

# Child and Youth Participation in the Czech Republic

Council of Europe Policy Review

## I. Summary

**"This discussion with lecturers is the first time anyone, other than my parents, is listening to what I think. Shouldn't that happen more frequently?" (child focus group participant)**

In 2021, the Czech Republic had the unique opportunity to participate in the Council of Europe project "CP4EUROPE - Strengthening National Child Participation Frameworks and Action in Europe". Through the opportunity to consult with experts on child participation, use the CPAT tool and share experiences from partner countries, it was possible for the first time ever to launch a systematic mapping of the extent of participation from the government level and to look for ways to strengthen it.

Children's participation in the Czech Republic is significantly influenced by the socio-cultural context, where some of today's adults grew up in a regime that did not allow either adult or child participation. The idea of involving children as equal partners, hearing and respecting their views and taking children's wishes into account in decision-making and daily activities is therefore still relatively new to the public and not always readily acceptable. One of the prerequisites for children's participation is a safe and accepting environment - on this basis, public education and a general change in attitudes towards children's participation is seen as one of the prerequisites for children's participation in everyday public life and in major decision-making processes.

The CPAT assessment of children's participation in the Czech Republic provided exceptional insight into children's involvement in different situations. Among other things, it was confirmed that the legislative framework sets out relatively clear conditions for ascertaining children's views and taking them into account. However, support in the form of methodological recommendations and practical guidance is almost absent in practice, both for adults and children. Representatives of social service providers are quite experienced in involving children and their approach to clients is ensured through standards of quality; other professions, such as judges, police officers or representatives of the OSLPC, expressed some uncertainty and the need for further professional support. Even the children themselves, who participate in more or less important decision-making processes, are unsure of their rights and possibilities, or are concerned about the consequences of declaring their wishes or opinions.

Practical procedures used in the application of the CPAT tool in the Czech Republic have shown effective ways of measuring children's and adults' attitudes towards participation - whether through focus groups, questionnaire surveys or awareness-raising seminars. These tools will continue to be developed as part of the implementation of child participation in the Czech Republic.

## II. Introduction

We all look to the Convention on the Rights of the Child as a source of inspiration, especially Article 12, which relates to respect for the views of the child. The aim of this report is to present the outcome of the mapping exercise on how the Czech Republic is doing in terms of involving children in all areas that concern them. The mapping was carried out using the Council of Europe's Child Participation Assessment Tool with ten specific and measurable indicators ([CPAT Child Participation Indicator Toolkit](#), hereinafter referred to as "CPAT").

Prior to joining the Council of Europe project "[CP4EUROPE - Strengthening National Child Participation Frameworks and Action in Europe](#)", we were full of expectations about where the Czech Republic stood in terms of children's participation. What did we find? In terms of anchoring child participation in the legislative framework of the Czech Republic, it is clear that more than thirty years have passed since the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991). We were all the more curious to see how the legislative changes would translate into the everyday lives of children. We were pleasantly surprised. Although there were sometimes islands of good practice, it is very positive that children's participation is more and less in the consciousness of both children and adults. It must be openly admitted that these are rather small steps on the way to the goal of safe child participation being an obvious part of everyday life for children and adults in the Czech Republic.

This report maps the level of child participation in the Czech Republic using 10 CPAT indicators. In order to verify the indicators, we used workshops, consultations with experts, studied laws, guidelines, standards, organized focus groups for children and adults, and addressed the child and adult population through a questionnaire survey. We are aware that given the number of focus group participants and the number of respondents to the survey, the data cannot be considered statistically valid. For this reason, the assessment of individual indicators using the CPAT tool should be seen as an expert estimate by the project team. However, it can certainly be said that the other objectives of the project have been met, namely raising awareness of child participation in the country, which needs to be further increased.

It can be summarised that the CPAT tool has proved its worth in practice. Its purpose is not to measure situation in individual EU Member States, but it may serve very well to measure progress in child participation in a given country. At the same time, it is a great form of support for changes in practice.

*"We need you to ask our opinion on issues. Only with genuine concern can we open up and tell you what is bothering us." (child focus group participant)*

### **The "CP4EUROPE - Strengthening National Child Participation Frameworks and Action in Europe" project**

The project is coordinated by the Council of Europe and funded by the European Union Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020). It has been implemented in the Czech Republic since 1. 4. 2021 to 30. 6. 2023. In addition to the Czech Republic, Finland, Slovenia, Portugal and Iceland are also cooperating on the project. Its main objective is to raise awareness about the participation of children and young adults. In addition to raising

awareness of child participation and the use of the unique CPAT tool, the project also provides the methodological document "Listen - Act - Change", which provides guidance on how to do so effectively and safely for children.

Key expected outcomes of the project include:

- The possibility for children to participate in individual decision-making processes
- Increased awareness and political willingness of decision makers
- Training for professionals to implement child participation
- Recommendations for legislative and policy changes
- A European platform and network for future exchanges



The project is creating a "European Platform for the Participation of Children and Young Adults" to share examples of good practice. The platform will be coordinated by the Council of Europe's Children's Rights Division. At the same time, it will develop European resources and activities that will benefit all partner countries and all EU and Council of Europe Member States in the long term.

### III. Baseline situation in the Czech Republic

The Czech Republic has 10 525 739 inhabitants (data as of 30. 6. 2022), of which as of 1. 1. 2021, 1,693,408 children under the age of 14. There are 20,659 children in foster care. The number of children who were placed in institutional care or protective education was 5,735 (data as of 31. 12. 2020).

### IV. The evaluation process

#### Creation of an implementation team

The implementation team consisted of six staff members. They were predominantly a team of people with experience of working in the non-profit sector who have also been working with the MoLSA for a long time. The focus was primarily on their professional and practical

skills - three of the workers and one member of the implementation team were experienced facilitators with experience of working directly with children and young adults in the system of social and legal protection of children. The distribution of roles within the team was not precisely defined, given the small number of project team members. The facilitators were versatile professionals who, thanks to their previous experience, were able to communicate with both children and adults, and also had great organizational skills. The implementation team met regularly to plan and also to jointly report on ongoing activities (25 meetings with minutes were held up to February 2023).

5 non-profit organizations working with children were invited for closer cooperation (Amalthea, z.s., Centrum J.J. Pestalozziho, o.p.s., Centrum ARPIDA, z.ú., LUMOS, s.r.o., Naše škola Praha - základní škola, s.r.o.).

Prior to the implementation of the children's focus groups, a **Protection Policy to Ensure the Safety of Children Involved in the CP4Europe Project within the Czech Republic** was developed. At the same time, a contact person was identified to ensure the Child Safety Policy. All those who participated in the child focus groups were made aware of this Policy by the contact person.

## Introductory seminar

On 16. 11. 2021, a three-hour introductory seminar titled "[Why listen to children, and why can't we do it without participation?](#)" took place which, in view of the pandemic situation in the Czech Republic, was held online on the Zoom platform.

Two NGOs (LUMOS and the Czech Expert Society for Inclusive Education) and a representative from the Office for International Legal Protection of Children were invited to actively contribute.

115 experts from the field of social services and the social and legal protection of children, education, health, leisure, local government, police, jurisprudence and other actors of the service network signed up to participate in the introductory webinar. Anonymous feedback showed that they found the webinar useful and were satisfied with the presentations.

### Annex 1: Invitation to the introductory webinar

**POZVÁNKA na úvodní webinář**  
**Proč naslouchat dětem, aneb proč to bez participace nejde?**

Aktivní zapojení dětí je nezbytnou součástí všech záležitostí, které se jich týkají v každodenním životě v oblasti školství, zdravotnictví, soudnictví, sociálních služeb i sociální práce, volnočasových aktivit, zajištění bezpečí a ochrany dětí a dalších.

Jaká je úroveň participace v ČR a v Evropě, jak a proč participaci posílit?

**Projekt, kterého je webinář součástí:** Úvodní webinář představuje aktivity 2letého projektu Rady Evropy „Participace dětí v Evropě – posilování národního rámce a aktivit v rámci participace dětí“, který se zaměřuje na zapojování dětí a mladých dospělých do tvorby politiky na národní úrovni.

**Komu je webinář určen?** Zástupkyním/zástupcům z oblasti sociálních služeb a sociálně-právní ochrany dětí, školství, zdravotnictví, volného času, samosprávy, policie, justice a dalším aktérkám/aktérům sítě služeb.

**Informace o přihlašování:** Hlaste se prostřednictvím [online formuláře](#). Účast Vám bude následně potvrzena. Odkaz na online webinář bude účastníkům a účastnicím zaslán prostřednictvím registračního e-mailu. Akce je bez registračního poplatku.

Úvodní webinář se koná v rámci projektu „Childhood Participation 2021 v Evropě – posilování národního rámce a aktivit v rámci participace dětí“ (2019-2021) financovaného Programem Evropské unie pro právo, rovnost a občanství (2014-2020).

**Termín:**  
**16. listopadu 2021**

The webinar included a talk by a young self-advocate Magdalena from the LUMOS organization about engaging children and their ability to express their opinion on topics that concern them. Children's opinions were also captured through three videos made by children from the drama group of the Theatre Ensemble in České Budějovice. The children answered the following questions: "**What do you think a right is? Where can you complain?**"

**What would I like to complain about, what do I not understand and what would I like to change?"** A large part of the audience appreciated the children's courage to speak their own opinion.

### Annex 2: Programme of the introductory webinar



[Zvětšit zobrazení](#)

## Program úvodního webinaru

### Proč naslouchat dětem, aneb proč to bez participace nejde?

**Termín: 16. listopadu 2021**  
Odkaz na online webinář bude poslán všem účastníkům a účastnicím v samostatném e-mailu

**10:00 – 10:10 Zahájení – úvodní slovo**  
Mgr. Martina Štěpánková Štýbrová – ředitelka Odboru rodinné politiky a ochrany práv dětí, Ministerstvo práce a sociálních věcí

**10:10 – 10:25 Představení projektu „Participace dětí v Evropě – posilování národního rámce a aktivit v rámci participace dětí“**  
Mgr. Kristýna Jůzová Kotalová – vedoucí Oddělení koncepce ochrany práv dětí a transformace služeb pro rodiny a děti, Ministerstvo práce a sociálních věcí

**10:25 – 11:10 Proč participovat a sdílení dobré praxe**  
Magdaléna Tichavská – zástupkyně skupiny sebeobhájců a sebeobhájkyň organizace LUMOS  
Mgr. Helena Pravdová – projektová manažerka projektu Férová škola, Česká odborná společnost pro inkluzivní vzdělávání  
Mgr. Zuzana Senciová – psycholožka, Úřad pro mezinárodněprávní ochranu dětí

**11:10 – 11:30 Představení nástroje Rady Evropy „Sada Indikátorů pro participaci dětí“ (CPAT) a nové metodiky „Participace dětí“ v rámci národních aktivit**  
Bc. Lukáš Talpa – odborný metodik projektu „Podpora systémových změn v oblasti péče o ohrožené děti, mladé lidi a rodiny v ČR“, Ministerstvo práce a sociálních věcí

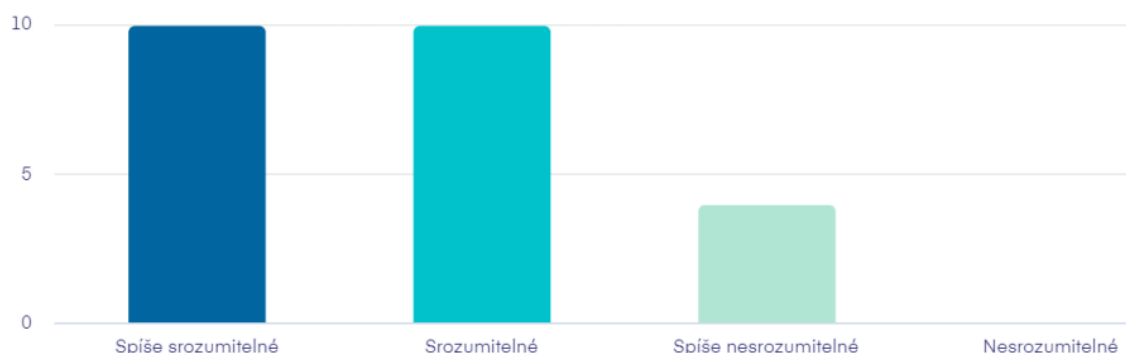
**11:30 – 11:50 Diskuse a možné využití participačního nástroje**

**11:50 – 12:00 Ukončení úvodního webináře**

Úvodní webinář se koná v rámci projektu „CP4Children Participace dětí v Evropě – posilování národního rámce a aktivit v rámci participace dětí“, který koordinuje Rada Evropy a je financován Programem Evropské Unie pro práva, rovnost a občanství (2014–2020)

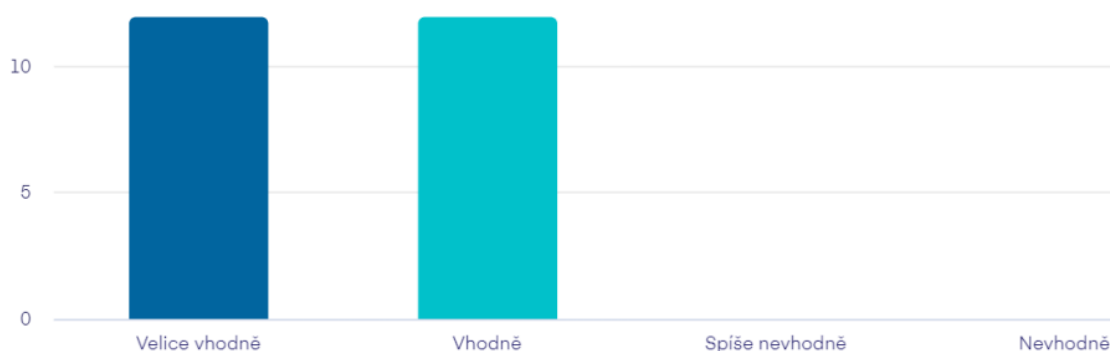
### Annex 3: Feedback on the presentation of the CPAT tool

#### 4. Představení nástroje Rady Evropy „Sada indikátorů pro participaci dětí“ (CPAT) bylo:



*Annex 3: Feedback on sharing good practice from LUMOS, the Czech Expert Society for Inclusive Education, i.e., ČOSIV, and a representative from the Office for the International Legal Protection of Children, i.e., ÚMPOD.*

#### 5. Příklady dobré praxe a kazuistiky byly vybrány (LUMOS, ČOSIV, ÚMPOD)



## Implementation phase

### Consultations with children and young people

To test the CPAT indicators, a total of seven facilitated focus groups were conducted, involving 54 children and young people. The youngest participant was 10, the oldest 17 years old. More detailed characteristics of the children's groups are given in Annex 4.

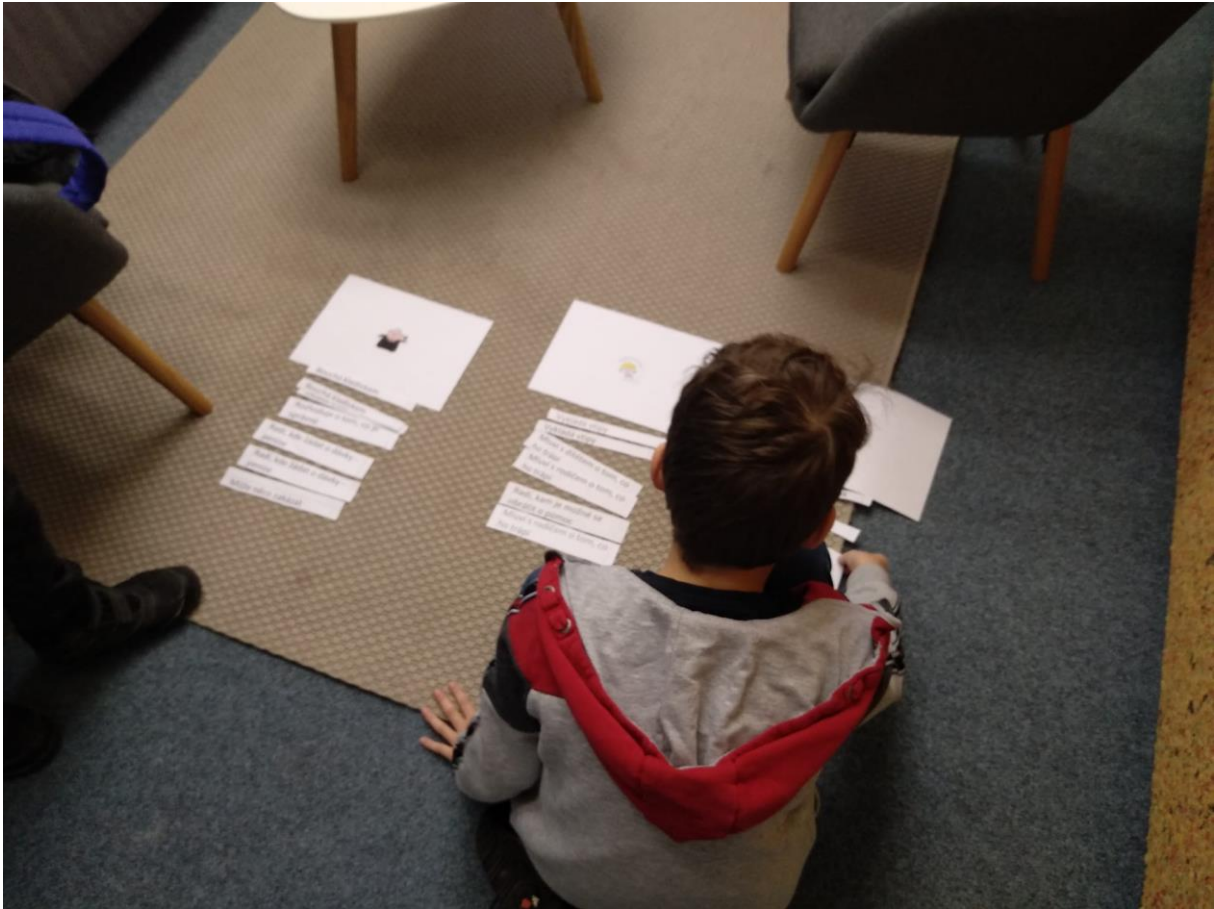
The groups were organized both in a face-to-face manner (in five cases), in compliance with the applicable anti-epidemic regulations, and, in view of the ongoing global pandemic, online (twice). One group was conducted both in person and online, due to the fact that one day before the focus group some of the registered child participants went into mandatory quarantine. The face-to-face focus groups lasted four hours with breaks; the online focus groups were two and a half hours with one break.

*Annex 4: Characteristics of implemented children's groups*

<b>Specification of the group of children / meeting format</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Verified indicator</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>boys</b>	<b>total</b>
private primary school / combination of online and face-to-face meetings	23.11.2021	U7, U3, U5	6	7	13
children with experience of court proceedings / in person	4.1.2022	U4, U5, U9	2	3	5
children from socially vulnerable families / in person	15.2.2022	U4, U5, U8	6	2	8
general population of children who responded to the call of the MoLSA / online	16.2.2022	U7, U8, U9	6	4	10
Children with disabilities / face-to-face meetings	24.3.2022	U5, U7, U8	1	6	7
Young people from residential institutions / face-to-face meetings	23.4.2022	U5, U7, U8	2	5	7
the general population of children who responded to the call of the MoLSA / face-to-face meetings	5.5.2022	U3, U4	1	3	4
<b>Total</b>	7 groups		24	30	54



### *Annex 5: Photos from the children's group*



In convening the consultation groups, the project team did not look at the number of children participating, but rather at the diversity of child participants (children from a private school in a large city, children from socially excluded families, children with disabilities, children from institutional care, a random collection of child respondents), with the aim of covering as wide a range of indicators as possible. Children's participation was secured through approaching NGOs working with children. They were then sent an invitation asking if the children would be interested in attending a particular meeting. In the case of the online groups, children were invited through affiliated organisations that were asked to disseminate the invitation to the event among the child population. **The invitation to the consultation was created in collaboration with a 9-year-old child.** Its involvement proved to be crucial for the correct setting of the clarity of the information given. The children and their legal guardians gave their written consent to participate in the group. The aim of this was, among other things, to inform the parents of the children what they were attending during the lessons and also to find out whether the children had any specific needs that the teachers should be aware of (e.g., food allergies, attention disorders, etc.).

The following organisations helped in reaching out to children: Amalthea (children with experience of court proceedings, children from socially vulnerable families), Vršovice Primary School (private primary school), Centrum Arpida, z.ú (children with disabilities), J. J. Pestalozzi Centre (children from institutional care).

The children's focus groups were led by an experienced pair of facilitators. In the case of the combined online and face-to-face consultation, a group of children was facilitated by three tutors in the face-to-face setting and for the children present online by another tutor who was also present in the online setting. In some cases, in order to ensure the children's sense of security and gain their trust, a person whom the children knew personally remained present at the beginning of the meetings.

The priority of all organized children's consultations was to provide a pleasant atmosphere and to verify the CPAT indicators in an experiential manner. Taking into account the difficulty of the topic and the age of the children, movement games were included in the programme in order to regain the children's concentration. The programme included an introduction of the lecturers, setting of the group rules, icebreakers, the screening of short thematic videos, etc. (See the programme in the appendix at the end of the document.) During the groups, care was taken to ensure refreshments and compliance with the drinking regime of the children.

A record was made of the progress of each meeting, which tracked the anonymised views expressed by the children. In order to ensure transparency and clarity, the record was made in a combined way: by writing on flipchart paper and by typing into a word document, which was also transferred by a data projector onto a screen.

All the children were awarded a certificate for their participation and the children who participated in the online meeting were gifted gaming headsets. It was very gratifying that in all cases of the children's focus groups, the facilitators were able to create a comfortable working and playing environment among the children and the facilitators and to obtain positive evaluations, which were collected both verbally and in writing.

## Annex 6: Certificate of participation in the children's consultation



### Questionnaire survey among children

In the period from 1. 4. 2022 to 30. 6. 2022, a questionnaire survey was conducted through a free online questionnaire platform (Google form). The children answered anonymously. The aim of the questionnaire survey was to supplement the information from the consultations with children, which served more for qualitative data collection, while the questionnaires verified certain indicators more quantitatively.

The online questionnaires were developed in two forms according to the age of the target group, namely a questionnaire for children up to 12 years of age and a questionnaire for youth and young adults, i.e., from 12 to 18 years of age. The questionnaire for younger children contained 13 questions combining open and closed-ended responses. The text was written in capital letters and simpler language was used, taking into account the age of the children. The comprehensibility of the text was checked with three children prior to distribution. The questionnaire for older children was more extensive, with 20 questions, and again the clarity of the text was checked with two children before distribution.

The reason for reaching out to the children and young people was explained at the beginning of each questionnaire. At the same time, a contact person from the MoLSA implementation team was also listed here in case of questions.

Both types of questionnaires were disseminated in a "snowball" manner, whereby the implementation team first asked for cooperation from affiliated organisations, while children who had previously participated in child consultations were approached directly. Social networks and children's interest groups were also used to disseminate the questionnaire. At

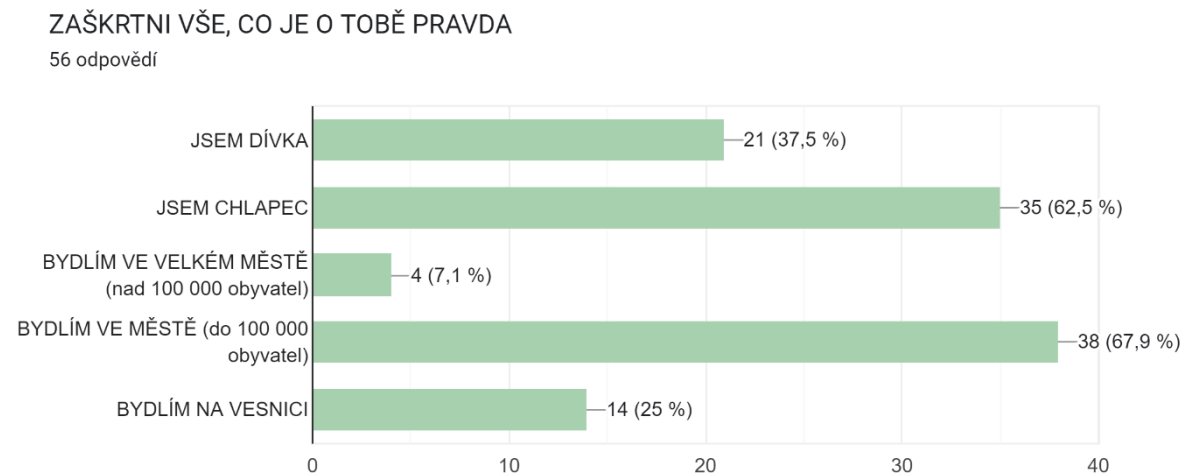
the end of the questionnaire there was a link to a website where children and young people could find more information about the ongoing project.

