

# EU CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION PLATFORM



## ADVISORY BOARD MEETING REPORT

7-9 APRIL 2024, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

# Introduction

On 8 April 2024, the EU Children's Participation Platform held its fourth Advisory Board meeting in Brussels to discuss how to run the Platform. The next day, on 9 April, child members of the Advisory Board met with Vice-President of the Commission Dubravka Šuica, who works on protecting the rights of children across Europe.

## CHILD BOARD MEMBERS

**Carlotta** – Italy

**Eva** – Spain

**Gabrielius** – Lithuania

**Guilherme** – Portugal

**Jan** – Croatia

**Javier** – Spain

**Karolina** – Ireland

**Naya** – The Netherlands

**Toby** – Ireland



## ADULT BOARD MEMBERS

**Anne-Laure** – Council of Europe

**Chiara** – Child Rights Advocacy Group (CRAG),  
Alliance for Childhood

**Hugh** – UNICEF

**Irene** – European Parliament

**Katerina** – Save the Children

**Lidia** – SoS Children's Villages

**Marie-Cécile** – European Commission

**Noemi** – Save the Children

**Sabine** - Child Rights Advocacy Group (CRAG),  
Eurochild

**Suzanne** - European Network of  
Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC)

## FACILITATION AND SUPPORT

**Cath** – Child participation expert

**Irina** – ICF SA

**Jane** – European Commission

**Leander** – LDV Production

**Lilla** – ICF SA

**Marta** – European Commission

**Roxana** – Save the Children (Child Protection Officer)

## DAY 1

### Children prepared for the Advisory Board meeting and the meeting with Vice-President of the European Commission Dubravka Šuica



The day started with fun icebreaker team-building games for the children to get to know each other better. After that, Jan was selected (names drawn from a hat) as co-chair, to moderate the Advisory Board meeting with Marie-Cécile, the adult co-chair, and Eva was chosen as the timekeeper.

Then, a professional videographer came in to talk with the group on how to make good quality videos with a mobile phone. Based on these guidelines, children volunteered to help record the activities of the meeting with photos and videos.

#### WEBSITE WORKSHOP

The website is co-created with Platform child members, to make sure it responds to their needs in terms of content, ease of use, and attractiveness. Children tested the website's new structure using their mobile phones and gave valuable feedback:

It's difficult for children who aren't members to understand how to join or participate:

Make this information clearer and more understandable for children

Make it easier for children to find organisations in their own countries

Discussed the possibility of having a ChatBot

In the true spirit of co-creation, children applied the knowledge gained from the session with the videographer and took photographs of each other, posing in different action shots. These images may be used for the new visual identity of the Platform.

#### PREPARING TO MEET VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION DUBRAVKA ŠUICA

On Sunday and Monday afternoon, children got ready for their meeting with Vice-President, Dubravka Šuica. They identified their key issues, discussed how to share powerful messages, and how best to get their points across to adults. They wrote and practiced their speeches and prepared some questions they wanted to ask the Vice-President.

At the end of the day, children took part in an improvisational theatre workshop, to help build their confidence ahead of the big meetings.

## DAY 2

### The Advisory Board meeting



Everyone liked the new visual identity proposal!

After the co-chairs opened the meeting, the board discussions started! The Board took the following actions:

#### **SAFEGUARDING**

- ★ Approved the Safeguarding Framework and 2023 Report.

#### **COMMUNICATION**

- ★ Gave feedback to improve the Platform's newsletter layout and subjects covered.
- ★ Agreed on a new webpage about the Board, more focused on what children would be interested to hear about.
- ★ Decided to create a new webpage to show what the EU does for children.

#### **1ST WORK PLAN 2023-2024**

- ★ Looked at the results of the consultations on what children need to feel safe
- ★ Suggested making online surveys simpler, shorter, more friendly to children, and reaching out to more schools.
- ★ Suggested using focus groups and interviews more, as children prefer this form of in-person consultation.

#### **2ND WORK PLAN 2025-2026**

- ★ Gave ideas, including focusing on topics such as poverty, the right to education, mental health, climate change and issues that children from minority backgrounds face.

The topics raised during an Open Space session:

#### **PRACTICAL ISSUES OF THE PLATFORM - SEE MORE ABOUT IT IN THE RULES OF PROCEDURE AND THE PREVIOUS MEETING REPORT OF THE ADVISORY BOARD**

- ★ Risk assessment is important and should be shared/discussed with children.
- ★ Schools and social media should be used for communication about the Platform.
- ★ Meetings should be held in different countries to boost member engagement.

