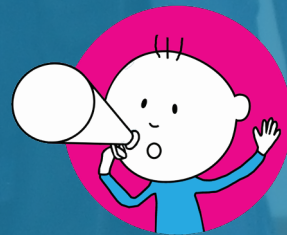




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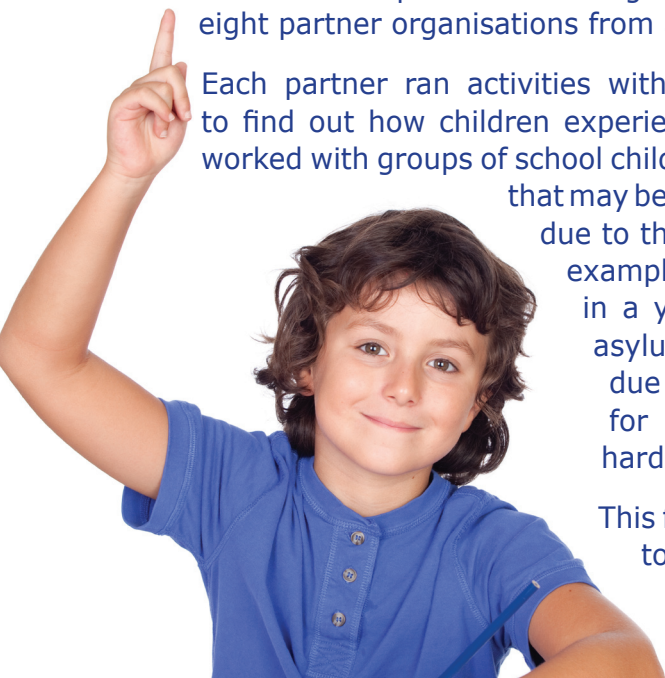
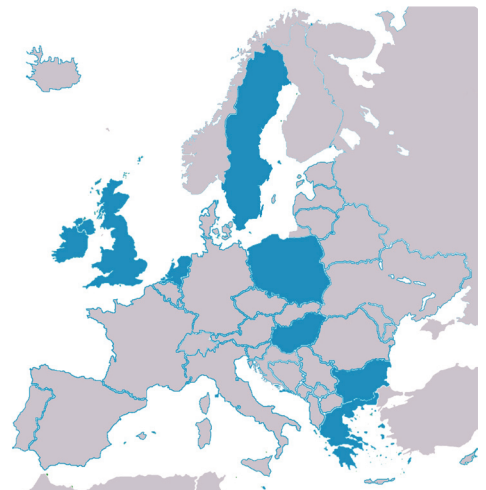
SPEAK UP!



GIVING A VOICE TO EUROPEAN CHILDREN IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS

The Speak Up! project was run by Eurochild, which is a European network that promotes the rights of children, and its eight partner organisations from across Europe.

Each partner ran activities with children aged 12-15 to find out how children experience their rights. They worked with groups of school children as well as children that may be particularly vulnerable due to their living situation, for example, those growing up in a youth institution or an asylum seeking centre, or due to their characteristics, for example, deaf or hard-of-hearing children.



This flyer tells you more about what we did and what the children told us.



CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Everyone has rights – certain things everybody is entitled to, such as the right to freedom of expression, special care, protection, culture and play, education and health care. Children's rights are human rights for people under the age of 18. These are laid out and protected by a special agreement that was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989. It was signed by almost every country in the world. This agreement is called the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). It states that all children have all the rights it contains, whatever their race, religion or abilities, whatever they think or say, and whatever their family background.

The UNCRC guarantees special protection for refugee children, disabled children, children without parents, children from minorities, children in detention and children experiencing particular vulnerable circumstances. Like adults, children have different coping strategies. Some children stand up for themselves, others find it difficult to speak up.

Children speak up!

In the Speak Up! project children met in small groups, so-called focus groups, to learn about, and to discuss, children's rights. In each country two groups of children were consulted: school children (the so-called 'control' group) and children who may be particularly vulnerable due to circumstance or characteristics.

They included: children living in an asylum seeking centre, deaf and hard-of-hearing children, children living in institutional care or foster care, Roma children, Traveller children, children living in deprived urban areas.



Children's rights not a game!



A children's rights game was developed. The cards have signs representing real and fake children's rights.

Most children had little or no knowledge about children's rights before they came to the meetings. The game was a fun way for children to learn about their rights.

Child participation methods

Once familiar with their rights, the children selected four rights which were most important to them and closest to their own life experiences and situations. The four selected rights were discussed in more depth and children came up with recommendations for better protection of their rights.

The children used different methods to express their views. Some produced a magazine, others did art work, drama, dance or poetry.



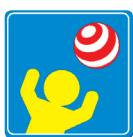
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Three main messages came out of the discussions with children:

1 CHILDREN WANT TO KNOW THEIR RIGHTS

Children, in particular children in vulnerable situations, do not know their rights: they need to be made aware of their rights.

