition to the strategy, the final Declaration of the 8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for youth “The future of the Council of Europe youth policy: AGENDA 2020” (Kiev October 2008), and the CoE Resolution (2008) 23 on the youth policy of the Council of Europe determine **the importance of co-operation and co-ordination between child- and youth-related activities².**

Cooperation with the European Youth Forum and peer-led organisations, as well as with other international stakeholders (UN, EU, civil society and the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children) will be essential for sustainable and meaningful results.

I. Objectives

The CoE work on child participation will be based on the following objectives **presented and approved within the Stockholm strategy for 2009 – 2011:**

- Support of sustainable and meaningful participation at local, national and international level, notably through:
 - Integrating child participation in the various policy areas (mainstreaming),

¹ The definition of a child is based by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child meaning any young person under the age of 18.

² Bearing in mind the conclusions and recommendations of the Seminar on the relationships between child, youth and family policies by Steering Committee of Youth, Steering Committee on Social Cohesion and its Expert Committee on Children and Families, organised in Kiev, Ukraine, 23 – 25 September 2004.

- development of standards and methodologies,
 - creation of opportunities for dialogue between decision-makers and children including access to decision- and policy-making structures and processes, and exchange of good practices.
- development of an inclusive approach, focused on schools, health-care systems, justice systems, residential care, families and also targetting particularly vulnerable children;
 - empowerment of children by human rights education, by developing and disseminating information in a child-friendly language, in print and on the Internet.

The three-year-work on child participation could lay the foundation to a future campaign on child participation (2012 -).

The work will focus on children and young people between 12 and 17 years of age.

II. Coordination/Structures

1. The co-ordination unit of the programme “Building a Europe for and with children” has a **programme officer** who is responsible for implementing the project on child participation and coordinating its actions under the supervision of the director of the programme.
2. A Council of Europe **inter-secretariat working group** on child participation (called KID-IN) was set up in early 2009. The programme officer works as the facilitator of the working group. The group is open to all those secretariat services interested in contributing to the work on child participation.

A training course on participation rights of children for the CoE staff was organised in June 19-20, 2009. The purpose of the training was not only to exchange and increase colleagues knowledge on children’s participatory rights but it also gave them concrete tools to develop CoE work and concrete actions to involve children in its decision- and policy-making.

3. An ad-hoc advisory **group on child and youth participation**³ (MJ-S-CYP) has been established under the co-management structures of the Youth sector. Draft terms of reference of the advisory group (consisting of governmental representatives, NGOs and experts on child and youth participation) were prepared and introduced to the Joint Council of Youth (CMJ) in its meeting in Mollina, Spain (March 23 – 25, 2009). The final terms of reference were adopted by the Committee of Ministers on May 27, 2009. The decision on the composition of the group was made by the Bureau of CMJ in its meeting on September 7-8, 2009. The first meeting of MJ-S-CYP will be

³ - 3 For the purpose of the work “child and youth” is defined covering participation of persons below the age of 18.

organised in December 2009 in conjunction with a Round Table discussion on Child and Youth Participation.

The work of the group will be financed by DG Social Cohesion (children's programme), and the programme officer for child participation will work as the secretary of the group in liaison with the administrator in charge of the intergovernmental programme of activities in the youth field.

III. Activities

1. Policy reviews in the field of child and youth participation⁴ and drafting of guidelines and recommendations

This would be the responsibility of the advisory group on child and youth participation, as one of the working groups of the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ). The main tasks of the advisory group would be to develop **a methodological framework for national policy reviews in the field of child and youth participation** in pilot countries, support the work done in the participating countries, **conduct the work on CoE guidelines for child and youth participation**, and suggest ways to add/enhance a child and youth participation dimension to the current international reviews of national youth policies implemented by the Directorate of Youth and Sport.

The advisory group would also prepare a **proposal for the CM recommendation on child and youth participation**. The recommendation will benefit not only from the results and finding of the national policy reviews but also from the General Comment on article 12 (child participation) by the UN Committee of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

National experts on child and youth participation from pilot countries will be invited to participate in the work of the group when the pilot countries are being selected. Also children/young people from the pilot countries would be invited to participate in the work.

2. Sharing of good practice on child participation and consultation with children in specific CoE activities

- a. Child-friendly justice
 - b. Healthcare in Europe – for and with children
 - c. Children in care
 - d. Campaign against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children
 - e. Disability sector
 - f. E-democracy and Internet safety
 - g. Violence in schools
 - h. Violence within the family
 - i. Project on child-friendly social services
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3. Education, training and child-friendly information

- a. Development of the **web pages** on child participation at www.coe.int/children (2008/2009)
 - b. **Publications**
 - i. Compasito
 - ii. Have your say!
 - iii. A revised edition on *Children, participation, projects – how to make it work*
 - iv. A new child-friendly “Treaty series”
 - v. A fairy tales book on children’s rights
 - vi. A brochure on children in care
 - c. **Training** for the media and for authorities and professionals working with and for children (Compasito training and other training sessions focusing on child participation)
4. Setting up an **e-participation forum** with children and young people in the countries participating in the pilot project. The expertise of the CoE ad-hoc committee on e-democracy (CAHDE) and other relevant CoE bodies will be utilized.

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