



Uffiċċju tal-Kummissarju għat-Tfal

Office of the Commissioner for Children

# **Child Participation and Empowerment**

**ENOC Spring Seminar**

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[www.tfal.org.mt](http://www.tfal.org.mt)

# Child Participation

- Child participation is not just a right and a basic principle but it is also positive for the development of children and youth;
- Child participation has a positive impact on community engagement and active citizenship;
- Children have the right to be heard, to be involved in decision making and they have the right to access age-appropriate information.



# Meaningful Participation

**Space:** In order to become increasingly active in influencing matters affecting them, children need to be able to form and express views and they must be afforded the space and time to do so. They must be given the opportunity to gain the confidence, the time and a “safe and inclusive space” to contribute their views.

**Voice:** Appropriate and accessible information is an important pre-requisite for the ability to speak out and express views and negotiate decisions. Adults have a responsibility to find ways in which to enable children to communicate their views, concerns or ideas.

**Audience:** Central to the right to participate is that adults listen respectfully to what children have to say. The right to express views and have them given due weight can only be realised if children’s views are heard by those people with the power and authority to act on those views.

**Influence:** The right to participate does not automatically lead to children’s views being followed, in all circumstances and in every respect. However, it requires that their views are given proper consideration and that any subsequent decision is reported back to children with an explanation of how their views had an influence, and why the decision was made.

Lundy model of Child Participation



# Ensuring Meaningful Participation

**Child participation should be safe, ethical, inclusive and impactful.  
Participation needs to be:**

- Transparent and informative;
- Voluntary;
- Respectful;
- Relevant;
- Child-friendly;
- Inclusive;
- Supported;
- Safe – Child Protection Policy;
- Accountable.



# Child Participation, an Integral Part of our Work

- As clearly stated in General Comment No 2 ICRI should 'ensure that the views of children are expressed and heard on matters concerning their human rights and in defining issues relating to their rights'.
- In the work carried out by ICRI, child participation can take various forms.



# Building Knowledge and Creating an Understanding

- In order for our work to be effective we must really understand the challenges and experiences that children and young people face.
- This is usually done through consultation with children by ICRIs.
- The Office of the Commissioner for Children in Malta does this through various channels:
  - Council for Children (made up of adults and Children)
  - Advisory Group
  - Focus Groups
  - Research studies
  - Casework



# Consultation with children

- Consultation is held with children of different ages.
- We discuss many issues with our Advisory Group in order to guide our work and to set our priorities.
- In order to empower as many children as possible we hold sessions in schools and other organisations.
- Outreach participation programme to include vulnerable groups such as migrant children, victims of abuse etc..
- Nationwide focus Groups held to involve children in the Monitoring of the National Children's Policy.
- Some are more specific like visiting residential homes to listen to what children have to say.



# Collaborating with children

- Collaborating with children in the development of resources to ensure that they are effective and age-appropriate.
- Collaborating with children to create child-friendly versions of written documents.
- Collaborating with children in the designing of awareness raising initiatives – For Example Social media campaigns.
- Collaborating with Children to draw up recommendations - ENYA, Manifesto for Children





# Manifesto for Children 2022

Through its role of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the National Children's Policy, the Office of the Commissioner for Children has identified the priority areas that need to be addressed so as to guarantee children's rights.

To have a stronger National Children's Policy, Political Parties must pledge to:

- Incorporate the UNCRC into law
- Develop a national children's rights strategy
- Set up a unit to spearhead the implementation of the strategy
- Include children's rights in national emergency preparedness plans
- Mainstream children's rights across the entire education system

**To enable all children to live and grow in a healthier home environment, Political Parties must pledge to:**

- Identify and help struggling families with children through appropriate services
- Provide better planning and funding for out-of-home care
- Promote positive parenting and co-parenting
- Make corporal punishment illegal in all settings
- End domestic violence

**To ensure the social wellbeing of all children, political parties must pledge to:**

- Carry out Child Rights Impact Assessments in all law and policy making
- Strengthen the independence of the Office of the Commissioner for Children to carry-out its function
- Increase awareness and knowledge about children's rights and needs
- Further encourage and provide training for the participation of children
- Address the issue of bullying and peer pressure and provide adequate support for children

**To enable children to live in good Health and Environment, Political Parties must pledge to:**

- Significantly reduce child obesity by promoting better nutrition and physical activity
- Raise awareness on how children can maintain good mental health
- Address problematic use of the internet in children
- Create more and better public spaces and youth clubs for adolescents
- Significantly improve air quality across Malta

