



REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA  
MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS

# Testing of the CoE Child Participation Assessment Tool in Estonia

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# Timeframe of the pilot process in Estonia

- November 6, 2014: induction Seminar
- December-January: tendering process for finding a person to carry out focus groups and to prepare the report
- November-May: translating, preparing and carrying out the survey for children
  - January-May: children's focus groups, multi-stakeholder consultations, and data gathering
- May-June: analysis of gathered data and preparing the report, final report ready and translated by 26th of June
- June - October: Presenting results of report in Estonia, feedback to participants, stakeholders, also recommendations
  - June-October: evaluation of the Tool and piloting process

# Online Survey for Children (1)

- Translated into Estonian and Russian and adapted to the local context Oct-Nov 2014.
- Information about the survey sent to schools, partners, youth networks
- By now, replies from 558 children, most Estonian speaking, average age: 15
- 500 copies printed out and sent to Russian speaking schools, to get more results from them
- Reason of low participation: participation issues have been raised recently by many parties (e.g voting right to youth, Youth Parliament), schools are overloaded (e.g PISA test)

# Online Survey for Children (2)

- Preliminary results:
  - The main sources of information about their right to participate comes from school (civics class), youth organisations and Facebook
  - Children feel they are asked about their views
    - Very much in youth organisations (local youth councils, trainings)
    - More or less at school (e.g about preferred food)
    - Much less in local municipalities and state level
  - They have had a chance to give feedback about the use of public services most in the areas of sport, health, and work and activities of youth organisations

# Focus groups with children (1)

- Various groups of children: Estonian, Russian, English speaking students; local youth council, children from vulnerable groups (children in detention, foster homes)
- Wide variety: urban and rural; different school sizes; 4 schools; 1 youth center; two special centers for detention (young offenders, rehabilitation); 1 international school; 1 alternative care institution; 3-4 to be done in May (today already more than 100 children and young people, age between 7-18 of years)
- also a separate meeting with LGBT youth will be done in May
- Difficulties in securing the cooperation with schools for children with special needs.

# Focus groups with children (2)

- Preliminary results:
  - Children know the number 116 111 very well
  - Children feel that at school they have consulted in some questions (such as choice of school lunches and school uniform; organising sports day), but not in some others (such as the content of the internal order of the school)
  - children do not feel respected and equal with adults
  - participation in most schools is well-organized for older children, youngsters are left behind (teacher do not have knowledge or do not realize importance of participation, one reason might be that not many schools are using non-formal education, group works etc where children could experience participation during the class)
  - Most children did not know the children's ombudsman existed, except for children in closed institutions (who were also in general more knowledgeable about their rights)

# Focus groups with children (3)

- Preliminary results (continued)
  - Children say if they are asked for their opinion, it is often in the form of a written questionnaire, but would prefer more active discussions, such as the current focus groups, where they feel equal
  - As a general rule, children wish to be consulted and trusted more
  - Russian speaking children have in general less knowledge about their right of participation and mostly feel they are not asked about their views at school (one reason is language barrier, also cultural differences)
  - English speaking children were aware about their right to participate at home and felt well-involved in school life, however did not know about general participation possibilities in the country for children and youngsters (youth council, councils in municipalities, debate groups etc)

# Multi-stakeholder consultations

- Induction seminar (Nov 6) was a good opening for the whole process, bringing together representatives from state, local municipality and NGO level, from health, judicial and education fields
- By now most of the written consultations and interviews with different specialists/stakeholders have been carried out, consultant will finish consultations by the end of May
- Problem areas: lack of information for Russian-speaking children; lack of possibilities for children with disabilities



# Feedback

- Feedback from children:
  - they were very happy to participate and surprised that someone is interested to hear their views and that adults are even thinking about their right to participate; some of them were a bit sceptic, expressing thought like that - *“Nothing will **anyways** change, what’s the point”*
- Feedback from interviews and written consultations:
  - some specialists from judicial area took it very formally, did not have any emotions, but ministries were very excited
  - specialist with social background were happy and more open-minded and are interested in the result and understand bigger picture, however felt that it is hard to collect data, or on the other hand (e.g. health area) realized that they actually already have data and participation is well-organized
  - some of the teachers expressed their apathy, from some schools did not get any feedback
- Feedback from consultant:
  - very interesting and enriching experience, gives input also to advocacy work;
  - the tool is necessary, however data collection takes a lot of time and in some parts the tool

Thank you for your attention!

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