#### **INCLUSIVE AND DIVERSE PLATFORM**

- ★ To ensure that everyone feels part of the group.
- ★ More focus on national languages, remote areas, and supporting children's participation groups nationally.
- ★ Visuals should also be used to make the platform accessible in different ways.

#### **HOW TO KEEP CHILDREN SAFE**

- ★ Important to talk about bullying outside schools
- ★ Provide teachers with training resources, victims with support and everyone with safe spaces to talk

- ★ Proposal to develop a group of children (task force) that support child victims of bullying.
- ★ Suggestion for the Platform to provide teachers with resources and to be used to share experiences of bullying.
- ★ The Platform could raise awareness about conflicts/violence and children affected by them.

#### **IMPORTANT TO FIGHT INEQUALITIES**

- ★ Disabilities, social status, racism, poverty, global conflicts all contribute to social issues.
- ★ Concerns include getting the right education for all children, sexism, biases, job opportunities for work experience, pink tax, AI and deepfake.
- ★ Support is needed for families with disabled children and refugees in the EU.
- ★ While the Platform's influence is limited in this field, it could share stories of children that live(d) in conflict and engage children in discussions and consultations about conflict.

## DAY 3

### Meeting between children and the Vice-President of the European Commission Dubravka Šuica, co-chaired by children



Child members of the Board met Vice-President Dubravka Šuica in the Berlaymont building of the European Commission. After a short welcome and introductions, children asked Vice-President Dubravka Šuica about her job and if her education helped her to engage in child rights and to work closely with EU citizens.

Responding, **Vice-President Šuica** shared that her education and professional experience helped her in the job that she has today. She recalled when she was a mayor of Dubrovnik, she set up a children's council. All her experiences prove that democracy matters and that it should be taught to children at a very young age. Vice-President Šuica explained that in her current role, she is responsible for steering the Commission's work on the rights of the child. In practical terms it means e.g., coordinating work on the EU Strategy on the rights of the child and working together with other Commissioners on children's rights. She also took care of events and discussions called the conference on the Future of Europe. Vice-President Šuica said she was very happy to see how the EU Children's Participation Platform has developed and to have the meeting with its representatives.

[Short version of the strategy](#)

The children then presented their different issues of concern.

#### **DISABILITIES**

**Karolina** talked about needing for more qualified learning support teachers for children. She would like the EU to assess how many children are not getting real help, and then support those children and the member states with funding.

#### **EDUCATION**

**Toby** pointed out that for many young people written state exams can cause anxiety and mental health issues. There should be more practical assessments as not everyone can give their full potential in memory exams. Also, some children learn best by utilising their sense of touch or movement instead of sitting in a classroom. All EU teachers should be educated on disabilities such as autism so that the classrooms are more accessible for all.

#### **PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE**

**Eva** advocated for preventing people from hurting children for any reason, both mentally and physically. She is concerned that many children are afraid to say that they have been bullied, and that it is not easy to find information about how to manage bullying or help children who have been bullied.

#### **EQUALITY AND RESPECT**

**Javier** underlined that equality and respect must exist between all kinds of people. In particular, because children suffer not only inequalities like discrimination, bullying, homophobia, racism etc. but also from adult centrism.

**Every child deserves a right to an inclusive educational environment... Remember, education is not one-size-fits-all.**  
Toby

Responding, Vice-President **Dubravka Šuica** said that one of the tasks and responsibilities of the European Commission is to make sure that rights of the child are respected. All rights and for all children, including children with disabilities and struggling with mental health. She said that education should be a right for each student. It is important to make schools more friendly and the Commission is working on guidelines on how to make it happen. She agreed that bullying is a big problem and that the Commission has plans for helping children in tough situations online and offline and works on making the internet safer for children.

### Better internet for kids

### Digital rights and principles

The Commission wants to work more with EU countries to better protect children from violence, including bullying. (See more on the [consultations of the Platform on feeling safe](#) and a document called the [EU Recommendation on integrated child protection systems](#).) Vice-President Dubravka Šuica highlighted that the Commission created the European Child Guarantee to help children that live in poor conditions across Europe. The Commission have ensured that child refugees from Ukraine have the same rights as children in the EU.

