

State of play on child participation



Based on national inputs from Austria, Belgium and Croatia

Child-centered and Accessible crisis-Response for an Effective protection System

(September 2022 – August 2024)



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1. Introduction

The right of children to participate in matters that concern them is enshrined in article 12 of the CRC.

While enshrining the principle in international law is an important step towards enabling children to express their opinions and ideas, it is not enough. The principle also needs to be followed up at national level, both in the legislation of each CRC signatory country, and in the day-to-day practices of adults who work or are in regular contact with children.

The aim of this report is to provide a modest overview of the practical application of the right to participation at international level, as well as at local level in the 3 partner countries of the Cares project: Austria, Belgium and Croatia.

It is divided into 3 parts. Firstly, a legislative analysis of the implementation of the right to child participation at international and national level in the 3 countries. Next, we present some key players in the implementation of the right to participation. We will conclude with some 'best practices' for implementing children's right to participation at different levels of power or influence.

It goes without saying that this report cannot be exhaustive. In particular, it cannot provide a complete overview of all the more or less local initiatives that bring participation to life on a daily basis. At most, it provides a few ideas and examples of how to put a fundamental principle of children's rights into practice. We also hope to highlight shortcomings in the implementation of this right, so that steps can be taken to remedy them.

2. Legal framework on child participation

2.1 Legal framework on child participation on the international level

The following **fundamental rights** are particularly at stake when dealing with "children at risk":

- to be protected from all forms of violence (CRC art.19),
- to be heard and to participate (CRC art.12),
- to family life (ECHR art. 8)
- and to be cared for by and not to be separated from their parents (CRC art. 7 and 9),
- to live in dignity (ECHR art.3),
- the right to live (ECHR art 2; CRC art 6)
- to have their best interests be a primary consideration (CRC art.3),
- to alternative care (art.20),
- to be protected from exploitation (art 32)
- to protect children in situation of weakness : refugee children (CRC art 22) and children with disabilities (CRC art 23)
- to a periodic review of the treatment of placed children (CRC art 25)
- and the positive obligation of States to protect children from torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (ECHR art. 3; CRC art 37 and case law including children in detention case law).

Under **EU law**¹, child's right to enjoy respect for their family life includes : the right to be cared for by their parents; the right to maintain contact with both parents; the right not to be separated from parents except where it is in the child's best interests.

¹ FRA handbook on the right of the child

The following **international standards** are particularly relevant about the rights of children in vulnerable situations and might sustain the elaboration of recommendations within the CARES project:

- ECHR art 3, 8, and case law,
- Council of Europe Recommendation on children's rights and social services friendly to children and families,
- Council of Europe Guidelines on child friendly justice,
- Council of Europe Guidelines on child-friendly health care
- Council of Europe [Recommendation Rec\(2012\)2 on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18](#)
- UN Guidelines for the alternative care of children,
- UNCRC General Comment No. 12 on the right of the child to be heard (CRC/GC/2009/12),
- UNCRC General Comments No. 14 on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration (CRC/GC/2013/14)

[2.2 Legal framework on child participation in Austria](#)

- Austrian Constitutional Law on the Rights of Children (in force since 2011):
 - Partial transposition of key CRC provisions into national constitutional law (only 6 substantive articles), with the right to participation enshrined in its article 4
- Different Laws in Austria's nine Länder (States) with different regulations and application scopes regarding participation:
 - Most states have established State Youth Advisory Boards (without participation of children), in which employees of youth work organisations represent the views of children
 - E.g. Carinthia State constitution: Two school parliaments have to take place per year in the state parliament
 - E.g. Lower Austria Youth Law: Paragraph 2 on participation states "*The municipalities should inform young people about planning initiatives and projects in accordance with article 12 of the CRC and inform and involve them in the opinion-forming process in a way that is appropriate for their age and in line with local practice*"
- Vienna is the only state that has its own Child and Youth Strategy 2020 - 2025
 - 193 concrete measures to be implemented (implementation status is being updated on [a regular basis](#))
 - Establishment of a Vienna Child- and Youth Parliament (including feedback and discussion rounds with the city government)
 - Vienna has declared itself a "Human Rights City" in 2014, with a Human Rights Office led by a Human Rights Coordinator, and which has set children's rights as a priority for implementation: <https://www.wien.gv.at/english/social/integration/human-rights/process.html>

