



CHILD PARTICIPATION ASSESSMENT TOOL

” Implementation
Guide

Council of Europe
Children's Rights
Division and
Youth Department



CHILD PARTICIPATION ASSESSMENT TOOL

Implementation Guide

French edition:

Outil d'évaluation de la participation des enfants: guide

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Frequently Asked Questions and Answers on the Child Participation Assessment Tool

Question 1: What is the Child Participation Assessment Tool?

■ **Answer:** The Council of Europe has developed a Child Participation Assessment Tool with **ten specific and measurable indicators** to measure progress in the area of children's participation. The indicators can be used by States to measure progress in implementing Recommendation CM/Rec (2012)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18.

■ The ten indicators are cross-cutting, rather than thematic, and reflect the three broad measures addressed in the Recommendation:

- ▶ Measures to protect the right to participate
- ▶ Measures to promote the right to participate
- ▶ Measures to create space for participation

Question 2: What is Children's Participation?

■ **Answer:** Children's participation is the right of children to be listened to and taken seriously. It is defined by the Council of Europe Recommendation (2012)2 as *'individuals or groups of children having the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and, where necessary, the support to freely express their views, to be heard and to contribute to decision making on matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.'* This definition is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Article 12 (the child's right to express an opinion), and to have that opinion taken into account, in any matter or procedure affecting the

child). The UNCRC Committee has adopted a General Comment 12 (2009) on 'The right to be heard', which explains in detail the meaning of children's participation and its implementation in practice in different settings, including education and schools, health care, in situations of violence, the family, judicial proceedings, etc. <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC-C-GC-12.pdf>

Question 3: Who should use the Child Participation Assessment Tool?

■ **Answer:** The Child Participation Assessment Tool is intended for **member States of the Council of Europe**. Ministries responsible for children's rights and welfare will lead on the assessment, but will have to involve different stakeholders, including other government departments, civil society, children's ombudspersons, organisations representing professionals working with and for children and academics.

Question 4: Why should a State use the Assessment Tool, what is the added value?

■ **Answer:** The Tool will enable States to:

- ▶ Raise awareness and understanding of children's right to participate
- ▶ Undertake a baseline assessment of the current implementation of children's right to participate
- ▶ Help identify measures needed to achieve further compliance
- ▶ Highlight and share good practice
- ▶ Measure progress over time

Question 5: We do already report on the implementation of the UNCRC, including the right of children to participate, to the UNCRC Committee. Is the Child Participation Assessment process not a duplication of our reporting process on the UNCRC?

■ **Answer: No**, the child participation assessment process should be integrated in the UNCRC Reporting process. In this way the outcomes of the child participation assessment can directly feed into the UNCRC Reporting process. A Fact Sheet on the link between the UNCRC Reporting process and the child participation assessment process has been produced by the Council of Europe and is included in this pack.

Question 6: Do we need to involve children and young people in the child participation assessment process?

■ **Answer: Yes**. Some of the indicators can be measured by collecting data and published information, but for several of the indicators the opinions of children and young people are required in order for member States to make a sound judgement on progress. **Finding out from children and young people, the reality of the situation on the ground, has to be an essential element of the process of self-assessment** that the member State undertakes. Such feedback provides a 'check and balance' to the subjective nature of the assessment. Guidance is provided to gather children's views and experiences in focus group meetings, including vulnerable children.

Question 7: What is the role of NGOs in the child assessment process?

■ **Answer:** It is important to ensure that information used to inform the assessment process comes from a range of sources. **NGOs are well placed to understand what is happening and will often have a good knowledge of the situation of vulnerable children and young people.** Their input into the assessment process is very important and it can be seen to provide another 'check and balance'. The optimum situation is for member States to triangulate their own evaluation of their performance with the views and experiences of NGOs, and the views and experiences of as wide a range as possible, of children and young people.

Question 8: How much time does it cost to carry out the Child Participation Assessment?

■ **Answer: About one year.** This includes a preparation phase with a training seminar for all stakeholders to be involved (2 months); an implementation phase to collect data, consult with children and young people and other stakeholders (8 months), and a concluding and evaluation phase (2 months).

Question 9: What do we need to budget to carry out the Assessment?

■ **Answer:** Time commitment from a national ministry representative and the costs of the appointment of a national consultant need to be foreseen, as well as the organisation of a training seminar for all stakeholders at the start of the process and at least 10 child focus group meetings led by children's facilitators. Additional costs would include expenses for the organisation of meetings, convened with relevant stakeholders. The Council of Europe may provide a subsidy to cover part of the costs.

Question 10: What can be done with the results of the Assessment?

■ **Answer: The results can be used as a base line assessment** to measure progress achieved over time and should be seen as an incremental process. States are expected to indicate for each indicator what follow-up proposals they plan.

■ The dissemination of the Tool and the implementation of it can create a transformation in the right of children to be heard within States.

Question 11: Will the results of the Child Participation Assessment be compared with other States?

■ **Answer: No**, the results of the Assessment are solely for the own use of the State and should function as a baseline to measure future progress in the implementation of children's participation within the country.

Question 12: Where do I find supporting material to carry out the Child Participation Assessment?

■ **Answer:** On this website: www.coe.int/en/web/children/participation.

Guidance note to the child participation assessment tool

Introduction

On 28 March 2012 the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted the Committee of Ministers Recommendation (2012)2¹ on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18 (hereafter the Recommendation). The Child Participation Assessment Tool² (hereafter the Tool) has been developed to provide specific and measurable indicators with which States can begin to measure progress in implementing the Recommendation. The development of the Assessment Tool is part of an **on-going process** initiated by the Council of Europe to ensure that all children and young people within Council of Europe member States can exercise their right to be heard, to be taken seriously and to participate in decision making in all matters affecting them. This includes protecting the right to participate, promoting and informing about participation and creating spaces for participation.

In 2014 and 2015 the draft Child Participation Assessment Tool was piloted in three Council of Europe member States: Estonia, Ireland and Romania. The final version has been revised to reflect the findings and experiences arising from this process, and was published in December 2015.

The Guidance Note provides direction on how to gather and analyse information on each indicator, together with suggestions as to which stakeholders should be involved and what the expected outcomes are. The Guidance Note should be read in combination with Appendix Two 'Overview of the nine basic requirements for effective and ethical participation

and associated benchmarks' of the Child Participation Assessment Tool.

The **Guidance Note** includes:

1. What will be expected from the national authorities in terms of support and resources.
2. How to collect the information and data, e.g. focus groups with children and NGOs, disaggregated data, etc.
3. Directions on the importance of holding multi-stakeholder group meetings/hearings.
4. A commentary for each indicator, identifying what the challenges are and the feedback to be given to the children and young people and the other stakeholders involved.

Process

To undertake the Child Participation Assessment, a **roadmap** has been developed which sets out a plan of action, which has three phases:

1. **Preparatory phase** (Months 1-2), notably through the organisation of a meeting, including training on the Tool and child participation, with key stakeholders within the member States and organised by the coordinating Ministry.
2. **Implementation phase** (Months 3-10), notably through the implementation of the Tool by involving all stakeholders identified in the preparatory phase within the member State.
3. **Concluding and Evaluation phase** (Months 11-12), notably through the drafting of a report with a baseline assessment and evaluation of the situation of children's participation within the country and with recommendations for further improvements.

