

Project Brief

Children's right to participate in matters affecting them is a fundamental right enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Although it is fairly underestimated by many, empowering children to think and express themselves critically increases self-esteem and self-belief leading children to develop a number of skills and capacities.

The "Empowering Children's Participation in Malta" project is co-funded by the EU Program for Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV). The project aims to contribute towards improving child participation and enable them to freely express their views and influence any decisions that will affect them.

This project is being implemented by the Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights (MSPC) in collaboration with the University College Cork (UCC) and the Commissioner for Children (CFC), Malta.

Project summary

The "Empowering Children's Participation in Malta" Project has 3 main objectives:

- 1) The development of an **Online Child Participation Platform (OCP)**, available as a website and mobile app. This platform will provide a safe, inclusive, and meaningful space for children to share their thoughts and ideas and to participate in national policymaking.
 - Through a dedicated chat providing professional support, the OCP will also provide assistance to the most vulnerable children experiencing any form of social exclusion, abuse, neglect, and/or psychological difficulties and are in need of emotional, moral, and social support.
- 2) Building the capacity of policymakers to integrate and improve children's participation in decision-making. This will also include the creation of a unique Child Policy Evaluation Toolkit, to be used in Malta and potentially also in other countries.
- 3) Raising awareness about children's right to be heard.

The results that this project is actively targeting include improved quality of life for all children in Malta, better opportunities for their growth and development and the empowerment of their voices to contribute towards national matters. The project will involve children in every step and will be implemented in full consultation with children throughout. It will also prioritize gender equality and avoid any form of discrimination.



Child Participation

-  **Enables** children to shape their future through Policymaking while becoming aware of their rights and responsibilities
-  **Encourages** children to be more inquisitive and innovative without fear
-  **Enhances** the likelihood of children reporting abuse or exploitation
-  **Promotes** the development of self-esteem and confidence
-  **Helps** develop positive relationships between children and adults and builds a consent culture

Overview of Participants

The project is being implemented in a partnership between Malta's Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights (MSPC) and the University College Cork (UCC).

At national level, the Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights is responsible for safeguarding the protection and rights of children in Malta. The Research and Evaluation Directorate (RED) within the Ministry is responsible for the project and its management. The Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights is supported by Malta's Commissioner for Children (CFC).

The UCC team involves some of the leading experts in children's rights at a global level, headed by Professor Lundy. Professor Laura Lundy is a leading expert in children's rights, with a focus on their right to participate in decision-making. Her influential work, including the "Lundy model" of children's participation, is widely recognized and used globally.

Impact

1. Child empowerment: The project will enhance children's personal development, self-confidence, and critical thinking skills, leading to greater engagement in societal, civic, and political matters.
 - a. Increased awareness of children's right to be heard and child participation: An awareness campaign will educate stakeholders, including children, policymakers, parents, and educators, fostering a better understanding and implementation of child participation.
2. More skilled public officials: The project will provide the necessary skills to public officials to incorporate child participation in policymaking, enhancing their ability to support, monitor, and evaluate child participation.
3. Improved child participation resources for policymakers:
 - a. The creation of an online Child Participation Mechanism will enable systematic and meaningful child participation, providing a space for diverse children to voice their opinions on relevant issues.
 - b. The Child Participation Evaluation Toolkit will enhance the capacity of consortium partners to evaluate and improve child participation policies, contributing to better policies at both national and international levels.
4. Implementation of the EU strategy on the rights of the child: The project aligns with the European Commission's recommendations to establish and improve child participation mechanisms and increase awareness and knowledge of children's rights through campaigns and training.