- Austrian Youth Strategy:
 - Ongoing process to strengthen and further develop youth policy in Austria, less precise than Vienna Strategy
 - 35 youth goals and 4 thematic areas, with one of them being participation
 - Part of the current governmental programme (2020 -2024), progress published in the [implementation report](#)
- Austrian Student Representation Law
 - Provides participation and co-determination of Austrian pupils in the local, regional and federal level
- Criminal Law
 - Child victims of crime/violence have a right to legal and psychosocial assistance (“*Prozessbegleitung*”) at court during criminal proceedings
- Civil Law:
 - In parental custody and contact rules proceedings, children above 10 years have to be heard and their opinion has to be considered in due balance to the best interest of the child
 - In case of strong conflicts between parents in divorce/custody/visiting rights proceedings, the judge may grant children support by a children’s counsellor (“*Kinderbeistand*”), who meets with the child outside the court for a statement to prevent stress for the child in formal court hearings
- Obstacles to participation in Austria :
 - Lack of a consistent legal framework about child participation in proceedings with courts and authorities (different age limits, issues of informed consent, lack of mandatory child safeguarding requirements)
 - Lack of clear legal and policy framework for child’ interests representation in alternative care settings/different approaches across nine *Länder*
 - Lack of clear requirements for qualification of authorities (judges, officials, staff in institutions) for direct engagement with children (especially in difficult situations, such as flight/trauma)
 - Change of attitudes needed among adults, decision-makers (at home, at school, in care settings etc) about added value of direct feedback from children
 - Additional (financial) resources needed to create more open space for participation opportunities for young people + better prepare adults (training) for taking children’s views effectively into account (see Lundy model)
 - Lack of consideration of benefits of digitalisation/digital tools for involvement of broader groups of children
 - No comprehensive independent child rights monitoring body in Austria

Visual overview (in German) of participation opportunities for children and young people in the Austrian school and work context:



2.3 Legal framework on child participation in Belgium

- Belgian Constitution
 - Partial translation of key CRC provisions into national constitutional law (only 1 article), with the right to participation enshrined in it
- Different Laws in Belgium two Regions with different regulations and application scopes regarding participation. Both are:
 - Article 9 of Flamish Decree on the status of minors in comprehensive youth aid stipulates that the mission of youth aid is to **strengthen the participation** of young people in youth aid services and in the community
 - The French Community's decree regulating youth aid only says that, for associations subsidized by the public authorities, the government must stipulate the conditions under which 'their educational project and internal regulations applicable to children or young people, including (...) the procedures for participation and for **gathering the views of children or young people(...)**' must be drawn up (art 141, 3°)
 - The Youth Aid Code stipulates: '*Anyone involved in the application of the present code is obliged to take into consideration the best interests of the child or young person and to respect the rights and freedoms recognized to him or her. These rights and freedoms include those set out in the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and in the Constitution. (art 1,4°)*'
 - If there is a placement in a foster family, the family is "obliged to respect the young person's religious, philosophical and political convictions" (article 4 of the decree on youth aid).
- Several state and para-state institutions refer to the right to participation
 - [An opinion from the Belgian health council](#) on the right of young people to participate in mental health care.
 - *Communal Youth Councils (CCJ), or Local Youth Councils*, are structures for participation in local life, aimed primarily at young people between the ages of 12 and 18. This restrictive age range is explained by the fact that, from the age of 18, young people are eligible to stand for election.²
- The Walloon government has drawn up a [children's rights action plan for the years 2020-2024](#). This plan includes a number of measures aimed at strengthening the culture of participation, with a view to :
 - Strengthening participation through partnerships with youth associations
 - Increasing democracy at school
 - Developing the role of the media in children's rights
 - Developing the right to participation in judicial decisions

² Participation citoyenne : mode d'emploi. Guide pour la mise en place et le suivi des structures participatives pour enfants et jeunes, CRECCIDE ASBL Carrefour Régional et Communautaire de la citoyenneté et de la Démocratie, 2010, p 117.

