



Good practices and recommendations from CPAT assessment projects in other Council of Europe member States

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Closing seminar of the pilot project – 29 January 2020:

Rights of children and young people to participate and their promotion in Finland

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Overview

1. Introduction: Council of Europe action on CP
2. Lessons learned from the CPAT tool
3. Evaluation of the tool by participating countries
4. Recommendations made by other countries
5. Way forward, including in the European project



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1. “What action has the Council of Europe taken, since the beginning of its Children’s Rights Programme, to foster CP?”



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Action taken at Council of Europe (CoE) level

Since 2006 and the beginning of its programme “Building a Europe for and with Children”, child participation action included “convincing some and providing guidance for others”

Support of sustainable and meaningful child participation was provided through:

- flagging **child participation as a priority** in consecutive Strategies
- developing **standards**, notably Rec(2012)2 on the participation of children and young people under 18
- developing **practical tools**, like the CPAT tool
- **involving children** in the CoE’s own activities: strategies, standards and guidance, monitoring, events
- **mainstreaming** children’s rights and child participation
- addressing the needs of **vulnerable** children (e.g. minorities, children with disabilities)
- facilitating human rights education thanks to **child-friendly language**



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2. “What are the lessons learned by different countries from using the Child Participation Assessment Tool (CPAT)?”



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“CPAT community and process”

Finland involved in developing the tool with CoE

Piloting phase (work cycle I)

2014–2015

Estonia

Ireland

Romania

Following rounds of assessment (work cycles II and III)

2016–2017

Bulgaria

Italy

Latvia

July 2018: Evaluation seminar in Sofia/Bulgaria

2018–2019

Finland

Malta

Slovenia

+Armenia

Possibly: further assessments in collaboration with EU



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Lessons learned in **work cycle II**

... as noted at the evaluation seminar in Sofia/Bulgaria in July 2018

- -The CPAT assessment is a **complex process**, which requires early preparations, to mobilise stakeholders and to involve children through focus group
- -Child participation is a **cross-cutting matter** requiring transversal views, e.g. close links exist between child participation and child-friendly justice
- -**Local initiatives** and action are important and should be linked into the project
- -Giving **feedback** to children who contributed to the process is crucial to ensure meaningful and credible participation
- -Better understanding of child participation (and its importance) must be increased amongst **top decision makers** to deploy action and resources



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3. “How was the tool itself evaluated by participating countries?”



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Main challenges met during the assessment

- Timing
- Organisation of a great number of child focus groups
- Organisation and follow-up of extensive surveys
- Obtaining information from authorities and partners
- Amount of available data and their inclusion
- Difference between data and reality on the ground
- Importance of induction training and support



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Evaluation of the tool

Strengths	Weaknesses
Clear, concise and easy to follow	Government to report – does the nominal ministry have the mandate? Role and work of NGOs is not specified.
Quick and easy to complete	Time consuming. Demands resources, training, a level of knowledge that is not always available at a national or in a municipal area.
Comprehensive	Only relates to some of the Recommendation. Elements missing include: participation in the family, in the community and on line (social media) as well younger children/early years.
Highlights issues that need attention (weaknesses) such as data availability, training of professionals, uneven implementation, difficulties experienced by particular hard to reach groups but also strengths that have been overlooked	Gaps in highlighting the situation in relation to marginalised or the seldom heard – the lack of data is limiting. Does not focus on implementation. Grades based on laws and policies will suggest a better picture than is the reality on the ground.
Raises interest in and knowledge of children and young people's participation and enables 'useful conversations' across sectors, settings and stakeholders.	Difficult for children and young people to understand.



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Evaluation of the tool

Strengths	Weaknesses
Collecting and triangulating data from a number of different sources including children and young people, NGO's, policy documents and research provides a good check and balance to the subjective nature of the self-assessment.	Collection of data from so many settings is too onerous and often the data is incomparable and based on different understandings of participation.
A foundation for building a culture of participation	Too many subjective terms like 'child friendly', 'effective'.
Potential for other uses, for example organisations assessing their practice and use in lobbying	Grading is not quite there. Still issues about how the different elements are weighted. Global scores can miss differences.
Could allow for comparison between countries, but...	Relies on too many subjective interpretations across countries, including self-evaluation of success factors (<u>so country comparison had been excluded from the process from the start; see implementation guide !</u>)
Forward working – incentivises progress	



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4. “What are the Recommendations coming from other countries?”



