

# EU Children's Participation Platform ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

22-23 October 2023, Brussels, Belgium



On 23 October 2023, the EU Children's Participation Platform organised the first in-person meeting of the Advisory Board with children, in Brussels. The Advisory Board is in charge of giving advice on how to run the EU Children's Participation Platform.

The children and adults who participate in this Advisory Board meeting (in alphabetical order):

CHILDREN	ADULTS
Carlotta – Italy	Anne-Laure - Council of Europe, Children's Rights Division
Eva – Spain	Astrid - European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)
Gabrielius – Lithuania	Cath - professor, child participation expert
Guilherme – Portugal	Chiara - Children's Rights Action Group (CRAG)
Helena – Croatia	Emilio - Secretary General of the Intergroup on Children's Rights. European Parliament
James – Ireland	Hanna - UNICEF, Representation to the EU
Jan – Croatia (he could not be present at this meeting)	Ingrid - European Commission, DG JUST
Naya –Netherlands	Irene - European Parliament, Office of the European Parliament Coordinator on Children's Rights
Toby – Ireland	Jane - European Commission, DG JUST
Veronika – Czechia	Laure - SOS Children's Villages
	Lidia - SOS Children's Villages
	Lilla - ICF SA
	Marie-Cécile - European Commission, DG JUST
	Marta - European Commission, DG JUST
	Noemi - Save the Children



## WHAT WAS THE PLAN FOR THE MEETING?

1 <sup>st</sup> day	2 <sup>nd</sup> day
14:00-14:45 Welcome & Teambuilding	9:00-9:30 Welcome & Introductions
15:00-15:45 Getting to know the Advisory Board, expectations for the meeting and selecting the child co-chair	9:30-10:15 How to work well together
16:15-17:30 Preparing for the Advisory Board meeting Day 2 with two parallel workshops: 1. Workshop on the Platform website 2. Co-chairs' preparatory meeting	10:30-11:00 Work Programme: presentation
	11:00-11:30 Work Programme: discussion
	11:45-12:30 Connect & Grow: Building impact together
	12:30-12:45 What comes next?

## WHAT HAPPENED IN THE SESSIONS?

### DAY 1 for child members only - getting to know each other and preparation for the meeting.

#### Welcome!

Prof. Cath Larkins welcomed and invited everyone to get to know each other better and agree on how they wanted the meeting to go.

#### What is the Advisory Board, what will we do, and who will be the new co-chair of the Advisory Board

The Advisory Board discussed the '**Rules of Procedures**', in short '**RoP**', a document that sums up what the Advisory Board is, how it should work and what its most important principles are.

**To improve the RoP, and find the best ways to collaborate, the children proposed some additional principles:**

1. Everyone should be included in the discussion, the language used should be simple, and accessible to all
2. The meetings should not be too formal
3. Adults and children should have equal opportunities to speak
4. Everyone should listen to and respect all opinions and people, people should not interrupt others, and everyone should be free to ask any questions

Participants agreed to have a **note-taker** who takes notes of what is said, a child **co-chair** and a **timekeeper** who helps keep track of time. Naya was chosen as co-chair by a draw to run this meeting together with Marie-Cécile Rouillon, Eva was a timekeeper and Lilla from the Secretariat took notes.

**After a short break, to continue the first day...**



## Two workshops were held at the same time:

### 1. Platform website: share your thoughts

Participants looked at different websites and voted on their likes and dislikes – which were then discussed. This input is to help the web team understand what works best for younger people. This session was facilitated by Jane, who is developing the website, and Laure.

**Key feedback:** If a website is not nice to look at, and subjects can't be quickly identified, children will not engage – even if the subjects are of interest. Child-friendly does not mean childish – in words or images. Using social media (like Instagram), and national languages are important to reach more teenagers.

**Children participating in the workshop will receive a short summary about the findings of this session.**

### 2. Co-chairs meeting

Marie-Cécile and Naya met with Cath to prepare the meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day.



### Dinner and free time in the evening

After dinner at the hotel's restaurant, some participants went to visit Brussels, while others watched a movie together.





## DAY 2 – the Advisory Board meeting with both children and adult members

### Welcome and introductions

Marie-Cécile and Naya welcomed participants and opened the AB meeting. They introduced their roles and the activities planned for the meeting. Other participants introduced themselves.

### How to work well together

Naya and Marie-Cécile presented what the Platform and the Advisory Board are. They introduced the Rules of Procedure (RoP) and the new principles added by the group the day before.

After this, AB members discussed different aspects of the RoP like:

- How to behave with each other
- How to express oneself, and be heard
- How long should children be members
- How to make sure people are informed and can actively participate in meetings
- What activities do members of the AB want to be involved in

### What AB members decided for the Rules of Procedures:

- There will be two meetings per year
- The AB prefers in-person meetings, but meetings can be also online
- Children will stop being members when they turn 18, or once they have participated in three or four AB meetings (to be confirmed before the next AB meeting, because based on the current contract, the Platform will work till 2026, five or six more AB meetings are foreseen in total).
- Participation in the AB is voluntary. Members are free to stop at anytime by informing the Secretariat.

After the Advisory Board meeting, the Secretariat updates the RoP based on the feedback received from the AB.

The updated RoP is sent to the Advisory Board.

And... we celebrated the 1<sup>st</sup> birthday of the Platform!



### 3. How does the Advisory Board work?

The Advisory Board follows these principles:



**Inclusive:** Everyone's opinion is important. Everyone will have a chance to speak out. We support any child or adult who needs special assistance. We include everyone in the discussions. We listen to all opinions. We respect opinions and people. We help each other. We don't interrupt others.