1. <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1927229>

2. www.coe.int/en/web/children/publications

■ Using the Tool to conduct an assessment is intended to start a debate on children's participation in a Council of Europe member State, and to collect information that can be used to establish a base line of relevant policy and practice. Further assessments should be conducted periodically to review progress. The Council of Europe recommends that these subsequent assessments of progress should be timed to inform and strengthen the periodic reports that state Parties are required to submit to the Committee of the Right of the Child every four years. To support the assessment process a **Factsheet has been produced linking UNCRC reporting to the Council of Europe child participation assessment process**. A document with **frequently asked questions and answers** regarding the child participation assessment process is also available.

■ The Child Participation Assessment Tool includes **ten basic indicators**, which will assist states to assess the implementation of children and young people's participation within different settings within their country. The indicators will enable states to:

- ▶ Undertake a baseline assessment of current implementation

- ▶ Help identify measures needed to achieve further compliance
- ▶ Measure progress over time.

The assessment **should provide an overview of the progress achieved** according to the ten indicators, each of which is rated from 0 (no progress) to 3 (fully complying with the indicator). In addition, **recommendations on further actions should be formulated in response to gaps identified**.

Responsibility for the carrying out of the assessment process lies with a national government representative, who will be supported by the Council of Europe Secretariat. The support from the co-ordinating ministry in sending out invitations to participate in the child participation assessment is crucial to ensure engagement of all the relevant stakeholders.

A **national consultant** should be appointed to write up the national report, which will be based on the data and information collected, outcomes from child focus group meetings, outcomes of the online children's survey, outcomes from meetings of professionals working with children, meetings with NGOs and civil society and other stakeholders.

Guidelines for collecting information on the 10 indicators

The Guidance Note to the Assessment Tool should be read in combination with the Child Participation Assessment Tool, which describes each of the 10 indicators; its definition; data sources to consult; assessment criteria, and suggests some particular questions to consider in respect of **vulnerable and seldom heard children**. These questions provide a useful lens for highlighting the different experiences of different children and young people including those who are vulnerable or seldom heard. The Tool identifies groups of children that are commonly excluded. Disaggregated data are important to reveal differences in the extent to which different groups of children are enabled to express their views and have them taken seriously.

For each indicator in the Child Participation Assessment Tool, space is provided to include notes from the analysis of each indicator. In addition, where a list of different settings is included for a specific indicator, a matrix is provided to enable states to analyse each setting separately (this is the case for indicators 1, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9).

The Tool includes a **Template or Country Profile for reporting the results of the Assessment per indicator** (Appendix Three). Within this template States are asked to indicate the date of the completion of the assessment, the key stakeholders involved, the grading for each indicator, as well as any comments or observations and examples of good practices. For each indicator States are also asked to include any follow-up proposals or plans of action. The completed Template provides a Country Profile of the member State. This Profile can be used at a later stage to monitor and review the implementation of the agreed follow-up proposals and action plans. The Council of Europe Secretariat (the Youth Department and the Children's Rights Division) would like to receive a copy of the report to assist them in monitoring how the Tool is being used and to enable them to highlight examples of good practice that can inspire other member States to take action to progress children and young people's participation.

The table below lists the ten indicators, summarises the way evidence should be collected, the stakeholders that need to be involved and provides advice on the most appropriate methodology. While the table makes clear that different types of

information are required for assessing progress against the different indicators, **as a general rule it is important that member States consider information from a range of different sources across the whole assessment**. The triangulation of different types of data, from policy documents and available research, from focus groups with NGOs and other organisations working with children and young people and from children and young people themselves (via focus groups) provides an important 'check and balance' to the subjective nature of the member States' self-assessment.

In addition, **member States will want to note situations where there is limited data available** (including data that is disaggregated by gender, disability, and other factors) **and consider including in their action plans, steps that can be taken to improve the availability of such data**, for example additional questions in any regular surveys of school aged children.

Children and young people are increasingly engaging in decision-making via **online and social media** and this needs to be considered in the assessment.

When it is indicated that **Children's Focus Groups** will have to be organised to consult with children and young people, it is proposed that States undertake half of the children's focus groups (at least 5) within schools and the other half (at least another 5) in cooperation with NGOs, to ensure attention is paid to the potentially different experiences of vulnerable and seldom heard children in each country. It is important to make clear to the schools and the NGOs what is exactly required.

NOTE: Throughout the Assessment Tool the **terms 'children and young people'** are used; this reflects the work undertaken by the Council of Europe in the Children's Rights Division and the Youth Department. The meaning of 'children and young people' within the Assessment Tool is defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 1: *'For the purposes of the present Convention a child means every human being below the age of 18 years ...'*. When using the Assessment Tool, States need to be aware that the experiences of all children below the age of 18 should be considered in the assessment process, which includes children in the youngest age range (below the age of 7).

Indicators	How to collect evidence for each indicator?	Stakeholders involved	Additional comments on Methodology
<p>Indicator 1 Legal protection for children and young people's right to participate in decision-making is reflected in the national Constitution and legislation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Collect information, including specific data in particular via line ministries on the legal protection of the child's right to be heard within different settings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Line ministries (including those responsible for education and schools; family decision making; criminal justice; health care; care and protection; custody and immigration and asylum proceedings) ▶ Government agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Data collection ▶ When analysing this indicator ensure a specific focus on school and education – data on legislation to make the establishment of school councils mandatory – in different types of schools (preschool, primary school, secondary school, vocational education, higher education, special education (e.g. for children with special needs))
<p>Indicator 2 Explicit inclusion of children and young people's right to participate in decision-making in a cross-sectoral national strategy to implement children's rights</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Collect information, including specific data in particular via line ministries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Line ministries (including those on education, justice, health, social affairs) ▶ Government agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Data collection
<p>Indicator 3 An independent children's rights institution is in place and protected by law</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Should involve analysis of mandate and discussions in Government agencies and analyse whether the ombudsman for children is in line with the "Paris Principles": http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r134.htm ▶ Will require consultations with professionals working with children and young people ▶ Consultations with children will be carried out in child focus groups. They will be consulted on how the Child Rights ombudsman functions and reaches out to children, whether they are aware of the ombudsman and how to get in touch with him or her. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Line ministry and/or Ombudsman for children ▶ Professionals working with children ▶ Children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Data collection (check which legislation in place and how this is implemented in practice) ▶ Organise a meeting with different groups of professionals, including teachers and social workers ▶ Children's Focus groups organised by facilitators.

