



## Guidelines on Child participation

During the 2019 Forum on the rights of the child, the Commission committed to do more to involve and engage with children and young participants in the next edition of the event. And we kept our promise. Participants of the 2020 Forum on the rights of the child who under the age of 18 have already contributed to drafting questions, preparing the workshops and will be speaking in almost all sessions of the event. Commissioner Reynders will open the Forum and discuss with children the political priorities of the current Commission while one workshop on child friendly justice was developed and will be led by children.

This document:

- relates to the preparation to the Forum, the Forum itself and any follow-up activity
- is meant for everyone involved in the organisation of the Forum, as well as all participants.
- sets guidelines and rules for all participants of the 2020 Forum on the rights of the child, who are expected to read and comply with them before connecting online to any session of the Forum.

Since it is our first digital Forum and first event with such numerous participation of children, we want to learn and do better, therefore we are open for comments and suggestions for future events.

## The event

The 2020 Forum on the rights of the child is part of the consultation process that will lead to the European Strategy on the rights of the child (“Strategy”). Outcomes of the conversations and discussions of this year’s event, together with the results of the open public consultations and consultations with children, will contribute to the final version of the Strategy.

The 2020 Forum on the rights of the child will take place on three mornings: 29-30 September and 1 October. An additional side event session on the rights of the child and environment will take place in the afternoon of 30 September. The Forum is a digital event, with participants and most speakers connecting remotely via the platform [b2match](#). Other platforms, such as Webex, Zoom and Sli.do will be also used during the event. The plenary sessions will be webstreamed and video recorded, the workshops will be video recorded. The restricted team

of European Commission staff (DG JUSTICE and DG SCIC) will be physically present in a meeting room in Brussels, as well as the technical team and representatives of the contractor (TIPIK). The moderators, the photographer and the person recording the event visually (Visuality) will be present in the meeting room as well. Speakers were given the opportunity to either connect on-line or participate in person in the meeting from Brussels.

### **Child participation**

The participation of children to the Forum is not a tick the box exercise. It is the right that children have according to the art 12 of the United Nation Convention on the rights of the child<sup>1</sup> and art 24 of the EU Charter of the Fundamental Rights<sup>2</sup>. Children were invited to participate in the Forum by the European Commission Coordinator for the rights of the child. Several civil societies organisations (“supporting organisations”) worked this year towards making it possible. The organisations through their established child participation mechanisms, proposed young participants and speakers for this year Forum. Each of these organisations has committed to adhering to comprehensive safeguarding measures and appointed a child protection officer (“trusted adult”) that will participate in this Forum.

We started conversations with the supporting organisations working with children well before the Forum. Together we explained to children what the Forum is about, what can they expect and what is expected from them. Children decided in what form and on what topic they would like to speak about and they worked together on shaping their interventions and priorities for discussions. We organised information and preparatory sessions for children with our moderators, contractor, some speakers and the technical team. We collected the relevant consent forms. Children will also be encouraged to provide feedback after the Forum on the organisation of the event as well as ways to improve child participation for future events.

### **Guiding principles for adult participants of the 13<sup>th</sup> Forum on the rights of the child**

Children are experts on the issues that concern them and they are ready to share their ideas with us. Adults need to be ready to actively listen to them and take them on board.

At the same time, children’s safety is of utmost importance. Staff and adult participants need to remember that they are in a position of trust and they must understand and adhere to a “do no harm” principle. We all make this event happen and we are all responsible for treating each other with respect.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT&from=EN>

The participants of the Forum are expected to embrace a child rights based approach<sup>3</sup> and make sure that the best interests of the child are their prime consideration in their interventions and behaviour during the event.

Therefore, we expect adult participants of the 13<sup>th</sup> Forum on the rights of the child to:

- Read this document before the event and comply with its guidelines
- Give space for children and young people to express their views freely in various forms (written, spoken, drawn, etc)
- Respect that children participate in the Forum on a voluntary basis. They are not obliged to respond to questions or to give comments.
- Use the same tone of voice as you use when addressing an adult speaker, adjust the complexity of your language if needed.
- Recognise that speaking in front of a big online audience, when there is no chances for friendly eye contact, can be difficult for all, and maybe even more for children. Be supportive and appreciative when commenting and/or asking questions.
- Appreciate that all participants are expressing their views and opinion. Do not put any pressure on children to speak on behalf of their generation, their school, children in their country, etc.
- Refrain from privately contacting children. This year Forum takes place exclusively online. This creates new opportunities and new challenges as well. The possibility to schedule 1:1 meetings is deactivated for children. In addition, please note that **any private conversation, private chat, private messaging or video calls with a child participating in the Forum is forbidden** and can be done only through her or his trusted adult or child participation contact person. If you want to comment on the presentation done by a child or ask her/him a question, please use chat option “to everyone”. Please do not try to contact children directly in any way.
- Not take photos of or record children without prior permission.
- Think before you post. Do not take screen shots of children without prior permission and do not mention their location, last name or any other data that would make it possible to identify them in your social media messages, reports and any other documents.
- Respect that children have the right to decide if and when they want to have their microphone and camera on. Never insist on that. They may choose to use chat function “everyone” instead.