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Conclusions and recommendations from **work cycle I** (as noted by the supporting consultants)

- Invaluable reflections made and lessons learned; constructive conversations held throughout the process
- All 10 indicators are relevant, revisions instrumental to clarify concepts
- But: limited availability of data and time to look at so many settings
- Different understandings of the concept of participation amongst stakeholders involved
- Triangulation of data from different sources is important
- Approaches to assessment and judging own performance varies between countries
- Absence of subsequent action plans to improve child participation mechanisms and practice



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Conclusions and recommendations from **work cycle II** (as presented in Sofia in 2018)

- To ensure coherence of the CPAT project with Council of Europe references, all indicators of the CPAT tool should be researched in a balanced manner not excluding any
- The interplay between different partners involved in the project (NGO, academics, consultants, children) can follow different models, according to each national context, and will vary between countries (according to size and complexity of administrative systems);
- To ensure the project's success, support is needed from decision-makers as drivers
- Ideally, a working group or steering committee would be created to get all relevant stakeholders on board and formalise their collaboration and make it sustainable
- Reaching out to children under the CPAT project can be facilitated if the initiative is linked to existing child participation activities (e.g. in schools or alternative care)
- Besides activities at the national level, the involvement of the local level (e.g. local government, NGOs, schools etc.) is a factor of success



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Overall conclusions and recommendations
from the consultants who have been supporting
the process since the beginning....

- The process of undertaking the assessment is as important as the outcome results
- Participating countries have found that the process has:
 - raised awareness of the meaning and significance of participation
 - increased interest in the potential of child participation
 - increased interest also in strengthening opportunities
- Assessments have highlighted the extent of the gaps in current law and policy on the one hand and their effective implementation, on the other



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Overall conclusions and recommendations from the consultants who have been supporting the process since the beginning....

- The focus groups have often been the first time to seriously consult children about their views (certainly not in Finland though!)
- The CPAT process makes adults understand how important being listened to is for children and how they can learn from creating those spaces
- The tool is a means for shifting the institutional culture towards children: it requires going beyond individual actions and activities towards embedded laws, policies and practices
- But: an on-going commitment to act on the findings and monitor progress over time is needed



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Recommendations coming from **Bulgaria** (work cycle II)

Need for a new approach:

- children are subjects and their opinion must be heard and taken seriously; – presence is not participation;
- children's participation is not focused on hearing expert opinions;
- need to create a new communication model: how to talk, how to listen, how to ask, how to inform children?

Need for action:

- creating child-friendly information sources for different institutions;
- providing information that is understandable to children;
- applying a systematic, pro-active and understandable approach to raising children's awareness of topics related to child participation;
- establishing real mechanisms for implementing the normative opportunities for children to participate.



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Recommendations from Latvia (also work cycle II)

- The «substance» of child participation should be elaborated in sectoral laws; a «general principle» in law does not seem sufficient;
- It is proposed to establish a uniform family court institute for solving the current issue of «fragmentation» (different approaches in government branches);
- It is proposed to develop a unified cross-sectoral policy planning document on the protection of children's rights (e.g. a national strategy);
- Regular monitoring of the situation of the rights of the child should be undertaken by involving children;
- In Ombudsperson's offices, children's rights departments should be strengthened as appropriate and separate sections for children developed on websites.



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5. “What way forward, including at the European level?”



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Joint European action suggested at the Sofia evaluation seminar in July 2018

- Link up link up indicators of the CPAT tool and good practice observed in countries, for example via a **dedicated webpage** at Council of Europe level
- On this webpage, **share existing resources** (webpages, publications, etc.) to facilitate international exchanges
- Provide specific support for **professionals to develop their capacities** for child participation activities
 - >> **Child participation handbook** (in preparation in spring 2020)



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Joint European action suggested at the Sofia evaluation seminar in July 2018

- Provide **specific guidance** on areas which are particularly problematic (e.g. healthcare, family matters etc.)
- In any children's rights communication and activities, establish **transversal links between issues of child participation** and other substantive areas relevant for children (restorative justice, child-friendly justice, democratic citizenship education etc.)



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Way forward at the European level ...

Council of Europe:

- Evaluation of work cycle III: all work cycles taken together?
- Revision of the CPAT tool: underway; interest in outcome indicators?
- CoE Child Participation Handbook for professionals: what are specific points of interest for relevant training modules

European Union:

- A priority for the Commission since the Romanian Chairmanship
- Now further promoted through European projects

How to join forces?

- Creating a “CPAT /CP community” and platform for further exchanges?
- Further ideas?



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Thank you very much for your attention!



www.coe.int/children

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*Giving the floor back to you
for questions, comments and suggestions...*



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