Indicators	How to collect evidence for each indicator?	Stakeholders involved	Additional comments on Methodology
<p>Indicator 4 Existence of mechanisms to enable children to exercise their right to participate safely in judicial and administrative proceedings</p>	<p>▶ Will require consultations with professionals and children who have experience with the justice system and administrative proceedings. Focus should be on: - Criminal justice proceedings, - Family law, - Care and protection, - Immigration</p>	<p>▶ Legal professionals working with or for children</p>	<p>▶ Organise a meeting with a group (10) of legal professionals or an organisation representing legal professionals working with or for children or professionals who work in administrative legal proceedings in which children are directly or indirectly involved (e.g. in the case of divorce). These could be judges, lawyers, attorneys, advocates, etc.</p>
	<p>▶ Consultations with children, who have experience with the justice system and administrative proceedings will be carried out in child focus groups, but can also be done in others ways, which are felt appropriate by the country (e.g. individual interviews). ▶ Council of Europe Guidelines on child friendly justice are relevant in the context of consulting children (they are accessible in your national language(s): www.coe.int/en/web/children/publications)</p>	<p>▶ Children with experience in the justice system, including children with experience in juvenile justice proceedings and administrative justice proceedings.</p>	<p>▶ Children's Focus Groups and/or individual interviews with children</p>
	<p>▶ The EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) carried out a study: 'Child-friendly justice Perspectives and experiences of professionals on children's participation in civil and criminal judicial proceedings in 10 EU Member States' (2015) (countries involved are: BUL, CRO, EST, FIN, FR, GER, POL, RO, SP, UK). The study provides a wealth of information on children's participation in juvenile justice and it includes views of 570 professionals. http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2015-child-friendly-justice-professionals_en.pdf The second report of the FRA research will concentrate on the responses of the children who were interviewed.</p>	<p>▶ EU (FRA) study on experiences of professionals on children's participation in civil and criminal justice proceedings.</p>	<p>▶ Data collection from EU (FRA) study, 2 European Commission studies and a study from the Mental Disability Advocacy Centre.</p>

Indicators	How to collect evidence for each indicator?	Stakeholders involved	Additional comments on Methodology
	<p>▶ The European Commission has carried out a study on children's involvement in judicial proceedings, including three sections, children in criminal, civil and administrative proceedings. The study concentrates on the child in different roles, such as suspect/offender, witness, victim, plaintiff or otherwise the subject of judicial proceedings. Final results were published in July 2015: http://www.socialplatform.org/news/commission-study-published-on-childrens-involvement-in-justice/</p> <p>▶ The European Commission has carried out a study on the "Evaluation of legislation, policy and practice on child participation in the European Union" within the 28 EU member states and includes children's participation within legal settings. The study was published in March 2015. http://bookshop.europa.eu/evaluation-of-legislation-policy-and-practice-of-child-participation-in-the-european-union-eu--pbDS0514101/related/?pgid=lq1EknI0.1ISR000K4MycO9B00006Yjr1CF_&sid=xlpI0RNAt-Bi_0YxvBj8dnFIZJkegRSTwIk=?PublicationKey=DS0514101&CatalogCategoryID=cOwKABstC3oAAAEjeJY4e5L</p> <p>▶ A study was conducted by MDAC on access to justice for children with mental disabilities funded by the EU and implemented in 10 countries: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and the UK</p> <p>http://www.mdac.org/en/accessing-justice-children</p>	<p>▶ Two European Commission studies: one on children's involvement in judicial proceedings and one with a mapping of national legislation, policy and practice of children's participation in the 28 EU member States.</p>	

Indicators	How to collect evidence for each indicator?	Stakeholders involved	Additional comments on Methodology
<p>Indicator 5 Child-friendly individual complaints procedures are in place³</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Will require multi-sectoral consultations with professionals from different fields (including: schools and educational settings; care and protection; health; criminal proceedings; family law proceedings; immigration proceedings). ▶ As few formal complaints exist to analyse the questions should focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do complaints mechanisms exist at all and in which of the settings listed? - If they exist, are these child-friendly? - Are the child-friendly complaints mechanisms mandated by law and easily accessible to all children? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Professionals working with children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Organise a meeting with professionals including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools and education (incl. teachers) - Lawyers working in the area of family and civil and criminal justice - Health (medical professionals, such as paediatric doctors and nurses) - Social workers and professionals working in care and protection services with children. - Officials responsible for immigration procedures - Academic experts
<p>Indicator 6 Children's right to participate in decision-making is embedded in pre-service training programmes for professionals working with and for children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Will require consultations with children and young people to test if the complaints mechanisms are known and if they feel they are accessible and safe. ▶ Optional Protocol 3 to the UNCRC on a communications procedure should be considered – is this ratified and implemented within the Member State? ▶ Take into account that training of professionals is at different levels in respective countries. Please note that pre-service training is the focus of this indicator. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Children and young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Children's Focus Groups

3. For more information on child friendly and quality participation, see Child Participation Assessment Tool Appendix 1, Basic Requirements for Quality Participation, for an overview of the measures necessary to achieve a child friendly complaints procedure

Indicators	How to collect evidence for each indicator?	Stakeholders involved	Additional comments on Methodology
	<p>▶ Consult with:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Responsible ministries 2. Professional bodies (including schools and other specific professional groups) 3. Ask for feedback from professionals themselves via organisations representing these professionals (professional associations) 4. Academic and training institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Line Ministries ▶ Government Agencies ▶ Professional bodies/associations ▶ Professionals working with children ▶ Academic staff designing and providing training for professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Data collection and interviews with government officials ▶ Scrutiny of relevant curricula ▶ Select six groups of professionals representing one of the selected settings, including teachers (teachers union), medical professionals, social workers, care workers, etc. ▶ Organise a meeting or consult in writing/interviews with professional organisations. ▶ Consult directly with six groups of professionals, choosing from list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - teachers - lawyers - judiciary - police - social workers - health care professionals - immigration officials - care-givers and residential workers - prison officers (in juvenile justice institutions if these exist) - children and youth leaders - civil servants and public officials
<p>Indicator 7</p> <p>Children are provided with information about their right to participate in decision-making</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Schools are of key importance to address investigate if the curriculum incorporates human rights education, democratic citizenship education. Research if children and young people's education includes children's rights education, including the right to participate. Is this a mandatory component of school curricula? ▶ Research if governments or governmental bodies, such as those working in the health sector, justice, child protection or other sectors, organise awareness raising campaigns, produce leaflets or other materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Line ministries, in particular the Ministry of Education ▶ Government agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Data collection

Indicators	How to collect evidence for each indicator?	Stakeholders involved	Additional comments on Methodology
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Consult children via focus groups to find out how aware they are of their right to participate and how and where this right can be exercised ▶ Consult with children's NGO networks, schools, local authorities and children and young people's associations ▶ Research what child friendly material exists in different domains, such as health or legal sectors, and in different line ministries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Children ▶ Children's Rights NGOs and civil society ▶ Schools ▶ Local authorities ▶ Child and young people's associations ▶ Line ministries ▶ Government agencies ▶ Professional organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Children's Focus Groups ▶ Organise a meeting with civil society, schools, local authorities, children and young people's associations to collect information – this could be facilitated by the Children's Ombudsperson ▶ Data collection
<p>Indicator 8</p> <p>Children are represented in forums, including through their own organisations, at school, local, regional and national governance level</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Consult with children in focus groups, through a selection of schools and with children who have been involved in forums, to consult them on how effective such opportunities have been for them ▶ Consult with children's NGO networks and national youth councils and local and regional authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Children ▶ Children's Rights NGOs, civil society ▶ Local authorities ▶ Academics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Children's Focus Groups ▶ Organise a meeting with civil society, including representatives of national and regional youth councils and school collect information – this could be facilitated by the children's ombudsperson. ▶ The indicator needs to be analysed at four different levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National - Regional - Local - Schools

