

Together: strengthening the participation of vulnerable children in decision-making

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| <u>Organisation(s):</u> | SOS Children's Villages International | |
| <u>Country:</u> | Austria | |
| <u>Contact:</u> | policy@esn-eu.org | |
| <u>Theme:</u> Choose at least one option | <input type="checkbox"/> Ageing & Care <input type="checkbox"/> Asylum & Migration <input type="checkbox"/> Young People <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Support for Children & Families <input type="checkbox"/> Community Care <input type="checkbox"/> Integrated Care & Support <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Co-Production <input type="checkbox"/> Disability <input type="checkbox"/> Housing & Homelessness <input type="checkbox"/> Artificial Intelligence <input type="checkbox"/> Digitalisation <input type="checkbox"/> Quality Care | <input type="checkbox"/> Labour Market Inclusion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Inclusion <input type="checkbox"/> Technology <input type="checkbox"/> Workforce and Leadership <input type="checkbox"/> Social Benefits <input type="checkbox"/> EU Funding <input type="checkbox"/> Social Service's Resilience <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health <input type="checkbox"/> Person-Centred Care <input type="checkbox"/> Research & Use of Evidence <input type="checkbox"/> Management & Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify: |
| <u>Principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights:</u> Check the 20 principles here . | <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Education, training, life-long learning <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Gender equality <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3. Equal opportunities <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Active support to employment <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Secure and adaptable employment <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Fair Wages <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Transparent employment conditions <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Social dialogue <input type="checkbox"/> 9. Work-life balance <input type="checkbox"/> 10. Healthy, safe work environment | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 11. Childcare and child support <input type="checkbox"/> 12. Social protection <input type="checkbox"/> 13. Unemployment benefits <input type="checkbox"/> 14. Minimum income <input type="checkbox"/> 15. Old age income and pensions <input type="checkbox"/> 16. Health care <input type="checkbox"/> 17. Inclusion of people with disabilities <input type="checkbox"/> 18. Long-term care <input type="checkbox"/> 19. Housing and assistance to the homeless <input type="checkbox"/> 20. Access to essential services |
| <u>Current status of the practice:</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> Concept and Design Phase <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Testing or pilot phase <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary practice that has terminated <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary practice that is ongoing and has a termination date <input type="checkbox"/> Established and ongoing practice <input type="checkbox"/> Scaling Up and Transformation Phase <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) | |
| <u>Summary:</u> Please summarise the practice in maximum 3 sentences. This | By forming Child and Youth Advisory Boards and organising peer-led workshops, the project informs children and young people of their right to participate in public decision-making, provides them with tools to express their views, and enables young participants to meet directly with public authorities and advocate for their rights. | |