- Civil law
 - Children are heard in legal proceedings on questions of accommodation, hosting, exercise of parental authority and personal relations.³
 - The child heard can be, in theory, any age in justice. There is an exception : this does not apply to a child whose consent is required for adoption or recognition. In these cases, he or she must be at least 12 years old at the time of the act of recognition or adoption. If he or she is under 12, only the parents' consent is required. In the case of adoption, if the child **above 12** refuses to give his or her consent, there is no adoption.⁴
 - The notion of "child consent" required for the child's voice to be heard and taken into account in legal proceedings is rather vague. It is collected in different ways, depending on the judge.⁵
- Criminal law
 - The Belgian law regulating youth assistance obliges the youth judge to hear all young people aged 12 and over. If they are under 12, the judge may also hear them, but is not obliged to do so. This rule applies both to young people who have committed offences, and to young people qualified as "minors at risk", for whom the judge intervenes ex officio with a view to protection.
- Obstacles to participation in Belgium :
 - Very few legal rules governing the subject
 - Very few official bodies dedicated to youth participation
 - No legally binding youth participation body

³ E.Dresse, 'L'enfant qui est entendu, l'enfant qui consent : une frontière vraiment étanche?', mémoire UCL 2017-2018, prom : J. Sosson

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

2.4 Legal framework on child participation in Croatia

- Croatian Constitution
 - In its **Constitution**, the Republic of Croatia has generally committed to the dedication to the protection and promotion of children's rights, as well as the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991.
- Different laws at national level
 - **The Law on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools** enumerates students' rights in Article 61.
 - Relevant to this topic are:
 - The right to be informed about all matters concerning them
 - The right to have their opinions respected
 - The right to lodge complaints which they can submit to teachers, principals, and the School Board
 - The right to participate in the work of the Student Council and in the creation and implementation of the school rules
 - The right to propose improvements to the educational process and educational work.
 - In addition to students' awareness and the right to lodge complaints, it is prescribed that students have the right to have their opinions respected and that a **Student Council** is established in the school, consisting of representatives from each class. A representative from the Student Council participates in the work of school bodies when decisions are made regarding students' rights and obligations, without the right to make decisions. The method of selection and the scope of work of the Student Council are determined by the school's statute.
 - In the healthcare system, it's important to mention the **Patient Rights Act**
 - the patient has the right to co-decision-making, which includes :
 - the right to be informed
 - the right to accept or refuse a particular diagnostic or therapeutic procedure.
 - the right to complete information provided in a clear and understandable manner, taking into account their age, education, and mental capabilities.
 - **The Social Welfare Act** defines that social welfare in the Republic of Croatia is implemented
 - It is based on the principles of freedom of choice and accessibility, individualization, inclusion of users in the community, timeliness, respect for human rights and the integrity of users, prohibition of discrimination, informing about rights and services, user participation in decision-making, confidentiality and protection of personal data, privacy, and lodging complaints.

- Civil law
 - **The Family Law** discusses the informed consent of the child regarding medical procedures.
 - **Regulation on the mandatory content of the form for the joint parenting plan** contains a set of questions about the opinion of the child on joint parenting plan.
 - **The Foster Care Act** addresses the participation of users.
 - A foster care user has an active role in meeting their needs, and the necessary services are provided by interconnected and coordinated service providers in the local community.
 - Additionally, the social welfare center, which referred the user for placement, is obliged to include the selected foster parent and the user in the development of an individual change plan. The rights of the fostered child are also defined by law, so a child who is fostered has the right, according to their age, to be informed about all stages of the process of leaving their own family and to be prepared for placement in a foster family, as well as to participate in decision-making that affects their life.
- Obstacles to participation in Croatia
 - A large number of set goals related to participation
 - Lack of clear mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating laws and strategies
 - Absence of mechanisms for sanctions in case of non-compliance with legal provisions and strategic measures
 - Lack of (or very few) child-friendly information regarding laws and provisions concerning children.