Indicators	How to collect evidence for each indicator?	Stakeholders involved	Additional comments on Methodology
<p>Indicator 9 Child-targeted feedback mechanisms on local authority services are in place</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Consult children via focus groups ▶ Consult with children's NGO networks and local authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Children ▶ Children's Rights NGOs, civil society and local authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Children's Focus Groups ▶ Organise a meeting with civil society and local authorities to collect information – this could be facilitated by the Children's Ombudsperson. ▶ The consultations should focus on 7 specific settings including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education and schools - Alternative care (e.g. fostering, children's homes) - Play, recreation and sports - Cultural services (e.g. museums, arts) - Child protection services - Support for immigration and asylum seekers - Family support and pre-school services
<p>Indicator 10 Children are supported to participate in the monitoring of the UNCRC (including in CRC shadow reporting) and relevant Council of Europe instruments and conventions (hereafter called children's rights instruments)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Consult with government contact responsible for UN CRC reporting ▶ Consult with the NGO coalition (if existing, if not consult with a single or group of NGOs) responsible for the shadow report or involved in reporting process to UN Committee on CRC. ▶ Consult with children who have been involved in the UNCRC reporting process (if any). This should be done via the NGO(s), which has involved the children in the reporting process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Line ministries ▶ Government agencies ▶ Children's Rights NGO Coalition (if it exists) ▶ Children, who have been involved in UNCRC reporting process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Data collection ▶ Concluding Observations of the child Committee on the Rights of the child ▶ Conclusions of CoE monitoring bodies (e.g. European Committee of Social Rights, Lanzarote Committee, etc.) ▶ Organise a meeting with representative(s) of the children's rights NGO coalition ▶ Children's Focus Groups ▶ Monitoring reports produced by or with children

Exploring children's views through Focus Groups

A focus group is a discussion involving a small number of participants, led by a moderator or facilitator, which seeks to gain an insight into the participants' experiences, attitudes and perceptions. Focus groups have long been viewed as having certain advantages and are particularly suitable for use with children. For example, they create a safe peer environment and replicate the type of small group settings that children are familiar with from their classroom work. The peer support provided in the small group setting can help to redress the power imbalance between adult and child that exists in one-to-one interviews. Children may also be (more) encouraged to give their opinions when they hear others do so and their memory may be stimulated by the contributions of other participants.

■ The objective of organising child focus groups during the piloting of the Child Participation Assessment Tool is to ensure a qualitative input from children and young people themselves about the implementation of children's participation within their country.

■ In the case of the piloting of the Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool, the child focus group discussions will in particular focus on issues emerging from the following indicators:

- ▶ **Indicator 3:** an independent children's rights institution is in place and protected by law
- ▶ **Indicator 5:** child-friendly individual complaints mechanisms are in place
- ▶ **Indicator 7:** children are provided with information about their right to participate in decision-making
- ▶ **Indicator 8:** children and young people are represented in forums, including through their own organisations, at school, local, regional and national governance levels
- ▶ **Indicator 9:** child-targeted feedback mechanisms on local authority services are in place

■ Children's consultations with regard to indicators 4 and 10 are only carried out with groups of children, who have specific experience in relation to these indicators.

- ▶ In relation to **Indicator 4** – *existence of mechanisms to enable children to exercise their right to participate safely in judicial and administrative proceedings* – children's consultations will be carried out with specific groups of children or by individual interviews with children, who have experience with the justice system and administrative proceedings.
- ▶ In relation to **Indicator 10** – *children are supported to participate in the monitoring of the UNCRC and CRC shadow reporting, and relevant Council of Europe instruments and conventions (hereafter called: children's rights instruments)* – children, who have been involved in UNCRC reporting processes have to be consulted.

Number of focus groups and length of discussions

■ In each country 10 child focus groups will be organised. 5 focus groups will be organised with the involvement of primary and secondary schools (possibly by involving the Council of Europe focal points on children's rights and human rights education). Another 5 focus groups will be organised with the involvement of civil society organisations. NGO's will be asked to ensure in particular that children from vulnerable settings and who are seldom heard participate in the focus group meetings (including disabled children, children with experience in alternative care, in health care, refugee and migrant children etc.).

■ Sufficient time should be dedicated to organise the focus group consultations. These consultations should preferably take one full day, and not be shorter than half a day. The consultations could take place during one day throughout a weekend. If this option is pursued, sufficient breaks and energizers should be safeguarded throughout the consultation day. For some children a one day consultation might stretch their capacities to concentrate and fully engage and they might prefer a sequence of shorter sessions. For this reason, the consultations could also be organised in several shorter sessions after school, depending on what is practical and in the best interests of that group of children.

The role of the Facilitator

■ The success of the focus group discussions and the quality of the data obtained will be strongly influenced by the skills of the facilitator and her or his ability to stimulate and maintain discussion among the participants. The facilitator has three major functions, the first of which is to make the group feel comfortable and at ease; the second, to keep the group discussion focused on the topic of interest and to ensure that all children have the opportunity to contribute; and third, to enhance the clarity of the children's contributions by seeking clarification when responses seem ambiguous or when there are contributions from the same child that appear contradictory.

■ Therefore, the focus groups need preparation by a professional facilitator(s), who has experience in working with children and who will be well informed about the process and the contents of the Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool.

Preparation for the facilitator will include:

- ▶ Getting acquainted with the Council of Europe Assessment Tool, the Recommendation and the piloting process of the Tool. Get familiarised with the indicators on which the children will be consulted on (Nos. 5, 7, 8 and 9) and the child-friendly version of the Tool (*estimate work time half a day*)
- ▶ Preparing the focus group consultation(s): develop a programme, ensuring it includes sufficient breaks and energizers and safeguarding that the key questions will get discussed. This can be done in various ways: group discussions, world café discussions, theatre and role plays, creative work, etc. (*estimate work time half a day*).
- ▶ Carrying out the focus group meeting (*estimate work time 1 day*)
- ▶ For each of the ten focus group consultations the outcomes will be collected, analysed and written up. (*estimate work time for reporting on each focus group 1 day*)

Composition and selection of focus groups

■ A number of factors need to be considered when planning the composition of focus groups with children. These include group size, age, gender, language and other variables relevant to the topic of discussion.

Focus groups in schools

■ A selection of 5 schools across the country must be made by the national ministry/body in charge of the piloting process of the Child Participation Assessment Tool. The selection of children at schools should be done in consultation with the designated schools,

representing a diversity of children with different backgrounds, e.g. rural and urban areas, areas with specific minorities present etc. Children need to volunteer to participate in the focus groups and cannot be selected by the school management without their active consent. The designated school should be asked to select a group of maximum 15 to 20 volunteering children from different age groups and with gender balanced.

Focus groups in NGO's

■ During the national induction seminar NGOs and civil society actors will be encouraged to prepare for children's focus groups outside the schools. The national authorities will ask the NGOs and civil society present to identify 5 groups of children from specific vulnerable settings. The NGOs and civil society representatives will be requested to coordinate the focus groups with the NGO sector. This could be done by asking different NGO's to each organise a child focus group meeting e.g. NGO's which work with specific groups of children, such as disabled children, asylum seeking children, children in juvenile justice, children in care etc. The purpose is to ensure that different groups of children from particular (vulnerable) backgrounds will be able to participate in the consultations.