*Annex 7: Questionnaire for younger children (up to 12 years of age)*



**56 child respondents answered the questionnaire designed for younger children.** The characteristics of this group of respondents are described in Annexes 7 and 8. The group of younger children consisted of 37.5% girls and 62.5% boys. The majority of respondents (almost 68%) live in a city that was specified as having a population under 100,000. Most children (41.5%) were aged 11 years. The two youngest children who participated in the survey were eight years old.

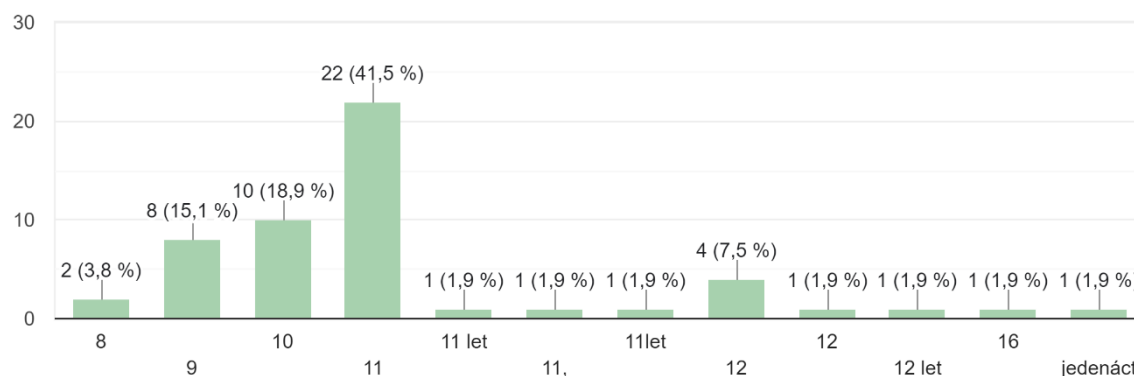
*Annex 7: Characteristics of the group of younger children who participated in the survey*



### Annex 8: Age composition of the group of younger children who participated in the survey

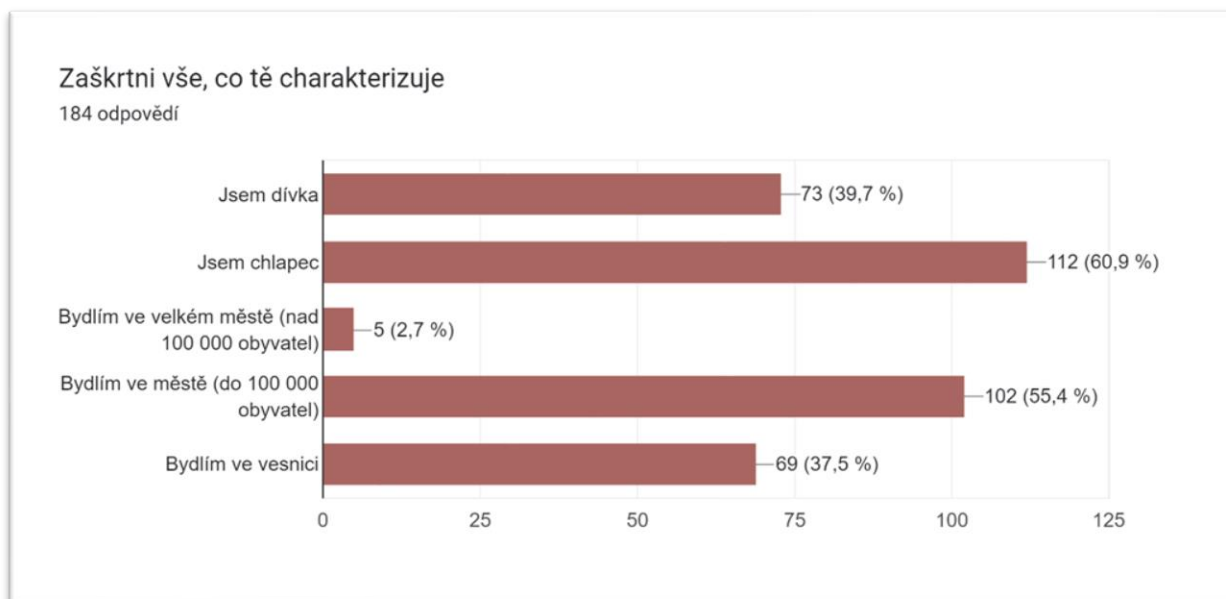
#### KOLIK TI JE LET?

53 odpovědí



**184 respondents answered the questionnaire for older children.** The characteristics of this group of respondents are described in Annex 9. The group of older children consisted of 39.7% girls and 60.9% boys. The majority of respondents (55%) live in a city that was specified as having a population under 100,000.

### Annex 9: Characteristics of the group of older children who participated in the survey





*Annex 11: Characteristics of the implemented groups of experts*

Group of experts	Date of meeting	Verified indicator	women	men	total
Various professions: people from accompanying organisations, courts, schools, bar associations, public institutions, ministries, authorities.	28.1.2022	U1, U3, U4, U5, U6, U7, U9	36	6	42
Various professions: people from accompanying organisations, courts, schools, bar associations, public institutions, ministries, authorities.	31.3.2022	U5, U6, U9	13	2	15
Members of the police force	6.9.2022	U9	1	1	2
<b>total</b>	3 groups		50	9	59

Focus groups with adults were led by an experienced facilitation team (2 female facilitators, 1 male facilitator and 1 member of administrative support). The facilitators briefly introduced the project "[CP4Europe - Strengthening National Child Participation Frameworks and Action in Europe](#)", its project activities to date and the tool for measuring child participation ([CPAT: Child participation assessment tool](#)). Through a video by LUMOS, they introduced a group of young male and female self-advocates and their conceptualization of participation<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cL4fGZHhLdQ>

## Annex 12: Invitation to the first meeting of the adult focus group



**POZVÁNKA  
na diskusní  
setkání**

**Proč naslouchat dětem,  
aneb proč to bez  
participace nejde?**

Aktivní zapojení dětí je nezbytnou součástí všech záležitostí, které se jich týkají v každodenním životě v oblasti školství, zdravotnictví, soudnictví, sociálních služeb i sociální práce, volnočasových aktivit, zajištění bezpečí a ochrany dětí a dalších.

Jaké jsou Vaše zkušenosti se zapojováním dětí do procesů, za něž odpovídáte? Jaké jsou překážky, jimž čelíte? Jakou podporu byste při tom potřebovali?

**Přijďte to s námi sdílet! | 28. ledna 2022, 9:00 – 12:00 hodin**

**Projekt, kterého je diskusní setkání součástí:** Diskusní setkání představuje aktivitu dvouletého projektu Rady Evropy „[Participace dětí v Evropě – posilování národního rámce a aktivit v rámci participace dětí](#)“, který se zaměřuje na zapojování dětí a mladých dospělých do tvorby politiky na národní úrovni.

**Komu je diskusní setkání určeno?** Zástupkyním/zástupcům z oblasti sociálních služeb a sociálně-právní ochrany dětí, školství, zdravotnictví, volného času, samosprávy, policie, justice a dalším aktérkám/aktérům sítě služeb.

**Informace o přihlašování:** Své přihlášky pošlete na email [jitka.filipova@mpsv.cz](mailto:jitka.filipova@mpsv.cz) do **21. ledna 2022**. Odkaz na online setkání bude účastnicím a účastníkům zaslán prostřednictvím samostatného e-mailu 2 dny před konáním akce.

Facilitators within the adult groups shared messages from children that related to themes of engagement. The facilitators obtained these messages during the child consultations and had the permission of the child participants to read them to the experts.



Annex 13: Examples of messages from children's consultations for adult focus group participants



## VZKAZY

- „Ozvat se, není vždy lehké.“
- Děti si sice mohou říct svůj názor, ale nepotkává se to s nadšením učitelů.. „*Myslím si, že je to proto, že si umím říct svůj názor a tím se učitelka cítí ohrožená. Má pocit, že na ní útočím, i když to tak není.*“
- „*Tato diskuse s lektory je poprvé, kdy někdo, kromě mých rodičů, poslouchá, co si myslím. Nemělo by to být častější?*“
- „*Já bych chtěla aby se nás učitelé víc ptali na hodinách na naše názory. Když třeba něco nemáme nebo neuděláme, tak aby nás prvně vyslechli, protože my můžeme mít vážný důvod.*“

The experts were divided into three groups where they discussed the assigned topics under the guidance of facilitators. Minutes of the meeting were taken to track the anonymised views expressed by the participants. Experts and professionals working with children were very cooperative and positive feedback was collected. Agendas for each focus group are available in the annexes at the end of the document.

At the end of the focus group, participants were asked to leave **messages for the children** if they wished to do so, quotes of which were shared with the focus group participants by the lecturer.

#### Annex 14: Messages for children from adult focus group participants



#### Questionnaire survey among professionals working with children

The project distributed a questionnaire mapping how professionals engage children in their practice. The questionnaire survey was conducted from 1. 2. 2022 to 9. 3. 2022 through a free online questionnaire platform (Google form). Participating respondents answered anonymously.

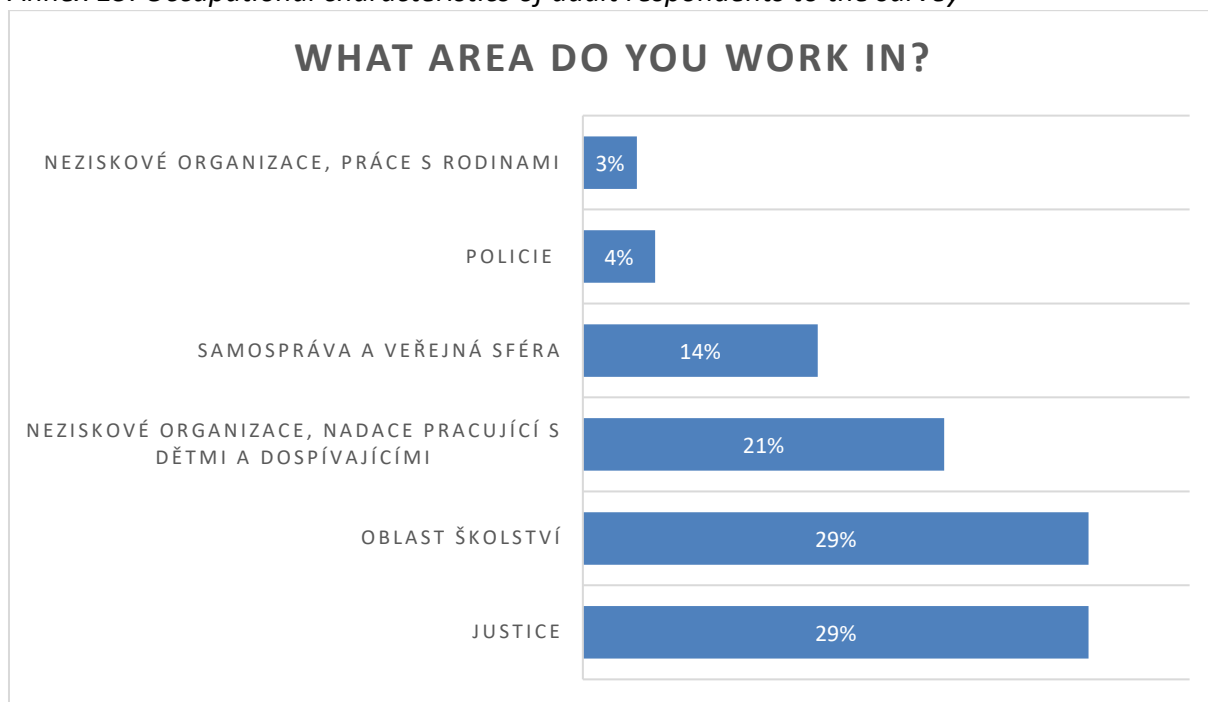
The aim of the questionnaire survey was to supplement the information from the consultations with experts, which served more for qualitative data collection, while the questionnaires verified certain indicators more quantitatively. We mapped how professionals working with children manage to involve children in practice, what tools they use for involvement, or, on the contrary, what support they need.

The online questionnaire consisted of 12 questions, and in its introduction the reason for addressing experts in the professions working with children was explained.

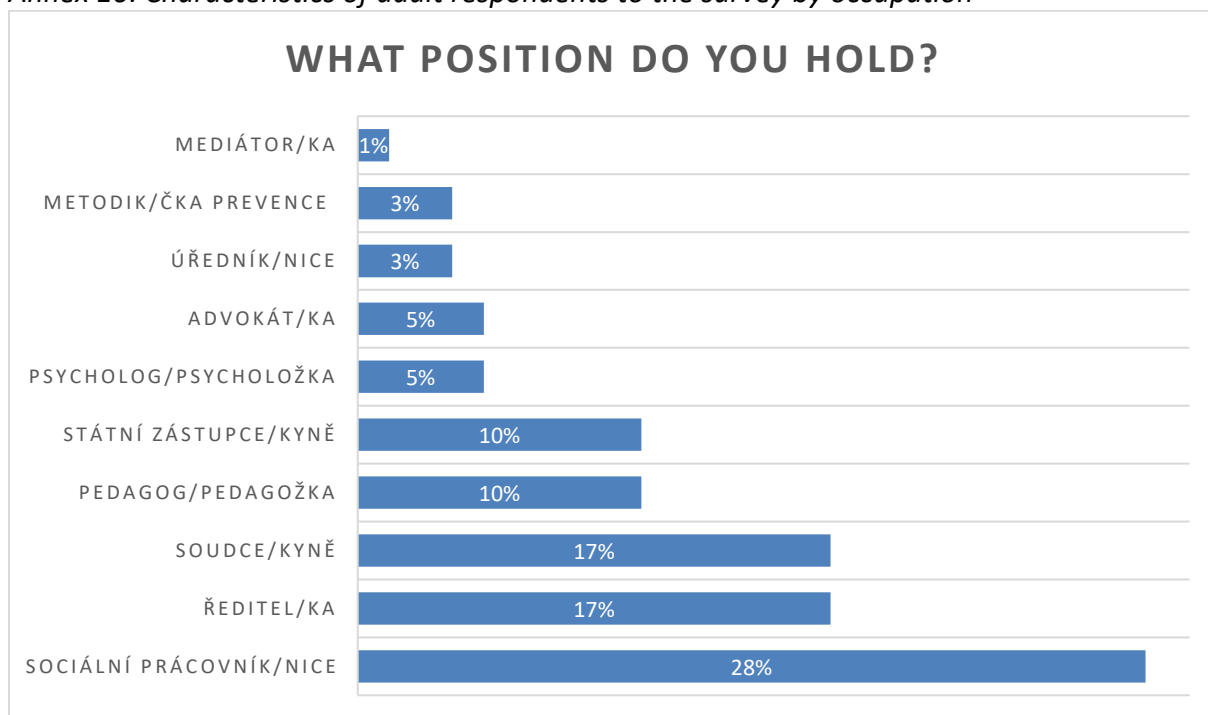
The questionnaire was disseminated in a "snowball" manner, where the implementation team first asked for the cooperation of experts and professionals from organisations that are involved in identifying and taking into account the views of children and actively involving them in their activities. Subsequently, we asked them to distribute the questionnaire to representatives of organizations affiliated to them that also have experience with the topic of engagement.

**96 male and female respondents answered the questionnaire.** The characteristics of this group of respondents are described in Annexes 15 and 16. Respondents were fairly evenly spread across all regions of the Czech Republic, with the most represented group being experts from the Hradec Králové Region (16.7%) and the Moravian-Silesian Region (12.5%).

Annex 15: Occupational characteristics of adult respondents to the survey



Annex 16: Characteristics of adult respondents to the survey by occupation



## V. Evaluation results

### U1 The Constitution and legislation include legal protection for the exercise of children and young people's right to participate in decision-making processes

#### Evaluation of U1 The Constitution and legislation include legal protection for the exercise of children and young people's right to participate in decision-making processes.

An analysis of the legislative framework shows that children's rights to participate in decision-making processes are anchored in general, special and procedural provisions.

The **Convention on the Rights of the Child** has been a direct part of the Czech legal system since 1991. All laws and regulations must comply with the Convention framework.

The **Civil Code**<sup>2</sup> regulates the basic participation rights of children in matters of parental responsibility, the child's right to family life, the child's participation in judicial and administrative processes concerning him/her and adoption (child's consent).

**"Before a decision affecting the child's interests is taken, the parents shall inform the child of everything necessary to enable him or her to form his or her own opinion on the matter and to communicate that opinion to the parents; this shall not apply if the child is unable to accept the communication properly or is unable to form his or her own opinion or is unable to communicate that opinion to the parents. Parents shall give due consideration to the child's opinion and take the child's opinion into account when making decisions."**

*Special Provisions on the Exercise of Parental Responsibility, Civil Code*

The **Act on the Social and Legal Protection of Children**<sup>3</sup> contains an explicit definition of the obligation of the social and legal protection authorities to inform the child of all relevant facts concerning him/her, as well as the right of the child to freely express his or her views on all matters, even without the presence of parents or other persons responsible for upbringing. The child's views shall be given due weight in all matters concerning his or her person, appropriate to his or her age and maturity of mind. **In its activities, the social protection authority shall take into account the wishes and feelings of the child, with regard to his or her age and development, so as not to endanger or impair his or her emotional and psychological development.** The relevant implementing decree then specifically describes the implementation of children's participation rights within the framework of quality standards for social and legal protection.

**Children's rights to participate in education** are regulated by the Education Act<sup>4</sup> and its implementing decree. The right of children to have a say in all substantive matters relating to education is clearly established, and their wishes and views must be given due weight.

<sup>2</sup> Act No. 89/2012 Coll., Civil Code

<sup>3</sup> Act No. 359/1999 Coll., on the Social and Legal Protection of Children

<sup>4</sup> Act 561/2004 on Pre-school, Basic, Secondary, Tertiary Professional and Other Education (Education Act)

There is a special and very specific regulation<sup>5</sup> of children's rights of participation in **court proceedings**, among other things, requiring the court to ascertain the child's opinion in a manner appropriate to the child and to take that opinion into account, with regard to the age and mental maturity of the child.

**"In proceedings involving a minor child who is capable of forming his or her own views, the court shall proceed in such a way that his or her views on the matter are ascertained. The court shall ascertain the opinion of the minor child by questioning the child.** In exceptional cases, the court may also ascertain the child's opinion through the child's representative, an expert's report or the competent authority for the social and legal protection of children. The court may also conduct the interview of the child without the presence of other persons if their presence could be expected to influence the child so that he or she would not express his or her true opinion; the court may exclude the presence of a confidant of the child who is not his or her legal representative and whose presence is requested by the child only if the purpose of the interview is undermined by his or her presence. **The court shall take into account the child's opinion, with regard to the child's age and intellectual maturity."**

*Civil Procedure Code*

The participation rights of **children deprived of parental care** are specifically enshrined in the Act on Institutional Education<sup>6</sup>, including the right of the child to express his/her views on measures concerning him/her or to have a conversation with his/her representative, and on the other hand, the obligation of the director of the institution to take due account of the child's views.

The rights of the child to participate in health care are expressed in the Health Services Act<sup>7</sup>, which makes the provision of medical care conditional on the child's opinion and consent. It also allows for exceptions where the child's opinion does not have to be sought (immediate danger to the child's life).

When providing health services to a minor patient, **his/her opinion on the provision of the intended health services shall be ascertained if it is appropriate to the patient's intellectual and volitional maturity.** This opinion must be taken into account as a factor whose severity increases in proportion to the age and degree of intellectual and volitional maturity of the minor patient.

*Health Services Act*

Further regulation of children's rights of participation can be found in legislation on social services, criminal procedure - the Criminal Procedure Code, jurisprudence in matters of youth, victims of crime and administrative law.

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<sup>5</sup> Act No. 99/1963 Coll., Civil Procedure Code, Act No. 292/2013, on Special Court Proceedings

<sup>6</sup> Act No. 109/2002 Coll. on the Performance of Institutional Education or Protective Education in School Institutions and on Preventive and Educational Care in School Institutions and on Amendments to Other Acts

<sup>7</sup> Act No. 372/2011 Coll. on Health Services and Conditions of Their Provision

## Adult focus group findings

### A message from adults to other adults

*"We need to be sensitive to the extent to which children are involved in various proceedings because they can be very challenging for children."*

#### Questions asked:

Is there sufficient support in legislation, methodologies or guidelines?

What are they?

What do you rely on to get a child's opinion?

### Focus group 28.1.2022 (experts from various professions)

The experts involved mentioned that they *perceived sufficient support in the legislation for involving children in decisions that affect them.*

Many of the organisations have also developed their own methodologies.

Experts and practitioners also perceived two major limitations in anchoring children's rights.

Firstly, that ***anything can be described in terms of the law, but children must also learn about their rights***, and secondly, that ***anything can be described in terms of the law, but the question is whether we as adults work with it.*** In the latter case, experts mentioned judges (especially custody judges) who allegedly often do not admit children to proceedings.

Experts also agreed that it is very important for workers who enter into negotiations with children to *make these children aware of their rights and suggested that this obligation of workers be anchored.* There was also experience of a case conference where children are not informed of their rights before the event.

Experts and practitioners mentioned that they rely on the *Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Civil Code and their own methodologies* to engage children.

Experts use a variety of special tools to get the child's opinion - games, emotion cards, or even drawings.

## Summary evaluation of U1 The Constitution and legislation include legal protection for the exercise of children and young people's right to participate in decision-making processes.

<b>Evaluation criteria</b>	The progress of indicator fulfilment can be measured through the following criteria: 0 = There are no legal norms that allow children to express their own opinion, which would simultaneously be given appropriate weight 1 = There is a legal right for children to express their own views in at least two of the areas listed 2 = There is a legal right for children to express their own views in at least four of the areas listed 3 = There is a clear legal right for children to express their own views, which are given due weight. This right is set out in the Constitution and in at least six of the areas listed.
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<b>Result in the Czech Republic</b>	<b>3</b> <u>Justification</u> In the Czech Republic, children have a legal right to express their own opinions, which are given due weight. This entitlement is set out in: the Constitution of the Czech Republic, the Civil Code, the Act on the Social and Legal Protection of Children, the Act on Special Court Proceedings, the Education Act, the Act on Social Services and other key regulations.
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## U2 The right of children and young people to participate in decision-making processes is explicitly included in the multidisciplinary national strategy

### Adult focus group findings

The National Strategy for the Protection of Children's Rights contains one of six main objectives to be achieved between 2021 and 2029, as follows:

#### Children are involved in decision-making processes

Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantees children who are capable of forming their own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting them, and the views of the child must be given due weight. Involving children in decision-making processes is part of a modern approach to protecting children's rights. This issue is particularly important in areas such as judicial and administrative proceedings concerning children, juvenile court proceedings, divorce or separation proceedings and the process of raising a child or young person outside his or her own family. Adults who interact with children need training, skills and support to be able to effectively support children's engagement. The fulfilment of the goal of effectively involving children in decision-making processes is possible under the following conditions:

- Children are provided with full and comprehensible information, taking into account their age and intellectual maturity, on their right to express their views freely, on the possibilities of exercising this right in decision-making processes, on the extent of their participation, how their expression will be handled, etc.
- The environment and communication methods are adapted to the needs of children. Adequate time and resources should be allocated to ensure that children are well prepared for communication, have confidence and have the opportunity to express their views. It is ensured that children's participation in decision-making processes is based on principles of social inclusion and avoids existing discriminatory stereotypes.
- Adults who interact with children have comprehensive training to acquire the necessary skills and subsequent methodological support to be able to effectively support children's participation.
- Information about the importance of involving children in decision-making processes and respecting the child's opinion is spreading in society.