3. Stakeholder analysis-key actors

3.1. Key actors for child participation on the international level

- The **European Commission team on the rights of the child**, especially Marie-Cécile Rouillon (the coordinator) and Marta Tarragona Fenosa
- Astrid Podialowski, Head of Social Rights Sector Unit Equality, Roma and Social Rights Unit, specialist of children's rights at **FRA**: FRA is conducting a mapping of legislation, policies and programmes of child protection systems across EU, to identify challenges, gaps and promising practices ([report to be published in November](#))
- Vice-chairs and members of the **European Parliament intergroup on the rights of the child**;
- Representatives of **ministries in Belgium working for the presidency of the Council** (first semester 2024)
- **CRAG (Child Rights Advocacy Group)**: composed of various NGOs working on children's rights this informal platform lead advocacy initiative toward EU institution, if child protection systems is not a thematic priority of the group this year, its members can still be interested in knowing recommendations of the CARES project. In addition, participation to the CRAGs meeting help monitoring EU policies to feed the CARES advocacy strategy.
- Networks at different levels:
 - International network: ChildRightsConnect
 - European network: Eurochild; Child-friendly Justice European Network; Children's Rights European Academic Network
 - National networks: National Child Rights Coalitions

3.2. Key actors for child participation in Austria

Federal actors

Austrian Youth Association (Bundesjugendvertretung - BJV):

- Representing the concerns of children and young adults towards political stakeholders and ensuring that participation of children and young adults (until the age of 30) in decision-making processes of political processes is being provided
- Legal mandate since 2001 (Austrian Youth Association Law)
- 60 child and youth organisations in Austria are members of the BJV
- Represents the interests of around three million young people in Austria.
- Has established an Inclusion Advisory Board consisting of young people

National Working Group on Youth Dialogue and Youth Participation (Nationale Arbeitsgruppe Jugenddialog & Jugendbeteiligung)

- Interface and dialogue forum to promote high-quality child and youth participation
- Activities: Coordinating initiatives, pooling of resources, providing quality standards, disseminating relevant information etc.
- Members: Youth work institutions (federal and state level), BJV, Coordination office for the EU Youth Dialogue
- Provision of 14 quality criteria for youth participation (see [here, only in German](#))

Coordination Office of the EU Youth Dialogue (Jugenddialog):

- Implementing the EU Youth Goals and coordinating the EU Youth Dialogue on the national level

State actors initiatives (regional level)

Vienna Child- and Youth parliament:

- Since 2022, around 300 children between 5 and 20 meet on 3 occasions annually to discuss important topics ranging from co-determination to climate protection and urban planning and to get to know the city's politicians.
- The delegates discuss the progress of Vienna's children and youth strategy and the achievement of its goals. They draw up joint statements as well as submit demands to the responsible politicians in Vienna's city government.
- In the third plenary session, the politicians respond to these statements and engage in a discussion with the delegates of the Children and Youth Parliament.

Special Unit for Child and Youth Participation in Styria: As a service provider for the province of Styria, 'beteiligung.st' sees itself as lobbyist, companion and advisor in the field of participation.

3.3. Key actors for child participation in Belgium

Federal actors

The office of the Ombudsman for children's rights

- The general mission of the Ombudsman is to protect the rights and interests of children
- In the exercise of his mission, the Ombudsman may in particular:
 - 1. provide information on the rights and interests of children, and ensure the promotion of children's rights and interests;
 - 2. verify the correct application of legislation and regulations concerning children;
 - 3. to recommend to the Government, to Parliament and to any authority competent to deal with children any proposal aimed at adapting current regulations with a view to more complete and effective protection of children's rights and interests;
 - 4. receive information, complaints or requests for mediation concerning infringements of children's rights and interests;
 - 5. to conduct, at Parliament's request, investigations into the operation of the French Community's administrative departments concerned by this mission.

Regional actors initiatives (regional level):

Le forum des jeunes

- Le Forum des Jeunes is the voice of young people aged 16 to 30 in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation.
- Its organization is centered around concrete projects that young people from different backgrounds have decided to carry out collectively.
- These projects are defined during participatory days highlighting the main concerns of young French-speaking Belgians. These exchanges enable participants to reflect on current priorities, as well as on local, national and international issues affecting young people.