References on children's focus groups methods and children's consultations:

- ▶ Sheila Greene & Diane Hogan, SAGE Research Methods, 'Researching Children's Experience, Exploring children's views through focus groups', 2005, http://www.uk.sagepub.com/gray3e/study/chapter18/Book%20chapters/Focus_groups_with_children.pdf
- ▶ In a focus group, a discussion is organized to explore individuals' perceptions and experiences of a particular theme (Kitzinger, 1994; McLafferty, 2004; Tinnfält, 2007; Brunnberg, 2013b).
- ▶ Observatory for Childhood, Youth and Youth Care of the Federation Wallonie-Bruxelles (www.oejaj.cfwb.be) 'Vademecum on children's participation in public decisionmaking: Why should I involve children?' http://old.eurochild.eu/fileadmin/ThematicPriorities/EYEC/Others/OEJAJ_VM_EN_LOW.pdf
- ▶ Eurochild, 'Speak Up! Giving a Voice to European Children in Vulnerable Situations, Methodological Framework' (Eurochild, May 2011): describes in detail the conditions to run focus groups with (vulnerable) children, including child protection safeguards, child friendly environments, ground rules, tools (e.g. energizers, creative activities, etc.), role of the facilitator.)

Questions to be addressed during the children's focus group consultations

Please note that these are only guiding questions for the consultations with children. The facilitator needs to adapt and use the questions, which are suitable to the children's age and background and ensure there are enough energizers, games, interactive exercises and other activities done during the focus group consultations.

Indicator 3: an independent children's rights institution is in place and protected by law

- ▶ Explain to the children what the child rights ombudsperson is doing in their country, including his/her responsibilities.
- ▶ Ask the children whether they are aware about the existence of the children's ombudsperson.
- ▶ Do they know how the children's ombudsperson functions and if he/she reaches out to children?
- ▶ Do they know how to get in touch with the children's ombudsperson?

Indicator 5: child-friendly individual complaints procedures are in place⁴

- ▶ Explain to the children that children (and adults) have the right to complain if there is a service, which does not function well for them. This complaint can be made with people working in the services or with government institutions, such as the Ombudsperson (for children's rights).
- ▶ Discuss different types of services, which are relevant for children. Ask the children for each of the services whether they have an idea how to complain about the service if something goes wrong and they experience unjust treatment or feel discriminated. If necessary, first explain what discrimination is. Ask the children if they have ever seen posters in their schools, information leaflets or found a websites about how to make a complaint about one of the following services.
- ▶ Examples of questions to be discussed with the children from Court proceedings:
 - If the child's parents went to court for example to get a divorce, did he/she experience unjust treatment by the Court (staff) or felt that he/she was discriminated against?
 - If the child has experienced that he/she was accused of breaking the law or had to appear in Court as a witness of a crime, did he/she experience unjust treatment by the Court (staff) or felt that he/she was discriminated against?

4. For more information on child friendly and quality participation, see Child Participation Assessment Tool Appendix 1, Basic Requirements for Quality Participation, for an overview of the measures necessary to achieve a child friendly complaints procedure

- Example of question from the education system:
- Did the child experience for example unequal access to education in the school system?
- Examples of questions to be discussed with the children from the health care system:
- If the child has experience of going to the doctor or a hospital, did he/she experience that the staff (doctor, nurse etc.) was not treating him/her correctly?
- Did the medical staff explain what treatment they were going to carry out or not? Was the child scared by the treatment?
- Did the medical staff explain what would happen after the child's treatment, e.g. that he/she would have some pain afterwards?
- **Indicator 7: children are provided with information about their right to participate in decision-making**
- ▶ Ask the children if they know that they have the right to have their voice heard and that their opinions should be taken seriously.
- ▶ Ask the children how they found out about their right to participate: e.g. did their teacher tell them or peers or family members or others?
- ▶ Did the children learn about their right to participate at primary school and/or at secondary school? Maybe this was part of human rights or children's rights education at school.
- ▶ If the children have been informed/told about their right to participate, was this clear, do they understand the implications?

Indicator 8: children are represented in forums, including through their own organisations, at school, local, regional and national governance level

- ▶ Explain to the children the meaning of an association, e.g. organisations, which can be consulted by local, regional or national governments, for example a local children's or youth council or a school council.
- ▶ Explain to the children that they have a right to set up an association.
- ▶ Ask the children which organisations (*consultative bodies with local, regional or national government*) they are members of, give some examples if children find this a difficult question: school council; local child/youth council; regional or national child/youth councils; a child or youth advisory council to an NGO (e.g. child helpline or other children's or youth organisations).
- ▶ Ask if there are children in the focus group who are not members of any of such organisations. Can they explain the reasons for this e.g. there are no child and youth councils where they live or they believe it does not make a difference

to be part of it? *(This question aims to find out about the scope and effectiveness of child and youth councils.)*

- ▶ If the children are members of child or youth councils, discuss whether they feel they can influence decisions and to what extent they actually have influenced decisions. Are their opinions taken seriously?
- ▶ Ask if the children believe that the different child and youth councils are representative of all children in that city, region or country? Explain what representation means, for example that equal numbers of boys and girls participate, different ages participate; children with different abilities, including children with disabilities, participate; children from different backgrounds (migrants, ethnic minorities, asylum seeking children, etc.) are able to participate.

Indicator 9: child-targeted feedback mechanisms on local authority services are in place

- ▶ Explain to the children that the local authorities provide various services to children. A few services could be mentioned and then ask the children if they could think of others. Local authority services can include services such as alternative care (e.g. fostering, children's homes), education and schools, but also play, recreation and sports, cultural services (e.g. museums, arts), child protection services, support for immigration and asylum seekers and family support and pre-school services.
- ▶ Ask the children if they are aware that they can give their opinion about the services if they experienced an unjust treatment from the services that they just discussed. If they are aware about an existing feedback procedure for children, ask if they can explain how this works? For example would they be able to fill in a survey or evaluation form?
- ▶ Are the feedback mechanisms accessible to all children, regardless of their age, disability, nationality, background, etc. or are there groups of children who are not able to use those?
- ▶ Ask the children when they give feedback to the services whether they know if anything is done with their concerns. For example are they informed about any changes made in response to their feedback?

Evaluation of the consultation process

■ At the end of the consultation, evaluate the consultation process itself with the children. This

could be done by a quick exercise, e.g. use a scale of 1-5 and mark these numbers in the room. Then ask the children specific questions on the length of the consultation, if it was useful, if it was clear, how they found the facilitator, if they learn something about children's participation and right to be heard and ask to give an overall mark for the consultation process.

■ Children can indicate on the scale by walking or running to the numbers in the room: 1 means that they found it was not very bad and 5 marks that it was very good. The facilitator can also use another evaluation method, with which he/she is familiar.

Reporting

■ The focus groups consultations have to be reported in writing. The facilitator, the national rapporteur or another person allocated for this task should do this.

The child focus group reports should include:

- ▶ Background information on the children who participated: number of children, ages, boys/girls, background (from a large city, rural area, part of the country), other specific background information such as disability, migrant children, Traveller children, Roma children, children living in alternative care (foster care or institutional care), children who are in juvenile justice institutions, etc.
- ▶ Process of the consultations: this needs to include information on the environment where the consultations took place, the programme of the consultation (activities), the length of the consultation (e.g. half a day, a full day or 4 sessions of 1,5 hours, etc.), the number of adults (facilitators, other adults) present.
- ▶ Outcomes of the consultations per indicator (3, 5, 7, 8, 9): describe what the children said with regard to each indicator, but also note down physical observations which were found striking, e.g. if children spoke about an issue with enthusiasm, with anger or with sadness. Other observations could include if the children found it very difficult to speak about specific indicators. Next to the descriptive part, the rapporteur will draw conclusions on what he/she observed as the key outcomes of the consultation process.
- ▶ Evaluation: describe the evaluation method used and the outcomes of the evaluation of the focus group consultations.

