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Exploring what the EU can do to promote and support the participation of children in decision-making



Experts' supporting document to the



Bucharest EU Children's Declaration

Introduction

This paper has been written in support of the *Bucharest EU Children's Declaration on Children's Participation in Decision-Making and Policy-Making at European Union level* which was drafted by a group of Romanian children, further developed in consultation with children across Europe and adopted at the International Conference on Children's Participation in Decision-Making and Policy-Making at European Union level in Bucharest. This Annex proposes solutions and recommendations for EU institutions and member states on how best to realise the ideas set out in the Declaration. The drafting draws on the expertise of representatives of EU institutions, member states, child rights experts and organisations, and children to review mechanisms that could be used to strengthen child participation in EU institutions¹.

The right of children to express their views freely and for those views to be taken into consideration is a fundamental right enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely ratified human rights convention in the world. This right is protected by Article 24 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The benefits of child participation accord strongly with the aims and objectives of the European Union. At a time when Europe is facing a rising tide of populism and scepticism about the true beneficiaries of liberal democratic political systems and falling youth voter rates, the participation of children in decision-making is a topic that needs to be prioritised. The specific advantages for the EU Institutions to involve children in its work can be seen as threefold:

- It will help to ensure that the priorities of the EU include those issues of most significance and relevance to children in Europe.
- It will help to ensure that the EU's reports, debates, resolutions and campaigns are informed by the experiences and perspectives of children and therefore more likely to lead to positive outcomes.
- It provides a positive role model to national parliaments and member states, building understanding and encouraging the creation of more opportunities for children's civic engagement at national, regional and local levels.

It is not only because participation is a right that we should take this seriously or because 1 in 5 Europeans is under 18 years of age. The way children think, their openness to change, their unbiased views, and their out-of-the box thinking are critical traits that can help in finding solutions to the world's most persistent problems, be it poverty, climate change, migration, or the rise of populism. At the moment all over Europe children are taking to the streets, but it is time that formal mechanisms are established in the EU for children to have their voices heard. The *Bucharest EU Children's Declaration* is an urgent call on the EU and its member states to accept that child participation is essential for the future of Europe.

Legal and policy guidance

The EU and member states must respect, protect and fulfill children's human rights. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) ratified by all 28 members of the European Union provides the most robust guidance on the state's obligations to fulfill the child's right to be heard. Article 12 of the Convention, states that:

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall, in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law².

¹ The term children, both here and throughout the Annex refers to people under the age of 18 in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

² [The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s General Comment 12 elaborates in detail the scope of Article 12, and how the Committee expects governments to interpret their obligations to children under its provisions³. The General Comment makes it clear that the right to be heard or to ‘participate’ applies to **all** children and State parties have an obligation to make particular efforts to engage children who are vulnerable or affected by discrimination and to ensure that child participation is an on-going process not a one-off consultation event.

In addition to the UNCRC, the EU and its member states have Charter and Treaty obligations regarding children’s rights. Article 24 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union recognises children’s right to be heard⁴. The Charter guarantees the protection of the rights of the child by the EU institutions and member states when they implement EU law.

Article 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union establishes the objective for the EU to promote protection of the rights of the child. In its policy, Investing in Children, the European Commission recommends that member states:

- Put in place mechanisms that promote children’s participation in decision-making;
- Enable and encourage children to express informed views, ensuring that those views are given due weight and are reflected in the main decisions affecting them;
- Involve children in running services and consult them on relevant policy planning;
- Reach out to and support the participation of children from disadvantaged backgrounds⁵.

The EU Youth Strategy (2019-2027) promises to *Engage, Empower and Connect* and places youth participation right at the forefront of youth policy. Objectives in the Strategy talk of ‘fostering youth participation in democratic life’ and ‘supporting social and civil engagement’⁶. There is no common definition of the age of ‘youth’ across member states but the EU Youth Strategy is seen apply to young people aged 15 to 30. There is no similar over-arching EU strategy for children (aged 0-18). A parallel EU Strategy focused on younger children would provide a framework to sustain children’s involvement in decision-making. Following its Communication of 4 July 2006 ‘Towards an EU Strategy on the rights of the child’, the European Commission adopted an EU Agenda for the rights of the child in February 2011⁷. This set out a number of general principles, whilst focusing on a few specific action areas such as child-friendly justice and protecting children in vulnerable situations. More than 8 years have passed since adoption of this Agenda and most actions have been delivered. It would now be appropriate to reinvigorate the EU’s commitment to children’s rights with development and adoption of a new over-arching strategy.