## D1 Creating an environment friendly to children's involvement in decision-making processes

Number	Description of the sub-activity	Fulfilment indicator	Period of fulfilment
D1.1.	Study of societal attitudes on the topic of "children's views and their involvement in decision-making processes"	Study discussed by the Interministerial Coordination Group	06/2022
D1.2.	Definition of technical and organisational measures to create a child-friendly environment in key areas of children's lives (education and social care, administrative and judicial areas) and their subsequent implementation	Defined technical and organizational barriers to children's participation, methodology for eliminating barriers (basis for subsequent implementation)	12/2022
D1.3.	Developing techniques for determining children's views in administrative processes and court proceedings	An overview of innovative techniques for eliciting children's views in administrative processes and court proceedings	12/2022
D1.4.	Implementation of training activities for professionals to acquire the necessary skills in the field of communication with children and involvement of children in decision-making processes	A series of training sessions for professionals on communication skills with children and involving children in decision-making processes	12/2023
D1.5.	Development of methodology and implementation of courses focused on communication with disadvantaged children and their families	Methodology focused on communication with disadvantaged children and their families, implemented educational programmes including evaluation of their impact discussed in the Interministerial Coordination Group	12/2023

Creating a child-friendly environment depends on the technical, organisational and staffing requirements, but also on the skills of those in charge. Working with the media is an important part of building awareness of respect for children and their views. Cultivating this environment can be done with the support of the non-profit sector and civil society, which consistently advocate for children's rights and their need to "be heard".



## Summary evaluation of U2 The right of children and young people to participate in decision-making processes is explicitly included in the multidisciplinary national strategy

<b>Evaluation criteria</b>	<p>The progress of indicator fulfilment can be measured through the following criteria:</p> <p><b>0</b> = No strategy on children's rights</p> <p><b>1</b> = There are only partial references to children's rights within the broader human rights strategy</p> <p><b>2</b> = Within the multidisciplinary strategy on children's rights, there are references to the right to participation</p> <p><b>3</b> = There is a clear and coherent focus on the right of children and young people to participate in the processes that affect them within the multidisciplinary strategy on children's rights. The strategy includes clear objectives, identifies key responsibilities (e.g., the Ministry of Children and Young People) and allocates sufficient resources for implementation.</p>
<b>Result in the Czech Republic</b>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p><u>Justification</u></p> <p>The National Strategy for the Protection of the Rights of the Child 2021-2029 sets out specific measures to set up and promote children's participation in the Czech Republic in one of its key objectives. The measures are implemented through the awareness-raising and methodological activities of the MOLSA, in the framework of the CP4 Europe project and within the OP Employment system project (2023-2025).</p>

## U3 There is an independent, statutory institution protecting children's rights

### Children's focus group findings

**A message from children to adults:**

**"We need clarity on who the Ombudsman is and in what cases we can turn to him. He should communicate in a language we can understand."**

Questions asked:

What is a right?

Do children have rights?

What do you think of when you hear "children's rights"? Do you know any? Which ones?

Where/from whom did you hear about them? What specifically? Have you ever seen a leaflet, brochure, book or website about children's rights? Have you read about them anywhere?

Has anyone talked to you about your rights, or about human rights in general?

In what ways and where, in what settings (school, family, elsewhere) have they talked to you about your rights/human rights?

Where can children learn about their rights besides school?

### Focus group from 23.11.2021 (children from a private primary school)

Children understood the word right - it is *freedom, permission to do something*, but the younger children had trouble articulating specific rights. Older children, i.e., 8th - 9th grade pupils were able to name some rights: - *the right to live in our country, - the right to have the basic needs of life met, - the right to privacy, - the right to freedom, - the right to live in a family, - the right to study, - the right to live in safety, - the right to an opinion and respect, - the right to healthcare*. During the discussion, it was clear that this is an important topic for them to think about. "*Can I lose any of my rights?*", "*In what situations can I lose my right?*". Children are taught within their school that "**with every right comes a duty**", every right has its consequences: "*You can do things, but there are certain conditions regarding how and when you can do them.*"

The children learned about their rights from school, from their parents, from television, from the helpline, and from the Internet. "*Life has taught me about my rights. I see, I observe, I have grown into my rights. It happens automatically.*"

The group said that children's rights are significantly more limited.

### Focus group from 5.5.2022 (general population of children)

These children also understood the word rights - they are *laws that define responsibilities, what I can and can't do. - everyone has rights*. The children discussed where everyone's right begins: "*I can do something, but at the same time, where my freedom ends, someone else's freedom begins.*" The group agreed that *children's rights should not be different just because they are for children. "Every citizen has rights and children are citizens too."* At the same time, it perceived that *adults don't have the same respect for them as they do for other adults*. The children listed various rights: - *the right to having one's opinion respected, - the right to education, - the right to assembly.*

Some of the children reported that they had learned about rights *at school, in the context of civic education*. Other do not have rights in their school curriculum. "*We talked about children's rights, court proceedings, the parliament and the senate with our teacher. She also told us everything a child has a right to.*" Some knew about rights by looking them up themselves on the internet. "*I looked at the Education Act and the House of Representatives.*"

Questions asked:
Who is the Ombudsman?
What's his job description?
Can you complain to him?

### Focus group from 23.11.2021 (children from a private primary school)

The children named several places to which they would turn if their rights were violated: - *Police, - a helpline, - parents, - court, - teachers, - fire brigade, - White Circle of Safety, - a friend*. No one in the group knew that there is an Ombudsman or what the role of the Ombudsman is. Based on the video, they were introduced to the office and the children expressed their opinions on whether and how they would use the office.

"*Kids should go to him if a stranger is restricting their rights.*" "*I'd go to him if I wasn't sure I had a right to something.*" "*If I do something illegal, the Ombudsman can defend me in court.*" "*If my parents divorce, can the Ombudsman decide who I go to?*"

There is no Office of the Children's Ombudsman in the Czech Republic. However, the children expressed the clear opinion that they would appreciate its existence. *"Although I wouldn't use it, it's good that other kids can use it, the ones who would need it." "I would use it, but I would have to know all the issues that I can contact him about."*

The students and even some of the lecturers did not know that there is an Ombudsman for schools in the Czech Republic who cooperates with the National Children's Parliament.

This showed how important it is to have "a good campaign, leaflets, to be more in the public space, to make it clear what the Ombudsman's Office does and in what cases children can turn to it."

In this part, two specific case studies were used:

1. A child in the orphanage writes emails, but before sending an email, he or she always has to show it to the educator or director. Is that okay?

*"That's not okay, it's his privacy. I'd rather not send the email; it would make me uncomfortable."*

*"In some cases, the educator may be looking over their shoulder. But if I'm texting a friend, they have no right to do that. Anyway, they have to agree on it together."*

2. A girl is on a gluten-free diet, but the school told her they do not cook gluten-free food and she should eat at home. Is that okay?

*"It's not okay, the girl should go to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman should opt for a warning, send a reminder to the school and, if the school does not respond, sue it."*

*"The school has an obligation to provide the girl with a gluten-free diet".*

### **Focus group from 5.5.2022 (general population of children)**

No one in the group knew that there existed an Ombudsman and no one knew what the role of the Ombudsman was. *"I've heard the name in connection with Brno, but I don't know anything more", "I've heard it, we've discussed the EU, but I don't know what his role is" - "I can't think of it. Someone for management?"* The office was introduced to them through a video and the children expressed what an ideal Ombudsman should look like. *"I would prefer a younger person, he should understand the problems of the younger generation.", - "He should be able to listen and should be around 30 years old so that I feel he understands me.", - "It doesn't matter what age, but he should be non-racist, non-discriminatory and open-minded."*

A video presenting the role of the Ombudsman was played to the children:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iiw2OM4jDbA&t=2s>

There is no Office of the Children's Ombudsman in the Czech Republic. However, the children expressed the clear opinion that they would appreciate its existence. *"I don't think there are many institutions children can turn to. So, it would not be a bad thing to have a Children's Ombudsman office for that."*

## Findings of the children's questionnaire survey

### Questionnaire survey for children up to the age of 12

Questions asked:

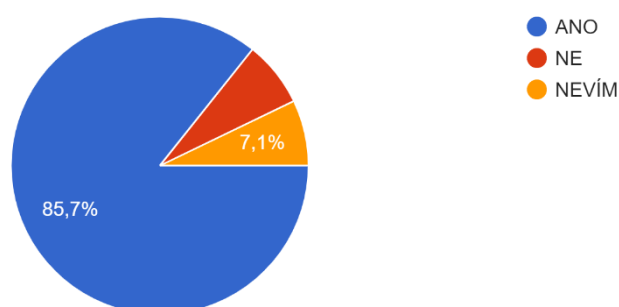
What is a right?

How would you explain "what rights are" to your friend?

#### Annex 17:

SLYŠEL/A JSI NĚKDY SLOVO „PRÁVO“?

56 odpovědí



85.7 per cent of children under the age of 12 in the survey knew what a right was. When asked how they would explain to a friend: "What is a right?", seven of the 39 children who chose to answer said they did not know. The other children were able to explain "what rights are" in their own words.

### Questionnaire survey of young people aged 12-18

Questions asked:

Where did you learn about your/human/children's rights? (you can tick more than one answer)

Have you ever been interested in any websites or publications that address the topic of "rights" and "participation"? Tell us about them.

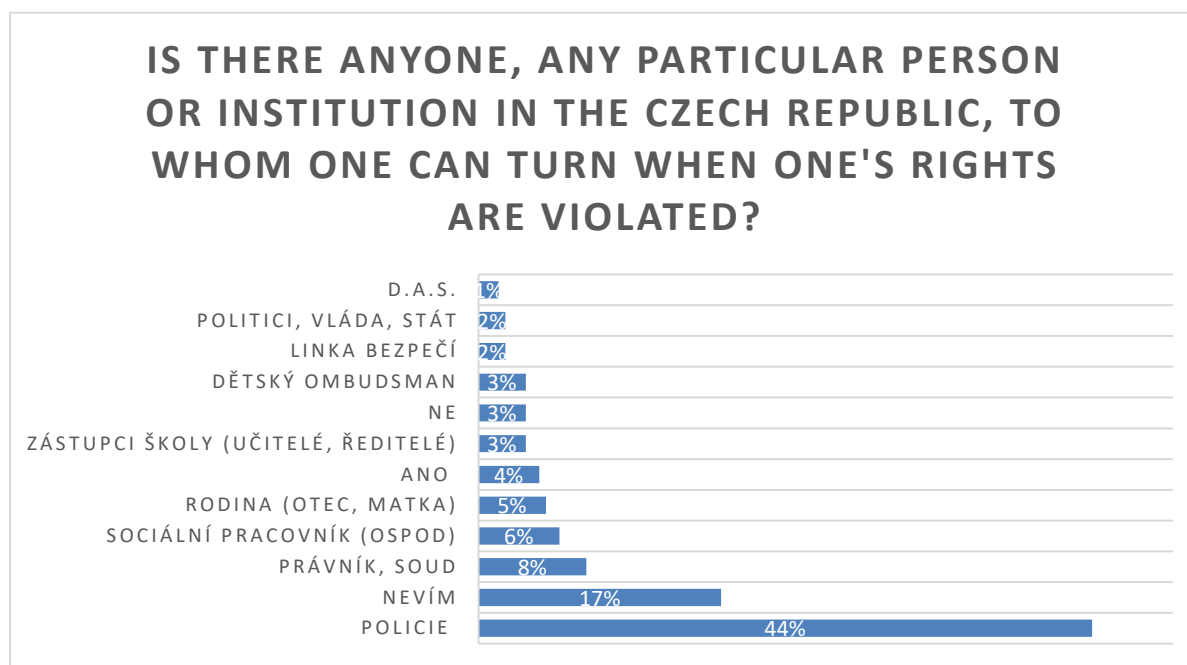
Is there anyone, a specific person or institution in the Czech Republic, to whom one can turn when one's rights are violated? Which ones?

Almost 55% of responses cited their family as the source, almost 52% of children cited their school, and videos were the third most cited source of information (17%). Another large group did not know the original source of the information. 14% of the responses indicated that the source was a booklet they had read. 8% of children said that no one had talked to them about their rights and they had no materials available.

The vast majority of young people were not interested in or aware of any resources addressing 'rights' or participation. However, several responses referred to videos on social media, the news channel CT24. One respondent named the Human Rights League and the Children's Ombudsman.

The majority of young people reported that it is possible to turn to the police when one's rights are violated (almost 45% of responses). 3% of responses mentioned the Children's Ombudsman.

Annex 18:



## Adult focus group findings

### Questions asked:

Is there, or should there be, an independent institution that exclusively monitors children's rights?

Where should it be anchored?

What should it control and who should it control?

### Focus group from 28.1. 2022 (experts from various professions)

Experts and practitioners agreed that it is important that such a function exists, but it must be made very clear externally *what its role and remit is, especially in relation to children.*

### The following recommendations were collected:

- If the children approach someone, it must be safe and confidential
- Institutions aimed at protecting children's rights must be accessible and understandable to children
- Establishing an independent institution is one thing, but it is even more important that the protection of children's rights is overseen by institutions that are already part of the system - e.g., the OSLPC, social services, the Ombudsman, and schools play a very important role here

Regarding the question of **who should control the protection of children's rights and how**, it was said that there are existing systems that control the various actors involved in child protection, e.g., quality standards, quality inspections, superior administrative authorities. *It is necessary to first build and test a system for the protection of children's rights, only then can it be controlled.*

### Summary evaluation of U3 There is an independent, statutory institution protecting children's rights

**Children's focus groups, questionnaire surveys and adult focus groups:**

Most of the children in the focus groups understood the word "right". Younger children had difficulty articulating specific rights. Older children, i.e., 8th - 9th grade students were able to name some rights. The group said that children's rights are significantly more limited. The children named several places to which they would turn if their rights were violated. However, none of the groups knew that there was an "Office of the Ombudsman" and they did not know what the role of the Ombudsman was. There is no Office of the Children's Ombudsman in the Czech Republic. However, the children expressed the clear opinion that they would appreciate its existence.

The majority of children and young people in the questionnaire survey reported that they knew they had rights. In only 3% of the responses would respondents turn to the Ombudsman in case of violations of children's rights.

Experts and practitioners agreed that it is important for the Children's Ombudsman to exist, but that it must be clear externally what its role and competences are, especially in relation to children.

<b>Evaluation criteria</b>	The progress of indicator fulfilment can be measured through the following criteria: <b>0</b> = No Children's Ombudsman (hereinafter also CO) <b>1</b> = The Office of the CO is established but not protected by a separate law <b>2</b> = The Office of the CO is established and protected by a separate law <b>3</b> = The Office of the CO is established and operates in accordance with the Paris Principles <sup>1</sup>
<b>Result in the Czech Republic</b>	<b>0</b> <u>Justification</u> Despite repeated legislative efforts, the position of children's ombudsman has not yet been established in the Czech Republic. A proposal to establish a separate office and also to strengthen the powers of the Ombudsman or his deputy was considered. A draft law on the Children's Ombudsman as an independent institution is currently being prepared.

## U4 Mechanisms are in place that enable children to safely exercise their right to participate in legal and administrative processes

### Message to adults

**"In order to understand a court report, I need it to be written simply, have pictures, and not contain words I don't understand. In short, it must appeal to me at first sight."**

### Children's focus group findings

#### Questions asked:

When something bad happens to children, someone hurts them, who can be called to help?

What can a police officer/judge/social worker do in such a case? What is their task? How do they specifically help?

How do you think a social worker can help? How and in what way?

#### Focus group from 4. 1. 2022 (children with experience of court proceedings)

Children had age-appropriate information about who to contact if they needed help. They had a basic idea of the competences of a police officer/ judge/ social worker. They reported the most information for police officers. They cited TV programmes and series as a source of information. They knew least about the competence of social workers.

Social worker - *"helping people, helping with benefits, talking to kids, talking to parents - I don't know about social services from TV, I haven't seen them on any shows."*

Policeman - *"shoots, keeps order, gives punishments, arrests people - I know it from TV, they are in most movies and TV shows"*.

Judge - *"he decides, he can forbid something, I know it from crime series and from the show - Judge Alexander"*.

On the other hand, two of the children were able to describe in more detail the content of the social worker's work:

*"to relieve children of their stress - to help them work it out"; "so that the children don't have to go to court - the children tell her and she tells the judge."*

#### Focus group from 15.2.2022 (children from socially vulnerable families)

The children in this group were able to name several institutions and people to whom they would turn if something bad happened to them or if someone hurt them. *Social Services, a friend, an ambulance, an emergency, the fire department, dad and mum, a teacher, a teacher from the Amalthea organization, family, rescue service, a cop, 911.*

The children talked with the lecturers about the role of a social worker. According to the children, a social worker is a *lady who helps people with their housing, asks them about their grades and how they are doing in school, makes sure children go to school, and finds out if their mother is taking care of them. If their mother didn't take care of them, the lady would have put them in an orphanage. She asks how the children are and helps the parents when they need it.*

They then reflected on what the role of a police officer is. Police officer - *searches for a lost child, - looks for lost items, - makes sure children are not scared on their own, - can help if something is going on inside the home and it is not possible to open the door, - can resolve a situation when parents are fighting at home.*

**Focus group from 5.5. 2022 (general population of children)**

The children were able to name several institutions and people they would turn to if something bad happened to them: - *a helpline, - a psychologist, - a school counsellor, - the police, - telling a trusted adult. "The helpline is great, it's anonymous and brings psychological help. In any case, it does not solve the situation."*

Together they reflected on the role of a police officer. A police officer - *protects citizens when something happens to them, - protects rights and stands up for people in situations when this is necessary, - deals with reports and assesses whether it is a misdemeanour or a criminal offence and forwards the report to the OSLPC.*

Together with the lecturers, the children talked about the role of a social worker. According to the children, a social worker is the *person who deals with police reports and works with the school to check whether anything is being violated.*

The children also talked about the role of a judge. A judge is a person who *decides on punishment when someone breaks the law, - deals with criminal offences, - decides on guilt and punishment, - decides which parent a child from a divorced family will go to, whether there will be alternating care, or whether the child will be removed from the family altogether.*

Questions asked:
Do you think that a police officer, social worker, judge can also talk to children personally about things that concern them? For what reason? What should they talk to them about? What are they supposed to ask them?
On what occasion did the judge/social worker/police officer speak to you?
Did they (police officer, judge, social worker) talk to you about what your rights are in the case?
Did you understand your rights?
Did you understand what they told you?
Did you have the opportunity to ask them something?

**Focus group from 4. 1. 2022 (children with experience of court proceedings)**

The children knew that they could generally talk to a social worker/police officer/judge. *"We talk to the social worker because she reaches out, she wants to help, she needs to know what problems there are, what's bothering us and all that."*

The most common experience reported by children was that they had spoken to a police officer when they witnessed an event (theft, looking for a lost friend) or during a discussion at school. The children reported that they were afraid because the police officers were very serious.

None of the children had spoken to a judge. One child knew that instead of talking to the judge, he talked to a social worker who relayed information to the court, it was in the context of a family conference. At the same time, the children agreed that they didn't actually want to talk to the court. And that's because of their insecurity. One child reported



an experience of saying something that was not true as a message to the court under stress and then regretting it.

One girl reacted to the interview with the social worker with distrust: *"I felt weird; what if I said something and she said it and then it changed for me, but I might want it differently, or she wouldn't say it..."* Another child said that he had an experience with a social worker who introduced herself to him and said that the child could ask her anything he needed or inquire about something he didn't know.

None of the children were aware of anyone (social worker/policeman/judge) lecturing them about their rights. However, the children had a general awareness of their rights under the proceedings, which they could name: *"I have the right to say nothing if I don't want to; I have the right to tell the truth; I have the right to leave."*

**Focus group from 15.2.2022 (children from socially vulnerable families)**

The children in this group agreed that they did not agree with the content in the police motto "Help and Protect". Rather, they were able to name several situations where police officers seemed to be arrogant and stuck up rather than helpful. On the other hand, the children had personal experience of being helped with the processing of new documents. Most of the children had personal experience of dealing with police officers (5 children).

The children talked about the role of a judge. According to them, a judge is the person who *decides that the child will go into someone else's custody. The children knew more about judges from TV (Judge Alexander, Judge Barbara).*

A smaller number of children (2 children) had personal experience of dealing with a judge. Both children said the judge asked them a lot of questions and in one case ruled the way the teen wanted. *"I told him what he wanted to know and what he asked me about. He asked my opinion and the situation happened just as I needed it to."* The younger child was shy and afraid of the judge. *"I told him the truth, but I was afraid."*

**Focus group from 5.5.2022 (general population of children)**

Children shared their personal experiences with the police *"I was bullied at school and when it went too far, I reported it and the school called the police and OSLPC. However, initially the school didn't want to get involved. The cops were normal and the social worker was nice. The bullying then stopped."*

*"My friends and I saw a lady taking drugs and we called the police and an ambulance. The cops were very nice."* One of the children complained *that although children at his school were using drugs (e.g., a 13-year-old boy smokes weed and drinks alcohol at school), no one at school addressed this. It only started to be addressed when the principal found out.*

None of the children had personal experience of dealing with a judge or social worker.

Questions asked:
How did you find out about the outcome of the hearing you attended? - by letter or personal interview? From whom, when and how?
Have you ever seen a report on the outcome of your interview with a police officer/social worker/judge? Did you understand it?
What should such a report (by a police officer/social worker/judge) look like for children to understand it?

### Focus group from 4. 1. 2022 (children with experience of court proceedings)

The children reported that they learned about the outcome of the hearing from their parents. None of the children were told by the social worker or the judge what it would look like in their home after the decision. They only knew that their parents had separated and that it was now going to be so and so.

One child stated that he was given a report from a social worker with messages about what he wanted to say to his parents or deal with in court and had to sign it.

The other children cited their agreement to participate in today's children's focus group, which they also signed, as an example of their familiarity with the report. As another example, the output of the children's group was cited - a children's guide to divorce, which was prepared for the court. The outputs were consulted with the children and the children could sign the report. The children agreed that mostly everything was communicated only to the parent.

In a group activity, the children were given a sample report and asked to describe what they did not like about the report and what they would suggest the report should contain. The children then gave specific examples:

- *We need to understand it, it could be with pictures.*
- *It shouldn't contain things like ADHD, PPP - acronyms we don't understand.*
- *There shouldn't be any words we don't understand.*
- *We should like how it looks.*

Children from various focus groups defined what an interrogation/consultation room should look like.

#### Annex 19: How children imagine the interrogation room



## Findings of the children's questionnaire survey

### Questionnaire survey of young people aged 12-18

Questions asked:

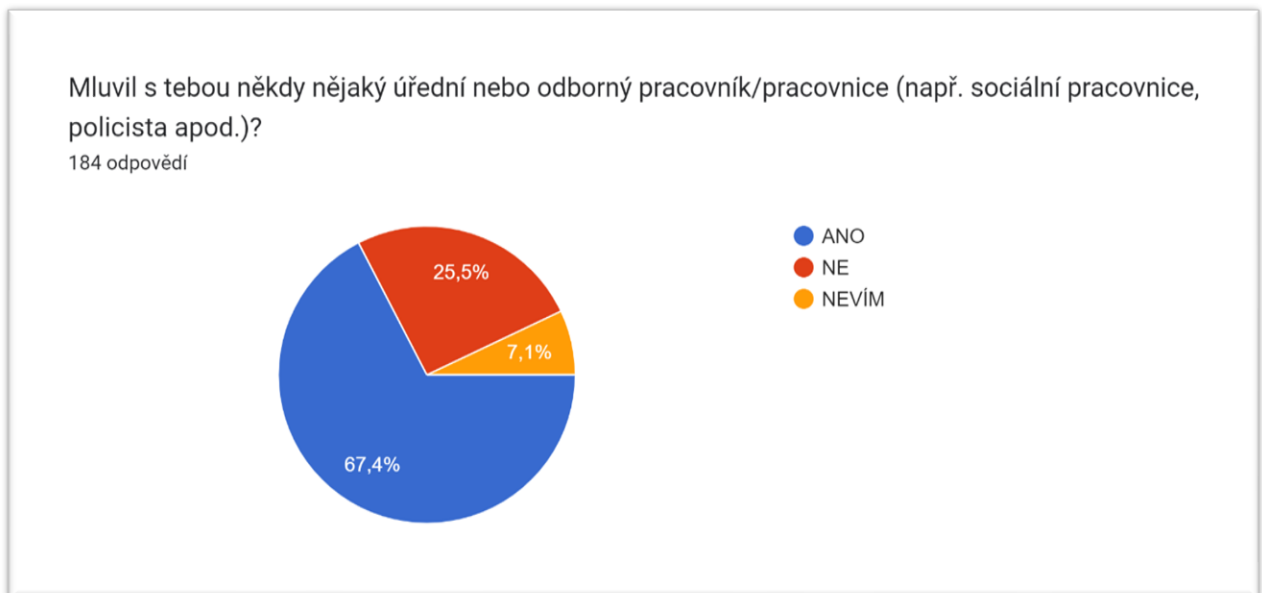
Has any official or professional worker (e.g., social worker, police officer, etc.) ever spoken to you?