Factsheet – Linking the UNCRC Reporting Process to the Council of Europe child participation assessment process

Governments are required to report regularly on the implementation of the UNCRC, including the right of children to participate, to the UNCRC Committee. The Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool can be used to undertake an assessment, which will strengthen and inform the UNCRC monitoring and reporting process in terms of the progress member States are making in implementing Article 12 of the Convention.

This Factsheet provides information on how the outcomes of the child participation assessment can be integrated into the UNCRC Periodic Reports.

UNCRC Reporting Process

As stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, each government that is party to the CRC must make its first report within two years of ratification, followed by regular reports every five years thereafter. Countries first submit to (and later discuss their reports with) the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, which meets in Geneva and was established in accordance with Article 43 of the Convention. The Committee on the Rights of the Child is made up of 18 members from different countries and legal systems that are of ‘high moral standing’ and experts in the field of human rights. Deriving their mandate from the Convention itself, Committee members are “accountable solely to the children of the world.”

In carrying out its work, the Committee seeks to engage States in a constructive dialogue with a view to critically assessing the situation of children and encouraging cooperation for implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The key aim of the international monitoring process is to **guide and strengthen national capacity to ensure and monitor the realization of children’s rights**. The process enhances the realization of children’s rights by providing a meaningful opportunity for different

stakeholders, including government officials, private institutions and independent advocates to act together to improve the situation of children. The reporting process is intended as a tool for policy development and planning and for promoting respect for child rights. Governments are therefore urged to involve all sectors of society in the preparation of reports.⁵

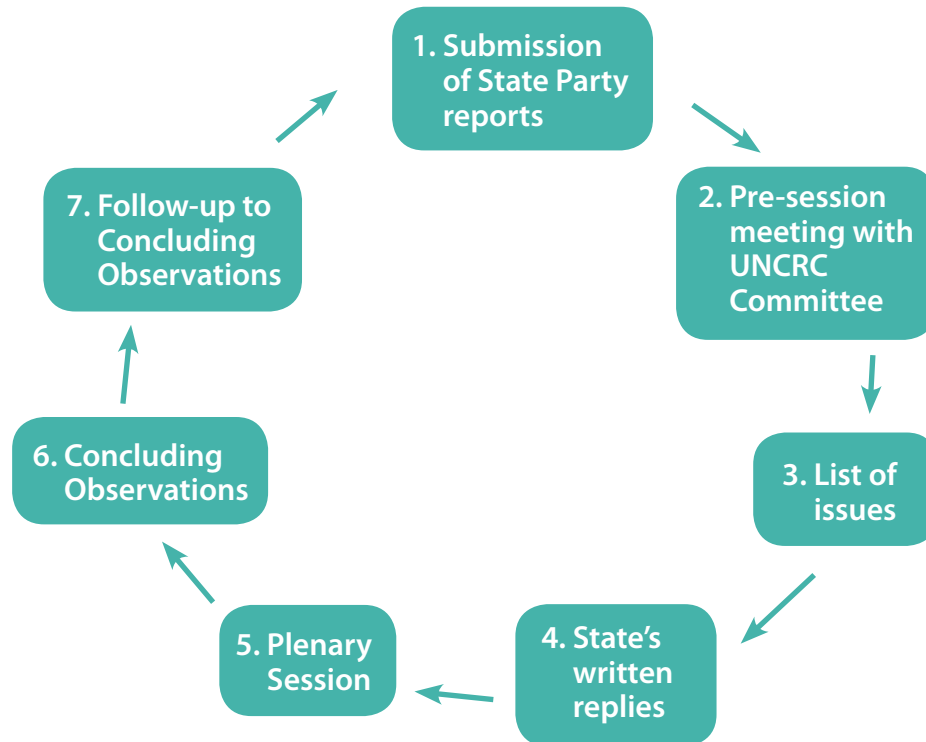
The reporting process to the UNCRC Committee is a continuous, cyclical process, where the actual writing and submission of reports is a natural by-product of on-going efforts of all government Departments. The responsible government department will have to initiate a consultation process with different stakeholders while preparing the report for the UNCRC Committee. These stakeholders include Government ministries, departments, CSOs, NGOs, Children, professionals working with and for children and academics.

The UNCRC Committee’s role is to monitor the State’s implementation of the UNCRC, based on the State’s written report and its oral examination by the Committee. Following the examination, the Committee drafts a series of recommendations or Concluding Observations which include areas of non-compliance by the Government with its obligations under the UNCRC and highlight actions which the Government needs to take to ensure full compliance with its international obligations to children under the UNCRC. Governments are obliged to give effect to these Concluding Observations. Though the UNCRC Committee does not have a formal follow-up procedure by which the implementation of the Concluding Observations is assessed, the Committee does at each periodic review, take the previous Concluding Observations into account. The Committee compares these with progress made as outlined in the State’s report and in submissions received from other stakeholders.⁶

5. UNICEF, “CRC Reporting process, Element 7”.

6. Child Rights Connect, CRC Reporting Process, <http://www.childrightsconnect.org/connect-with-the-un-2/crc-reporting/>

Graphic image of the UNCRC Reporting Process



How does the Child Participation Assessment fit into the CRC Reporting Process?

At the same time as the CRC Reporting Process starts, the child participation assessment has to be initiated and needs to be aligned with the CRC Reporting Process. The ten indicators measuring the child participation situation within a State are perfectly in line with the way the UNCRC Committee has explained and elaborated on the meaning of Article 12 UNCRC on children's participation. The outcomes from the child participation assessment process can therefore be directly integrated into the States report to the UNCRC Committee.

At the same time, outcomes of the child participation assessment process, which are in need of further actions to strengthen progress on specific child participation indicators will need to be monitored and followed by the State. Similarly, the Concluding Observations of the UNCRC Committee will have to be given effect by the State and implemented.

Both processes are continuous and should not be seen as one-in-five year reports, but as an ongoing monitoring and improving of children's rights standards as laid down in the UNCRC. The Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment process should therefore be seen not only as fully complementary with, but also serving to improve the quality of the UNCRC report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Road Map to the Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool

Introduction

On 28 March 2012 the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted the Committee of Ministers Recommendation (2012)⁷ on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18 (hereafter the Recommendation). The Child Participation Assessment Tool⁸ (hereafter the Tool) has been developed to provide specific and measurable indicators with which States can begin to measure progress in implementing the Recommendation. The development of the Assessment Tool is part of an **on-going process** initiated by the Council of Europe to ensure that all children and young people within Council of Europe member states can exercise their right to be heard, to be taken seriously and to participate in decision making in all matters affecting them. This includes protecting the right to participate, promoting and informing about participation and creating spaces for participation. As part of the Council of Europe's initiative in this field, three Policy Reviews on child and youth participation in Finland⁹, the Slovak Republic¹⁰ and the Republic of Moldova¹¹ were carried out over 2011 and 2012. These Policy Reviews provided the grounds for the development and adoption of the aforementioned Recommendation on child and youth participation. A specific section on the Council of Europe website is also dedicated specifically to child and youth participation¹².