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<sup>3</sup> [General Comment No 13 of the UN Committee on the rights of the child, para 59, definition of a child rights approach https://www.refworld.org/docid/4e6da4922.html](https://www.refworld.org/docid/4e6da4922.html)

## Safety measures

Marta Kuljon is the child participation focal point for this event. In case of any doubts, questions, or concerns about a child participant wellbeing or safety, please refer to her ([marta.kuljon@ec.europa.eu](mailto:marta.kuljon@ec.europa.eu), +32 496 262214) or another member of the child participation team:

- Alice Hagger-Vaughan (Alice.Hagger-Vaughan@eurochild.org)
- Mieke Schuurman (Mieke.Schuurman@eurochild.org)
- Jens Ladekarl (Jens.Ladekarl@eurochild.org)

Children participants should always put in copy of their emails either a parent/guardian or the supporting adult from their supporting organisation.

Marta will be physically present in the meeting room all the time and follow all the sessions of the Forum. She will support children during the event and make sure that they feel comfortable and that their participation is meaningful and safe. She participated in the preparatory meetings with children.

**If you see someone behaving in an inappropriate way, you have suspicions or you are not sure if the behaviour is safe for children and/or goes against the rules indicated in this document in any way, please contact immediately the child participation focal point, Marta Kuljon or another member of the child participation team. They will treat each issue on a case by case basis and help you to take care of the situation in a sensitive manner. They will contact in the first place the person responsible for a child participating in the Forum in the supporting civil society organisation (trusted adult) that the child represents (see the list attached). Together, they will take appropriate actions.**

**Do not try to solve the issue yourself, do not engage in a direct conversation with the child.**

**The organisers reserve the right to remove from the Forum or/and to block access to the sessions for participants not following the rules described in this document, behaving in an inappropriate way or posing danger to children participating in the Forum.**

### List of supporting organisations and their child participation bodies:

- Eurochild and the Eurochild Children's Council
- European Network of Young Advisors (ENYA) Greece, Malta and Scotland
- Leeds municipality office - Leeds' children and youth council
- Joining Forces Initiative



## Code of conduct during the 13<sup>th</sup> Forum on the rights of the child

**The European Forum on the rights of the child is a space for meaningful and respectful interactions and conversations. Please remember that we all contribute to this and we are responsible for what we show or write on the screen and what we say. By committing to the rules below, we all help to make sure that everyone has a good, safe and friendly experience during the Forum:**

- Treat others as you would like to be treated. We are all equal, regardless of race, gender, age, religion, education, cultural background or anything else.
- Make sure that you listen and allow space for everyone to participate: we want to hear what all participants have to say. Everyone should feel welcome and respected.
- The working language of the Forum is English. For most of the participants, it is their second language. Try to speak slowly and clearly.
- What does the ACE or the College mean? Exactly. Avoid using abbreviations and jargon that other participants might find hard to understand.
- It is ok to repeat important information or to put it in the chat option to everyone if you think what you said might not have been clear.
- When you want to ask a question, ask the question but try to avoid long introductions.
- Sometimes it can be hard to know the right time to speak during online meetings. The organisers and conversation managers will help you understand how and when you can intervene, if you would like to.
- Private conversations of any type (1:1 meetings, chat, etc) between adults and children participants are not allowed. The possibility to schedule the 1:1 meetings is turned off for children. The option “to everyone” in the chat box should be used as a default one for communication between an adult and a child, unless the chat takes place between the child and the trusted adult or a member of the child participation team. The child participation team, technical hosts and trusted adults from supporting organisations will be available to pass on messages if needed.
- Do not take photos, screenshots of or record others without prior permission.
- Think before you post messages on social media. Once posted, it stays there forever.
- Please mute your microphone when you are not speaking.
- There is no obligation for you or any other participant to have your camera on.
- Enjoy the Forum, be active, and make the most of it.

