



Connecting Children with National Authorities

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What Happened at the Study Visit in Ireland

#EUChildParticipation

2025

GUESS WHERE WE WERE ON MAY 6-7, 2025. IN IRELAND!

The European Commission and the Irish government invited us to Dublin! By us, we mean children from the EU Children's Participation Platform and representatives of the EU Network for children's rights from eleven EU countries: Austria, Croatia, Bulgaria, Finland, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain and the Netherlands.

WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THE IRISH AUTHORITIES AND CHILDREN?

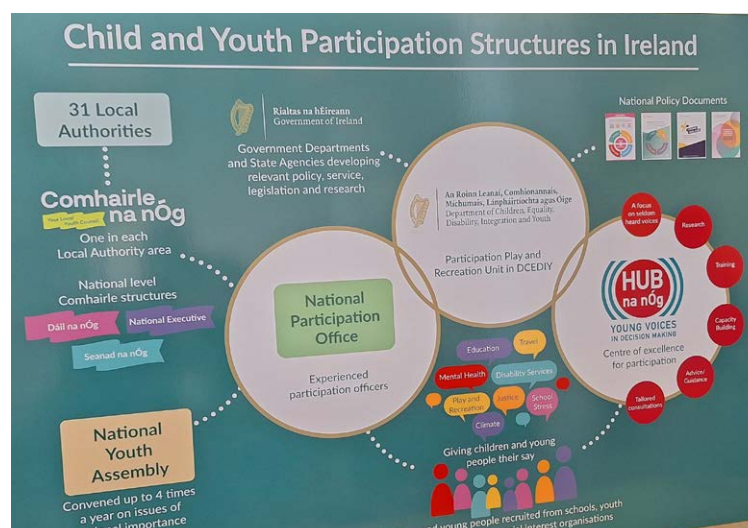


We learned how important it is to involve children in taking decisions about issues that are important for them and how to do that well. We went around to the different groups and children from each one explained how each one works:

- ▶ **Comhairle na nÓg:** Special councils for kids and teens (12-17) in the 31 local areas across Ireland. They are supported by the government.
- ▶ **Dáil na nÓg:** A big youth parliament that has happened every two years since 2001. Around 200 young people from the 31 local youth councils come together to talk about issues that matter to them. They discuss, vote, and make their voices heard on topics important to them and their communities.
- ▶ **Hub na nÓg:** An office that works on child participation. They help the government and other organisations to make sure children and young people have a say in things that matter to them, especially those who don't often get heard.

Charlie and Iggy, part of the Platform's communication co-creation team, presented on participation at the EU level. They explained what the Platform does and how they co-designed parts of the Platform's website.

At The Ark, a cultural centre for children we had lots of creative games, discovered how to work in a team, how differences make us similar, and we also learned about children's rights from the Irish Ombudsman for Children's Office.



WHAT DID WE SHARE WITH THE OTHER COUNTRIES AND CHILDREN?



The second day started with a child rights quiz and discussion led by Professor Laura Lundy and Blaze and Maria (UNICEF Ireland). We then worked in groups, looked at child rights and participation in our own countries to figure out what's working well and what needs improvement in how our countries interact with children. We came up with ideas for solutions.

Here's a quick look at what was discussed about child participation in each country:

▶ **Bulgaria:** has a National Children's Council but requires more local groups to connect schools with the Council. The aim is to develop stronger, interconnected structures that allow children to be creative and express themselves, while also providing guidance and mentoring.

▶ **Croatia:** has children city councils and clubs, but not many children are involved. They want every child to join in and suggest creating a children city council in each city.

▶ **Finland:** their constitution says children have the right to be heard, but they need a better way to make this happen and want to help teachers, especially with refugee children.

▶ **Greece:** has a youth parliament and council, but this is still new. They want to help children make decisions and improve schools and healthcare.

▶ **Italy:** children can join groups in schools, but they want to make this more important everywhere.

They want people to listen to children and let them join more groups.

