



EU PROJECT PROPOSAL – CONCEPT PAPER

“Strengthening National Child Participation Frameworks and Action in Europe (CP4Europe)”

A. Key references

The **present project proposal** responds to the [EU call for proposals on capacity-building in the area of rights](#) (REC-RCHI-PROF-AG-2020), and in particular priority 3 “to assess national legislative and policy frameworks for child participation, with a view to designing and implementing tools to promote child participation at national level”

Under this third priority, activities shall include:

- mapping of existing **national legislation and practice** to assess how child participation is embedded in national frameworks;
- development of **strategies and plans to foster child participation** at national level, as well as of handbooks, checklists, training material, to build capacity on child participation;
- **design and implementation of child participation mechanisms** at national level.

It is strongly encouraged to involve a public authority to actively participate in the projects. This will be assessed under the award criterion (b) “quality” of the proposed action, including:

- proposed methodology;
- organisation of work;
- allocation of resources;
- time schedule;
- appropriateness of envisaged activities;
- strategy for monitoring the project implementation (through success measures and risks);
- identification of risks and the measures to mitigate them;
- way of addressing ethical issues;
- gender mainstreaming;
- child protection policies.

Timeline:

- Opening of the call: end of January 2020
- *[Internal authorisation for the Council of Europe to participate in the call as an organisation provided towards the end of February 2020]*
- Preparation of a proposal and mobilisation of partners: March/April 2020
- Deadline to submit proposals: 13 May 2020
- Estimated start of projects: Winter 2020/2021
- Duration of projects: 24 months (with a possible extension to be requested at a later stage)

Budget as specified by the call:

- No less than € 75,000 per proposal
- Co-funding at an 80/20% ratio between EU and a proposing consortium

B. Synergies between Council of Europe and European Union in the area of child participation

In the area of child participation, the priorities of the EU call are an excellent match with those of the Council of Europe. Promoting children's rights to participation as covered by the [Recommendation on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18 \(CM/Rec \(2012\)2\)](#) is priority area 2 of the [Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child \(2016-2021\)](#). Since 2014 the Children's Rights Division has supported three work cycles during which the [Child Participation Assessment Tool \(CPAT\)](#) has been used by nine Council of Europe (and EU) member States on the basis of limited funding from the Council of Europe, to assess national child participation mechanisms and practice. This work has always been closely related to the Council of Europe Children's Rights Committees whose members have been regularly updated on any progress achieved at inter-governmental level. There has always been great interest amongst member States represented at the former Ad hoc Committee for the Rights of the Child (CAHENF), and its predecessors, to receive support for the application of the CPAT tool to the national situation. and first delegations represented at the new Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) have already informally expressed their interest in joining an upcoming work cycle.

The proposed EU/COE project would involve the further operationalisation of the CPAT and of new resources, such as the Council of Europe Handbook on Child Participation currently elaborated by the Children's Rights Division, in additional EU member States. This project would provide possible project partners (national governments and their partners) with more support from the Council of Europe Children's Rights Division, access to an extensive range of resources to both assess and develop child participation mechanisms and practice at State level. Furthermore, project partners would have the opportunity to contribute to the development of additional resources to further strengthen child participation. The European Union for its part would benefit through increased child participation capacities within its member States. In this respect, the European Commission has expressed an interest in the tools developed by the Council of Europe on several occasions over the past years, for example under Romanian EU Presidency (Jan-June 2019).

A number of promising experiences in EU member States have already been examined and promoted through the Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool (CPAT) and received relevant

support from the organisation through its Programme “Building a Europe for and with Children” led by the Children’s Rights Division.

The CPAT tool was developed in 2012 and has since been applied by 10 Council of Europe member states, 9 out of which are EU members (Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Romania and Slovenia). Their experience has underlined the importance of undertaking comprehensive assessments, led by member States and with the support of the Council of Europe, in order to strengthen child participation: Assessment exercises involving public authorities, civil society and children lead to increased awareness across sectors, strengthen commitment to change institutions in a sustainable manner and highlight both gaps and potential for improvement, turning strategies into action.