➔ **Eurochild calls for a European campaign on children's rights**



"Just being a child is very important. Not only work or be responsible"
(Dutch girl)

"If children do not learn how to read and write and basic maths, and these are missing from our lives, than we will not be able to form our own opinions and cannot find a job"



(Hungarian child living in foster care)



"...everyone is allowed to make mistakes, aren't they? Am I right or wrong? That's how we learn from it and obviously, I reckon, by putting children like us, 13, 14, 15-year-olds into jail and shit, that's not really going to help"
(English boy)

"Travellers are not meant to do education (...) we're meant to teach our own ways"

(English Traveller boy)



"... His mother beat him with a cable and he wanted to commit suicide by jumping from the second floor"
(Polish boy, 12y, being a witness of an incidence of violence)

"Regarding asylum seeking procedures: 'speed and clarity is necessary! But in a human way"

(Dutch girl)



"Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty"

(Swedish deaf child, addressed to Swedish and EU politicians)

2

EQUAL TREATMENT OF ALL CHILDREN



All children are equal, whatever their race, religion or abilities, whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from and whatever age they are. The fact that they are under the age of 18 does not mean that they should be treated differently.

→ Eurochild calls on the EU to assess how its non-discrimination legislation can protect children.

The right for disabled children to special care: *"Ensure that teachers teaching deaf and hard-of hearing children are able to use sign language"*

Swedish children

The right to be protected against violence and abuse: *"If we were the Prime Minister we would ensure "harsher punishments" for those who are abusing and hurting children"*

Hungarian children

"All children need a warm bed, a roof and to eat healthily to be well"

Greek girl

The right to be protected against violence and abuse: *"To be bullied because you are 'different' can mark you for the rest of your life"*

Dutch girl

"Everyone is equal: all people should be treated the same and not treated differently because of their colour, their clothes, etc"

Irish girl

The right to health care: *"Children who are different from others also have a right to health care"*

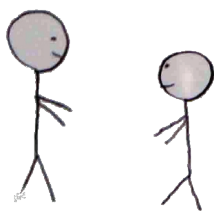
Dutch girl

The right to be treated equally: *"If we were the Prime Minister, we would give money to all children who were poorer than ourselves so that all families could have a warm home, food and clothes"*

Greek children



3 CHILDREN HAVE A RIGHT TO BE LISTENED TO AND RESPECTED



Children in Europe, in particular those in vulnerable circumstances, are not asked for their opinion and have had very limited opportunities to think about what is important to them as individuals and to make their own choices in life.

→ **Eurochild urges professionals to be trained on children's rights, including on anti-discrimination and their right to participate.**

Child participation structures have to include ALL children. Child participation indicators and benchmarks can help organisations and professionals to strengthen participatory approaches. Eurochild calls for a Europe-wide mechanism to celebrate and promote good practices.

Do you listen to us?

“We would like to participate in more events at school and in our village”

Bulgarian children



“Make sure our rights are heard and children should know what their rights are”

Irish girl



The favourite part of the consultation sessions of some young people were:

“learning about new rights”

UK boy, aged 15



“Pay more attention to us. We do have a very big voice and just because we are small and stuff doesn't mean we haven't things to say”

Irish girl



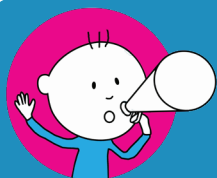
“choosing most important rights”

UK boy, aged 15



What is children's participation?

Children's Participation means that “children have their voice heard and are listened to seriously and are able to influence decisions affecting them” (article 12 of the UN Convention on Children's Rights).



SPEAK UP! PARTNERS

Eight Eurochild partners from different European countries took part in the Speak Up! project, each working with different groups of children experiencing vulnerable situations.

ORGANISATION	COUNTRY	CHILDREN IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS CONSULTED
Amalipe Centre for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance	Bulgaria	Roma children from rural areas
Roots Research Centre	Greece	Roma children
Family, Child, Youth Association	Hungary	Children in residential care and children in foster care
Pavee Point Travellers' Centre	Ireland	Traveller children
Yohri – Youth and Human Rights Institute	The Netherlands	Asylum seeking children living in asylum centres
Foundation Institute of Social Initiative	Poland	Children living in 'urban poverty pockets'
Malardalen University	Sweden	Deaf and hard-of-hearing children
Children's Rights Alliance for England	The UK (England)	Children in Secure Children's Homes

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Eurochild is a network of organisations and individuals working in and across Europe to improve the quality of life of children and young people. Our work is underpinned by the principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Eurochild's activities include:

Sharing information on policy and practice;

- Monitoring and influencing policy development at national and European level;
- Creating interest groups and partnerships between member organizations;
- Representing the interests of its members to international institutions;
- Strengthening the capacity of its members through training, individual advice and support.

Eurochild has members in 35 countries all over Europe (both within and outside of the EU).

The views expressed in this publication are those of Eurochild and do not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.



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