



# EU CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION PLATFORM

## FIRST CONSULTATION

# FEELING SAFE



**Summary of what children said**

## What is this about?

This is a summary of the Platform's first consultation with children. It tells you what children said and how the EU Commission will be using children's ideas.

## What is the first consultation?

We asked children across Europe about what helps to keep them safe. We wanted to look at this topic because the European Union is trying to improve the protection of children.

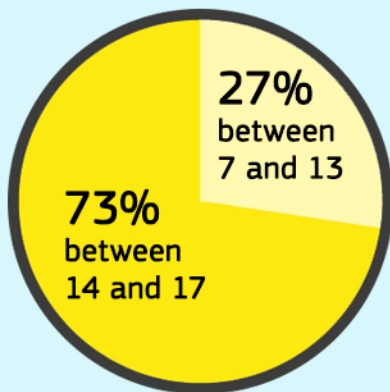
The ideas that children have shared will help the European Union write a document called 'Recommendation on integrated child protection systems'. This Recommendation will advise how to work together to help keep children safe. The advice is for people in organisations like schools, hospitals, the police and everyone working in communities.



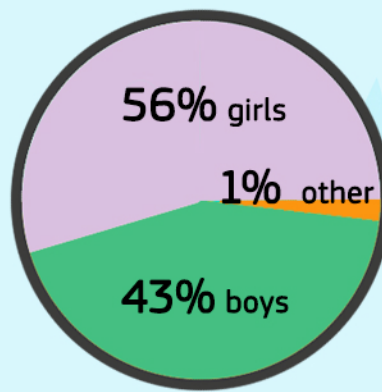
## Who participated?

Between May and October 2023 **1,095** children from **21** countries of the European Union took part in the consultations.

Children were aged:



Children were:



Children were from:



**896** children answered an **online survey**.



**37** children took part in **interviews**.



**162** children joined one of the **23 focus groups**.



## What did the children say?

All children said they want to grow up safely and without fear.

### Children talked about how to feel safer in different places:



**School** is important because children spend a lot of time there. Improving hygiene and stopping bullying would help them feel safer.



**Homes** need to be stable and secure. Having enough money to live on can help families feel safe. When the home is not a safe place, children need a safe space to go to.



**After school** and extracurricular activities and clubs can help children socialise in a safe space with adults supporting their needs. Children need more spaces where they can meet together and feel safe.



In **public spaces** like parks, streets and bus stops, children sometimes feel unsafe, especially girls. Playgrounds and parks could be safer, if buses run throughout the night, and there is more street lighting.



More **online** safety is important, especially for young children.

This means:

- Being more protected.
- Having more information about how to be safe.
- Training for children and for adults.

### Children talked about how adults can help them feel safe:

#### Who to talk to first?



**63%** of children prefer to talk to someone **in person** rather than going online.



**74%** of children would go first to **family or relatives**, **68%** would go to **friends**.

## Who can help keep children safe?

*'Adults who are friendly, positive, who have the patience to listen to children's opinions and views, understand their feelings make the place and activity they are in safer and more accepted'. (Child from Romania)*

*'I think teachers should listen us more carefully because even though they think we are very young, we have our opinion and they should not ignore it'. (Child from Bulgaria)*



- Dedicated and understanding teachers.
- Additional school staff (like counsellors, social workers, deputies and principals).
- A caregiver that has time to look after both their physical and emotional needs.
- Good foster parents (when parents cannot keep children safe).
- Health professionals who speak with children in a friendly way. This means talking to children with respect, explaining any treatments to them and giving them the option to have an adult present with them.
- The police, if they are familiar and known to children.

## What children want adults to do to keep them safe?

*'It is important for every child that he/she knows that there are people they can contact, who will explain to them what the whole process looks like, that they feel safe while doing so, because children are afraid of what will happen to them if they report.' (Focus group in Croatia)*

### Children want adults to:

#### Listen

- Respect children, listen to them and take them seriously.
- Try harder to understand children's needs.
- Make them feel safe in schools, public spaces and healthcare facilities (such as hospitals, medical centres, etc).
- Include children in developing solutions to their problems. Children want to be involved in decisions at home, at school, in their communities and government.

#### Give children information

- Inform children about potential risks and dangers.
- Provide them with information and guidance about whom to ask for help and support and how to report unsafe situations.
- Give children clear information on what happens after they look for help.



### **Provide help**

- Set clear rules, boundaries and measures that can prevent harm from happening.
- Act quickly when they realise children are not safe.
- Help children before the problem becomes worse. Children want access to specialised support, and to have one person to go to for support.
- Continue providing children with material and emotional help throughout the problem.



### **Work together well**

- Share information about the problems of children and communicate with each other to help create a protective environment.
- Be trained to understand how to address children's problems all together.

*'The children said that, as presidents of Lithuania, they would communicate more widely through public spaces about ensuring children's safety, look for more volunteers to help children feel safe, hire more people so that children who do not feel safe now would be better provided for.'*  
(Focus group in Lithuania)



### **Protect children's mental health**

- Provide an open and safe environment to discuss mental health issues.
- Create more awareness raising, guidance and information to deal with mental health issues.
- Improve hygiene, stop bullying in schools and stop cyberbullying.

*'I would put awareness on mental health, stress, and teach about it in school. Help people come up with solutions, make events. Bring awareness to after school activities, like out of school life. Bring some physical activities in school.'*  
(Child from Denmark)



### **Keep children safe everywhere, including online**

- Provide more guidance and training on how to be safe online. Both children and adults need training on how to stay safe online.
- Protect them online by introducing more effective and efficient rules.
- Involve teachers, parents and other adults in explaining social media safety rules to children.