Continue to teach children and teenagers eco-friendly habits that they can have in their daily life because the future is in our hands.  
Guilherme

### HEALTHCARE

**Naya** pointed out that there are a lot of differences around Europe when it comes to mental health care. She would like the same kind of system everywhere to provide children with access to mental health care, including enough psychologists and funding. She advocated for providing free healthcare – especially to children with disabilities, migrants, and children at risk of poverty.

### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Guilherme** appreciated that the EU is taking important steps to deal with the climate crisis, but in his view, more needs to be done. He wants countries to be encouraged to increase their investments in sustainable solutions such as renewable energies and electric transport and put a limit on CO2 emissions from factories.

### DEMOCRATIC POLICIES

**Gabrielius** recalled that at the [first General Assembly of the Platform](#), he and many other children had the chance to voice their concerns and ideas. Since then, he is advocating for the idea of 'vote 16', to enable younger people to voice their opinions in elections. He thinks children need more opportunities to participate in democratic processes, like the Platform, that can shape the future and have a positive impact for children in the EU.

### POVERTY

**Jan** is greatly concerned that the number of child refugees is growing each day, and this is connected to child poverty. He wants politicians in the EU to come back to the principles of the European Child Guarantee and make sure that child poverty is much lower. He believes that no matter a child's background, race or ethnicity, all children should live in humane conditions and not on the poverty line.




Vice-President **Dubravka Šuica** explained that the European Child Guarantee helps children by making sure everyone is treated fairly and that nobody is left behind. Even though health and education are mainly up to each country, the Commission works with them. Mental health is a big concern, especially for young people feeling lonely or stressed, so the European Commission is working on ways to help them.

At the beginning of the European Commission's term, they had two big goals: going digital and being eco-friendly. Sticking to this plan, the European Commission is pushing countries to follow the rules to reduce CO2 and is promoting the Climate Pact. Vice-President Dubravka Šuica recalled that children like Greta Thunberg started movements like Fridays for Future to fight climate change. She encouraged children to speak up, get involved in local councils and groups, and help promote the Climate Pact.

The European Commission is working to ensure that children's voices are heard, and to better communicate EU initiatives to EU citizens. At the conference on the Future of Europe, they made sure that children and teenagers were included. Lowering the voting age to 16 is a very good step to make children involved in democracy early, but this is a decision of each country. The European Commission is also working to connect the 'Have your Say' platform with the EU Children's Participation Platform to make it easier for children to share their opinions. There's still a lot to do, but the European Commission is working hard so that everyone has the same chances and opportunities.

**I am impressed with your generation. Your ideas are important to us because you are the future. We believe that involving you in decision-making from a young age will help create responsible adults.**

**Dubravka Šuica**

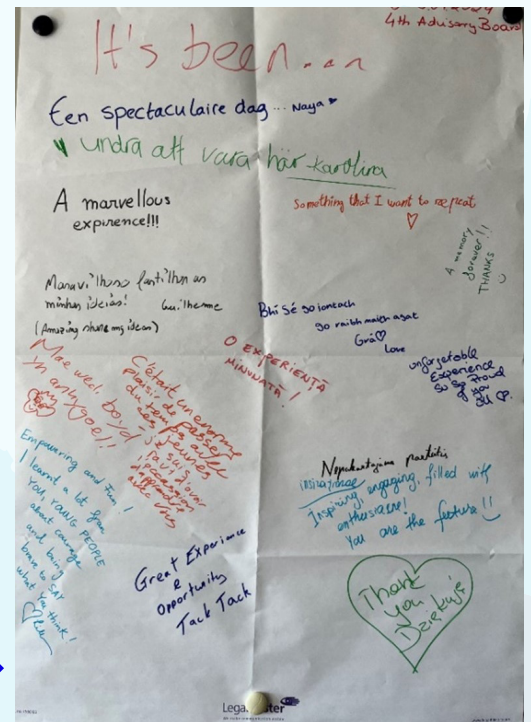


The meeting concluded with the Vice-President shortly discussing the NextGenerationEU programme and the investments that the EU is making today for future generations in terms of resilience and digitalisation.



Feedback after the meeting with the Vice-President

Feedback about the AB meeting in general



## Closing Remarks

To close the fourth meeting of the Advisory Board, the children were asked to return to their initial expectations and determine what the actual take away was. They discussed the meeting with Vice-President (see post-its), took part in a tour of the Berlaymont building, and had a fun closing activity with reflection before saying goodbye (see messages in various languages).

[See more photos, videos and news about EU child participation on the website.](#)