Vlaamse Jeugdraad

- The Flemish Youth Council is the official advisory council for the Flemish Government on all areas that concern children, young people and their organizations in Flanders. We ensure that the voice of children and young people reaches policy makers and defend the interests of youth organizations in Flanders and Europe.
- Flemish ministers must seek the advice of the Flemish Youth Council whenever they want to make decisions that affect children and young people. But the Flemish Youth Council also gives advice on its own initiative. In committees, working groups and at other meetings we prepare positions and advice. Each opinion then passes our advisory council, which consists of 16 elected youth and youth work advisors. The advisors deliver the final result to the Flemish government

3.3. Key actors for child participation in Croatia

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (<https://dijete.hr/hr/>)

- The Ombudsperson was established in 2003 with the task of protecting, monitoring, and promoting the rights and interests of children based on the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, international agreements, and laws (The Ombudsperson for Children Act).

The Council for Children,

- The Council was established in 1998 as an advisory body to the Government of the Republic of Croatia. It serves as a permanent body that monitors the implementation of the fundamental national strategic document in the field of protection and promotion of children's rights in the Republic of Croatia.
- It coordinates and harmonizes the work of state and other bodies in implementing planned measures and activities.
- Among other tasks, it monitors the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international agreements, as well as national regulations and programs related to the protection and promotion of children's rights.

The National Student Council of Croatia

- The Student Council is the highest body of elementary and high school students at the national level.
- It has been the representative body of all students and an advisory body to the competent ministry since 2005, with 21 students representing each county of Croatia and the City of Zagreb.
- The Council's tasks include
 - Representing students in all national matters concerning them, their work, and the educational system
 - Advocating for students' obligations, rights, and interests in public and relevant educational institutions
 - Preparing and providing proposals to the competent minister on issues important to students, their work, and educational outcomes
 - Proposing measures to improve conditions in schools
 - Assisting students in fulfilling their school, extracurricular, and other obligations
 - Promoting the interests of students with developmental difficulties and seeking solutions to the daily problems they face
 - Promoting sportsmanship and combating all forms of addiction among students
 - Fostering a culture of dialogue and tolerance among students regarding national, racial, and religious diversity
 - Fostering collaboration among students from different countries
 - Promoting innovation and a spirit of inquiry among students; strengthening the structure of the National Student Council and student representation, and promoting democracy, transparency, and representativeness among students for this purpose
 - Assisting in personality development and strengthening the identity of students.

4. Good practices for child participation

4.1. Good practices for child participation on the international level

- **EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child**, as Thematic area 1 of the Strategy is about child participation in political and democratic life: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/rights-child/eu-strategy-rights-child-and-european-child-guarantee_en
- **EU Youth strategy** https://youth.europa.eu/strategy_en & EU Youth Dialogue https://youth.europa.eu/strategy/euyouthdialogue_en
- June 26th 2023: launch of **EU Child participation platform** by the European Commission
 - At this stage, the child participation platform includes only 14 EU member States (including Croatia but not Belgium nor Austria). The platform will be launched in the end of June during an event organised by the EC. In order to participate to the consultation, groups of children will need to join the platform (by contacting national focal points and following a proceeding).
 - A first consultation took place and the [workplan for 2023-2024](#) came out.
- In addition, the European commission invites member states to establish, improve and provide adequate resources for new and existing mechanisms of child participation at local, regional and national level, including through the [Council of Europe's child participation self-assessment tool](#).
 - The aim of the Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool is to **support states** in meeting the goals of the Recommendation on participation of children and young people under the age of 18. The Assessment Tool offers a method, at European level, to facilitate and support the implementation of the child's right to participate. The Assessment Tool provides 10 basic indicators enabling states to:
 - undertake a baseline assessment of current implementation of the recommendation;
 - help identify measures needed to achieve further compliance by states;
 - measure progress over time.
 - The Assessment Tool can be used across government ministries, throughout local authority administrations, with the courts and judicial systems, with relevant professionals working with children, with academic and civil society partners, and with organisations of children and young people.
 - In 2016-2017, the Assessment Tool was successfully piloted in Estonia, Ireland and Romania, and subsequently revised. In 2017-2018, three further countries (Bulgaria, Italy and Latvia) applied the tool and an evaluation meeting of this work cycle will take place in Sofia, Bulgaria in July 2018.