Implementation mechanisms

The position of the Commission coordinator for the rights of the child was established in 2007 to ensure that the rights of the child are properly considered in all relevant policies and actions throughout the European Commission departments⁸. A new coordinator was appointed in September 2018. She is supported by a small team of experts. The Commission also promotes dialogue with member states through an informal expert group. At the 12th European Forum on the rights of the child held in April 2019, children’s participation in political and democratic life was one of three main themes for discussion. The Commission announced that

³ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009) [General Comment No 12 The Right of the Child to be Heard](#)

⁴ [EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](#)

⁵ COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION of 20 February 2013 [Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage](#) (2013/112/EU)

⁶ Res Doc.14080/18: Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Youth Strategy 2019 – 2027

⁷ COM(2011) 60 final, An EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/rights-child/eu-action-rights-child_en

as a concrete follow up to those discussions it will be launching a study to explore how child participation in the democratic life of the EU level can be strengthened.

With support from the European Parliament Intergroup on Children’s Rights, some members of the European Parliament have met with children at an annual event organised by UNICEF and Eurochild and its membership network. At these events children have explained to the parliamentarians how they are influencing decisions that affect children at local level and raised issues of concern including the need for greater access to child-friendly information⁹.

In the area of youth policy, covering the age group of 15 to 30, the European Union has a more elaborate tools and structures to engage directly with young people. This includes the European Youth Forum, the annual European Youth Event held at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, and the EU Youth Dialogue which is linked to the Presidency of the EU and the European Commission. Many of these are closely connected to national and local participation mechanism such as National Youth Councils and National School Students Councils. The Erasmus+ programme also provides important tools and funding for the promotion of youth participation across the EU. The EU Youth Dialogue process strives to include young people in policy-shaping and bring about positive change in youth policy at local, regional, national and European level but it is for youth and there are no parallel, dedicated mechanisms to support the participation of children - that is, those citizens of the EU who are under 18 years of age. Examples of good practices provide strong evidence on both why and how children (one fifth of the EU population) should be involved in decision making.

At a national level practice varies considerably across member states with some excellent examples of good practice but children’s rights to spaces to be heard and taken seriously in public decision making are not fully or consistently respected across the Union¹⁰. This is particularly true for children in vulnerable situations. The European Commission’s evaluation of children’s participation in the EU, reported that some form of children’s participation is provided for in at least one piece of legislation in all EU member states¹¹. However, in the most recent rounds of reporting back to governments across Europe on their periodic examinations, the UN Committee has pointed to the lack of a culture of listening, inadequate resourcing, absent and poorly functioning participation structures, and children’s views not being given adequate weight¹². The Committee has also raised specific concerns about the lack of opportunities to participate for disabled children, Roma children, and children with experience of migration and/or asylum processes and those experiencing poverty as well as children facing other disadvantages¹³.

The Council of Europe has supported a number of EU member states to evaluate their structures and processes using a Child Participation Assessment Tool¹⁴. With the help of the tool which has been used in Bulgaria, Estonia, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, and Romania, governments can identify strengths and gaps and plan targeted action to ensure that all children can exercise their right to be heard.

⁹ See Eurochild’s [Annual reports 2016, 2017, 2018](#)

¹⁰ For examples of good practice please see: Crowley, A. and Larkins, C. (2018) [Children’s Participation on Public Decision-making – a review of practice. Eurochild Conference 2018 Background paper](#). Eurochild.

¹¹ ECORYS. 2015. [Evaluation of Legislation, Policy and Practice on Children’s Participation in the European Union \(EU\). Final Report](#). Brussels: EC Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers.doi:10.2838/45596.

¹² Crowley, A. and Larkins, C. (2018) [Children’s Participation on Public Decision-making – a review of practice. Eurochild Conference 2018 Background paper](#). Eurochild.

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Council of Europe (2015) [Child Participation Assessment Tool](#). Strasbourg.