If yes, tick who it was (you can tick more than one option)

How did you understand what they were telling you? Rate on the scale.

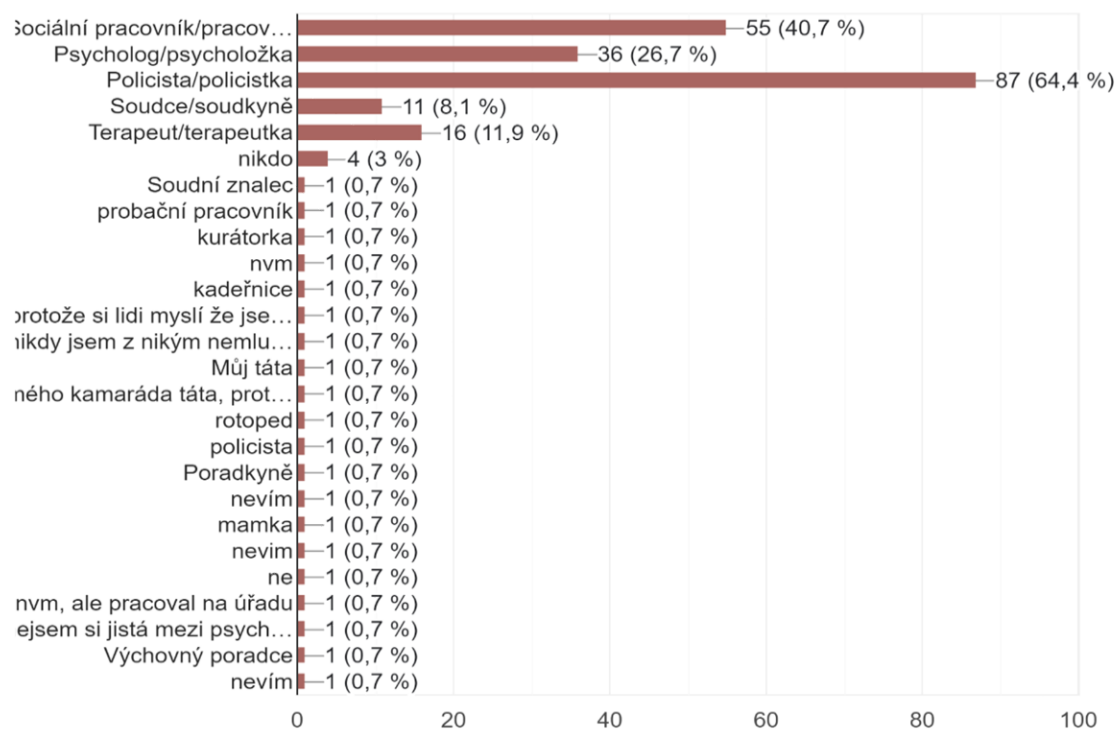
67% of child respondents over the age of 12 had ever spoken to an official or professional worker(s). Most young people had experience with a police officer. 41% of the respondents had personal experience of talking to a social worker, 8% to a judge.

*Annexes 20 and 21:*



Pokud ano, zaškrtni, kdo to byl/byla (můžeš zaškrtnout i více možností)

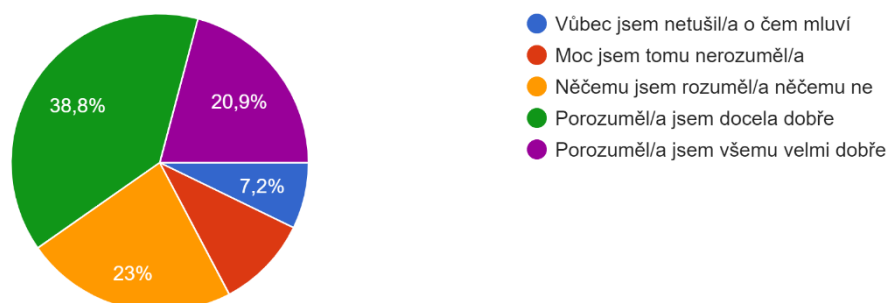
135 odpovědí



## Annex 22:

Jak jsi rozuměl/a tomu, co ti říkali? Vyber si na škále.

139 odpovědí



The majority of young people said that they fully or at least partially understood what the official or professional staff member was talking about. However, 7% of the total number of respondents had no idea what these people were talking about.

## Adult focus group findings

Questions asked:

What mechanisms exist for the safe exercise of children's right to participate in administrative or judicial processes?

### Focus group of 28.1.2022 (experts from various professions)

The experts first answered the question separately: "**How are children informed of their right to participate in administrative or judicial processes?**". The Jamboard platform was used for their answers. According to experts, *children are generally not informed about their rights*. They are only introduced to them when they find themselves in a difficult situation, such as the **break-up of their parents, problems at school or in their relationships**. At that point, they will most often learn about their rights from a school prevention officer, school psychologist or teacher, or from peers who have experienced such behaviour. **Sometimes they find out about their rights when they call the Helpline, which children know from advertisements or school lessons**. Experts also reported that when children become participants in administrative or judicial proceedings, they are informed by a social worker or a forensic social worker. In the ensuing discussion, it was mentioned that "*children often do not know what they are entitled to and find it difficult to complain in a given environment because they do not feel trust in the people involved.*"

Children are worried that someone will find out what they say. **Because of this, some organisations have formalised complaints procedures that they have developed with children so that the children feel safe in their actions**. There was also a message from the experience of experts that some children are surprised at the beginning that they also have rights. Therefore, the group agreed that it is very important that children are made aware of their rights not only at the beginning of any dealings with them, but also that they are made aware of their rights by their parents or/and at school in the context of education. At the same time, the group found it useful to have the children summarize in their own words

their understanding of their rights. *Children also need to be given the space to talk safely about their experiences.* One participant shared the experience that children in families often know what would help them but do not have a safe space to express it. The group also agreed that it *is important for children to be reassured by professionals that they understand correctly what the child wants to tell them, by repeating what they say in their own words.* This will give the child confidence that he or she is truly being listened to.

## Summary evaluation of U4 Mechanisms are in place that enable children to safely exercise their right to participate in legal and administrative processes

### Children's focus groups, questionnaire surveys and adult focus groups:

The children in the focus groups had age-appropriate information about who to contact if they needed help. They had a basic idea of the competencies of a police officer/judge/social worker. They reported the most information about a police officer, whom they knew most about from personal experience and from the media. They had the least idea about the competences of social workers. Young people in the questionnaire survey also indicated that of all the officials and professional staff, they had the most personal experience with a police officer.

The children in the focus groups knew that children generally can talk to a social worker/police officer/judge. Children also reported that they were afraid when talking to the police officers because the officers were very serious.

None of the children were aware of anyone (social worker/policeman/judge) lecturing them about their rights. The children in the focus groups learned about the outcome of the decision from their parents. The children agreed that mostly everything was communicated only to the parent.

Two of the focus group children had experience with a judge and both felt respect for the judge, while the younger child felt shame and fear.

The majority of young people in the 12 and over questionnaire survey said that they fully or at least partially understood what the official or professional worker was talking about. Of the total number of respondents, 7% of the children had no idea what they were talking about.

The adult focus group revealed that children are generally not informed about their rights. Children are only introduced to their rights when they find themselves in a difficult situation, such as parental separation, problems at school or in their relationships. From the experience of experts, some children are surprised at the beginning that they also have some rights. Therefore, the group agreed that it is very important to inform children about their rights not only at the beginning of any dealings with them, but also by their parents or/and at school in the context of education. At the same time, according to the group, the

procedure where children summarize in their own words how they understood their rights has proved successful.

<b>Evaluation criteria</b>	The progress of indicator fulfilment can be measured through the following criteria: <b>0</b> = Children do not have access to legal proceedings <b>1</b> = The rules above are applied in one of the listed proceedings <b>2</b> = The rules set out above are applied in two of the listed proceedings <b>3</b> = The rules of child-friendly jurisprudence are implemented in legal and administrative procedures
<b>Result in the Czech Republic</b>	<b>2</b> <u>Justification</u> According to the legislation, children are guaranteed the right to be informed and the right to have their views communicated and taken into account in the context of the social and legal protection of children, in administrative and judicial proceedings. In practice, however, the application of this law in terms of quality depends on the erudition and competence of responsible persons.

## U5 Child-friendly complaints procedures are in place

### Message to adults

**"Sometimes we don't know how to say certain things, but we need to address them or know that you are addressing them."**

## Children's focus group findings

Questions asked:
<p>What is a complaint? What does it look like in practice to complain?          Have you ever complained? Do you know how you would proceed?          How do you know that? Who helped you when you complained? What happened afterwards?          Have you received a response to your complaint? If you complained, should you get an answer to your complaint?          Have you ever experienced unfair treatment by a judge, police officer, social worker? If so, in what way? What did you do about this situation, or what could be done about it?          Even if you've never been to court, has its decision affected your life? How?</p>

### Focus group from 23.11. 2021 (children from private primary school)

The area of complaints emerged as the most important topic for students. Children knew how to complain politely, how to complain about goods. If they didn't know how to do something, they used the tutorial videos on the topic.

*"I was able to get my graphics cards discounted thanks to my complaint", "Dad ordered the goods and something completely different arrived. I went there with my sister and they fixed it", "I went to the store and the shop assistant cheated me out of money. When I told her about it, she gave me the money back."* The children agreed that it is better to complain in person, although writing is sometimes safer. *"Sometimes it's hard to take the first step, even*

*when we have the right to do so - it's shame, fear. But if we say it politely, it's okay to ask for a change."*

Children reported that they first complain to the person involved. If there is no change, they look for a person who can make a difference.

The children also addressed their complaints at school during classroom sessions. It was clear from the children's responses that the topic of complaints in the school environment was important to them. However, the children felt that they lacked a clear complaints mechanism. They liked the suggestion of a "complaint box" so much that they agreed to let the lecturer communicate the suggestion to the representative at their primary school. This was at the end of the focus group when the representative joined the group. The children partly said everything independently. They added that it would help if the mailbox was anonymous and not read in front of everyone. It is also important that children know that their complaints are being addressed.

#### **Focus group from 4. 1. 2022 (children with experience of court proceedings)**

As examples of environments where children complained, they mentioned their family where they did not like the behaviour of their siblings. Outside of the family environment, most children had some experience from school. As a rule, nothing changed after a complaint was made to the teachers about the behaviour of a classmate. The inappropriate behaviour of the classmates continued.

The children in this focus group initially did not know and wondered if they could complain to the social worker/police officer/judge. They then named some specific cases where this would be appropriate: *"Well, I don't know if I could complain; for example, if he treated us badly, forced us to say something that wasn't true, for example, to the OSLPC or wrongly, I could complain; if he threatened us, was mean to us, forced us not to say something even though we wanted to."* When asked if they could recognise that the social worker's actions were wrong, one child replied: *"He might say something I didn't say at all - he's making it up."*

Children generally knew that they had the right to complain about the actions of adults. But they had less information on how to do it specifically. As examples, they cited: *"Through my parents, or if I'm alone with her, but it's hard to tell him directly, I'd probably be scared, so maybe through someone."* After the hint, they realized that there is a drop box at both the non-profit organization they work with and the school. One child added that he could not imagine how he would complain about the police officer's actions.

None of the children gave an example of unfair treatment by a judge/police officer/social worker. They imagine such behaviour as: *"Someone is withholding our rights, treating us as they shouldn't."* Again, they would react by telling the closest person ("mum").

Then the children had a group activity where they had to try to write a specific complaint. The boys stated (the girls did not join in) that the complaint should include:

- the address, date, statement of what I didn't like, description of what bothered me and why and what I would like to do about it
- there shouldn't be foul language
- the signature of whoever's complaining.



Even though the children had never been in court, they were able to answer how the court's decision affected their lives:

1. *"Yes my life was affected - but then I felt like maybe it was my fault and my mum or dad were angry with me for siding with someone;*
2. *If I didn't like it and wanted it differently, I'd be afraid they wouldn't do it, so it depends on what I say, and then if it turns out a certain way, not everybody's going to be happy anyway, and it's annoying to have somebody mad at me;*
3. *For example, I would like to see my dad more and I would like to be able to change my mind more often."*

Questions asked
<p>Are you attending the school you wanted to go to?            Do you know what equal access to education is?            How should teachers not treat children?            Which of these things have you experienced? Was it unpleasant?            Do you think there's anything you can do about it? Any idea what?            How should doctors/nurses treat children? (And what behaviour towards them would you not like? Have you experienced any of this behaviour? What exactly was it?)            Were you told by the nurse/doctor what they will be doing as part of the examination?            Did you have information about what can happen to you after the examination/procedure?            Did you understand it?</p>

**Focus group from 15.2.2022 (children from socially vulnerable families)**

The children thought together about what they think equal access to education is: *everyone starts from the same place, - they do something directly.* Not all children had the opportunity to study at the school they wanted. Some got into the school because of catchment, not preference. One child had the experience of not having a place at school. *"I go to a special school because there was no room at the regular elementary school. But I want to go somewhere else and I've already asked for it at home."* The school can also be recommended by a social worker. *"A social worker recommended the school to my parents. It's a school that has fewer students and I could be able to handle it."* The children had the experience that their school was attended by - *slower children, - children of foreigners, - children with ADHD, - children with physical disabilities, - children with speech impediments, - children with intellectual disabilities (inclusive school).* Teachers treated these children differently - *they gave them easier tasks.* But the children perceived it positively. What they did not perceive positively, however, was the behaviour of the teachers *when they did not explain certain things to the foreign children when they did not understand them.* One child had the experience that when he stood up for his classmate, the teacher did not like to see it. *"I think it's because I can speak my mind and that makes the teacher feel threatened. She feels like I'm attacking her when I'm not."*

The children had mostly good experiences with doctors. They perceived that doctors should - *treat children with respect, - greet the child, - communicate with the children and not just the parents, - speak simply and slowly, - be able to calm them down, - be able to explain*

*what is going to happen, - have a friendly attitude, - be interested in how the child feels. Some of the children have had the experience of doctors tossing them around "like a hot potato" - they tell them what is going to happen, but it is only partially true, - the doctor is not honest, - they are inconsistent, every doctor says something different and I don't know what's true, - they feel that they want to get it done quickly so that the next patient can come in, - they pay more attention to the computer than to the patient. The children discussed about the fact that if they did not like the behaviour of the doctors/doctors, it was possible to fight back: - i can leave, - I can say I don't like it, - I can tell an adult, like my dad, - I can complain about the doctor through the nurse, - I can send my complaint to the hospital director.*

**Focus group from 24.3. 2022 (children with disabilities)**

The children who shared their experiences with us considered their school a good choice. Due to their disabilities (physical and combined), they were able to have barrier-free access and an individualized approach thanks to the lower number of pupils in the class. Some of them are currently dealing with the transition to high school. *"I wanted to go to a programming school, but it wasn't wheelchair accessible, I couldn't get there with a wheelchair, it's impossible."* Children therefore perceived that their disability could be a limiting factor in their choice of school.

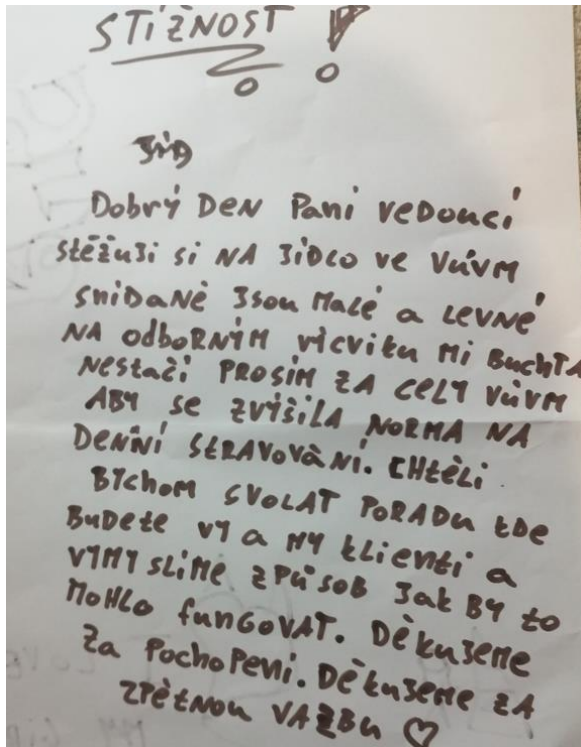
They had a good experience with the teachers. The behaviours they perceived as inappropriate were described in relation to doctors and nurses in hospital settings. *"I didn't experience being completely ignored by the doctors, but I'm sure they talked to the parents a lot more."* *"I don't like it when they do everything quickly. I would like it if things were dealt with more calmly."* The children often knew what was going to happen during the examination, but perceived that health facility staff often did not know how to work with children's fears. *"I cried during the examination, I was scared and the dentist simply didn't book me in for another visit."* *"Because of my disability, I couldn't stretch my arm and the nurse couldn't find the vein. She was nervous that I was panting and tried to discipline me."* The children had no experience of rating satisfaction with the service of the doctor/dentist. *"I would like an app in the form of stars, where I would be asked how I liked the doctor's work."*

The lecturers agreed with a group of pupils that three teachers would also be present at the final round, where they were jointly told of the children's request to *know about the complaints box* (which is located in an inconspicuous place and hardly anyone knows about it), to *have a school parliament and to know what happens with complaints*. All the teachers listened to the feedback, thanked them for it, and said they would find out the school's options and the management's view on the proposals. The children will be informed soon.

Questions asked
<p>What is a complaint? What does it look like in practice?          Have you ever complained? Do you know how you would proceed? How do you know that?          Who helped you with it? Have you received a response to your complaint?</p>

### Focus group from 23.4. 2022 (young people from residential institutions)

Teens agreed that they complain if something bothers them. Sometimes they complain



verbally, but it's better to do so *in writing*. "It's better when it's on paper." One of the opinions was that it was nice to have "a human mediator, someone from the outside who is impartial." Teens reported that they write a complaint and if they don't get a response, they go to the individual in person. "If it doesn't get solved through letters, it will work in person. Because everyone is confident behind a letter."

The teens were asked to think of 2 situations in which they would complain. One was supposed to take place *in a residential facility* and the other in *communication with a social worker*. These were current topics for them and it was obvious that the situation stirred emotions. The first situation involved *insufficient food portions*, the second situation *dysfunctional communication with the social worker in the residential facility towards the*

*teenager and towards her school*. In both cases, the teens worked nicely as a team and complemented each other.

## Findings from the children's questionnaire survey

### Questionnaire survey - children under 12

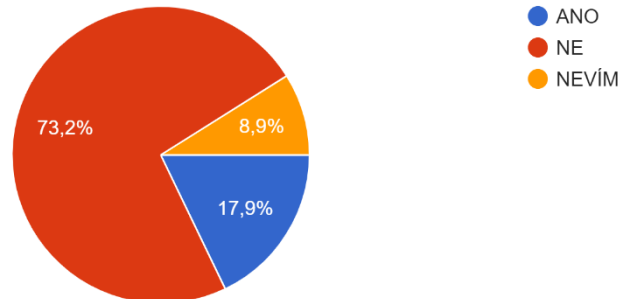
Questions asked:

Have you ever been treated unfairly by a police officer, judge, social worker or anyone else (e.g., they didn't listen or were unpleasant because you are a child)? If so, in what way?

### Annex 23: Unfair treatment by an official - younger children

ZAŽIL/A JSI NĚKDY NESPRAVEDLIVÉ CHOVÁNÍ ZE STRANY POLICISTY, SOUDCE, SOCIÁLNÍ PRACOVNICE NEBO NĚKOHU JINÉHO (např. neposlouč...ebo se chovali nepříjemně proto, že jsi dítě)?

56 odpovědí



Almost 18% of the 56 younger children said they had experienced unfair treatment by professionals. As an example, they cited: *"Being thrown out of places that are open to the public; the PE teacher - he didn't look when we scored, when others scored he looked; the teacher was mean to me - she kept shouting at me; we were on a scooter and the lady wanted to call the police on us for riding the scooter; when someone accused me of something but I didn't do it and I told the gentleman it wasn't me but he didn't believe me."* 73% of the 56 children said they had not experienced anything like this.

#### Questionnaire survey - young people aged 12-18

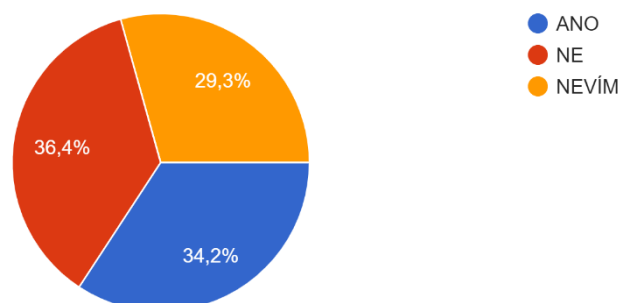
Questions asked:

Have you ever been treated unfairly by a police officer, judge, social worker or anyone else (e.g., they didn't listen or were unpleasant because you are a child)? If so, in what way? Have you had a chance to address this? Describe how and with whom you addressed it.

## Annex 24: Unfair treatment by an official - older children

Zažil/a jsi někdy nespravedlivé chování nebo postup, kterému jsi nerozuměl/a ze strany doktora/doktorky, soudce/soudkyně, policisty/polic...ciálního pracovníka/pracovnice, učitele/učitelky?

184 odpovědí



34% of the young people surveyed said they had experienced unfair treatment by professionals. Of the open-ended responses, the most frequent was an experience they had in a school environment (in 26 cases):

*"In my PREVIOUS school, when I was "disrupting" they grabbed me by the neck and dragged me to the office. An assistant was there surfing the internet, An unnamed teacher would humiliate someone from time to time and also if you said something wrong, they would embarrass you in front of the whole class; Bullying at school regarding me or a classmate, physical punishment for not wanting to participate in a class activity- standing in the corner."*  
Experiences from another area were also occasionally heard: *"My orthopaedic specialist doctor failed to recognize my back and knee problems; the social worker wasn't honest to me."*

When asked whether and how young people had dealt with the situation, 21 young people responded that they had a solution, 32 did not have a solution or did not deal with the situation, and 3 young people responded that they did not know. The person with whom the young people had the opportunity to address the situation was most often a teacher or principal and a parent or other family representative. Dialogue was the most frequently mentioned method of solution. Some of the answers were that the situation didn't have much of a solution, that the young person felt they had no representation.

From the open-ended responses: *"I addressed it with my aunt and with the social worker; I transferred to another school; I had the option but I didn't want to; I asked but she didn't answer; I told the class teacher; it couldn't be solved - I wasn't allowed to discuss it, only to keep quiet; then I solved it with my parents and they complained, but it was even worse because the head teacher, instead of protecting me, was not impartial."*

## Adult focus group findings

Questions asked:

Are there ways in which children can complain about what they are involved in?  
How can children in your organisation/institution complain?  
Are there child-friendly procedures in place for dealing with complaints and do children know about them?  
How is the complaint handled, how are the children informed of the resolution?