**To enhance the prospects of children in Education and Employment, Political Parties must pledge to:**

- Make education inclusive and respectful of all differences between children, including different gender and sexual identities
- Create an education system through which children can become active and open-minded learners and citizens as well as free and critical thinkers
- Extend free childcare to all children
- Expand vocational training in secondary education
- Increase time dedicated to school breaks and give more importance to physical education and activity

**To guarantee children's right to Leisure and Culture, political parties must pledge to:**

- Provide adequate and safe places for adolescents including the regulation of teen parties
- Create open spaces even in urban areas by closing busy roads so that children can play
- Increase efforts to promote participation in cultural and traditional activities
- Promote fun and sport activities to encourage children to create an online/offline balance
- Constitute an authority to regulate fun parks and luna parks

**To ensure the wellbeing of children participating in political and electoral campaigns, political parties must pledge to:**

- Establish a plan for the protection of children involved
- Provide information to parents and children on the possible positive and negative impact
- Obtain consent in writing of parents and children
- Carry out an assessment prior to approving the participation of children
- Ensure the protection of children of politically exposed persons

This Manifesto for children highlights the gaps identified by the interim-report on the implementation of the National Children's Policy which was based on a large number of focus groups carried out with children.

The Manifesto was drawn up in collaboration with the Office's Youth advisors.

The full report can be accessed by scanning the QR code.




# Child-Led Participation

- Empowering children and young people to advocate for their rights – Addressing Policy makers at a National Conference on Child-friendly Towns and Villages.
- Identifying issues that need to be addressed and how they should be addressed.
- Producing material for awareness raising and advocacy – For example a video to Commemorate Safer Internet Day.



#DigitalEU

EUROPEAN  
YEAR OF  
YOUTH



Panel discussion featuring three participants: George, Samara, and Hon. Dr. Michael Falzon. The background is yellow with a pattern of small white dots. The participants are shown in circular frames. George is a young man with glasses and a black jacket. Samara is a young woman with glasses and a blue face mask. Hon. Dr. Michael Falzon is an older man with a blue face mask and a suit. The video player interface at the bottom shows a progress bar at 05:48 and a subtitle 'What do you do best when you are online, and what do you do best?'.

**GEORGE**  
MEMBER

**SAMARA**  
PANEL MEMBER

**HON. DR MICHAEL FALZON,**  
MINISTER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND SOLIDARITY

05:48

What do you do best when you are online, and what do you do best?



# Empowerment

- All children have a lot to offer through their insights and experiences.
- It is our role to empower children and young people by building on their strengths.
- We should show children and young people that they are valued and that we value their contributions.
- We should support children to increase their awareness, skills and knowledge.
- We should assure them of our commitment to keep them safe.
- We should support peer relationships.
- We should take what they say seriously and keep them informed of their influence on decision-making.

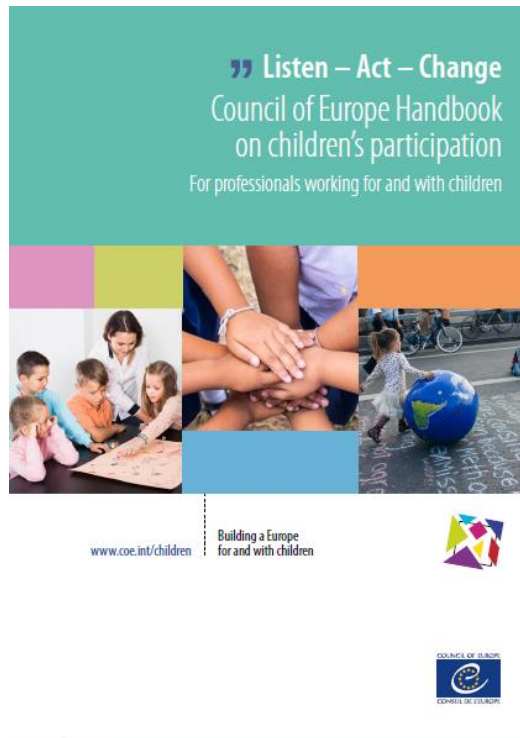


# Challenges

- Reaching vulnerable groups.
- Making child-participation age-appropriate especially for young children.
- Time – child participation is a process.
- Human Resources.
- Convincing authorities to really listen to children.
- Providing children with feedback following their participation.
- Children are often de-motivated as they feel that they are not being listened to.
- Lack of awareness on child participation.



# Useful Tools



Thank You

Questions?

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