The case for child participation in policy-making at an EU level

The Committee on the Rights of the Child considers that recognising the right of the child to express views and to participate in decision-making, according to her or his evolving capacities, is beneficial for the child, the family, the community, the school, the state and democracy. We know that having opportunities to participate in decision-making collectively **impacts positively on children in terms of their health and well-being**. Children can **increase their knowledge and understanding** of their rights as well as learn new transferable skills when they participate in public decision-making¹⁵.

It can also improve the **effectiveness of policies**, the **quality of public services** and bring benefits to communities. The active engagement of children provides information and insight into their lives with which to inform legislation, policies, budget allocation and services.

Participation is central to a process of **building accountability** and promoting good governance. It is a means through which governments and other duty bearers can be held to account. Community participation in government decisions helps improve public services, holds public officials to account, ensures justice and strengthens the rule of law. Participation will contribute positively to enhanced decision-making and improved outcomes. For example, as the Oak Foundation explains, it leads to **better protection**. Children who are silenced and passive can be abused by adults with relative impunity. Providing them with information, encouraging them to articulate their concerns and introducing safe and accessible mechanisms for challenging violence and abuse are key strategies for providing effective protection¹⁶.

In addition, participation promotes **civic engagement and active citizenship**. Through experience of direct participation in matters of concern to them children can become **active and effective advocates** for the realisation of their own rights, and contribute to the creation of peaceful and democratic societies which are respectful of human rights. Participation contributes to a culture of respect in which decision-making is undertaken through negotiation, not conflict. Children also learn that human rights are reciprocal and mutual and not a route to selfish individualism.

Listening to children, taking their views and opinions seriously and responding positively makes a difference to children, to public services and contributes to creating a culture of respect and reciprocity. Making extra efforts to ensure the inclusion of children who are disadvantaged by poverty, or by race, religion, disability or status maximises those dividends for all concerned.

How can child participation be organised meaningfully?

If the EU is to promote the right of child to participate in matters that affect them, it is important to develop a common understanding of the concept. Meaningful participation requires more than just listening to children. Children’s views must be given serious consideration in line with the full text of Article 12. Meaningful participation has been usefully conceptualised by Professor Laura Lundy to include the concepts of **Space** where children can come together to express their views; **Voice** where children are provided with information and support to facilitate expression of views; **Audience** where children have access to the people who make the decisions; and **Influence** where children’s views are given proper consideration and they get feedback on the decisions and how their views were taken into account¹⁷.

Meaningful participation requires the inclusion of children who have diverse experiences, including for example, disabled children, refugee children and young children. It requires consideration of whose views

¹⁵ Ross, G. Kerridge, E. & Woodhouse, A. (2018) *The Impact of Children and young People’s Participation on Policy-making*. Children in Scotland and the Scottish Government.

¹⁶ Oak Foundation (2017) *Child Abuse Programme Guiding Principles*, pages 9-10.

¹⁷Lundy L. (2007) *Voice is not enough: Conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. *British Educational Research Journal*. 33(6)(6):927-942.

are represented. Participatory processes which bridge national and European levels, and which involve children identifying issues, gathering views from their peers, and representing these to national and international audiences can be effective and inclusive of children living in vulnerable situations¹⁸. The efficacy of the model has been shown in the EU Youth Dialogue and can be expanded to other EU areas of policy making.

When considering new or refreshed structures and mechanisms for the EU institutions to involve children in decision-making it will be important to ensure that practice is of a sufficient quality and results in meaningful engagement. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has identified a number of basic requirements for children’s participation to be effective, ethical, systematic and sustainable¹⁹. The EU will need to consider how these requirements are reflected in any and all the initiatives they prepare for working directly with children. The nine basic requirements stipulate that child participation should be:

- Transparent and informative
- Voluntary
- Relevant
- Facilitated with child-friendly environments and working methods:
- Inclusive
- Supported by training
- Safe and sensitive to risk
- Accountable

Participation can take many different forms and decisions as to which form or approach will be informed by the purpose and context of the activity. It is very important to be clear from the outset what is the goal or objectives of involving children in a particular activity. This will help to determine the form the participation takes. In a review of child participation activity earlier this year, Eurochild reported that children across Europe participate in decision-making in a huge variety of ways both online and offline²⁰. These included: via government consultations; in inquiries; the setting of budgets; giving evidence to government or parliamentary enquires; joining government appointed committees and expert advisory groups; and national, local and school based children’s parliaments or forums. Children can be involved in multiple ways in and through the work of the EU institutions: as advisers, as researchers, as communicators and as peer educators.