### Focus group of 28.1.2022 (experts from various professions)

Experts and practitioners said that if children did not like something, they had the opportunity to express *their opinion through the website with a procedure for complaining*. Observation is another possible tool to gauge how a child is feeling. "*As an attorney for one of the parents, this is the only option for me. When a child walks out of the court room, I can tell from the look in his eyes what it was like for him.*" During the discussion it was clear that the group was aware of the importance of involving children and seeking their opinion in all areas that affect them. However, the experts agreed that the starting point is to **"provide the child with information, to educate them, make them aware of what is going to happen, to explain"**. Only in this way will the child understand his/her situation.

The child has the opportunity to use *emotion cards* to communicate what was missing and how the activity made them feel. It also includes *group work, where* children can give feedback *through games and a final round*. Children can also say what they think through *feedback questionnaires and with the help of smileys*. The group defined that it was important that children knew why they were giving feedback and what would happen with it. At the same time, it is advisable to monitor whether feedback mechanisms are appropriate tools: "*For some time we had a box in the corridor of the OSLPC office for the observations of children and parents, but unfortunately it was not used much.*" Practice has shown that some judges ask children at court hearings if they want to say anything about how professionals work with them. However, it is advisable for **children to feel that it is safe to give their opinion and to do so in an informal setting, e.g., without a gown**. It is advisable to expect the child to evaluate the meeting and the process after it is over and to set up the possibility of feedback even after time has passed. "*The children are given the contacts of the social workers and are encouraged to use them if there is something they wondered about later.*"

### Focus group from 31.3. 2022 (experts from various professions)

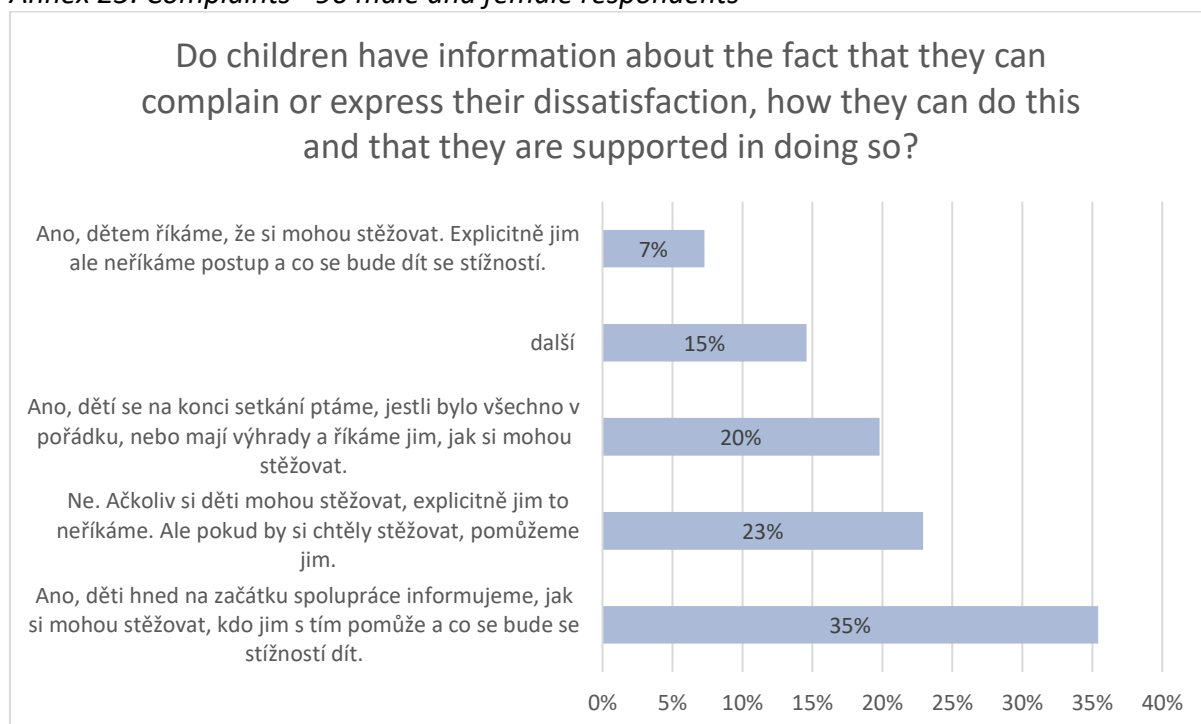
According to experts, the *various trust boxes* or alternatives to them are important, but it is equally important to work with the content that appears in the trust boxes. It was the experience of practitioners that in addition to the trust box, each service has *guidance on how to complain and the procedure is also included on information leaflets*. The complaint is dealt with either directly with the child or, in the case of anonymous complaints, by posting a response on the notice board. The aim is to explain the situation to the child so that he or she understands it (even though he or she may not agree with it, e.g., if a sanction is given for breaking the rules). The procedure for dealing with complaints at the various stages of

the organisation's management is precisely defined and, depending on the subject matter, deadlines are also given if the complaint is dealt with by the regional authority. For example, failure to provide information to a client was addressed in practice. In social services, it is easier for the clients in comparison to the OSLPC in that if they disagree with something, they also have the option to leave.

In relation to children, it is important to respond to all suggestions, even small ones, because clients check how their submission will be responded to and then are not afraid to complain about more serious matters. Parents are also informed about the procedure. They can also make a complaint (although parental involvement is not common in low-threshold facilities for children and youth). *"There should be a person (psychologist, social educator) in schools that children can trust and know is in school and is easily accessible."* Some schools have a school counselling chat that is more low-threshold for children. At the same time, the children know who is on the other side. They don't write to someone anonymous. They can then arrange appointments during the chat for a time when it is safe to do so. As professionals, we need to *create space for children's complaints by going directly to children and talking to them about what they don't like or what they do like*. It is necessary to speak to children in their own language and to strengthen listening skills. Children need to be actively supported and motivated in exercising their rights. In addition to official documents, experts say that feedback can be given verbally, after completing an activity with the children (e.g., participating in a focus group, etc.). According to the respondents' experience, the *Crisis Helpline* seems to be a good tool for communicating complaints. Children know it and get information there on how they can complain or give feedback on what is happening to them. ***Respondents agreed that it should be customary for someone to come to the children, for example, after they have been admitted to a hospital or institution, and ask how they felt when they were admitted and whether there was anything else they needed to know.***

## Adults questionnaire survey findings

Annex 25: Complaints - 96 male and female respondents



## Summary evaluation of U5 Child-friendly complaints procedures are in place

### Children's focus groups, questionnaire surveys and adult focus groups:

Children in the focus groups generally knew that they had the right to complain about the actions of adults. But they had less information on how to do it specifically. One child added that he could not imagine how he would complain about the police officer's actions.

Almost 18% of younger children in the survey said that they had experienced unfair treatment by professionals. 73% of children said they had never experienced anything like this. In a questionnaire survey of children aged 12-18, 34% of the adolescents surveyed reported unfair treatment by professionals. Of the open-ended responses, the most frequent was an experience they had in a school environment (in 26 cases). When asked



whether and how young people had dealt with the situation, 21 responded that they had the opportunity to address it, while 32 respondents said they either had not had the opportunity to address it or had not dealt with the issue.

Children from the focus group discussed the topic of equal education. Not all children had the opportunity to study at the school they wanted. Some got into the school because of catchment, not preference.

Children from the focus groups and the questionnaire survey sometimes perceived that not all teachers treat all pupils equally. As a rule, nothing was done after a complaint about the behaviour of a classmate was made to the teachers. The inappropriate behaviour of the classmates continued.

Children from the focus groups also talked about their experiences with doctors. Although their experiences were mostly positive, they knew that if they did not like the behaviour of the doctors/doctors, they could fight back.

Children in the focus group of children with disabilities, although satisfied with their school, perceived that their disability could be a limiting factor in their choice of school. This was exemplified by the high schools they wanted to apply to, but that did not have wheelchair access. Children evaluated the behaviour of staff in hospital facilities. Although they often knew what was going to happen during the examination, they perceived that health facility staff often did not know how to work with their fears. They did not have the opportunity to evaluate the behaviour of the staff (e.g., through feedback questionnaires, interviews, apps).

The adolescents in the focus group of people from residential institutions agreed that they complain if something bothers them.

Adults in the focus groups mentioned that a frequent tool for getting feedback from children in their workplaces are various trust boxes. At the same time, they spoke about the need to respond transparently to these suggestions. As an example, they cited responses to suggestions on bulletin boards. They also mentioned the Crisis Line as a good practice, where children are used to calling and getting advice on how to complain.

<b>Evaluation criteria</b>	The progress of indicator fulfilment can be measured through the following criteria: 0 = There is no complaint mechanism in the above areas 1 = Child-friendly practices are available in two of the above areas 2 = Child-friendly practices are available in four of the above areas 3 = Child-friendly complaints procedures are guaranteed by law and are easily accessible to all children in all of the above areas. Children have information about their right to complain. Children are given all the help and support they need to make a complaint in a form appropriate to their age and ability.
<b>Result in the Czech Republic</b>	<b>1</b> <u>Justification</u> Children's right to complain is enabled in practice within the education system and within social services. In social services, complaints procedures are regulated directly by quality standards, in schools there are usually trust boxes, but the way in which children's complaints are handled differs.

## U6 Training programmes for professionals working with children include information on children's right to participate in decision-making processes

### Adult focus group findings

#### Questions asked:

Are there training programmes for professionals on the topic of participation?  
What kind of educational programmes on the topic of participation would you appreciate?  
Can you express your opinion or uncertainty about children's involvement and are these views given constructive consideration?  
How are you adequately supported?

#### Focus group from 28.1. 2022 (experts from various professions)

Experts agreed that *there is currently a wealth of material available on the topic of participation*. They perceived continuous *education in the form of self-study*, attendance at *professional conferences, seminars and workshops* (e.g., Czech Bar Association, Union of Family Lawyers, Office for the International Legal Protection of Children, Judicial Academy, National Institute for Children and Family) as important. Sharing practice with colleagues is a key tool for spreading participation. Some universities currently offer sufficient materials primarily in advanced social work methods and, through the selection of appropriate speakers, bring the topic of participation linked to practice. Experts perceived that thanks to their home organisations and institutions they had the opportunity to study *literature from foreign sources*, read expert articles and conclusions of symposia, collect information from publications (e.g., Save the children, Sheffkids, Who care?) and thus broaden their awareness of participation. A big part of this is to *practice participation with children and young people through trial and error*. Experts agreed that it is important to have effective support if they are unsure about adequately engaging children in their work. Supervision and interviews are therefore important tools used.

#### Focus group from 31.3. 2022 (experts from various professions)

Experts and practitioners have defined the headings that are key to gathering information about children's involvement in their practice.

Annex 26:



Experts and practitioners repeatedly mentioned that *sufficient time and trust from* children is crucial for effective and safe implementation of child participation. It is also important to make sure that at the end of the conversation or meeting with the child, *the child* leaves *in a calm and relaxed manner*. It is also necessary to choose *language* that children of a given age group understand so that they comprehend exactly what we are asking them and what we want to ascertain from them. Participants saw *multidisciplinary cooperation* as quite crucial for children's participation, which will support the fact that other actors in the system will be used to communicating with children and involving them in decision-making processes. It is sometimes confusing for children that in one institution or service they want to know their opinion and then in another institution they hardly communicate with them. Participants also mentioned the unfortunate attitude of some adults, which they summarized in the sentence *"I am an adult and I know best what to do."* When it comes to what participants perceive as important, it is the *knowledge of children's developmental needs*. Engage them in participation accordingly, and in some cases have an awareness of working with trauma. ČOSIV currently has a [project](#) together with Eduzměna aimed at improving communication in schools, strengthening openness and trust. In order to strengthen participation, it is advisable to undergo training, to *get to know oneself well first* and then guide the children.

The group also discussed the topic **What hinders the use of participation?** and came to the following important factors:

- **prejudice** on the part of adults ("Children don't understand") and the perception that participation is not needed
- creating a **safe space** for children to engage ("*sometimes all it takes is for another colleague to be present in the office and the child no longer feels safe talking about things that are important to them*")
- **service overload**, where there is not enough time to involve children
- **lack of courage on the part of the adults**
- **lack of courage on the part of the children**. It takes a lot of courage to give your opinion to a judge, for example, and children may be afraid of the impact it will have on them.

To spread the importance of involving children in decision-making processes, respondents said it is important to *highlight good examples and support those who do so*. It is necessary to leave behind the position of "we are the experts" and, in the case of teachers, to understand that their role is not only to teach, but also to know the children's opinions. Experts mentioned that sometimes no one informs the child. Also, in view of the fact that the *boundaries of what a child should know* and be involved in (e.g., legal matters) are often addressed.

Some of the experts use *materials in the form of comics* to communicate with and engage the child. Some practitioners shared their experience that *"the biggest challenge is not involving children, but involving inactive children."* *"All materials for children should be given to children to read and have them comment on."*

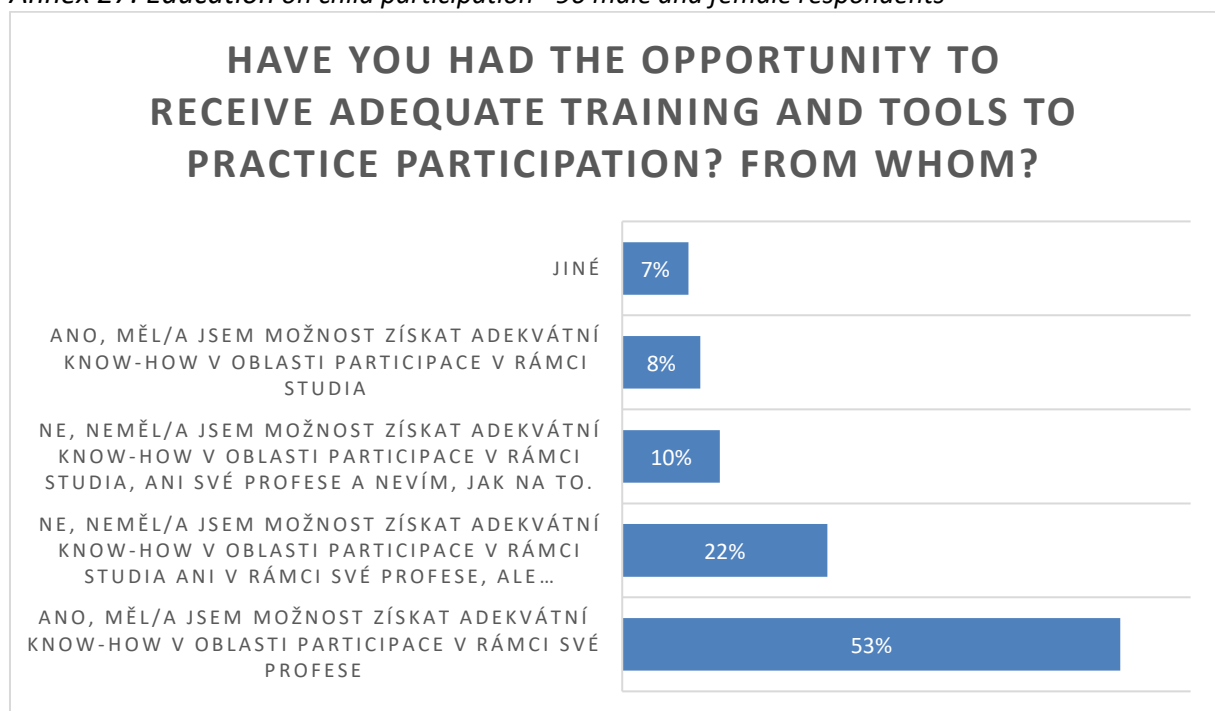
### Examples of good practice

The Aufori organisation uses creative [materials](#) suitable for children.

## Adults questionnaire survey findings

Of the 96 respondents, 53% of the experts had the opportunity to acquire sufficient know-how in the field of participation.

*Annex 27: Education on child participation - 96 male and female respondents*



## Summary evaluation of U6 Training programmes for professionals working with children include information on children's right to participate in decision-making processes

<b>Evaluation criteria</b>	The progress of indicator fulfilment can be measured through the following criteria: 0 = Very limited or no education on child participation 1 = Competence-based education is part of the curriculum of at least one occupational group 2 = Competence-based education is part of the curricula of at least three occupational groups 3 = Competence-based education is part of the curricula of at least six occupational groups
<b>Result in the Czech Republic</b>	<b>1</b> <u>Justification</u> Child participation is not yet an established topic in the curricula of all responsible professions working with children. Children's participatory rights are included in the training of social workers to a rather limited extent. In other professions, this is optional competence development.

## U7 Children are provided with information on the right to participation

### Messages to adults:

**"Talk to children, don't neglect them!"**

**"Don't assume we think anything, ask us. You think you know what's best for us, but you forgot to listen to us."**

## Children's focus group findings

Questions asked:
Have you ever heard the word participation? What does it mean? What can participation look like in reality? Can you think of any examples? On what occasions (in what settings and activities) should children be listened to? Why do children need to be listened to? Have you encountered any specific participation where children were listened to?

### Focus group from 23.11. 2022 (children from private primary school)

Knowledge of the word "participation" appeared to be correlated with children's age. Younger children did not know the word.

*"Participation is a collective language", "It's a candle", "They are the technical names of cities".*

The older children were aware that this meant *engaging* and some *form of involvement*. The group talked about what participation can actually look like.

*"Participation is when adults ask children how they feel, give them ALL the information, even the uncomfortable information, in short, they explain."* Specific examples given by children included *"getting involved in children's parliaments", "making up rules within the school" and "getting involved in library events"*.

According to the group, children should be involved in all situations, namely at the *doctor, at school, in the family*. They felt the need to be involved in *crisis situations* that affect the whole of society. They mentioned that they did not have enough information about Covid and about the president's state of health.

The children thought it was important that adults listened to them. And they perceived that this was not happening to a sufficient extent.

*"I don't think adults listen to children, they treat them more like lesser beings, they ignore us."*

For the children, it was important that adults not only talk to children, but also speak to them in a language they could understand. *"If children were given a chance, if they understood what adults were telling them and were listened to, adults could see that children can reason. That way, maybe they would start listening to them."*

### **Focus group from 16.2. 2022 (general population of children)**

Adolescents perceived that when adults listen, they *"get along better" with the child*. Listening *should be reciprocal and the child should not wait for adults to ask*. The adults might not even realise they should. The children mentioned that it is crucial to start in the family. *"Children should have the opportunity to be involved in planning their holidays. They can see everything from a different perspective, they can fully complement their parents' ideas."* A larger proportion of children had experience of the school parliament and were able to name specific examples where their involvement had made a difference to their neighbourhood. *"We pointed out the small portions in the school canteen and the portions increased". "Only the bigger kids could compete at school, but we wanted to have competitions for the smaller ones and we succeeded." "We got bins and mirrors for the girls' toilets." "We couldn't catch the bus because of the queue in the canteen. We were given the opportunity to go to lunch first and everything was sorted out". "We disagreed with the teacher's behaviour and attitude. We managed to change it."* For children who are in the school parliament, it is important to talk to adults about political events. However, they are not always met with understanding.

### **Focus group from 24.3. 2022 (children with disabilities)**

2 children out of 7 knew what the word participation meant. It is about *engagement*. One of the students *created a book that is available to everyone at the local library*. This was an example of good practice. The children perceived that it was important to be present *during demonstrations and, for example, during times of conflict*. *"Adults should listen to all the children involved in the conflict and work with them to find a solution."* Children felt strongly that they should be involved because they are human beings as well as adults. After explaining that there is a limit of 12 years in the law below which one cannot go and not ask the child's opinion, the students said, *"that it is possible to ask even younger children what they think."* Children shared examples of how they are involved in decision making within the family and within the school. *"If I have a different opinion about a holiday, I sit down*

*with my parents and we talk about it." "At school we can sometimes interfere with the order of subjects for the day."*

**Focus group from 23.4. 2022 (young people from residential institutions)**

Adolescents knew that participation meant *getting involved*. They agreed that they should be able to have a say in *different projects, - in sports, - in elections, - in games, - in ongoing communications, - in things related to the society they live in*. In their opinion, the involvement of children should be *at school, - in a residential facility as part of co-management, - in court, - at the doctor's office, - at a part-time job, - in communication with a social worker and a probation officer, - at home, - at the police, on the helpline, - in cooperation with the J.J. Pestalozzi Centre*. Teens agreed that adults listen to them if they unite and don't address issues as mere individuals. *"When we're all in and we speak up for the things we want to change, they listen."* It was noted that even *when they want to change something in school and address it, they often don't know why the change is not happening*.

Teens have had experience of their own involvement: *we can intervene in the creation of the programme at the group, - we can choose the cinema and the film we want to go see, - I can choose to stay in the facility or go home and live with my folks*.

*"If I want to make a change in the group, I have to go to the director. I did it so many times and nothing, until I tried to act more forcefully and tell him clearly, and things started to change. I've been doing it that way ever since."*

Adolescents reported that it was important for adults to listen to them because *"Our opinion is important", "We are the next generation and one day we will be the adults who will make the decisions"*. In the discussion it was said that *"In the Czech Republic the environment is such that only adults are asked, not children. It's completely different abroad, asking children is a given."*

Adolescents reported that they had experience of questioning adults. *"The prosecutor asked me how I was, but I didn't tell him anything, I didn't know him and I didn't trust him." "I don't trust adults, I said something once and the entire facility found out about it."*

**Findings of the children's questionnaire survey**

**Questionnaire survey for children up to the age of 12**

Questions asked:
Have you ever heard the word "participation"?
Try to explain in your own words what it is.

*Annex 28:*

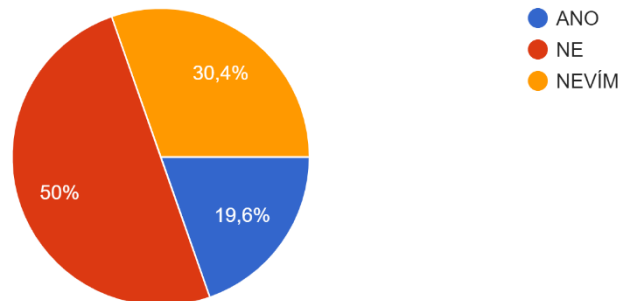
In the under-12 age group, 87.5% of children responding to the survey did not know what "participation" was. Three children (5%) said they knew. The word "engagement" appeared once in the open-ended response option.

Questions asked:
Have adults ever changed something according to your wishes or the wishes of your friends at school or in your club (e.g., change the food choices in the school canteen, etc.) or in your neighbourhood (e.g., build a new playground)?
If so, please give an example.

## Annex 29:

STALO SE NĚKDY, ŽE DOSPĚLÍ NĚCO ZMĚNILI PODLE TVÉHO PŘÁNÍ, NEBO PŘÁNÍ TVÝCH KAMARÁDŮ VE ŠKOLE NEBO NA KROUŽKU (např. změ...TVÉM OKOLÍ (např. vybudovali nové hřiště)?

56 odpovědí



Some children up to the age of 12 were able to give a specific example of an adult changing something according to their wishes: "they built a new park, we played soccer instead of running in gym class, and they built a new playground in our village."