**Meaningful, Safe and Participatory:** Child Protection Officers will make sure that children will have a safe space in which they can speak freely. The AB will listen to what they have to say and take it seriously. All ideas are good.



**Creating Agreement:** To make a decision, everyone in the AB needs to agree. If there is a disagreement, the child and adult co-chairs will agree on and propose next steps. The representatives of the Commission have the final word on any decisions, tasks, and activities. Decisions may be taken after a meeting, by email or online voting if more time is needed to think about a topic.



**Accountable:** Before deciding, objectives, any next steps, context and activities will be presented clearly. Everyone will get feedback about what has happened.



**Responsive:** If important issues come up in between AB meetings, AB members will be told by e-mail. They will have the opportunity to share their opinion, feedback and advice in writing.



**Transparent:** All AB members will receive all information and documents. After the meeting, everyone will be able to read the meeting minutes.



**Effective and efficient:** Each meeting and AB interaction will have clear objectives, agenda and next steps.



**Balanced:** We will dedicate the same time and attention to adults and children. The meetings will be less official, more informal and free.



**Informed:** Collaborations and conversations will involve both child and adult members of the AB. Everybody will use a child-friendly and accessible language. We will provide information about context, objectives and background of any topics. Everybody is free to ask questions, can use different communication channels and has the right to privacy.



## Presentation of the Work Programme and discussion

Marta and Lilla introduced the document that explains what the Platform will do over the next two years, called the '**Work Programme**' or '**Work Plan**'. They presented the work done by the children during the General Assembly and the Secretariat to develop the Programme. They talked about the topics that the Platform wants to address until October 2024, and those that will be discussed after October 2024. The final version of the Work Plan will be put [online](#).

### The Work Plan describes four main topics:

1. **Topic 1:** Feeling safe
2. **Topic 2:** Democracy and voting
3. **Topic 3:** EU Children's Participation Platform website
4. **Topic 4:** What worked, what didn't and what we want to do next?

### The activities the Platform will propose until October 2024:

- Meetings online and offline
- Consultations with children
- Preparing documents in a simpler and accessible language

### What AB members discussed:

After the presentation, the Advisory Board members asked questions to Marie-Cécile, Ingrid and Marta to better understand the Programme. They explained what activities the Platform Secretariat can organise. They also explained that the Platform will focus on some important topics this year, and on the other topics in the years to come.

### Then the Advisory Board members made suggestions on how to improve the Work Programme's different aspects:

#### 1. Changes in the way information is presented:

- Give more details on the activities, with who and how they will be done, and how you make sure that many children can participate
- Make the child-friendly language easy to understand, but not too simple

#### 2. Changes to the first topic on Democracy and Participation

- Show what the impact is when children can participate in democratic processes
- Organise activities where children can actively combat disinformation and meet with government representatives to discuss
- Organise debates on topics that many children are interested to discuss, like the age when we should be able to vote
- Give the chance to as many children as possible to participate in these activities, so that many children can learn how to make a choice, how to vote and participate in democratic processes at an early age

#### 3. Changes to the way the Platform does the consultations

- The questions in the surveys should be shorter and in a language children can easily understand
- The documents should give definitions of words that are not clear or easy to understand
- Meeting with experts to understand better what the consultation is about
- Organise games and role plays to engage more children




#### 4. Changes to the topics

- Mental health and climate change are priorities that should be addressed in 2024
- Have more interactive games and space to learn about the topics on the website
- For Topic 1, it would be good to use the online meeting to present the results of the consultation to the children and the representatives of the European countries, and for children themselves to present the recommendations that were made by other children
- For Topic 3, children should have a space on the website to give feedback on the Platform's activities and the website
- For Topic 4, the sub-topics of the workshops should be more flexible

### Connect and grow – the actions we should take to strengthen the Platform

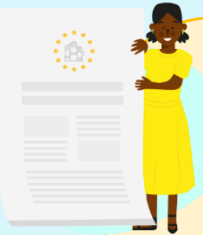
#### How can we grow the CPP and connect to more people?

##### The Advisory Board said that we could:

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- Ask the member organisations and representatives of the European Institutions to promote the Platform in their countries
  - Find ways to involve schools
  - Focus on countries from where we don't have any members yet
  - Invite more children from various countries for events of the Platform like the General Assembly
  - Provide more information on what the Platform is and what it does
  - Have the Platform's documents in other languages to reach out to people who do not speak English
  - Get 'Ambassadors' or influencers to promote the Platform on social media or other platforms
  - Look at the problems that children in vulnerable situations may face to participate in the activities of the Platform
  - Social media presence and communication in national languages could help reach more children and teenagers (from the website workshop on day 1)

### FINAL CONCLUSIONS

#### The Advisory Board agreed that:



**On the Work Programme:** The Work Programme will be flexible enough to include changes suggested by the children. As climate change and mental health topics are a priority, they will be included in Topic 2 on Democracy and Participation.

**On the Consultations:** The way consultations are done should be adapted, so that children can connect with the experts and get more information before, during and after the consultations.

**On the Advisory Board and Children's Panel:** The AB and the Children's Panel should discuss topics that are related to actual policies/initiatives. A session of the AB meeting should be dedicated to the problems and the issues the AB wants to discuss.

**On the website:** Children should have a space on the website to express the changes they want to see regarding the Platform's activities and website.



### Next steps:

- The Work Programme and the Rules of Procedures documents will be adapted based upon the discussions with the AB.
- AB members will receive those documents and can then vote on them.
- The AB will make stronger links with the Children's Panel.



### SAFEGUARDING

The CPO reported that there were no safeguarding incidents.