- The [Assessment Tool](#) is accompanied by an [Implementation Guide](#) with a roadmap and detailed guidance on information collection, focus groups and using the results for reporting to the UN Committee for the Rights of the Child.
- The Child Participation Assessment Tool is aligned with the “Framework for monitoring and evaluating children’s participation”, a toolkit for monitoring and evaluating child participation processes at global level
- The [Council of Europe Child Right Strategy 2022-2027](#) aims to agree on a shared vision and develop a **common reference framework** with specific and time-bound objectives.
 - The process of drafting the strategy adopted a participatory model, with 220 children consulted in its preparation.
 - The **6 priorities of this strategy are** :
 - Freedom from violence for all children
 - Equal opportunities and social inclusion for all children
 - Access to and safe use of technologies for all children
 - Child-friendly justice
 - **Giving a voice to every child**
 - **Children’s voices in crisis and emergency situations**
 - The CoE aims to adopt a **child participation approach**, and produce child-friendly versions of its standards
 - The recognition of the legitimacy of children’s experiences, views and recommendations
 - It suggests to support peer education on the rights of the child
 - Giving a voice to every child is a priority : children have the rights to be heard, and participate
- Save the Children created a [consultation toolkit](#)
 - This is a practical guide about **how to consult with children and young people on policy related** issues. It is written for community workers, youth workers, teachers, local authority workers, facilitators and other organisations and individuals working with children and young people. It is also for children and young people themselves who may be involved or interested in organising a consultation exercise
- [What was the European Year of Youth? | European Youth Portal \(europa.eu\)](#)
- **Child Justice Caravan**
 - Organised by [CFJ-EN Projects | CFJ-EN \(cfjnetwork.eu\)](#)
 - The project aims at improving children and youth’s knowledge of their rights and ability to claim them. Every year, a group of children will participate in a visit to the European Union and Council of Europe institutions and meet child justice and child protection professionals.

4.2. Examples of good practices for child participation in Austria

- Many civil society organisations, NGO and Child rights organisations have or are in the process of establishing a child advisory board, for instance, SOS childrens village, UNICEF, Integration Tirol, Vienna Child and Youth Ombudsperson
- As part of the Vienna Children and Youth Strategy, several initiatives for child participation have been launched, including a process for children themselves do decide allocation of funding (one million Euro) to projects and activities they care about most, see *Kinder- und Jugendmillion*, <https://junges.wien.gv.at/projekte/>
- The Austrian National Coalition for the Implementation of the CRC (Netzwerk Kinderrechte Österreich) regularly implements projects supporting child participation, including political participation of children
 - Erasmus+ Project "Best Practices of child participation in National Coalitions for the Implementation of the UN CRC (ended in 2018)
- Many local, regional and national participation projects, initiatives and research activities, such as:
 - Human Rights Space: interactive exhibition about human rights and children's rights, with workshops for young people and adults, <https://humanrightsspace.at/>
 - Child and Youth Ambassadors for Children's Rights and SDGs (Caritas Vorarlberg): some 30 children and young people (8 to 25 years) organising projects, public events and workshops, as well as developing and performing their own musicals about child rights and SDGs on stage - <https://jugendbotschafter-vorarlberg.at/>
 - LBI-GMR project 2023 "[Being a Child in Times of Crisis](#)": Training of 70 students to become human rights advocates to raise their voices and opinions. Establishment of platforms for dialogue between the young advocates and influential stakeholders, including Austrian Members of Parliament, leading to a parliamentary proposal to revise school curricula for future educators

4.3. Examples of good practices for child participation in Belgium

- [Écouter Rassembler Agir - Forum des Jeunes](#)
 - **The Forum des Jeunes is the voice of young people aged 16 to 30 in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation.** Its organization is centered around concrete projects that young people from different backgrounds have decided to carry out collectively. **These projects are defined during participatory days highlighting the main concerns of young French-speaking Belgians. These exchanges enable participants to reflect on current priorities, as well as on local, national and international issues affecting young people.**

The Forum des Jeunes listens to the voices of young people, and makes them heard by issuing official opinions that represent the collective voice of diversity, by representing young people at national and international conferences, and by carrying out citizen initiative projects.