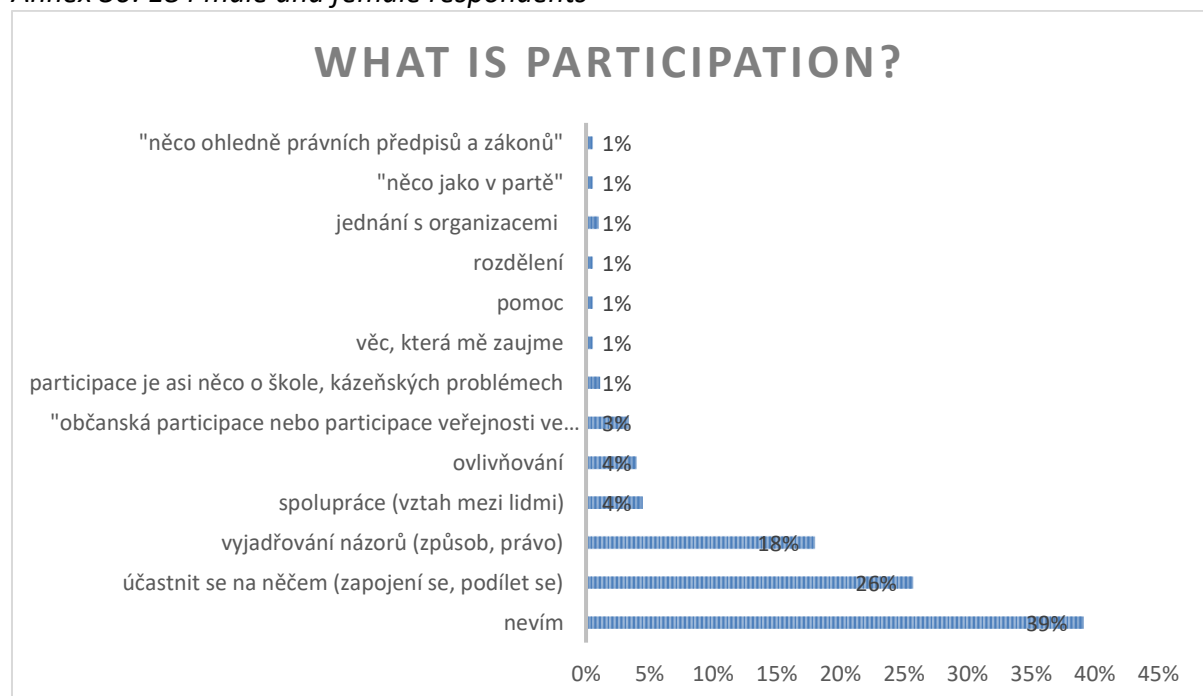
## Questionnaire survey of young people aged 12-18

Questions asked:

Have you ever heard the word "participation"?

Try to explain in your own words what it is.

## Annex 30: 184 male and female respondents



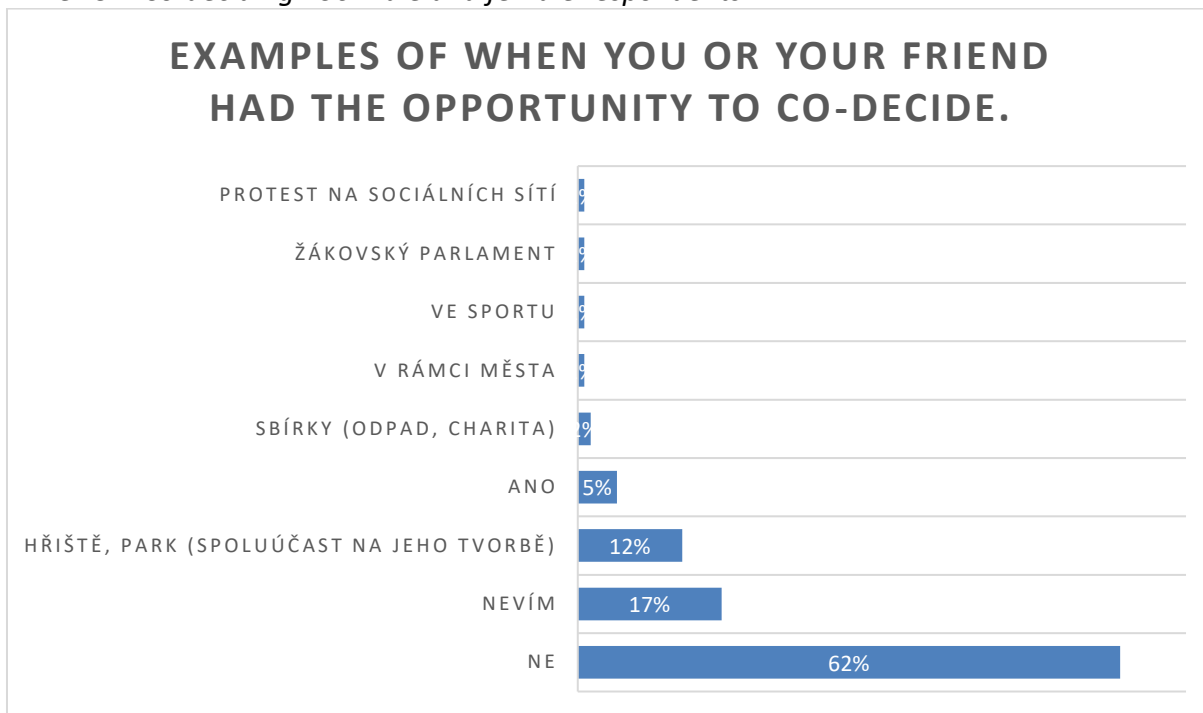
39% of young people aged between 12 and 18 selected the option "I don't know" when asked what does the word "participation" mean? 56 responses (30%) were relevant.



Questions asked:

Can you think of any examples where you or your friends had the chance to co-decide, be involved in the solution, or contribute your suggestion to improve the lives of people in the area (e.g., build a skatepark/parkour playground, dog park, etc.)?

Annex 31: Co-deciding - 56 male and female respondents



Most of the young people surveyed did not know (17% of responses) or answered 'no' (60%) when asked if they could give an example of some kind of participation in practice. The most concrete examples were in the area of participation in the creation of a playground/park/skatepark.

## Adult focus group findings

### Focus group from 28.1. 2022 (experts from various professions)

Questions asked:

Are children informed of their right to participation?  
Do they understand it?  
Who informs them or should inform them?  
What is your practice?

Experts shared their experiences in the fields of jurisprudence, education, social services, international child protection and youth participation.

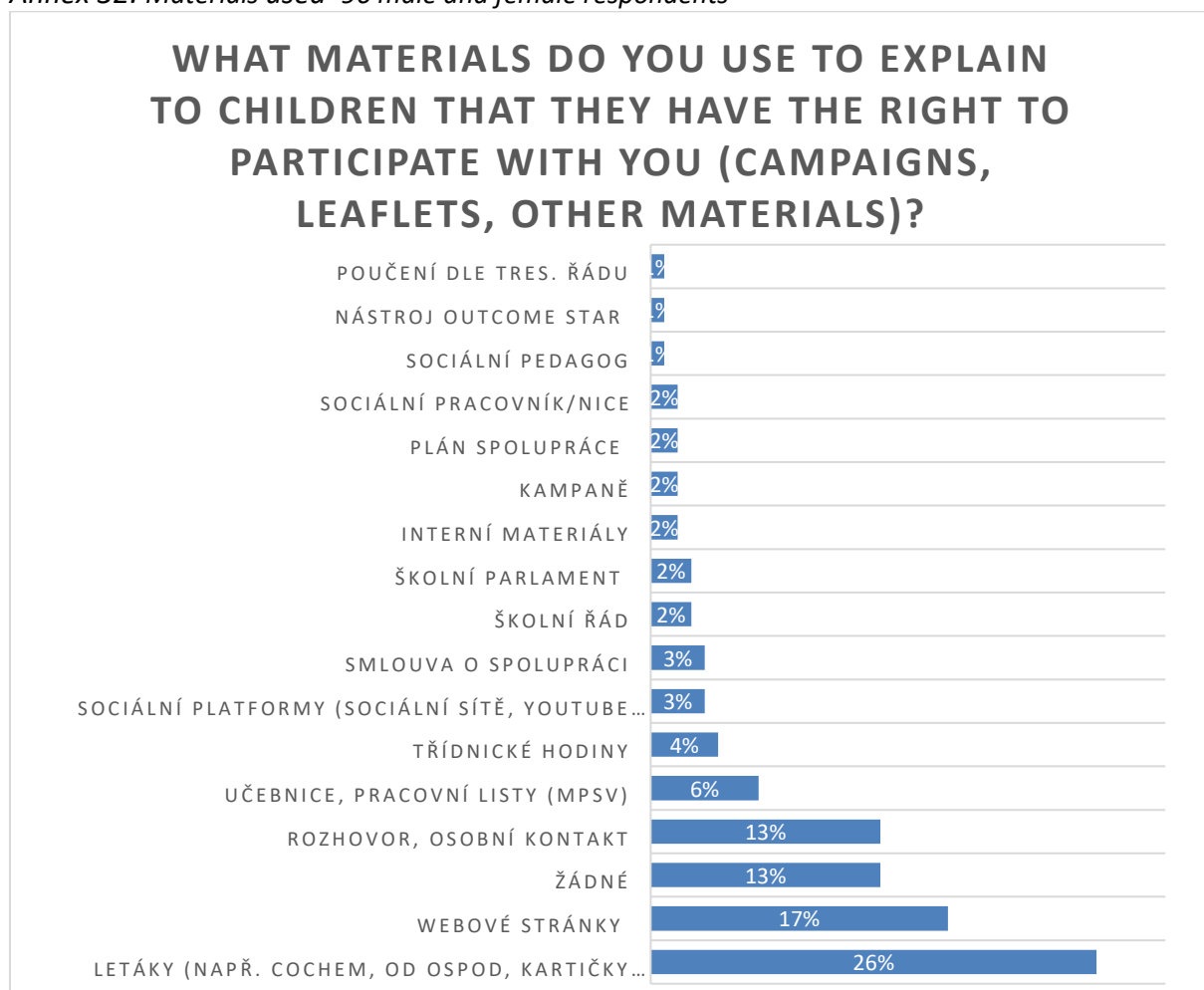
In response to the basic question of who should inform children about their right to participation, the ***following recommendations*** were collected through the Jamboard tool:

- Children should be *informed* about their right to participate *by their parents, school, caregivers in the facility, school psychologist, friends, through websites, social workers, educational TV programmes, educational videos, information letters (in an understandable form), and social networks*.
- Information on participation should be adapted *to the age of the child and to the modern ways of communication* to which children are accustomed.
- Children may not be informed by just one person or institution, but it may be a jigsaw of information that the child learns gradually.
- It is essential that *information is consistent from all the parties* from which the child receives it - for example, in the form of interdisciplinary sharing.
- Experts agreed that *participation is a child's right, not an obligation*, it should be communicated to the child in everyday life, it should be the norm, i.e., children should "experience" participation.
- Sometimes even parents, especially disadvantaged ones, are not able to participate fully - they cannot then pass on this experience to their children. It is good if the child experiences participation first in positive situations where he or she expresses himself or herself on good options, it then is ready to form and present an opinion in more challenging situations.
- A bad experience can discourage children from participating. Sometimes children are distrustful of adults, preferring the *anonymous option of communicating their wishes* (trust boxes, secret messages) - children test the reaction of adults, then get involved directly.
- The group defined that it was important for the children to actually have the *opportunity to participate* and have this experience.
- It is important to *change public attitudes*, there is still a feeling that the child does not know how to express its opinion. In court, it is only possible for the child to be invited in a situation where there is a conflict, otherwise there is no need, the parents are encouraged to reach an agreement. Sometimes the opposite extreme occurs - the child is forced into participation, manipulated.
- The *child's wish to participate can be part of a standardized court form* - a request for a report from the OSLPC.
- There is a need to *educate professionals*, to unify their approaches, to create tools on how children can be involved.
- The group agreed that the child's opinion may not always be the same as the child's best interests, and this needs to be worked with.
- *TIME is the most important thing* in participation (allowing children enough time and space), sometimes a child more informed than the court leaves the court (familiarizing the child with the judgment).
- It is important to *name and structure the participation process* sufficiently for children.

## Adults questionnaire survey findings

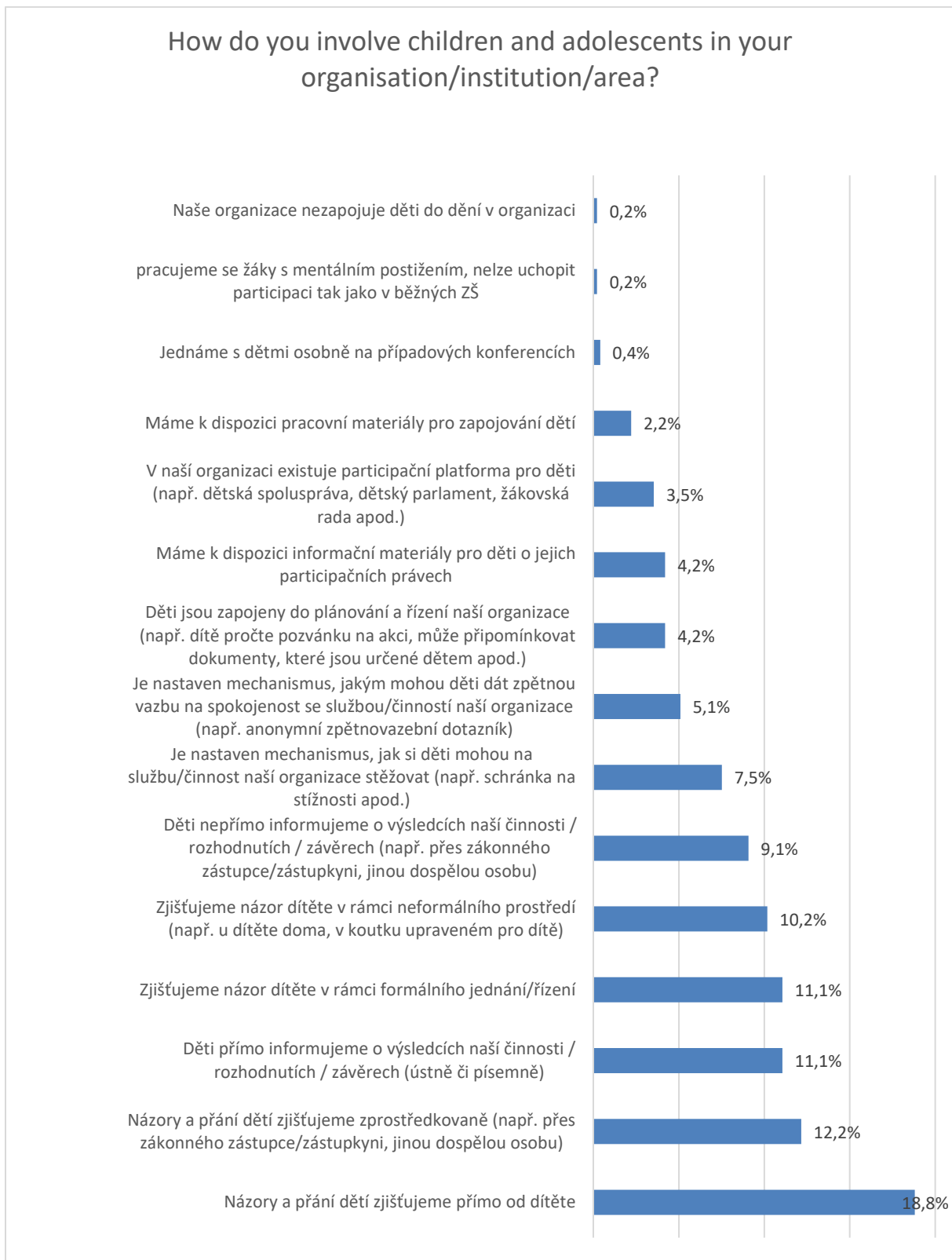
26% of the 96 respondents communicate with children about their rights through leaflets, 17% use the websites of their organisations. 13% of professionals use face-to-face interviews. The same percentage do not communicate to children that they have the right to participate.

Annex 32: Materials used- 96 male and female respondents



The majority of professionals and experts get the views and wishes of children directly from the child (18.8%). 12.2% of children's opinions are obtained indirectly (e.g., from their legal representatives). 11.1% of respondents seek the child's opinion in a formal meeting/management setting, 10.2% of respondents seek the child's opinion in an informal setting.

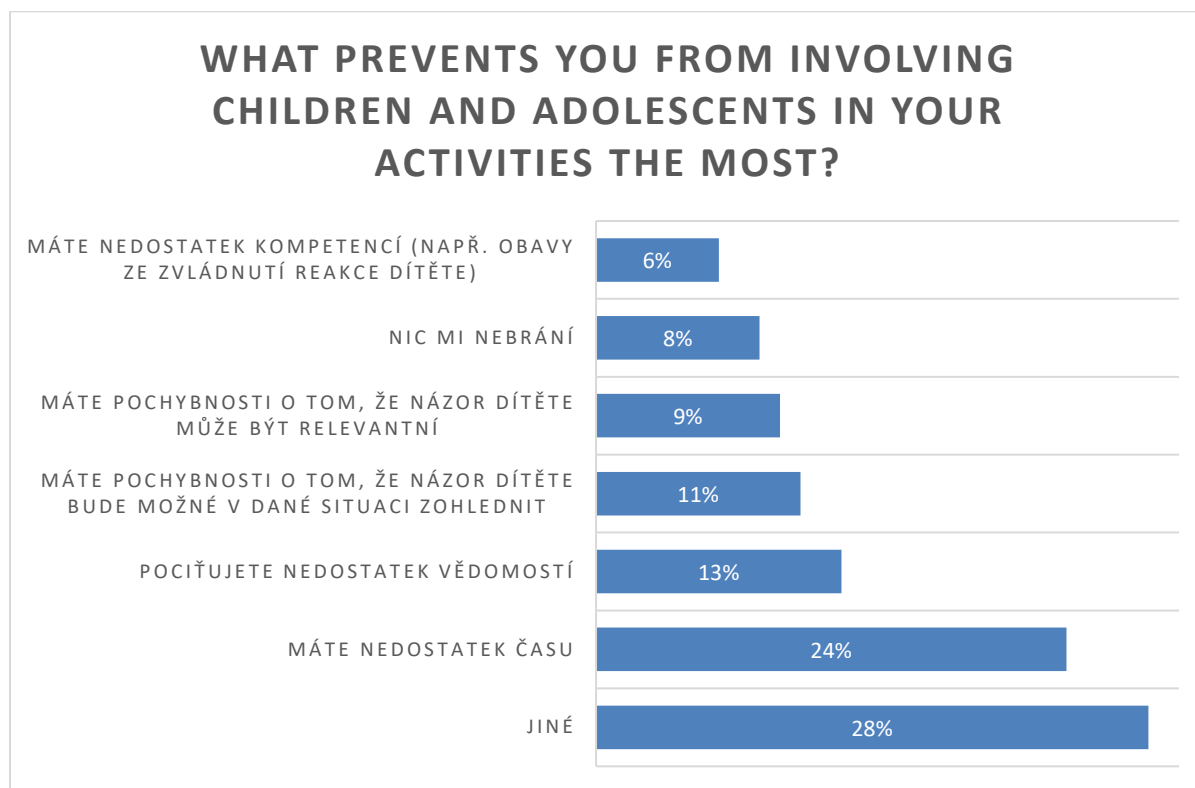
Annex 33: Ways of involving children - 96 male and female respondents



Up to a quarter of respondents felt that lack of time was the main reason for not involving children in activities (24%). Less than a tenth doubted whether a child's opinion could be relevant (9%). Along with other responses ("I doubt I will be able to use the child's opinion" and "other"), the results also indicate a certain caution or perhaps reluctance to ask for the child's opinion. And also, that there is a

certain reluctance among professionals to work with the topic and to learn about the ways and benefits of finding out the child's opinion.

Annex 34: Barriers to child involvement - 96 male and female respondents



## Summary evaluation of U7 Children are provided with information on the right to participation

### Children's focus groups, children's questionnaire survey and adult focus groups

Knowledge of the word "participation" appeared to be directly correlated with the age of the children. In the age group up to the age of 12, 87.5% of the children who responded to the questionnaire did not know what "participation" was. In the age group 12-18 years there were 56 responses (30%) that were relevant. On the basis of the questionnaire survey and focus groups, it can be concluded that children and adolescents are rather unfamiliar with the term. A related issue is that only a small number of children were able to give a concrete example of participation. In the questionnaire survey, some children under 12 were able to give a specific example of when adults had changed something according to their wishes: *"they built a new park, we played soccer instead of running in gym class, and they built a new playground in our village."*

The children in the focus groups felt it was important for adults to listen to them. But they perceived that this was not happening to a sufficient extent. It was important for the children that the adults not only talk to them, but also speak to them in a language they can understand, which is often not the case. The child should not wait for the adults to ask, because it may not occur to them to do so at all. Children from the focus groups were able to

name areas where children need to be listened to: in the family, at school, in extracurricular activities, in the school parliament and in the city council.

Adolescents from residential institutions agreed that adults listen to them if they come together and do not "solve things" by themselves, but instead unite.

While experts agree that *participation is a child's right* and as such should be communicated to the child in everyday life and be the norm, they also perceive that engaging children and adolescents takes time. Not everyone is able to regularly find that time in their workday. Adults working with children consider it crucial that they take the time not only to engage with the children themselves, but also to explain clearly and understandably what such engagement will look like, to structure the process, and to get feedback on their actions.

During the focus group with experts, it was mentioned that in some organizations that work directly with children, they have, for example, on a bulletin board, on a website or in information leaflets, how children can complain about the procedure in a given service or facility. The experts also agreed that, for example, when a child is admitted to a hospital or service, they should immediately receive information, for example on a leaflet, informing them of their rights or how they can give feedback.

The survey also revealed that the experts interviewed often talked about the right to participation in personal interviews. However, the fact that they sometimes do not have time for this has also emerged.

<p><b>Evaluation criteria</b></p>	<p>The progress of indicator fulfilment can be measured through the following criteria:          0 = No child-friendly materials on the right to participation available          1 = There are ad hoc public education/information programmes on children's right to participation and association          2 = Child-friendly information is sometimes available to children of different ages and in different forms (including Braille) e.g., through children's associations, services, policies, rights, consultations and government procedures          3 = Comprehensive and accessible information programmes on children's right to participation are established, including the introduction of a compulsory part of the curriculum for primary and secondary schools</p>
<p><b>Result in the Czech Republic</b></p>	<p><b>1-2</b>  <u>Justification</u>          Children in the Czech Republic have partial materials on their participation rights, especially in the context of social services. Some courts and the Office for the International Legal Protection of Children have information materials for children on court proceedings and parental disputes.</p>

**U8 Children are represented in public forums, within their own organisations, in schools, at local and regional government level and in national institutions**

## Children's focus group findings

### Messages to adults

**"It's hard to speak out against people we should have respect for. We would probably tell our parents so that we would have their support."**

**"Don't comfort us, but rather tell us the truth. In a calm and sensitive way."**

### Questions asked

Are children allowed to interfere with "matters" at school? (e.g., length of breaks, quality of food in the canteen)?

If you wanted to change something in the school, how do you think you could do it? (What specifically would that be - adult behaviour, after school day care, the surrounding environment?)

Do you have a school parliament or student council? (Would you like it if there was one at your school? Why yes, why not? What can he decide on? Have you ever had the opportunity to be a member? Would you accept an offer of membership? Why yes/why not? Do you know of similar bodies in your village or town that operate in a similar manner? Are you members? Do you think that a child, if they really wanted to, could participate in the council meeting? What could be the reason for it not being able to participate?)

### Focus group from 15.2. 2022 (children from socially vulnerable families)

The kids agreed that they can choose *how they want to organise an event at school* (e.g., carnival, Mardi Gras), on *what kind of trip* they want to go, they can decide *how they will divide into groups* or *how they will regroup*. Some children knew that there was a school parliament/student council. 2 children had experience with the school parliament. Children in the first stage of primary school had two elected classroom representatives who were responsible for allocating services within the classroom. The representatives or alternates are elected for a 1-month term by secret ballot. In Key Stage 2, the class representatives met with representatives from other classes to bring ideas to the school parliament. Representatives and alternates are elected for six months. One of the children described being a member of the student council and having a *notebook in which he wrote down everything the children wanted to say on behalf of the class*. However, there were also children who had no experience with the school parliament and did not know about it. *"We don't have a parliament, we only have school rules, and I would change those right away. It's all prohibitions, it certainly doesn't motivate anyone."*

The children knew that *if they wanted to change something, they could talk to the teacher or even directly to the principal*. They had the experience that *parents can be invited* to help with the solution. Some of them knew the Children and Youth Parliament, the City Council, and would turn to social services in case of need. *"The Roma people know how to speak up, they know how to defend their rights and they fight for them. We have a mouth and an opinion and we fight for it. We don't need a parliament."*

However, several of them had the experience that if they did speak out against something, it was not met with a positive response. *"If we as children could make decisions in the classroom, many teachers would be against it. They would be annoyed that children, not adults, are making the decisions."* One of the children had an experience with the so-called *school willow, an anonymous box where* children could write their complaints and wishes. The children designed and implemented a new playground with parkour elements.