Many child participation initiatives in Europe are supported by NGOs who have a key role to play, especially in assisting more formal institutions to link up with children and engage in dialogue²¹. This is especially true with regard to supporting the participation of children living in vulnerable situations. Since the UNCRC first came into force 30 years ago, there has been a proliferation of toolkits, guidance and recommendations on just how to organise and deliver meaningful, inclusive child participation in public decision-making²². Whilst there are key principles that need to be adhered to in relation to children’s safety and well-being, and the responsibilities on adults to reach out to marginalised children and create as child-friendly environment as possible, it is the behaviour and approach of staff that really determine whether children will be able to

¹⁸ Larkins, C. (2011) ‘Can the EU live up to the expectations of its child citizens?’ *International Journal of Children’s Rights Special Issue: Children and the European Union*, Vol. 19(3), 451-476.

¹⁹ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009) [General Comment No 12 The Rights of the Child to be Heard](#).

²⁰ Crowley, A. and Larkins, C. (2018) [Children’s Participation on Public Decision-making – a review of practice. Eurochild Conference 2018 Background paper](#) Eurochild.

²¹ ECORYS. 2015. [Evaluation of Legislation, Policy and Practice on Children’s Participation in the European Union \(EU\). Final Report](#). Brussels: EC Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers. doi:10.2838/45596

²² Lansdown, G. (2014) 25 years of the UNCRC: Lessons Learned in Children’s Participation, [Canadian Journal of Children’s Rights](#). 1(1).

participate effectively²³. Important things to consider when setting up structures and mechanisms for children's participation include:

- All children can participate as long as appropriate support and time is provided.
- Capacity building and education are key for adults as well as children themselves – it is not possible to promote children's right to participate if you do not know that the right exists or how to implement it.
- Attitudes of respect and commitment to children's participation are essential if it is to be meaningful and effective.

Opportunities for realising child participation at the EU level

Listed below are a number of opportunities for involving children at the EU (institution) level. It is not an exhaustive list and there may be other ways of children being involved that have not been considered and may become clear through further consultation with children:

- **Consulting children on their priorities and on the EU's legislative proposals.** This could be done through a variety of offline and online means including through local representatives in national structures and onwards to EU institutions through a European Children's Platform and an EU Children's Dialogue. It could happen at a constituency level where MEPs meet with children and at the EU level.
- **Advisory groups.** An advisory group of children and young people could be established for a particular enquiry or investigation.
- **Reviewing and monitoring progress.** Children can be involved reviewing and assessing progress against the EU standards and instruments in the same way that children routinely now participate in the periodic reporting processes to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The key issues to think about in relation to any and all of these ideas include:

- The purpose of involving children.
- Terms of reference for the engagement, including the frequency of meetings and forms of communication during and in between face to face meetings.
- How to reach out to a broad range of children who are most affected including children who are living in vulnerable situations to ensure different perspectives are adequately reflected.
- Support for the children including training and capacity building for staff, parliamentarians and children.
- Ensuring children are fully informed about their role and how their views will be considered.
- Providing feedback to children on how their views have been taken into account. Tracking of the impact children's views have on policy implementation, in order to promote accountability.

Addressing the challenges

Legislation is no guarantee that children's right to be heard is safeguarded.²⁴ The subsequent interpretation can exclude particular groups of children (for example, migrant children, disabled children or children under the age of 12) from decisions that will have a huge impact on their lives. While there are a number of practical difficulties that can be addressed, for example, the lack of child-friendly information, and the lack of training across the EU28, the European Commission's own research identified a series of shared 'implementation' challenges which were primarily cultural, structural and historical in nature.

The more cultural aspects of public awareness and attitudes play a key role in determining the success or otherwise of child participation measures in many of the countries analysed.... In most European

²³ UNICEF (2019) *Children's Participation in the work of National Human Rights Institutions*.