In addition to its political advocacy role, **the Forum des Jeunes puts youth participation at the heart of its actions.** A project by young people and for young people, making them active players in society.
- [Accueil - Dialogue Jeunesse](#)
 - Since 2009, Europe has set up a Youth Dialogue process to promote the active citizenship of young people and enable them to make their voices heard by member states and the European Commission. The Youth Dialogue takes the form of an 18-month cycle, divided into **three European Youth Conferences.**
 - **European Youth Conferences take place every 6 months in the countries of the Trio Presidency of the European Union.** These three countries define a specific theme to be addressed, and a national consultation is carried out in all Member States to find out young people's opinions on the subject, and to come up with concrete proposals to improve their situation.
- [On lance officiellement l'AJC Festival ! - Forum des Jeunes](#)
 - 3 weeks of workshops, debates, conferences, shows, concerts, exhibitions, international meetings... for young people! The Agora Jeunes Citoyen-ne-s (AJC) takes place from February 20 to March 9 at TRACK.brussels in Brussels North Station (and also at other locations in Wallonia). This 100% free event is dedicated to the participation and expression of young people in collaboration with youth structures.
- [Jeugd Parlement Jeunesse](#)
 - Jeugd parlement jeunesse organizes mock parliamentary sessions with children and young people
 - These sessions take place in the 3 national languages
 - Young people can discuss in the real Belgian Senate
 - Different roles are played : MP, journalists, senator,...

- Different kinds of local initiatives :

- Participative mediator: hire a person within the specialized institution to gather children's opinions. This initiative has been implemented in a psychiatric hospital, but is not very effective there. (Mental institution in Brussels)
- Co-creation of a comic book to speak about their life (Foyer des Jeunes des Marolles)
- Podcasts with children (Samarcande AMO)
- Co-creation of pedagogical tools (Ixelle museum) <https://www.musedixelles.irisnet.be/museum-in-progress/musee-a-lecole>
- Media workshops and debates on social issues to compare points of view and encourage encounters between young people in Brussels. (Bruxitizen) : <https://www.altermedialab.be/lab/bruxitizen>
- *Ambassadors for civic expression* create educational tools to encourage young people to express themselves in civic life : <https://www.ambassadeurs.org/>
- NB : These local initiatives are just a few examples. Youth associations have a great deal of latitude in their actions, which allows the creation of numerous local initiatives that are unfortunately little known or disseminated.

4.3. Examples of good practices for child participation in Croatia

- **The Network of Youth Advisors of the Ombudsperson for Children (MMS)** is a permanent advisory and collaborative body that gathers children and youth at the national level.
 - Membership in the network lasts for three years, but interested members can, after the expiration of their mandate, remain collaborators of MMS and the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children.
 - Every child can become a member of MMS. Members are selected based on a public call by the Ombudsperson for Children.