Children involved in these experiences have always been enthusiastic in generating more opportunities for participation; they generally reported that the self-assessment process had been the first time their opinions had ever been solicited. Evidence from these projects show that there is a need for a more systematic use and promotion of child participation across EU member States, , both for the consultation of individual children (for example in judicial proceedings or health systems) and for collective child participation (for example in schools, care institutions or political processes).

C. Set-up of the project consortium

The Council of Europe will be the lead applicant (coordinator) in a consortium with several participants (partners) amongst selected member States (both to Council of Europe and EU).

National partners from 5 countries have now been selected from the governments represented in the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF). Their competent government departments, as well as civil society organisations working with them on child participation will submit the project proposal and ensure implementation of the project jointly with the Council of Europe if the project will be granted funding by the European Commission. Implementing partners should also include civil society organisations and experts with child participation experience.

National partners to the project will form **two focus groups**, according to whether their aim is to:

- Apply, for the first time, the CPAT assessment tool to **evaluate their national child participation mechanisms and practice**, as a basis for further activities in this area (focus group 1) – the countries forming this group are: the Czech Republic, Iceland and Portugal;
- After having undertaken the CPAT assessment in one of the previous work cycles (2014-2020), **promote the reinforcement of child participation mechanisms and practice** in specific areas and/or with the support of specific tools, including strategies and plans to foster child participation, handbooks, checklists and training material to build capacities, leading over to the actual **design and implementation of child participation mechanisms** at national level – countries forming this group will be Finland and Slovenia.

Next to the [Child Participation Assessment Tool \(CPAT\)](#) as a key instrument of this project, tools to be used could include:

- the Handbook on child participation for professionals which is currently being prepared by the Council of Europe (to be published before the summer of 2020);

- Existing national instruments or instruments in preparation, including strategies, handbooks, checklists, child safeguarding policies, training programmes etc. which could be instrumental for the preparation of European Tools to strengthen the participation of children.

Through their work on child participation, according to the appropriate emphasis in each country, the national partners would contribute to the development of new tools, including handbooks, checklists and training material for specific areas of child participation, as well as (model) national strategies.

All partners of the project could physically meet at strategic moments of the process and otherwise form a network in which exchanges would regularly take place by email, telephone or video conference. A reinforced Secretariat unit in Strasbourg would manage and coordinate the project over the two-years period.

D. Project description

The **impact (overall objective)** of the project is to contribute to **strengthening child participation** in Council of Europe and EU member States, by providing support to developing national mechanisms and practice, thus improving and multiplying children's opportunities to participating in decision-making processes in different contexts. This could also include political decision-making processes at the local level (closest to children), and processes organised by public institutions or civil society associations.

The **expected intermediate outcomes** (specific objectives) of the project in the mid-term could then be **a greater number of child participation strategies, evidence-based tools and mechanisms**, but also **improved capacity of professionals** in different sectors to involve children in decisions of concern to them.

This could, for example, be achieved thanks to the following **immediate outcomes** (results):

- Increased knowledge and awareness of key decision-makers and staff on the need and requirements for child participation, including through the evaluation of a given national situation with the help of the Child Participation Assessment Tool (CPAT);
- improved capacities of public authorities at different government levels (through the development of national strategies) and professionals (through trainings) to involve children in decision-making procedures at different levels (European, national, regional, local) and in different settings (political, social, educational, judicial, healthcare-related etc.), and to put in place relevant safeguarding policies;
- the actual set-up of new child participation mechanisms at different levels and in various contexts in countries acting as project partners;
- the consolidation, dissemination and replication of promising practices across the pan-European area of the Council of Europe (including all EU member states).

E. Overall deliverables

- Country-specific assessments of legislation, policy and practice (with CPAT tool), developments of tailor-made national strategies and tools or implementation of child participation mechanisms in specific areas in the 5 focus countries as well as reports on first experiences made after the assessment;
- supporting tools, including model strategies for child participation, interactive website, model child safeguarding policies, handbooks and checklists, training modules and material, etc;
- sensitised and trained professionals and increased cooperation at European and international levels ("child participation champions");
- overall impact assessment of the Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool (CPAT) and its translation into a practical format that allows to regularly assess child participation activities in the long-term.