| | |
|--|---|
| <i>will be the disclaimer of your project on our website.</i> | |
| <u>Context/ Social issues addressed</u> <i>Please explain the problem you attempt to solve with your practice.</i> | <p>Unfortunately, for vulnerable children and young people, including those who are supported by social services, their voices are often further underrepresented compared to those of children in the general population. These children, young people, and their families are often among those at the highest risk of poverty and social exclusion and usually face other forms of disadvantage that create barriers to their participation in their communities. As such, their specific dynamics and needs are not always recognised or addressed, resulting in them lacking the appropriate support.</p> |
| <u>Objectives:</u> <i>Please provide a maximum of three objectives in bullet points.</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To promote inclusive communities by embedding children's rights in public decision-making across the EU, specifically prioritising the participation of vulnerable children and young people supported by social services or in alternative care. 2. To empower children and young people from vulnerable backgrounds to participate meaningfully in public decision-making on all matters that affect them. |
| <u>Activities:</u> <i>Please describe the activities put in place to achieve the objectives (maximum 300 words).</i> | <p>The meaningful participation of vulnerable children and young people was integrated throughout the project, and over 1000 children and young people participated in the various project activities.</p> <p>All project resources were developed based on the voices of children and young people, through direct consultations and the results of a survey answered by 468 children at the start of the project. A Child and Youth Advisory Board was formed in each country, composed of children aged 10-24 who supported the development and implementation of project activities at a national level. At the international level, 8 young people aged 20-27 were involved as Mentors who supported the training of children and young people and shaped the training methodology and materials.</p> <p>One of the key project actions was the development and roll-out of peer-led workshops for children aged 13-17 to learn more about their right to participate in public decision-making processes. These workshops were delivered by young people aged 15-24 who were trained as Peer Trainers. Each workshop included a session in which the children met directly with public decision-makers and other professionals who can support their participation (e.g. teachers, and social workers) to share their messages and practice what they have learned. An awareness-raising e-learning course was also developed for these key adults on the topic of "Meaningful Child and Youth Participation in Public Decision-Making".</p> <p>Other awareness-raising and advocacy actions that took place within the project included the development of videos for children on their right to participate, including an online campaign; the organisation of information webinars for adults; national policy recommendations developed together with children and young people; as well as the organisation of further meetings and exchanges between children and public authorities.</p> |
| <u>Outcomes:</u> <i>Please explain what the results were/are so far and how you evaluated this.</i> | <p>The project activities were evaluated through various methods aimed at assessing their quality and short-term impact on participants. An external project evaluation process was also conducted to analyse all findings and results.</p> <p>Through their participation in the National Training of Peer Trainers, 49 young people were given the tools and knowledge to deliver peer-to-peer workshops for children and were empowered to share this knowledge with their peers. Following their training, 98% of Peer Trainers evaluated their capacity to deliver the peer-to-peer workshops as good/very good. As stated by some of the Peer Trainers in their post-training evaluation, "<i>I feel capable to work with my peers and I think the training will be helpful to them and others</i>" and "<i>It was so exciting to participate and also important. I think I managed to build great skills.</i>"</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>Through their participation in the peer-to-peer workshops, 433 children and young people learned about their right to participate in public decision-making processes and built their capacity to do so. In the focus group discussions that were held with children and young people approximately 3 months after they completed the workshops, they reported increased self confidence in expressing their opinions and participating in decision-making processes. A sense of empowerment was fostered among the children, allowing them to recognise that their opinions matter and that they can contribute to societal changes. They had gained a deeper understanding of their rights, as well as practical skills and knowledge to be able to engage in their communities and advocate for their needs. As some of the children shared, <i>“The knowledge we have learned allows me to express my opinion on the things I want to change”</i> and <i>“After the workshop I feel more confident.”</i></p> <p>161 adults participated in the final workshop session, in which they were given the opportunity to hear directly from children and young people as they presented their messages and recommendations, and start to engage in discussions on these key topics. These adults shared positive feedback on their participation and the importance of facilitating such exchanges between children and adults. As stated by one of the adults in the post-workshop questionnaire, <i>“This approach and activities should be a leading practice, not only in social services for children and young people at risk, but for all children and young people in the country.”</i></p> <p>In total, 81% of children, young people and adults who participated in the peer-to-peer workshops evaluated their knowledge and skills about child and youth participation in public decision-making processes as improved/much improved.</p> <p>Furthermore, through their participation in the e-learning course, 555 adult participants gained knowledge on the importance of child and youth participation and were provided with practical tools for implementing it. 87% of respondents to the post-course questionnaire evaluated that their awareness of the importance of including children and young people in public decision-making had improved. As stated by one e-learning participant, <i>“This course on child and youth participation has profoundly reshaped my understanding of the importance of involving young people in decision-making processes.”</i></p> |
| <p><u>Links to supporting documents:</u> e.g. website or report of the practice</p> | <p>https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/together</p> |
| <p><u>Comments and tips</u> i.e. for people willing to use your Practice</p> | <p>The Training of Trainers Guide for Lead Trainers and Peer-to-Peer Workshop Handbook are available to download on the project webpage. It is important that the participation of children and young people as both trainers and participants is handled safely with respect to the necessary safeguarding measures that should be in place. Please see the guidance provided in each of the training manuals for further information.</p> |