### Focus group from 16.2. 2022 (general population of children)

The children perceived that it is possible to make changes in the school, but it is important to turn to those who listen and there are not many of them. Some teens have had the experience of that person being the principal. Some had *a good teacher/class* teacher who was willing to support them. If the teen is not alone in the changes, change can succeed. *"We can implement quite a lot of ideas if we don't do it alone, but instead join together and take it to the teacher or principal."* However, it was the experience of a number of them that even after *repeated conversations and writing a letter*, nothing changed significantly. *"In the cafeteria, we have repeatedly asked that students who have afternoon classes be allowed to go to the front. We have addressed this several times with the management, with the teachers, and we have emailed the principal. There has been no change."* One adolescent had the experience of a *regional children's parliament* whose ideas are taken seriously by adults. Others had the opportunity to get involved in the *city council, where* the multifunctional playground was co-decided on.

### Annex 35: School parliaments - 10 male and female respondents





A large number of children from the online focus group were active in school parliaments (see the diagram How are you doing with school parliaments?, which shows the children's responses at the meeting). The children knew that the representatives of each class had the opportunity to bring topics to the floor of the parliament that are discussed during the meeting. Many of the concrete ideas have been turned into action (e.g., portion sizes in the canteen, involving younger children in competitions, modifying the girls' toilets, collecting aluminium with a view to possible use of funds by the school parliament, school-wide collections, changing the drinks on offer at lunch). The view was expressed that not all topics that children are passionate about are actively addressed. *"In our school, the teachers who are responsible for the functioning of the school parliament choose from the topics we bring to them. It may happen that some topics which are important to us don't make it to the meeting."* Children reported that it is often a long process to address a particular issue through the school parliament. It is much easier to negotiate directly, e.g., with the deputy principal. It is easier when the school management attends the meetings of the members of the school parliament. *"If we address something in a meeting, we know the result right away. By being part of it, the principal makes the decision directly at the meeting."* One adolescent gave an example of when some children were unable to attend school parliament meetings. *"The teachers created the rules of procedure and did not discuss them with anyone. I decided, along with others, to write a different set of rules because the teacher's rules didn't allow children other than those in the parliament to participate. In the end, my order was finally passed."* But the school parliament is not the only way to make changes in the school. This can also be done through an *active school magazine*. Although the teachers themselves decide on the editorial team, it is the students who create the content of the magazine and collect student votes through surveys.

### **Focus group from 24.3. 2022 (children with disabilities)**

Children were able to reflect on things they would like to change, such as the *quality of food*. But they didn't know how to do it. They talked about it together in class with the teacher, but in the canteen the quality of the food did not change afterwards and they did not know what was happening with the information that they did not like it. One of the children had a personal experience of *changing schools*. Together with their mother and the teacher, they chose a school and went to see it.

The children had no personal experience of the school parliament and did not know how it worked. After explaining what it is primarily intended for, they said: *"We don't have one, but I'd like it."*, *"I think the parliament would make adults listen to us."* Children perceived that *teachers should ask them for their opinion*. One of the pupils did not like the fact that the children had to write tests after the distance learning. However, he did not express this dissatisfaction to anyone.

#### Questions asked

Can children and teenagers interfere with matters in your facility? (e.g., the programme, quality of food in the canteen)?

If you wanted to change something in the facility, how do you think you could do it?

What specifically would it be - the behaviour of adults, the surrounding environment?

Do you have something like co-deciding in your facility?

Would you like to have it in your facility? Why yes, why not? What can he decide on?

#### Focus group from 23.4. 2022 (young people from residential institutions)

The adolescents had different experiences of **joint management** with respect to the residential facility in which they were currently residing. Where they had a co-management in the facility, their *representatives met with the director and the management of the facility to discuss how their group was doing and what they would like to change, such as - animals they would like to take care of, - tournaments between facilities, - adding more food portions because they are not enough, - changing the unsatisfactory surface of the playground, - the behaviour of a particular educator, - the form of spending free time.* Those who did not have joint management in the facility - *went directly to the director to suggest changes, - had meetings of the whole facility, - dealt with things through the curator, - the J. J. Pestalozzi Centre guide.* One of the participants said, *"But you can't argue with adults, they are right. Joint management, even if we had it, would not work. They wouldn't want to talk to us."*

*"A child should ALWAYS be able to solve their problems with adults. They should try to accommodate it."*

An interesting debate arose during the discussion about whether it would be appropriate *to have clearer and stricter rules in residential institutions, as the current system set up may not be clearly anchoring for all children (e.g., those children who had a stricter regime at home or did not have sufficiently set boundaries at home).*

## Findings from the children's questionnaire survey

### Questionnaire survey - children under 12

#### Questions asked:

If you want to make a difference in the school you attend, do you know who to contact?

Who can help you with this (e.g., class president, teacher)?

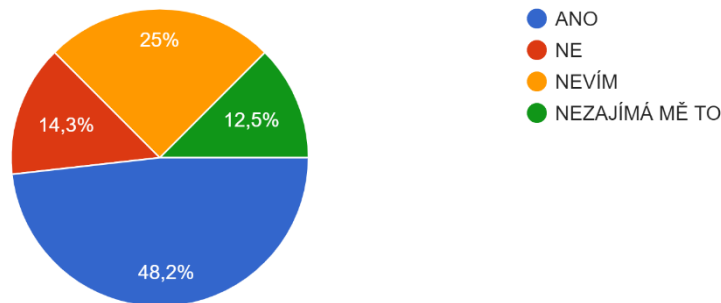
Do you have a school parliament or a school council?

If so, what do they do, for example?

*Annex 36: School Parliament - 96 male and female respondents*

MÁTE VE ŠKOLE ŠKOLNÍ PARLAMENT, NEBO ŠKOLNÍ RADU?

56 odpovědí



48% of the responses included that children have a school parliament, 14% do not. Some children did not know (25%), some did not care (12.5%). Of the children who used the open-ended response, the most common would be to contact the teacher if they wanted a change in the school (25 open-ended responses), then the principal (3 responses), the assistant (2 responses), the guidance counsellor (1 response), 2 children would contact a family member, 3 children said no one would help them, 2 did not know. In the open-ended answers, children mentioned that the school parliament deals with pupils' behaviour and problems, children's suggestions for changes in the school, and the level of quality of meals.

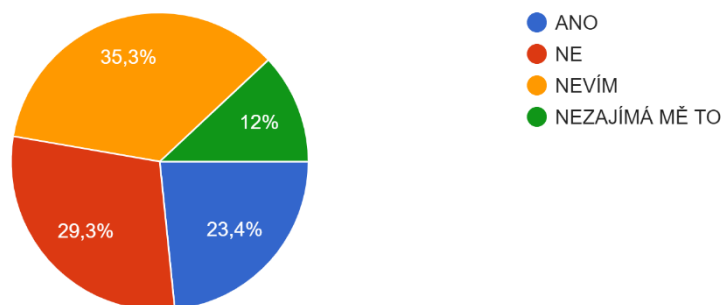
**Questionnaire survey - young people aged 12-18**

Questions asked:
Is there anything you can do to influence what happens at the school you go to? (e.g., changing things like rules, the environment - what the classroom looks like, how lessons are taught, etc.)
If YES, do you know how and who to contact at school?
Do you have a school parliament, a student council or a group that talks to teachers and the principal? What exactly do they do?

*Annex 37: Ability to influence what happens at school - 184 male and female respondents*

Můžeš nějak ovlivnit dění ve škole, kam chodíš? (např. měnit věci, jako pravidla, prostředí – jak to ve třídě vypadá, jak se tam učí apod.)

184 odpovědí



When asked if adolescents can influence what happens in their school, 29.3% of adolescents' responses indicated that they could not influence what happens at their school, 36.3% did not know, and 12% of respondents did not care. 23% of responses said "yes".

Of the adolescents who used the open-ended response, they would most often turn to the teacher if they wanted a change in school, then to the principal, assistant, educational counsellor. One respondent stated that he can turn to anyone but is never heard.

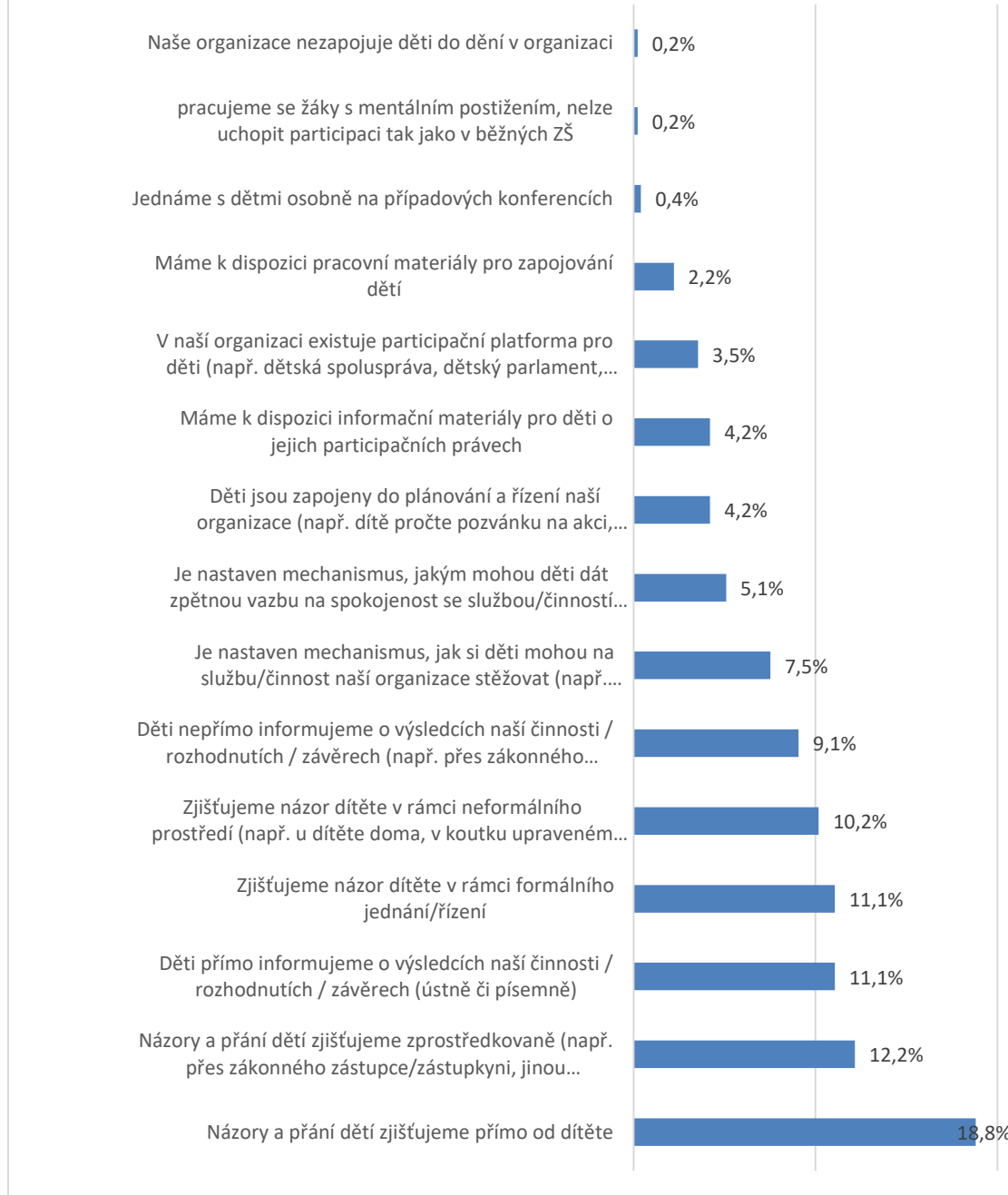
When asked about the presence of a school parliament or other group that defends the interests of pupils, 51% of the responses indicated that adolescents have a school parliament. Some children did not know (20%), some did not care (3.8%). Of the 118 answers about what the parliament is actually responsible for, the most frequent was that they prepare various school events, projects, check and survey pupils' opinions and satisfaction, and propose changes. One respondent stated: "*We don't need a group like that because everyone can discuss anything with all the teachers, if it's something more serious it's with the class teacher and possibly directly with the principal.*"

Another described the course: "*In each class, 1 or 2 students are selected to go for the whole class. The class then has time to say what they would like to change etc. On a certain day after school, all those who have been selected get together and say the things they would like to change (the selected teacher is there with them)*".

## **Adults questionnaire survey findings**

*Annex 38: Ways of involving children - 96 male and female respondents*

## How do you involve children and adolescents in your organisation/institution/area?



**Summary evaluation of U8 Children are represented in public forums, within their own organisations, in schools, at local and regional government level and in national institutions**

**Children's focus groups and questionnaire surveys:**

Some of the children in the focus groups knew that a school parliament/student council exists and some of them had personal experience of a school parliament. The children perceived that it is possible to make changes in the school, but it is important to turn to those who listen and there are not many of them. Some teens have had the experience of that person being the principal, for some a good teacher/ or classroom teacher. Although most of the children were active in school/county parliaments, they expressed the view that it was not easy to convince adults to listen to them. However, several children reported the experience that if they did speak out against something, it was not met with a positive response.

Some of the children in the focus groups and the questionnaire survey had no personal experience of the school parliament and did not know how it worked. In the questionnaire survey for children under 12, it was found that 48% of the responses included that children have a school parliament, 14% do not. Some children did not know (25%), some did not care (12.5%). A questionnaire survey of young people aged between 12 and 18 showed that in 51% of the responses, the young people had a school parliament. Some did not know (20%), some did not care (3.8%).

The adolescents in the focus group of children from residential institutions agreed that through co-management they can change small things in the institutions. However, one of the adolescents did not have joint management in her facility and felt that even if they did, the adults would not listen to them.

The questionnaire survey among adults showed that 3.5% of the institutions where the respondents were from had some form of children's parliaments or children's participation groups. In 4.2% of cases, children are involved in the organisation's activities, e.g., by reading the invitation.

<b>Evaluation criteria</b>	<p>The progress of indicator fulfilment can be measured through the following criteria:</p> <p><b>0</b> = There are no forums through which children can engage within schools, local, regional or national governments</p> <p><b>1</b> = There is a Children's Council or Parliament through which children can address the government at national level</p> <p><b>2</b> = There is a Children's Council or Parliament through which children can address the government at regional level</p> <p><b>3</b> = There are legally mandated children's councils or parliaments that can address governing bodies in schools, at local, regional and national levels</p>
<b>Result in the Czech Republic</b>	<p><b>2-3</b></p> <p><u>Justification</u></p> <p>Many schools in the Czech Republic have children's parliaments or councils for children and youth, and there is also a National Parliament for Children and Youth. However, the existence of children's participation groups is not guaranteed in any way.</p>

## U9 Locally provided services have mechanisms in place for obtaining feedback from children

### Messages to adults

*"For adults to listen to us, it is a good idea to talk to more children, think it through, and then go to an adult and say that this is our mutual agreement."*

### Children's focus group findings

#### Questions asked:

What groups (groups of children) do you go to outside your family, e.g., school, judo, music school, eating disorder club, etc.? Are you happy there?  
If you wanted a change or didn't like something there, who would you turn to?  
Has anyone ever asked you if/how happy you are there?  
Who asked you? How did they find out (interview, questionnaire...)?  
What happened afterwards? Have you received a response to your feedback?  
If not, do you still feel that someone is interested in your opinion? Who?

#### Focus group from 4. 1. 2022 (children with experience of court proceedings)

The children did not report any other leisure activities that they currently attend, apart from the children's group for children after divorce at an NGO. One girl recalled that in mathematics they were given a feedback questionnaire in school about what they were and were not good at and what could be improved within the subject. Other children reported feedback in a sportswear shop, in a supermarket. The children could not remember any other examples.

#### Focus group from 16.2. 2022 (general population of children)

Teens had experience with attending different clubs (music, language, sports, programming, scouting) and giving feedback *online and in the form of an interview*. They perceived that feedback is an important tool to bring about change. *"It's a good idea to talk to multiple kids, think it through, and then go to an adult with the understanding that it's our mutual agreement."* Many of the teenagers had the opportunity to go to the teacher, organisers or club leaders. Adolescents reported that teachers asked them what they liked about the lessons and what they would like to change. *"Online questionnaires are very popular."* But the question remains whether teachers are asking because they're genuinely interested or whether they're asking to fulfil the required feedback. *"Our point that we need less memorization in French really had weight. The professor really changed what she asked us to do."* Not everyone is comfortable with questionnaires and prefers a conversation. *"Personally, I have a problem with school questionnaires. I lack the teacher's opinion in them."*

In addition to giving feedback within the *school*, the children had personal experience of giving feedback within *Scouts*. One participant shared her frustration with the way the leader approaches the younger children and punishes them in the form of black dots. *"Scouts are about learning to survive, sticking together, making friends, and not about going into a corner and getting black dots. I didn't like the fact that although we wanted to address the issue, there was no space for us to have our say."*

Questions asked:
<p>Have you ever given feedback anywhere? To what and why?          How did you do it? (in writing, by email, in person, by questionnaire, otherwise)?          Who did you give feedback to?          What happened afterwards? Have you received a response to your feedback? In what way?          If not, do you still feel that someone is interested in your opinion? Who?</p>

**Focus group from 23.4. 2022 (young people from residential institutions)**

Teens thought about how and where they can give feedback: *- I can express it at the J.J. Pestalozzi Centre in the form of a game called Cool/Not Cool, - I can say it verbally, - I can tell someone that they look good, - I can give my opinion in the form of a questionnaire at school or at Pestalozzi, - I can tell my friends if they aren't behaving as they should, "Hey dude, you're acting like a llama."* Giving feedback is not always easy, but it is important to learn. *"It's exactly the same if you hear something about yourself. I had to learn to accept feedback. But I always need to know specifically what bothers someone about me."*

One of the adolescents had an experience with a *questionnaire at school that the school sends to all pupils once a month. "It addresses a variety of topics: how we like school, bullying, teachers, leadership or practice. But I don't fill it out."* Another teen had experience with *a discussion group at school where, using negative feedback ("We got a lot of 'hate', too"), they could address what they didn't like.*

**Findings of the children's questionnaire survey**

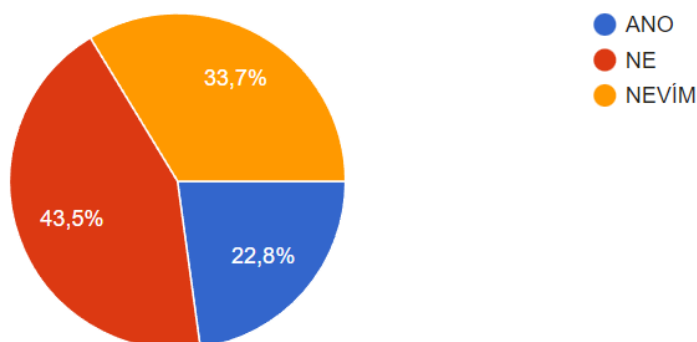
**Questionnaire survey of young people aged 12-18**

Questions asked:
<p>Do the organisations or services (e.g., sports club, leisure activity, folk art school, scouts, community centres, low-threshold facilities, etc.) you go to check how satisfied you are with them (e.g., feedback questionnaire, interview)?          If YES, who did you tell your opinion to (e.g., troop leader, violin teacher, etc.) and in what form (e.g., feedback questionnaire, interview)?          What happened afterwards? Did you receive a response to your feedback?</p>



Ověřují organizace nebo služby (např. sportovní oddíl, volnočasová aktivita, lidová škola umění, skaut, kulturní centra, nízkoprahové zařízení apod.), kam chodíš, jak jsi s nimi spokojen/a (např. zpětnovazební dotazník, rozhovor)?

184 odpovědí



Almost 23 percent of young people reported having some experience of an organisation seeking feedback from them. 43.5% had no such experience and the rest did not know.

Most often, young people mentioned the person they gave feedback to as a coach (9 cases), the leader of the club (6 cases), a teacher (5 cases), a family member or social worker (4 cases), a psychologist (1 case). The most common method of feedback was an interview, questionnaire or online survey.

*"I attend several clubs, but I have a great flute teacher and I told her through conversation that I enjoy her lessons. And I told our Czech teacher that he has a great lesson form and that I like to take part in his lessons; every time my teacher organizes some events at the club, she usually gives out a questionnaire about how we liked it, what we would change...; they don't verify anything, because the club I go functions on the basis of "if you want to go, go; if you don't want to, that's okay."*

## Adult focus group findings

### Focus group from 6.9. 2022 (male and female police officers)

#### Questions asked:

Are you getting feedback from the children?  
Where do you see room for improvement when working with children?  
What works well for you in engaging children?  
How do you make sure the children understand you?  
How can systemic child abuse be prevented within the framework of participation?  
Are there any informal meetings with other actors involved in working with children?

The police officers mentioned that at this time there is *no provision for obtaining feedback from children after an interview*. They think that it would be possible to get feedback from parents and *they also see the use of smileys as an interesting option* through which the child could very easily give feedback on the whole process.

In the discussion over the familiarisation of children with the whole process of interrogation and investigation, it proved to be *good practice to have a written familiarisation in a language that children understand*, without technical terms. It is also important to let the children say in their own words how they understand what they have just been told. However, it was also mentioned that *"sometimes it slips into formality because police officers succumb to the pressure of the number of interrogations and instead of doing three interrogations properly, they do six and do not think about the consequences for the children."* However, they usually try to do the interrogations informally. *"Sometimes we even think about moving the trial to the interrogation room so the child is not stressed. We try to treat the child gently and then it occurs that the child meets the perpetrator during the trial."* A certain improvement would be the use of a different judicial step, where the interrogation would just be in the interrogation room, for example.

Experts perceive that as police officers they try to make the impact of the child's involvement in the investigation as minimal as possible. However, their experience is that the other actors then stress the child a lot. They would therefore see it as useful to *share experiences of different actors who work with the child at risk in the field of crime*. *"Sometimes children are repeatedly interrogated and there is a risk of retraumatization."*

***They then perceive as a certain weakness the lack of knowledge of foreign practice in involving children in setting up the process of interrogating children and the practice of interrogating children.***

# Summary evaluation of U9 Locally provided services have mechanisms in place for obtaining feedback from children

## Children's focus groups, children's questionnaire surveys and adult focus groups:

Children's experiences of giving feedback were varied. Some of the children in the focus groups expressed that they had no experience of being asked for feedback. Children and young people had experience of giving feedback online and in conversation. They perceived that feedback is an important tool to bring about change. At the same time, they wondered if adults were asking because they were genuinely interested or if they were asking to fulfil the required feedback.

Almost 23% of young people in the survey reported having some experience of an organisation seeking feedback from them, but 43.5% had no such experience and the rest did not know.

Adolescents in the focus group of people in residential care reported that it is possible to give verbal or written feedback, but it is not always easy.

The focus group among adults revealed that they get feedback after they have finished talking or working with the child. However, they also mentioned that sometimes they lack the courage to ask children for feedback. In some organisations, they also have trust boxes through which children can provide feedback. A focus group with a member of staff and a member of the police force revealed that at this time **there is no provision for obtaining feedback from children after an interview.**

Experts do not regularly collect feedback on their work from children. At the same time, they view positively the possibility of using smileys, through which the child itself could very easily give feedback on the whole process. Knowledge of foreign practice in engaging children may be a potential for change.

<b>Evaluation criteria</b>	The progress of indicator fulfilment can be measured through the following criteria: <b>0</b> = Children do not have the opportunity to express themselves to local public services and these services are not obliged to offer the opportunity to offer such expressions <b>1</b> = At least two of the above services have a system in place for providing feedback from children on the services provided <b>2</b> = At least four of the above services have a system in place for providing feedback from children on the services provided <b>3</b> = All of the above services have a system in place for providing feedback from children on the services provided
<b>Result in the Czech Republic</b>	<b>1</b> <u>Justification</u> Children in the Czech Republic have experience in giving feedback especially in the area of social services, where quality standards are set, and in selected leisure activities and school settings. It is not yet standard practice to obtain feedback from children within the medical, judicial or OSPLC systems.