At the same time, the European Union has also contributed to identifying good practices, tools and methods of children's participation in its study 'Evaluation of legislation, policy and practice on child participation in the European Union (EU)¹³, which provides a comprehensive overview of legislation, policy and practice on child participation in the 28 member states of the EU. The results provide a baseline for the participation of children in the development and implementation of actions and policies that affect

them and draws up recommendations and practical guidelines for child participation at local, regional, national and European level.

Moreover, international NGO's such as Save the Children, Plan International, World Vision and UNICEF - and supported by the Oak Foundation - have developed a tool "Framework for monitoring and evaluating children's participation"¹⁴. The Framework is intended to be useful for monitoring and evaluation of a variety of children's participation processes and the tool can be used by organisations working directly with children, by child and youth-led organisations, and by governments. This tool and the Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool are complementary to each other. The use of the Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool should be seen within the context of these other Council of Europe, EU and international activities.

The Council of Europe's Child Participation Assessment Tool was subject to a piloting process in three countries (Estonia, Ireland, and Romania) during 2014-15. The learning from these pilots has been incorporated into this Roadmap, and the accompanying **Guidance Note**, and **Training Package**. A **document with frequently asked questions and answers** on the Child Participation Assessment Tool and a **Factsheet linking the UNCRC reporting process to the Council of Europe child participation assessment process** has been added to this. The Tool itself was also revised in response to issues arising in the pilots.

Purpose

Using the Tool to conduct an assessment is intended to start a debate on children's participation in a Council of Europe member state, and to collect information that can be used to establish a base line of relevant policy and practice. Further assessments should be conducted periodically to review progress. The Council of Europe recommends that these subsequent assessments of progress should be timed to inform and strengthen the periodic reports that state Parties are required to submit to the Committee of the Right of the Child every five years.

7. <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1927229>

8. www.coe.int/en/web/children/publications

9. www.coe.int/en/web/children/publications

10. www.coe.int/en/web/children/publications

11. www.coe.int/en/web/children/publications

12. www.coe.int/en/web/children/publications

13. European Commission, Directorate General for Justice and Consumers (JUST), Unit C1 Fundamental Rights and rights of the child, Evaluation of legislation, policy and practice on child participation in the European Union (EU), March 2015

14. <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/resources/online-library/toolkit-monitoring-and-evaluating-childrens-participation>

■ The Child Participation Assessment Tool includes **ten basic indicators**, which will assist states to assess the implementation of children and young people's participation within different settings within their country. The indicators will enable states to:

- ▶ Undertake a baseline assessment of current implementation
- ▶ Help identify measures needed to achieve further compliance
- ▶ Measure progress over time.

■ The assessment **should provide an overview of the progress achieved** according to the ten indicators, each of which is rated from 0 (no progress) to 3 (fully complying with the indicator). In addition, **recommendations on further actions should be formulated in response to gaps identified**.

Guidance Note and Training Package

A Training Package and Guidance Note are available to support the child participation assessment process.

■ The Guidance Note provides direction on how to gather and analyse information on each indicator, together with suggestions as to which stakeholders should be involved and what the expected outcomes are.

The **Guidance Note** includes:

1. What will be expected from the national authorities in terms of support and resources
2. How to collect the information and data, e.g. focus groups with children and NGOs, disaggregated data, etc.
3. Directions on the importance of holding multi stakeholder group meetings/hearings.
4. A commentary for each indicator, identifying what the challenges are and the feedback to be given to the children and young people and the other stakeholders involved.

■ The Training Package can be used when organising the initial training day for the key stakeholders to be involved in the child participation assessment process. It includes materials that will help to familiarise stakeholders with the concept of children's participation that underpins the Tool as well as with the Tool itself.

The **Training Package** includes:

1. A draft agenda for a training day(s).

2. A presentation on children's participation: Article 12 UNCRC and General Comment no. 12 regarding the right of children to participate.
3. A presentation on work of the Council of Europe regarding the observance of the child's right to participate, including the three policy reviews and the development of the Recommendation on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18.
4. A presentation of the child participation assessment tool.
5. A presentation of the child participation assessment process.
6. Illustrative European case studies on the impact of children's participation in decision-making processes.
7. Guidelines for working group sessions at the training day to discuss and familiarize the stakeholders with the CPA Tool.

Timeline

The purpose of the Roadmap is to suggest a timetable and guide for using the Child Participation Assessment Tool within a Council of Europe member State.

The following table sets out a plan of action for conducting the assessments with the following three key phases taking place over the course of a year (12 months):

1. **Preparatory phase** (Months 1-2), notably through the organisation of a meeting, including training on the Tool and child participation, with key stakeholders within the member States and organised by the coordinating Ministry.
2. **Implementation phase** (Months 3-10), notably through the implementation of the Tool by involving all stakeholders identified in the preparatory phase within the member State.
3. **Concluding and Evaluation phase** (Months 11-12), notably through the drafting of a report with a baseline assessment and evaluation of the situation of children's participation within the country and with recommendations for further improvements.

1. Preparatory phase

The preparatory phase consists of the organisation of an introductory training for key stakeholders at national level.

Timeline	Action	Responsibility
2 Months		
Month 1	<p>Translation</p> <p>All supporting materials for the piloting phase of the Tool should be translated into national language i.e. the Tool itself and the child friendly version of it, the Guidance Note to go with the Tool, on-line children's survey. The translation of the guidance for children's facilitators is optional. The translations need to be ready for distribution at the training seminars at the start of the assessment process.</p>	National authority
Month 2	<p>Appointment of national consultant and facilitators</p> <p>A national consultant or responsible person within the ministry should be appointed to collect data and outcomes from the child participation assessment process and to draft a national report.</p> <p>As well as a national consultant, one or more c facilitators should will be appointed to organise, lead and report on the children and young people focus groups.</p>	National authority
Month 2	<p>Preparation of Training and Induction Seminar</p> <p>A meeting should be organised to launch the start of the child participation assessment process. The recruited national consultant should participate in the induction seminar.</p> <p>Invitations should be sent out by the coordinating body/ministry and should include relevant stakeholders such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Relevant line ministries and state agencies (including local authority administrations) ▶ Civil Society and children's rights, child welfare and youth NGO's ▶ Children's Ombudsperson(s) ▶ Children and young people themselves, including children and young people from vulnerable settings (see section on consultation of children and young people below) ▶ Relevant professional organisations (including teachers, health, judicial, social workers etc.) ▶ Academics working on children's rights and child welfare issues, in particular those with expertise on children's participation and/or involving children in their research. <p>The consultations should be open to all relevant stakeholders. Therefore the coordinating body/ministry should I also publicly announce in an open call, e.g. through the ministry's website and via professional associations, NGO's, civil society movements and academic organisations etc., that the child participation assessment will be carried out and that interested stakeholders are welcome to participate. The support from the co-ordinating ministry in sending out invitations to participate in the assessment is crucial to ensure engagement of all the relevant stakeholders.</p>	National authority

Timeline	Action	Responsibility
2 Months		
Month 2	<p>Induction seminar</p> <p>A training and induction seminar of one to two days should be held for around 25-30 of the key stakeholders as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ An introduction to the Council of Europe work on child participation: the three policy reviews, development of the Recommendation, setting the context for the child participation assessment process ▶ An introduction to Article 12 of the CRC and General Comment No 12 ▶ An introduction to the Recommendation (2012)2 on child and youth participation ▶ An introduction to the Child Participation Assessment Tool and the Guidance Note ▶ Discussing the expectations on national partners ▶ Child and young people’s consultations: focus groups ▶ Expected outcomes of the consultation process and how to report ▶ The action plan and timing of the process ▶ What will be done with the outcomes and the necessary follow-up activities 	National authority

2. Implementation phase

The implementation phase will include the implementation of the Assessment tool in the Council of Europe member state.