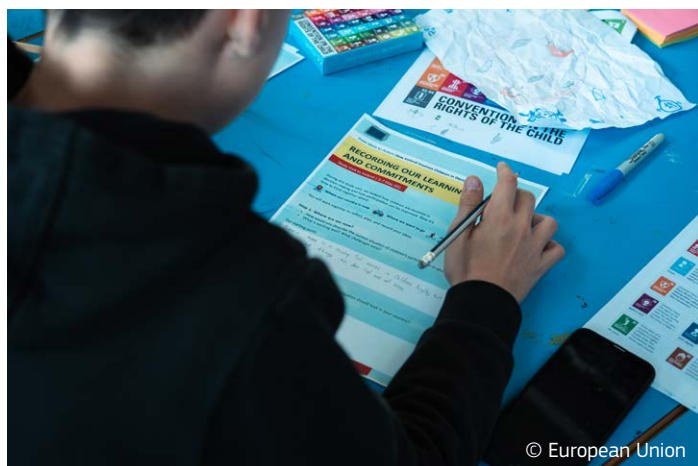
▶ **Malta:** has school and organisation councils but need to make them better. They want a stronger system with children from all areas and better support from adults.

▶ **Netherlands:** they are working on better ways for children to join in by improving teamwork between local and national councils.

▶ **Portugal:** has a National Council for Children and Youth and local assemblies but need better organisation and talking with children.

▶ **Slovakia:** has local youth parliaments, but children need to learn about their rights and adults need to engage with them more in political matters.

▶ **Spain:** they want better representation of children from all areas and stronger connections between local, regional, and national councils.



Children and adults will work together after the visit in Ireland on these points and we will meet online to see how everyone is doing.

EMPOWERING STUDENT VOICES: LEARNING FROM BREMORE ETSS



We visited Bremore Educate Together Secondary School (ETSS) in Balbriggan. And look at the cupcakes the Student Council prepared for us!



Students explained how they help make student voices heard, keep the school clean, create kid-friendly rules, and join in European projects. They even held a workshop on making information easy to understand for kids. The Student Council wants to keep improving and works with teachers and local leaders to make sure students are happy and involved.



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Our goal is to make sure every student's voice is heard and valued. We want to create a school environment that is safe and empowering for all students. ”



By letting students help make decisions, we are not only getting them ready to be future leaders but also making school life better. ”



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WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THE VISIT?



To make sure children's voices are heard and valued, National Governments should:

- ▶ Make sure that there is a stable source of money, training, people and child-friendly materials.
- ▶ Involve children in decisions that affect their daily lives.
- ▶ Check if children's ideas lead to real changes and improvements.
- ▶ Teach both adults and children about children's rights and how to work together.
- ▶ Promote teamwork between children and adults for better results.
- ▶ Share successful practices and learn from each other.

To make sure there are spaces where children feel confident and empowered to share their views, National Governments should:

- ▶ Include and reach out to more children from different places, groups, ages, speaking different languages.
- ▶ Support ongoing conversations between youth and adults.
- ▶ Report back to children and have clear guidelines on how to do that and when.
- ▶ Organise more meetings between children and adults from different countries.
- ▶ Make sure that different groups and institutions work together, such as government, NGOs, schools.
- ▶ Speak up about how great it is for everyone when children and young people lead and share their views.

It was wonderful to see how Ireland involves children in taking decisions, and how children learn about democracy. We saw how Ireland's models can be used in our own countries.



NEXT STEPS



We had an online meeting on 3 July to reflect on the learning from the visit, discuss what children and national representatives plan to do next and what support they might need to make it happen.

During the meeting, we used a Mural board where everyone could share their actions and needs for support.

There will be dedicated pages on the website to share this information, including what each country is working on. We will also follow up with them over the coming months on how any actions taken are progressing.

- ▶ Department of the Taoiseach Child Poverty and Wellbeing Summit 2024 YAG video
- ▶ Comhairle na nÓg National Executive Youth Travel Card video (with Csr McGrath)
- ▶ Comhairle na nÓg National Executive The Future of Relationships and Sexuality Education in Ireland video
- ▶ “The Spark” – Kabin Crew in Cork and Lidsoonvarna, Crinniú na nÓg video
- ▶ The Ark, Dublin. Creative Arts Activities for Children
- ▶ Bremore Educate Together: Instagram