²⁴ See for example the ECORYS study (2015) [Evaluation of Legislation, Policy and Practice on Children's Participation in the European Union \(EU\). Final Report](#). Brussels: EC Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, European Commission.

countries, the dominant view is still that adults decide what is right for children, in spite of legislation that provides for participation opportunities²⁵.

Negative attitudes towards the participation of children are a challenge. They are usually based on a belief that children lack capacity to act responsibly and to understand the complexities of European policy debates. These arguments can be challenged with reference to accumulated evidence to the contrary but we should be in no doubt that changing cultural norms and expectations is a long term endeavour and requires resources.

A further challenge is involving only a small group of children and young people from similar elite or privileged backgrounds and/or with particular characteristics. Reaching out to children from a range of different backgrounds is essential to ensure that the voices of children living in vulnerable situations and younger children (under 11) are included. Experience would suggest that national and regional NGOs are well placed to assist EU institutions in this regard. Successful approaches will be reflective and are likely to involve all of the following:

- the use of clear and accessible language that children can understand and a range of communication methods that children use and can relate to;
- attending to barriers for example, meeting the costs of transportation promptly and having interpreters available to support young people who are newly arrived;
- having multiple ways to engage children not just ‘one’ way;
- training and raising awareness with staff; and
- talking to children themselves and experimenting with a range of methods²⁶.

Finally, the key challenge is the lack of resources and capacity within EU institutions dedicated to realising children’s right to be heard. Resources are required to practice effective, quality and ethical participation but with trained facilitators a lot can be achieved. It is suggested that the EU institutions take a strategic, collaborative approach to involving children in their work. Starting with small steps, learning from experience and building up to multiple initiatives, as and when resources and confidence allow.

Recommendations

Having presented a brief review of the current policy framework and implementation mechanisms at an EU level, the case for children’s participation, guidance on how to organise it meaningfully and an exploration of the opportunities and challenges, this paper now concludes with a number of recommendations for EU institutions on how best to realise the ideas and demands set out in the *EU Bucharest Children’s Declaration*. Two of the recommendations focus on building capacity in EU institutions and setting the agenda with the remainder directed towards the setting up of new structures and mechanisms to enable and support children’s participation within the EU institutions – the Council, the Parliament and the Commission.

When considering these recommendations, it is most important to understand that child participation and the routes to establishing practices that respect children’s right to be heard within EU institutions, should be viewed as a process and not a one-off event. This is a journey that requires action, review, stock-taking and the application of learning; continuously building on the strengths and capacity of all partners and stakeholders. Adhering to human rights principles, the journey must recognize the priorities of children themselves and the importance of reaching out to include **all** children, particularly younger children (aged 12 years and under) and children living in vulnerable situations.

²⁵ Ecorys (2015: 22) [Evaluation of legislation, policy and practice of child participation in the European Union](#). Directorate-General for Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, European Commission.

²⁶ Crowley, A. Moxon. D. (2017) New and innovative forms of youth participation in decision-making processes. Council of Europe.

Building capacity and setting the agenda

The means of progressing the journey are located within EU institutions but there is an urgent need to build capacity in these institutions: to raise awareness and develop understanding amongst civil servants and parliamentarians; to build a culture of listening and taking seriously the views and opinions of children living in the Union; and ultimately thereby, to recognise the accountability of the EU to realise its obligations to children.

1. The EU should establish a **clear road map or agenda** for fulfilling its obligations (as set out in the UNCRC and its own Charter of Fundamental Rights) on the right of the child to be heard in all matters that affect them. That is, their right to express views and opinions and to have those views taken into account when decisions are made. The road map should be developed in consultation with children, member states, and civil society; be delivered by the European Commission with progress monitored by the European Council (subject to an annual report from the Commission). As with the EU’s Youth Strategy, the strategy should have several goals or objectives (co-produced with children) that drive the Commission’s dialogues with children (see recommendation 3 below).
2. Staff working in the EU institutions should receive **training on children’s right to be heard** – how to do it (including engaging with children living in vulnerable situations), why it’s important, the vision, how children can be involved in setting the agenda and the relevance of child participation to the European project. The training should be mandatory across all DGs and there should be sufficient resources allocated both to capacity building and facilitating child participation.
3. Increase the scope and resourcing of the **European Commission’s Children’s Rights Coordinator** to support more comprehensive consultations with children on legislative proposals. Information on the proposals will have to be produced in child-friendly formats and consultation methods should include the use of social media and digital platforms as well as face-to-face opportunities with the aim of being inclusive and reaching diverse groups of children not just the elite.