Timeline	Action	Responsibility
9 Months		
Months 3-10	<p>Multi-stakeholder consultations</p> <p>During this period multi-stakeholder consultations should take place with NGO’s, civil society actors, academics and line ministries and the consultations will be carried out per indicator. Detailed guidance on which stakeholders will be consulted on which indicator is given in the Guidance Note.</p> <p>The consultations should be coordinated by the national authorities. For each indicator the responsible national authority will request written information (in particular for indicators 1 and 2) or organise consultation meetings with the relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>Indicators 1, 2, 7,10: consulting line ministries and government agencies</p> <p>Indicators 3, 5: consulting professionals working with children</p> <p>Indicator 4: consulting legal professionals working with/ for children</p> <p>Indicator 6: consulting professionals and professional associations</p> <p>Indicators 7, 8, 9, 10: consulting with NGO’s and civil society</p>	National consultant

Timeline	Action	Responsibility
9 Months		
Months 3-10	<p>Children and young people consultations</p> <p>Children and young people should be consulted on certain indicators (Nos. 3, 5, 7, 8 and 9). These indicators are selected, since the other indicators are a matter of collecting documentary evidence, which can be done without consulting children. Children will be consulted by organising focus group meetings with the support of selected schools and civil society organisations.</p> <p>Focus groups with children and young people</p> <p>In each country at least 10 child and young people focus groups will be organised. Half (at least five) of the focus groups should be organised with the involvement of primary and secondary schools (possibly by involving the Council of Europe focal points on children's rights and human rights education). The other half (a minimum of another five focus groups) should be organised with the involvement of civil society organisations. NGOs should be asked to ensure in particular that children from vulnerable backgrounds participate in the focus group meetings (including disabled children, children with experience in alternative care, in health care etc.).</p> <p>Sufficient time should be dedicated to organise the focus group consultations. These should preferably take one full day, and not be shorter than half a day. The consultations in focus groups could take place during one day during a weekend or it could be organised in several shorter sessions after school, depending on what is practical and in the best interests of the children. For some children a one day consultation is stretching their capacity to concentrate and they would prefer a sequence of shorter sessions, but this could, however, be addressed by ensuring sufficient breaks and energizers during the consultation day.</p> <p>Selection of children at schools should be done in consultation with the selected schools across the country, representing different backgrounds of children, e.g. rural and urban areas, areas with specific minorities at schools. Once the schools have been selected, the designated school should be asked to organise a group with a maximum of 15 to 20 children from different ages and with gender balance.</p> <p>Selection of children with the support of NGOs. During the Training and Induction meeting a side meeting with NGO's and civil society actors could be organised to request their support in identifying different groups of children. This could be done by asking five different NGOs to each organise a child focus group meeting (e.g. NGOs which work with specific groups of children, such as disabled children, migrant children, asylum seeking children, children in juvenile justice, children in care etc.). The purpose is to ensure that different groups of children from particular vulnerable backgrounds will be able to participate in the consultations.</p> <p>Facilitator(s)</p> <p>The focus groups need preparation by a professional facilitator(s), who has experience in working with children and who will be informed about the process and the contents of the Child Participation Assessment Tool.</p>	National authority

Timeline	Action	Responsibility
9 Months		
	<p>Preparation for the facilitator(s) will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Getting acquainted with the Tool, the Recommendation and the piloting process. Getting familiarised with the indicators on which the children will be consulted (Nos. 3,5,7,8 and 9) (estimate work time half a day) ▶ Preparing the focus group consultation(s): develop a programme, ensuring it includes sufficient breaks and energizers and ensuring that the key questions will get discussed. This can be done in various ways: group discussions, world café discussions, theatre and role plays, creative work, etc. (estimate work time half a day). ▶ Carrying out the focus group meeting (estimate work time 1 day) ▶ Reporting on the focus group consultation (estimate work time 2 days) 	

3. Concluding and Evaluation phase

The outcome of the child participation assessment process is a national child participation assessment report. This report includes the data found and a grade (0-3) for each indicator, but also gaps and challenges identified per indicator. The report will provide a baseline assessment and evaluation of the situation of children's participation within the country, including recommendations and an action plan for further improvements.

Timeline	Action	Responsibility
2 Months		
By the end of Month 10	<p>Collection of national data</p> <p>The national authorities are responsible for coordinating the collection of information, data and outcomes of consultations with the different stakeholders, including the outcomes from the children's focus group consultations (written up by the children's facilitators) and outcomes from the consultations with adult stakeholders. All collected reports and information will be sent to the National Consultant.</p>	National authority and National consultant
Month 11-12	<p>National Report</p> <p>All information and reports from the member state will be collected by the National Consultant and compiled into a national report.</p>	National Consultant
Month 12	<p>Evaluation meeting</p> <p>At the end of the assessment process an evaluation meeting should be organised by the national authority, involving all stakeholders involved in the process. The purpose of this meeting is to present the national report, discuss key outcomes and proposals for moving forward.</p> <p>Feedback on the outcomes of the assessment process should also be provided to the children who have participated in the child focus groups via the children's facilitators or the schools and NGOs who have supported the organisation of the focus groups.</p>	National authority, national consultant

Agenda

“Guaranteeing children’s right to participate in all fields of life and measuring progress in promoting child participation”

Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool

Draft Agenda

- 9.30 **Opening and welcome**
Representative of the national ministry/body
Children’s Rights Division, Council of Europe
- 9.45 **Presentation of participants**
- 10.05 **Children’s right to participate: Introduction to the Child Participation Assessment Process**
Presentation on the meaning of Article 12 UNCRC and General Comment no. 12 on the children’s right to participate.
Presentation of Council of Europe work on children’s participation, including three policy reviews, development of the Recommendation (2012)2 on child and youth participation
Questions & answers
- 10.45 **Presentation of state of play of children’s participation in *Member State***
- 11.15 Coffee break
- 11.30 **The impact of children participating in decision-making: two evidence-based case studies**
– a European case study
– a global case study
- 12.00 **Interactive session on children’s participation**
Group-based discussions on how to involve different groups of children in decision-making
- 12.30 Lunch
- 13.30 **Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool and the process of piloting the Tool**
Introduction to the Child Participation Assessment Tool
Presentation of the implementation process of the Tool and the involvement of the different stakeholders, including children and young people
Background documents: Child Participation Assessment Tool, Road Map, Guidance Note, Involvement of children in focus groups
- 14.15 **Working group discussions on the Indicators of the Child Participation Assessment Tool and the consultation process**
*The purpose of this session is to familiarize participants with the Indicators and to set a basis for the consultation process in **country**. The participants will be divided into groups to allow everyone to discuss the Indicators that are relevant to their area of work and expertise. The participants will also have a chance to raise questions on the use and implementation of the different Indicators in the **countries’** context.*
- 15.15 Coffee break
- 15.30 **Feedback on the outcomes of the working groups, follow-up actions and conclusions**
- 16.30 **Closing of meeting**

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