Project overview (October 2020-September 2022)

Focus group 1:

Mapping and assessment of national legislation and practice by using the CPAT tool (3 focus countries)



Focus group 2:

Following a CPAT assessment done, implementation of child participation mechanisms in specific areas and through specific tools (2 focus countries)



Both groups to contribute to ...

the application and consolidation of existing tools:

- CPAT tool, update and "dynamisation"
- Council of Europe Handbook on child participation
- Consolidating model child safeguarding policies
- Improvement of national strategies, handbooks or training programmes

the development of new tools:

- Creation of an exchange platform on child participation
- Development of handbooks, checklists and training material for specific areas of child participation
- Development of (model) national strategies for the implementation of national child participation mechanisms, including at regional and local levels



F. Translation of the present concept into the project proposal (abstract and work packages)

In the current draft of the electronic project proposal form (initialised by the coordinator), the project has now been described by the following “abstract”:

Promoting children’s rights to participation as covered by the Council of Europe Recommendation on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18 (CM/Rec (2012)2) is a priority area of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021). In light of these references, the project is aimed at promoting the use of Council of Europe tools on child participation amongst EU member states, including the Child Participation Assessment Tool (CPAT) and an upcoming Handbook on Children's Participation for Professionals, as a starting point for the development of national strategies and tools.

Under the coordination of the Council of Europe Children's Rights Division, a number of EU member states (represented by national governments and other stakeholders) will be partners and beneficiaries of the project. They will use, test and consolidate existing European tools while producing their own range of mechanisms and tools adapted to specific contexts in which child participation is taking place. Deliverables at the national level will include assessments of national mechanisms (legislation and practice), as well as the development of model national strategies, means-tested child safeguarding policies, handbooks, checklists and training materials aimed at building capacities on collective and individual child participation and at strengthening child participation mechanisms at the national level.

All partners of the project will connect in a network of "champions for children's participation", to benefit from mutual experiences and previous national experiences with child participation assessments undertaken at Council of Europe level, as well as with child participation mechanisms in various settings. The project will follow a multi-stakeholder approach by involving public authorities of different levels, civil society organisations, professionals of various backgrounds and children.

On the basis of this abstract and the other parts of this concept paper, it is proposed to present the joint project according to the following work packages:

- 1 – Project management and coordination (*mandatory*)
- 2 – Assessments of child participation mechanisms and tools according to the CPAT (focus group 1)
- 3 – Development of specific national child participation practice, resources and tools on the basis of needs assessments, European tools and peer support (focus group 2)
- 4 – Development of sustainable child participation mechanisms at different levels (national, regional local) and in different settings (political, social, educational, judicial, healthcare-related etc.)
- 5 – Set-up of a European network of “child participation champions” for continuous peer exchanges and to support the development of a range of European resources and tools for further dissemination of good practice (web-based platform, model national strategies, handbooks, checklists and training materials)

G. Long-term impact of the project

Beyond the project stages, deliverables and achievements described above, the project “CP4Europe” could also generate a wider and a long-term impact on the dynamics of child participation policies across Europe. Besides the governments (and other national stakeholders) acting as project partners, further governments represented on the Council of Europe Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) had, from the very start, expressed an interest in peer exchanges about child participation practice within a pan-European network. The dynamic developed within the project could lead to the creation of a more permanent network of “child participation champions” to which could also be associated those countries which represent a certain role model or leadership in the area of child participation, or whose stakeholders see a specific need for transnational exchanges to find inspiration for topical challenges.

Such a network, if well received by project partners and further associate countries, and successfully set up, could continue to exist beyond the project implementation phase of 24 months; it could possibly continue to be supported through EU funding and receive its own structure and tools (e.g. a minimal Secretariat equipment, a website centralising information and requests etc.).

H. Governance

The Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF), will be regularly informed of any progress achieved under the project. A project steering group could be created to involve the representatives of partner countries and international experts. The project would be coordinated by the Children’s Rights Division, where a dedicated Secretariat unit (including a project manager (B5) and a project assistant (B2)) could be set up under the supervision of administrators in place.

I. Implementing entity / contacts

Implementing Major Administrative Entity within the Council of Europe:

Directorate General for Democracy (DGII)

Directorate of Anti-Discrimination, Department of Children’s Rights and Sports Values

Children’s Rights Division

Council of Europe

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