- **UPSHIFT** (<https://zabum.hr/>) is a UNICEF program that involves a three-day workshop combining entrepreneurial and team spirit, practical knowledge, and mentoring support to address challenges that young people face in their local communities.
 - The workshop provides participants with new knowledge and skills for analyzing and solving specific problems.
 - To participate in the workshop, young people gather their own teams of three to five members and describe the problem they want to solve in their application. Ten teams are selected to participate in the workshop based on the best description of the problem and their motivation to solve it.
 - During the workshop, participants have the opportunity to gain new and applicable knowledge and connections, while selected teams also receive financial support of 1,000 euros to turn their ideas into reality.
- **"Take the Money and Make Something for Youth"** (<https://zagorje-sutla.eu/uzmi-pare-i-napravi-nesto-za-mlade-vol-3/>) is a project aimed at young people in rural areas and small urban settlements.
 - Young people developed and promoted projects, voted for them, and thus participated in the decision-making process. Local decision-makers analyzed the proposed projects together with young people and provided their expert advice to prepare for voting, and they were also responsible for the implementation and co-financing of the projects.
 - This project is an opportunity to create space for collaboration and dialogue between young people and decision-makers, fostering a better understanding of the needs and interests of young people in local communities.
 - The project originated as a joint idea of the Zagorje-Sutla LAG and the Zagor Network of Associations, funded through the Civic Europe call.
- **The "Društvo Naša Djeca Opatija"** (<https://dnd-opatija.hr/> Our Children Opatija Society) is an organization that focuses on planning and organizing leisure activities for preschool and school-age children.
 - Ways in which children can participate within the framework of "DND Opatija" include: Children's Forum, Children's City Council, meetings with the mayor, participation in public events, and writing messages to adults.

- **"KONTACT - Center for Empowering Youth from Alternative Care"** (<https://udrugaignra.hr/programi/kontakt/centar-za-mlade-iz-alternativne-skrbi/>) is a program of the Association "Igra" that has been in existence since 2002.
 - The general aim and purpose of the program are to develop competencies for independent living after leaving institutional care, thus reducing the consequences of institutionalization of children and youth by providing assistance and support in the three most stressful periods of institutional treatment: at its beginning, completion, and after leaving care.
 - The concept of participatory rights permeates horizontally through all segments of their work. For example, young people involved in the "Contact" program have independently created and manage the SkokUŽivot website aimed at young people, where youth from institutions and foster families can find interesting and useful information about independent living (<http://www.skokuzivot.hr/>).
 - In 2011, "Reflections of Youth Who Grew Up in the Social Welfare System in Independent Living" (<http://udrugaignra.hr/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/promisljanja.pdf>) was published, written by young people for young people in alternative care. "Catapult - Educational Brochure for Youth Exiting or Having Exited Social Welfare Institutions" reached its fifth edition in 2015 (http://udrugaignra.hr/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/katapult_5-izadnje_web.pdf). As part of this program, the association also offers a peer support program. Peer supporters are young people aged 20 to 30 who were placed in children's or educational institutions during their upbringing and now independently care for themselves, wanting to help others with their experiences.
- **The "Mali dom"** (<http://www.malidom.hr/en>) is an institution in Zagreb that operates as a day center for the rehabilitation of children and youth.
 - The programs and activities of the "Mali dom" include around a hundred children with visual impairments and additional significant developmental difficulties, with approximately 150 children from this population going through assessment and counseling programs at the institution each year.
 - The mission of the "Mali dom" is to provide a fulfilling and meaningful life for children with multiple disabilities and visual impairments by offering services in a stimulating and positive environment that encourage the development of each child's abilities, aiming for their self-realization.
 - At Mali Dom, the involvement of children with multiple disabilities is primarily achieved through communication encouragement and integration into the wider community. Children participate in all activities at Mali Dom because they are tailored to them. The extent of children's involvement and participation depends on the person working with them and the activities (for example, they cannot decide whether or not to take medication), but they are encouraged to choose the type of activity, the music they will listen to, the game they will play, etc.



- **The Association "Krijesnica"** (<https://krijesnica.hr/>) is an organization that provides assistance to children and families facing malignant diseases.
 - The participatory role of young people is most evident through "Mlade Krijesnice" (Young Fireflies) and "Malo Svjetlo Nade" (A Little Light of Hope). These are young individuals aged 18 to 29 years (occasionally even 16) who have been treated for malignant diseases in childhood and have responded to the call to contribute their experiences to those currently undergoing treatment and/or to the topic of life after treatment, difficulties, and possibilities
- **"Pukotine"** (<https://pukotine.hr/>) is a platform aimed at opening a virtual space for young people (as well as other generations) - a space within which they can identify and define their own problems, relate to others and their difficulties and cracks, as well as open up the possibility for repair and healing. It's a space where they feel they are not alone and isolated. Young people create and share content about mental health, social relations and other current topics on the platform.