**U10 Children's participation in monitoring compliance with the Convention (incl. CRC Shadow Reporting) and relevant RE instruments and conventions is supported**

**Evaluation of U10 Children's participation in monitoring compliance with the Convention (incl. CRC Shadow Reporting) and relevant RE instruments and conventions is supported**

<b>Evaluation criteria</b>	<p>The progress of indicator fulfilment can be measured through the following criteria:</p> <p><b>0</b> = There are no procedures to promote children's participation in monitoring the implementation of children's rights instruments</p> <p><b>1</b> = Selected children are invited to monitor compliance with the Convention</p> <p><b>2</b> = The views of a large group of children from different backgrounds on the implementation of the Convention are available</p> <p><b>3</b> = Children's organizations are encouraged to systematically monitor the implementation of the Convention and other children's rights instruments adopted by the State<sup>4</sup></p>
<b>Result in the Czech Republic</b>	<p><b>0</b></p> <p><u>Justification</u></p> <p>In the previous periodic reports (1st and 2nd, 3rd and 4th, 5th and 6th reports) on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children were involved minimally, only partially through shadow reports by NGOs. Children will be invited to evaluate future reports. A child-friendly version of the Convention on the Rights of the Child will be prepared within the framework of the current OP Employment project.</p>

**VI. Action Plan to Ensure the Participation of Children in the Czech Republic in Key Areas of Their Lives in the Years 2023-2026**

The presented Action Plan to Ensure the Participation of Children in the Czech Republic in Key Areas of Their Lives in the Years 2023-2026 (hereinafter referred to as the AP) sets out tasks that build on the ongoing project "**CP4EUROPE - Strengthening National Child Participation Frameworks and Action in Europe**", which was implemented in the Czech Republic by the MoLSA in cooperation with the Council of Europe. This project ran from 2021-2023. The document builds on the National Strategy for the Protection of Children's Rights 2021-2029.

The aim of the AP is to set the necessary steps for the implementation of participation indicators, which are not yet sufficiently functional in the Czech Republic. The plan is therefore divided into ten activities, each of which includes a description of the current state of play, as well as the steps that determine how each indicator should be met.

## Indicators of participation and steps to achieve them

### 1. The Czech Republic has an independent, statutory institution protecting children's rights

*Despite repeated legislative efforts, the position of Children's Ombudsman has not yet been established in the Czech Republic. A proposal to establish a separate office and also to strengthen the powers of the Ombudsman or his deputy was considered. A draft law on the Children's Ombudsman as an independent institution is currently being prepared.*

Step 1.1: By 2026, the Czech Republic will have an institution dedicated to the protection of children's rights. This legislative proposal is currently being discussed at the level of individual ministries. Children will be involved in the preparation of the legislative changes and the establishment of this institution in cooperation with the Office of the Czech Republic within the framework of the OP Employment project of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

### 2. Children participate in monitoring compliance with the Convention (incl. CRC Shadow Reporting) and relevant RE instruments and conventions is supported

*In the previous periodic reports (1st and 2nd, 3rd and 4th, 5th and 6th reports) on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children were involved minimally, only partially through NGO shadow reports.*

Step 2.1: Children will participate in the evaluation of future reports and monitoring, including CRC shadow reporting. (31.12.2025)

Step 2.2: As part of the current OP Employment project, the MoLSA will prepare a child-friendly version of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. (Fulfilment until 31.12.2025)

### 3. The services provided to children and their families have mechanisms in place to obtain feedback from children

*Children in the Czech Republic have experience in giving feedback especially in the area of social services, where quality standards are set, and in selected leisure activities and school settings. It is not yet standard practice to obtain feedback from children within the medical, judicial or OSLPC systems.*

Step 3.1: Within the current OP Employment project, the topic of participation and obtaining feedback from children will be included in the standardization and unification of procedures for working with children at risk and their families. Children will be given the opportunity to participate in the review of existing procedures and their application in practice when working with children at risk within the framework of SLPC and within activities and actions falling under other ministries and in the identification of good and bad practice in the provision of services to children at risk. (Fulfilment until 31.12.2025)

#### **4. Child-friendly complaints procedures are in place in the Czech Republic**

*Children's right to complain is enabled in practice within the education system and within social services. In social services, complaints procedures are regulated directly by quality standards, in schools there are usually trust boxes, but the way in which children's complaints are handled differs.*

Step 4.1: As part of the outputs of the OP Employment project, information and methodological materials will be developed for individual professional positions, which will include, among other things, recommendations on how to deal with children's complaints. (Fulfilment until 31.12.2025)

#### **5. Training programmes for professionals working with children include information on children's right to participate in decision-making processes**

*Child participation is not yet an established topic in the curricula of all responsible professions working with children. Children's participatory rights are part of the training of social workers, but to a limited extent. In other professions, this is optional competence development.*

Step 5.1: In cooperation with other ministries and based on the outputs of the focus groups, methodological materials/presentations, written and published educational articles (10 professional articles in professional publications and 10 popular educational articles online) will be created.

Step 5.2: By 2025, the MoLSA will ensure that the topic of participation is included in the so-called competency model for OS LPC workers. (Fulfilment until 31.12.2025)

#### **6. Children are provided with information on the right to participation**

*Children in the Czech Republic have partial materials on their participation rights, especially in the context of social services. Some courts and the Office for the International Legal Protection of Children have information materials for children on court proceedings and parental disputes.*

Step 6.1: Within the framework of the OP Employment project, the MoLSA will carry out awareness-raising on the topic of participation aimed at children using appropriate tools (websites, workshops, popularization events and also through the creation of popular educational online articles). (Fulfilment until 31.12.2025)

## **7. There are mechanisms in the Czech legal system that allow children to safely exercise their right to participate in legal and administrative acts**

*According to the legislation, children are guaranteed the right to be informed and the right to have their views communicated and taken into account in the context of the social and legal protection of children, in administrative and judicial proceedings. In practice, however, the application of this law in terms of quality depends on the erudition and competence of responsible persons.*

Step 7.1: Within the framework of the OP Employment project, the MoLSA will carry out awareness-raising activities on the topic of participation aimed at professionals (judges, social workers, health professionals) using appropriate tools (media articles, methodological materials, conferences). (Fulfilment until 31.12.2025)

## **8. Children are represented in public forums within their own organisations, in schools, at local and regional government level and in national institutions**

*Many schools in the Czech Republic have children's parliaments or councils for children and youth, and there is also a National Parliament for Children and Youth. However, the existence of children's participation groups is not guaranteed in any way.*

Step 8.1: Within the framework of the OP Employment project, the MoLSA will implement child participation groups within individual regions. Children will participate in the work of the regional multidisciplinary teams, especially in identifying and assessing the need for services for children at risk and their families in individual localities. (Fulfilment until 31.12.2025)

Step 8.2: A Child Participation Group will be established within the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which will have an advisory role within the Ministry. It involves 20 children and young adults on an ongoing basis. The group will discuss with the children topics that are directly relevant to them or that may affect their lives indirectly. The Participation Group will meet according to current needs (e.g., in the framework of the preparation of new legislation or in the framework of consultations on the project outputs), at least twice a year. (Fulfilment until 31.12.2025)

## **9. The Constitution and legislation include legal protection for the exercise of the right to participation of children and young people in decision-making processes**

*In the Czech Republic, children have a legal right to express their own opinions, which are given due weight. This entitlement is provided for in: the Constitution of the Czech Republic, the Civil Code, the Act on the Social and Legal Protection of Children, the Act on Special Court Proceedings, the Education Act, the Act on Social Services and other key regulations.*

Step 9.1: The MoLSA, in cooperation with other ministries, will monitor, as part of the legislative process, whether newly adopted legislation concerning the lives of children and their families includes the topic of child participation. In the planned changes to the legislative rules of the Government of the Czech Republic, the CRIA (Children Rights Impact Assessment) process should be newly introduced. It is a tool to support the systematic assessment and communication of the impact of intended measures on the rights, needs and interests of children and young people. (Fulfilment until 31.12.2025)

## **10. The right of children and young people to participate in decision-making processes is explicitly included in the multidisciplinary national strategy**

*The National Strategy for the Protection of the Rights of the Child 2021-2029 sets out specific measures to set up and promote children's participation in the Czech Republic in one of its key objectives. The aim is to strengthen children's participation at all levels in matters affecting them and to involve them in relevant decision-making processes.*

Step 10.1: The measures are implemented through the awareness-raising and methodological activities of the MoLSA, in the framework of the CP4 Europe project and within the OP Employment system project (2023-2025). The right to participation will continue to be included in all strategic and conceptual materials related to the protection of children's rights. In the planned changes to the legislative rules of the Government of the Czech Republic, the CRIA (Children Rights Impact Assessment) process should be newly introduced. It is a tool to support the systematic assessment and communication of the impact of intended measures on the rights, needs and interests of children and young people. (Fulfilment until 31.12.2025)



## VII. Conclusions

The Czech Republic had the honour of participating in the Council of Europe project "CP4EUROPE - Strengthening National Child Participation Frameworks and Action in Europe" from 2021 to 2023. The aim of the project was to promote the anchoring and strengthening of children's participation in European countries. From the point of view of national needs, this was a unique opportunity to gain insight into the level of participation in the Czech Republic and to map the possibilities for its further development. Using the CPAT framework, which has been tested in other European countries, a guiding structure was developed to focus on key areas of participation and assess their level. At the same time, the individual ranges of indicators indicate the extent to which the implementation of the participation principles can be achieved - the CPAT is therefore also a guide for the future direction of participation.

What are the main findings of the reassessment of participation in the Czech Republic? The good news is that children's participation is fairly firmly anchored in the Czech legal order. Most of the key sectoral regulations (e.g., social work, education, jurisprudence and health) and general regulations (Civil Code) include conditions for children's participation in decision-making processes and substantive matters affecting them, as well as conditions for the child's views to be sought and taken into account. Despite this relatively good theoretical basis, the professionals involved in the participation project agreed that they often lacked sufficient information and competence to safely involve children and to be more confident about how to deal with the child's opinion and wishes. Exceptions are workers in child-oriented social services - the involvement of children is usually part of the quality standard of a social service. At the same time, a number of examples of good practice among local authorities (child welfare authorities, Office for International Child Protection), courts and schools were identified. These resources will serve as inspiration for all actors in the system. Practical functioning in the participation of children in everyday life situations, such as the possibility to file a complaint or give feedback to the service provider, appears to be very little assured and guaranteed. Children are unsure about whether and how they can communicate their views, and especially about what will happen afterwards. Adult service and process providers, on the other hand, are not aware of how children's views can be taken into account and responded to. The most common way for children to get involved is through children's school parliaments, which are usually limited to school-related matters, and sometimes rather formally.

In the Czech Republic, there are not many information resources and awareness-raising materials for children on the topic of participation, nor are there standardised tools in the school curriculum. Adult professionals also frequently expressed the need for support resources and materials to boost their confidence in communicating and working with children.

It is a positive sign that the importance of participation is perceived seriously by both adults and children and that they are unanimously interested in further strengthening and developing it. The challenge for the next period is to educate the public, professionals and, above all, the children themselves. Safe and meaningful engagement with children should become part of professional training and professional standards. Raising public awareness of children's involvement in everyday life is an integral part of this. We would like to strengthen the direct involvement of children through child participation groups at the level of each region and for social affairs also at the level of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

These steps are illustrated in the Action Plan and every effort will be made to implement them.

A big thank you to the Council of Europe team, through whom we were able to draw on their highly expert knowledge and experience on child participation, as well as to our project partners from Finland, Portugal, Slovenia and Iceland, who kindly shared examples of good practice in participation with us.

## VIII. Amendments

### Project partners:

- Amalthea, z.s., <https://www.amalthea.cz/>
- Centrum J.J. Pestalozziho, o.p.s. <https://pestalozzi.cz/>
- Centrum ARPIDA, z.ú., <https://www.arpida.cz/>
- LUMOS, s.r.o., <https://www.wearelumos.org/czechrepublic/about/>
- Naše škola Praha – základní škola, s.r.o., <https://www.naseskolapraha.cz/>
- ČOSIV- Czech Professional Society for Inclusive Education, <https://www.societyforall.cz/>
- OILPC - Office for the International Legal Protection of Children, <https://www.umpod.cz/>

### Documents and resources:

- National Strategy to Protect Children's Rights  
<https://www.mpsv.cz/documents/625317/625903/strategy.pdf/16525ab3-48d2-cae2-a057-f1ab8be379c2>
- Children's Ombudsman website  
[Ombudsman for children and teenagers \(ochrance.cz\)](http://Ombudsman%20for%20children%20and%20teenagers%20(ochrance.cz))

### Legislation:

- Act No. 89/2012 Coll., Civil Code
- Act No. 359/1999 Coll., on the Social and Legal Protection of Children
- Act 561/2004 on Pre-school, Basic, Secondary, Tertiary Professional and Other education (Education Act)
- Act No. 99/1963 Coll., Civil Procedure Code, Act No. 292/2013, on Special Court Proceedings
- Act No. 109/2002 Coll. on the Performance of Institutional Education or Protective Education in School Institutions and on Preventive and Educational Care in School Institutions and on Amendments to Other Acts
- Act No. 372/2011 Coll. on Health Services and Conditions of Their Provision

## IX. Annexes

### Programme of the first children's focus group in a primary school in Prague - Vršovice

Focus group - school 23.11. 2021 - CP4EUROPE - Strengthening National Child Participation Frameworks and Action in Europe

TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY	TOOLS
9:00-9:20	<p><b>Introduction of lecturers, name tags</b></p> <p><b>Getting to know each other</b></p> <p><b>Online raise their hands when answering YES</b></p>	<p><b>Ask children to stick on and fill in their name tags upon entry</b></p> <p>Who we are, where we come from, our role - we are in the MoLSA project</p> <p><b>GAME: THROW AND SAY</b></p> <p><b>SWITCH PLACES IF</b>            You are under 15.            You were looking forward to coming here.            You know any of the children here.            You like steak and chips.            You know what time we finish today.            You know what we'll be doing here today.</p>	<p>Name tags, marker</p> <p>It is possible to play music when the children arrive, 3 balls</p> <p>Chairs in a circle</p>
9:20-9:25	<p><b>About the project - the aim of today's meeting - what is it about?</b></p>	<p><b>Presentation of the project</b></p> <p>Name of the project, number of planned focus groups - children/adults - we are validating the Council of Europe tool, i.e., the Child Participation Assessment Toolkit (CPAT)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have 4 project areas that we need to discuss with you</li> </ul> <p><i>There will also be focus groups for adults on the same topic - if you would like to ask an adult a question, please email us</i></p> <p><i>If you want to know more, we have a recording of the introductory seminar =&gt; you can request it in writing; the teachers in the webinar were</i></p> <p>For us: <b>Our goal is not to educate, to teach them something, but to ascertain the level of participation</b></p>	<p>PPT presentation</p>
9:25-9:30	<p><b>Rules</b></p>	<p>Written on the Jamboard - and they add - you informal and formal, first names, respect, right to stop, cell phones silence, breaks, we start and finish on time - by 1</p> <p>We take away flipcharts</p> <p>Minutes are written, names are not written, everything is anonymous. Minutes will be projected directly onto the wall/canvas</p>	<p>Flip: RULES</p>
9:30-	<p><b>1st part of the</b></p>	<p>a) <b>BRAINSTORMING CAROUSEL:</b></p>	<p>4x flipcharts and</p>

10:10	<b>participation (U7)</b>	<p>in 2/4 chat rooms (according to the number of children), in each corner of the room one flipchart with one presenter - children 2/4 groups and each always about 5-10 min at one paper, a so-called "carousel" - the goal of the activity (to get more original answers independently, they will not interact) - on each paper one question of the above and we or children write down, we provoke discussion, for the next group we hide the answers of the original group</p> <p>at the same time online: 2 groups, each with 2 questions, after 7 minutes they swap jamboards</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have you ever heard the word participation? What does it mean?</li> <li>2. What can participation look like in reality? Can you think of any examples?</li> <li>3. On what occasions (where and during what - activities and settings) should children be listened to?</li> <li>4. Why do children need to be listened to? Do you think adults listen to children?</li> </ol> <p>b) <b>DISCUSSION:</b> read the answers together and discuss</p> <p>c) <b>LUMOS VIDEO</b> only the part on participation</p> <p>d) <b>SUMMARY:</b> what does this imply? Ask the children - put the flipcharts side by side; write on the flipchart what children think participation is, why it is important, what they would say to adults</p> <p>Show PPT - Council of Europe definition of participation - PPT</p>	<p>pre-written questions, paper tape or gumotex</p> <p>Online: 2 questions no. 1 and no. 2 - after 7 minutes they are switched</p> <p>2 questions no. 3 and no. 2 - after 7 minutes they are switched</p> <p>in person: Divide the group into 4 (according to the number of children)</p> <p>Video Lumos - <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cl4fGZHhLdQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cl4fGZHhLdQ</a></p> <p>PPT: participation - Council of Europe definition / write their definition into the PPT</p>
break			
10:20 11:05	<b>2nd part- right U3</b>	<p>a) <b>BRAINSTORMING:</b> what is a right? (A: write it down)</p> <p>b) <b>In person: WORK IN TWO/THREE GROUPS AD FLIPCHART</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. write down what all the rights of children they can think of</li> <li>2. how they know, how and where/from whom they found out (websites, flyers, etc.) ....</li> </ol> <p>Online: jamboard</p> <p>c) <b>Joint DISCUSSION:</b> We'll put our heads together. Where can children find out about their rights</p> <p>d) <b>PC JAMBOARD:</b> they match text to images of rights - we only selected some rights, about 11, they will have two groups at two PCs</p> <p><b>What is a right?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What comes to mind when you hear children's rights? Do you know any? Which ones?</li> </ol>	

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Where/from whom did you hear about them? What specifically? Have you ever seen a leaflet, brochure, book, website about children's rights?</li> <li>3. Has anyone talked to you about your rights, or about human rights in general?</li> <li>4. Have you ever read about them?</li> <li>5. In what ways and where, in what settings (school, family, elsewhere) have they talked to you about your rights/human rights?</li> <li>6. Where can children learn about their rights besides school?</li> </ol>	
<b>BREAK</b>			
11:15-12:00	<b>3rd part-Ombudsman</b>	<p><b>a) BRAINSTORMING:</b>  <b>Is there anyone, any particular person in the Czech Republic to whom you can turn if you feel that someone's rights are being violated?</b>  <b>Do you know what they are called?</b>  (Take notes)</p> <p><b>What could a Children's Ombudsman do specifically? Any different ideas? What could you contact him about? Try to think of some specific situations.</b>  (Take notes)</p> <p><b>b) 2 CASE STUDIES IN GROUPS - they will find out the answer in the video. Work for 5 minutes</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A child is in the orphanage, he writes emails, but before he sends them, he has to show them to the educator or the director.  Is it possible to contact the Ombudsman about this?  How should this be addressed?</li> <li>2. A girl is on a gluten-free diet, but the school told her it does not cook gluten-free and she should eat at home. Is it possible to contact the Ombudsman about this?  How should this be addressed?</li> </ol> <p><b>e) Ombudsman video - first 4 minutes - answers case studies</b></p> <p><b>f) BRAINSTORMING:</b>  Should there also be an Ombudsman who only defends the rights of children?  Can you imagine using his help? Why yes/no?</p> <p><b>g)</b> (if there is time) we can get feedback on the website</p>	<p>Case studies on paper - printed for each group</p> <p>Video:  <a href="https://youtu.be/NSIKeZ9GB14">https://youtu.be/NSIKeZ9GB14</a></p> <p>Website:  <a href="https://deti.ochrance.cz/">https://deti.ochrance.cz/</a></p>
break			
12:10-12:45	<b>IV. Complaints</b>	<p><b>a) VIDEO</b></p> <p><b>b) BRAINSTORMING:</b>  What is a complaint? What does it look like in practice to complain? (Take notes)</p> <p>c) Together -we'll have it pre-written and we make notes directly into the word document</p>	<p><a href="https://youtu.be/u46PFq_OafA">https://youtu.be/u46PFq_OafA</a></p>

		<p>Have you ever complained? Do you know how you would proceed?  How do you know that? Who helped you when you complained? What happened afterwards?  Have you received a response to your complaint? If you didn't complain, should you get a response to your complaint?  (Take notes)</p> <p>c) <b>JOINT DISCUSSION</b>, output  d) <b>GAME "Why are you late?"</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 One boss, 2 "actors" return a damaged book to the library - they go behind the door and don't know what the reason is (the rest of the group comes up with the funniest reason)</li> <li>2 the "actors" who are behind the door come and try different excuses - why the book is damaged? The boss can somehow direct them to the right answer</li> <li>3 We can switch more than once - another situation - a complaint about a T-shirt with a hole...</li> <li>4 It is necessary to guess the reason</li> </ol>	
12:35-13:00	<b>Feedback questionnaire, acknowledgment</b>	Written connection - written and oral (round) Final game - bomb - shield Farewell, thank you => handover of certificates	Written feedback

Programme of the first online adult focus group - 31. 3. 2022

**Timetable for the preparation of the 2nd online adult focus group 31. 03. 2022**

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Time allotment</b>	<b>Responsible person</b>
<b>Opening of the discussion meeting</b> - Introduction of the team, rules, programme	<b>9:00 - 9:10</b> (10 min.)	Lukáš Talpa
<b>Presentation about the project</b> - Presentation to the RE Steering Committee	<b>9:10 - 09:30</b> (20 min.)	Kristýna Jůzová Kotalová
<b>What do the children say?</b> - Short info, how many and which focus groups we have done - Presentation of children's messages - Video ( <a href="#">messages from children to social workers</a> )	<b>09:30 -09:40</b> (10 min.)	Andrea Šafařík
<b>Our needs</b> <u>Start together</u> - Jamboard on what experts need, whether adults have education, materials, etc. + presentation of the outcomes on the topic of needs from the feedback questionnaire (10 min.) - (Can be drawn from the questions "Have you had	<b>09:40 -10:35</b> (55 min.)	Kristýna Jůzová Kotalová Lukáš Talpa Andrea Šafařík

<p>the opportunity to receive adequate training, tools to practice participation? From whom?", "What prevents you from involving children and adolescents in your activities the most?", "If you would like to tell us what worries you or, on the contrary, pleases you in the field of child involvement, here is the space to do so"</p> <p><u>Division into 2 groups</u> (led by Lukáš and Kristýna)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What specifically do professionals need to be able to implement participation effectively and safely? (each group writes on the jamboards regarding the last proposals - discussion on specific proposals and how to achieve them) (35 min)</li> </ul> <p><u>Joint summary</u> (10 min.)</p>		
<b>Break</b>	<b>10:35 -10:45</b> (10 min.)	
<p><b>Feedback and complaints</b></p> <p><u>A short introduction together</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Follow up on the last meeting and any unfinished topic (5 min.)</li> </ul> <p><u>Division into 2 groups</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How and where children can complain, whether it works or not, what would help (45 minutes)</li> </ul> <p><b>Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Are the procedures used safe, easily accessible and is all information (leaflets, brochures, posters and websites) prepared in formats appropriate to the age and ability of the children and located in a way that is accessible to children?</i></li> <li>- <i>Do children have information about how they can complain and are they supported in doing so? Is it freely available?</i></li> <li>- <i>Are responses to complaints communicated directly to the children, within a reasonable timeframe and in a manner that is appropriate for the age and/or cognitive abilities and taking into account the children's medical limitations, language?</i></li> </ul> <p><u>Joint summary</u> (10 min.)</p>	<b>10:45 -11:45</b> (60 min.)	Kristýna J. Kotalová Lukáš Talpa
<b>Messages to children</b>	<b>11:45 -11:55</b> (10 min.)	
<p><b>Closing of the meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acknowledgements and what's ahead</li> </ul>	<b>11:55 -12:00</b> (5 min.)	Kristýna J. Kotalová

Photos from the conference "Listen to us, it's important for us" - Safety and Myths in Children's Participation held on 23.2.2023.