Structures and mechanisms

4. A **structured dialogue mechanism** with children should be instituted at the EU level. This can be inspired by the existing structured dialogue in the youth sector²⁷ but should be adapted to the specific needs and protection requirements for children. Procedures will need to be established that: a) enable children to raise their own issues as well as comment on EU legislative measures and, b) provide feedback on how the children’s views have been considered and taken into account in the decision-making. The following initial steps are suggested:
 - Build on the success of the European Parliament’s Intergroup on Children’s Rights, and support MEPs to consult with their child constituents (individually and via national, regional and local, child forums) on legislative proposals and decision-making within the European Parliament. MEPs could also visit schools and make use of the Euroscola initiative²⁸.

²⁷ For reference see the Structured Dialogue in the youth sector https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/implementation/dialogue_en

²⁸ Euroscola is an initiative of the European Parliament information offices and offers an immersive experience in the Chamber of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, allowing high-school students to learn about European integration by experiencing it firsthand. Students from the 28 EU Member States are selected to become Members of the European Parliament for one day. They take the floor in plenary and committee sessions to debate and vote on resolutions on current affairs, all the while practicing their language skills and making friends with fellow students from across Europe. Teachers also have the opportunity to meet their colleagues and exchange feedback about their own classroom practices & experiences: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/euroscola/en/home.html>

- Based on the knowledge of the current TRIO Presidency (RO, FI, HR) expertise, propose the creation of a pilot cycle of structured dialogue with children under the incoming trio presidency (DE, PT, SI). The cycle should consist of the following three phases, matching to one Presidency term each:
 - Phase 1 preparing and carrying out the consultation with children
 - Phase 2 high level symposium or event with children and policy makers resulting in proposals for improved policy making
 - Phase 3 implementation of the policy recommendation from the high-level symposium or event; as well as impact assessments.
- In the longer term, a representative European Children's Platform should be established with representation from every member state, composed of national children's councils. The Platform should enable children to debate and draft resolutions on issues of concern as well as provide comments on draft EU legislation.
- 5. The EU should develop capacity in member states and support the engagement of children in all levels of decision-making through both **dedicated funding programmes and by guiding other investments including Cohesion Policy**. The *Bucharest EU Children's Declaration* calls on the EU to prioritise the following: a) the funding of school programmes to educate children about their right to participate; b) programmes that build the capacity of parents/guardians; and c) programmes that support the engagement of children in decision-making at a local or municipal level.
- 6. The Inter-group on children's rights and the child rights office in the European Parliament should undertake an **annual stock take** of how the Commission and Parliament have promoted and protected children's rights to have their views taken into account on matters that affect them, publishing an annual report on the 'State of Children's Rights to Participate'. This could be linked to World Children's Day which celebrates children's rights on the 20th November every year.
- 7. Following on from the International Conference on Children's Participation in Decision-Making and Policy-Making at European Union level in Bucharest in 2019, the European Council should introduce a procedure whereby each Trio Presidency includes during its program, **a high-level symposium or event focused on the participation of children in public decision-making**. The Trio could also oversee the Children's Dialogue on a topic selected by children (as under the EU Youth Dialogue).

The following options for administrative solutions to take these recommendations forward should be considered²⁹:

- Adoption of a decision by the President of the European Commission³⁰ to set up specific functions or structures to give greater effect to the participation of children in decision-making within the European Commission.
- The application of an institutional mechanism of policy action that is not currently provided in EU legislation.
- Complaint to the European Ombudsperson regarding the absence of procedural tools to give effect to the fundamental right of the child to participate in EU institutional decision-making.

Last updated: 2.05.2019

²⁹ Informal advice given by Dentons Europe LLP (law firm) to Eurochild on 'Tools and mechanisms in administrative EU law that could enable procedural participation of children in EU decision-making processes', 15 February 2019

³⁰ Under Article 22 of the European Commission's Rules of Procedure.